

Working Together for a Better Wales - maximising the impact of action in communities
19 September 2024
Yr Egin, Carmarthen, SA32 3EQ
Biographies & Abstracts

Sessions

11.15 – 11.35: Better Together – research on perspectives on gaps in the system
Presenter: Babs Lewis (Babs Lewis Consulting)

Together for Change has commissioned a series of in depth, user-led interviews with experienced people in the statutory, third and voluntary sector. These interviews, along with TfC's own extensive consultation focuses on how the sector works with communities on wellbeing. It is part of TfC's own examination of new ways to grow and develop future support.

Participants were identified working collaboratively with Together for Change and its partners. All had wide experience of the sector and of community and place-based working. In all, TfC commissioned 12 in depth, user-led research interviews to combine with their wider consultation, which included reaching out to 30 community groups across Wales. User-led interviews are a qualitative research method where the researcher aims to understand people's experience by asking participants guided questions on how they interact with the service or system. In this instance, TfC wanted to explore:

- how organisations currently support grassroots community groups to maximise their impact on living well
- what would help them increase the impact of this work
- where they saw gaps in the current support structures in Wales and
- how they thought those gaps could be strengthened

Interviewees reflect a range of experiences. Their views were their own, not those of their organisations, although they reflect their organisation's perspective. Each spoke candidly from their point of view and their comments represented sector perspectives, not official organisational views. These interviews were combined with workshops, presentations and meetings organised by TfC's own senior team with partners and other key people in the sector to consider ways forward. Participants described real barriers to change in the public sector model. Many felt place-based work already provided answers that could be scaled and knowledge that could be spread, where people had the space, time and capacity to "join the dots". Others saw a need to challenge traditional cultural attitudes that the state will provide. They reflected on how people could be supported to develop the capacity to explore and learn from place-based work in the current pressurised, competitive and complex system.

13.15 – 14.15: Parallel Session 1 - People power through research
Chair: Michael Woods (Aberystwyth University)

Community-led Action Research - Jessie Buchanan (Together for Change)

What you will hear: A short presentation about the Cymru Wledig Local Policy Innovation Partnership Rural Wales Community-led Action Research. LPIP is funded by the United Kingdom Research Institute (UKRI) Consortium and brings together researchers, policy-makers and communities to tackle the many challenges facing our rural areas. We know that many communities face economic hardship, social injustice and threats to their environment. We also know they play an important part in the solutions to these challenges through the collective knowledge, ideas and energy of their populations. Exploring what matters most to a community and understanding the underlying reasons behind their priorities in a focused way can often lead to positive change and more practical, effective and sustainable solutions to the challenges identified.

The Community-led Action Research Programme is an opportunity for communities across rural Wales to explore important issues through action research, testing ideas, sharing and learning with other and working with academic partners.

How you can participate: Ask questions about the approach, consider the role of action research in developing confidence and capability in evidencing the impact of community led organisations.

What you will take away: Knowledge and interest in community action research approaches, the themes addressed through the LPIP and opportunities it presents.

Building local capacity through the Community Research Network - Jess Mead Silvester (People's Economy)

What you will hear: I'll share our 15-month journey as a community research network exploring what tourism that benefits communities in 3 of the slate valleys in Gwynedd could be, and how we might get there.

You'll hear how we worked as a network and what it means to be led on shaping tourism by community researchers - what we did, why, what we found and how that's been received so far - and the vision for an alternative, community benefiting tourism model.

How you can participate: Please come and find me to chat, ask questions or share your experiences in English or Welsh during the day, or get in touch for a chat directly here: jess.silvester@peopleseconomyuk.org. You can also find out more about this project and our findings here: foundationalalliance.wales. Sign up to our mailing list to hear more about People's Economy's work here: peopleseconomyuk.org

What you will take away: Hopefully you'll leave with a sense of what a community research and action approach can achieve, a practical example of how a community research network might work, an idea of some of the challenges and enablers and how developing local capacity in this way can support community-led change.

13.15 – 14.15 - Parallel Session 2 - Data to support place-based action
Chair: Andrew Flynn (Cardiff University)

Data and asset mapping in Wales - Scott Orford (Cardiff University)

What you will hear: The presentation will discuss recent research in mapping local community assets in Wales, focusing on work undertaken by the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) and Together for Change in Pembrokeshire and the AHRC funded Public Map Platform in Anglesey. It will outline future planned research as part of the ESRC funded Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership (LPIP) and the ESRC funded WISERD Centre for People, Place and the Public Sphere.

How you can participate: In Q&A session after the presentation; in sharing ideas and information; in follow-up conversations / collaborations.

What you will take away: insight into on-going research and development in tools and resources for community asset mapping in Wales and how to get involved in the project.

Measuring and Building Community Resilience - Eleri Williams (Building Communities Trust)

What you will hear: You'll hear about BCT's pioneering place-based indexes which cover every small area in Wales and how the data and findings can be used to transform community life and wellbeing.

How you can participate: Respond to and question the data and findings, and how they relate to your communities.

What you will take away: Greater knowledge of the enabling factors for community resilience and sustainable community action.

13.15 – 14.15 - Parallel Session 3 - Building capacity through collaboration and support

Chair: Christala Sophocleous (Swansea University)

How can Higher Education Institution (HEI) led support make a difference? The Third Sector Research Partnership (TSRP), a working model - Anna Skeels and Dave Horton (SPARK)

What you will hear: Anna and Dave will give an overview of Cardiff University's Third Sector Research Partnership (TSRP), an innovative approach to building research skills and driving evidence-based change in some of Cardiff's most disadvantaged communities through the provision of pro bono research support to small, grassroots Third Sector organisations (TSOs).

How you can participate: There will be a chance after the presentation to respond and share your own experiences and reflections, and opportunities to follow up with Anna and Dave after the session.

What you will take away: Participants will take away new thinking and practical examples of how more equal and co-productive relationships can be built between academic researchers and communities

**The Transport and Health Integrated Research Network- THINK, reflections on collaboration and helping a network to thrive.
Amy Nicolass (THINK Cymru)**

What you will hear: Overview of what THINK is, its outputs and honest reflections on how to manage a network aiming to bring together people from very different parts of the transport and health system and how learnings apply more widely, concluding with some top tips.

How you can participate: share THINK resource links and reflections that are applicable to different thematic area and question your own organisations' ways of working and how you can integrate more collaboration and provide opportunities to practice collaborative working skills. You can also dive deeper into reflexive practice using THINK resources by joining the autumn online Life Long Learning Course in October or get in touch with Amy or Charles at think@aber.ac.uk

What you will take away: Reflections and top tips on how to consider what more your organisation or role can do to integrate more collaborative working between organisations.

Biographies

Sue Denman - Together for Change

Sue is passionate about community development and its role in equality and wellbeing. She helped to set up the thriving older people's social support Charity, Solva Care; is a Trustee of the Charity; and chairs the local Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Group. She founded Together for Change, which works in partnership with other organisations to generate and share knowledge about communities for people centred decision making. Sue has a background in public health, spanning policy, research and practice. She is Professor Emeritus of R&D Policy at the Medical School, Cardiff University.

Jessie Buchanan - Together for Change

Jessie Buchanan is the Co-founder and Coordinator of TfC which brings knowledge of communities and their needs to decision makers and partnerships. TfC supports communities in setting up and evaluating innovative projects by providing training in action research and sharing learning. Jessie has brought her considerable experience in the public and private sectors to bear on her work as a community volunteer, activist and third sector employee. She is passionate about the role of communities of place in supporting people to live well. She also strongly believes in the importance of their participation in the policy decisions that are likely to affect them now and in the future.

Babs Lewis - Babs Lewis Consulting

Babs Lewis has co-designed and delivered innovation programmes working with communities and public sector partners across Wales. She has pioneered place-based, people-centred approaches working with those closest to the issues both as Wales's business development manager for People Powered Results - part of Nesta, the UK innovation agency for social good – and as a freelance consultant. Babs has worked at a senior level with Welsh government, public services, academic and community-groups to explore what works. Most recently, Babs supported Social Care Wales to consult, draft and implement their new national five-year Research, Innovation and improvement Strategy for social care and ran Nesta's People Powered Result coaching and facilitation team for Cardiff Capital region's Infuse programme helping public sector staff innovate around complex challenges. Previously, as Shared Lives Plus Wales development manager, Babs managed the growth of this small, innovative service, introduced new services and widening Shared Lives support across Wales. Babs has a postgraduate certificate in Autism Studies from the University of Birmingham Post-Grad Cert: Autism Studies and an MA in English Literature, Life and Thought from Cambridge University. Born and raised in Port Talbot, Babs brings a deep understanding of the public and third sectors and a commitment to empowering people to work together on what matters to them.

Sarah Evans - Cwmpas

Sarah is the Director of Business Growth and Consultancy at Cwmpas. Sarah joined Cwmpas 4 years ago and has overseen the development of the consultancy activities, in the fields of social value, digital transformation, social care and learning and development. Sarah has led a variety of different projects including working with Public Sector Bodies in Wales to review commissioning and procurement practices and development local social economies. After joining Cwmpas Sarah finalised the social enterprise vision and action plan for Wales 'Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise'. Before working at Cwmpas Sarah was a

senior lecturer and researcher, leading European social enterprise development projects in topics such as the internationalisation of social enterprise and the role of minority ethnic women in the social business sector.

Leighton Phillips - Hywel Dda UHB

Dr Leighton Phillips is Director of Research, Innovation and Value at Hywel Dda University Health Board, overseeing a large Department and portfolio of clinical trials, clinical investigation of devices and medical technologies, innovation, real world-evaluation, and strategic change guided by the principles of Value Based Health Care (VBHC). Leighton is an honorary Professor at Aberystwyth University and has previously held leadership roles in the NHS, academia, NGOs and the senior civil service, where he deployed a new strategy and planning system for the Welsh NHS and has experience of working at a national level with senior politicians, cabinet and government committees.

Selwyn Williams - Cymunedoli

Sel Williams was brought up in the Conwy Valley and has worked at different times as a farm labourer, builder's labourer, research scientist, schoolteacher and lecturer at y Coleg Normal and the University in Bangor. He has a background in teaching, research and writing in the fields of Agriculture, Biology, Philosophy, Economics and Community Development. Over a period of forty years he has gained considerable experience of developing higher education and community courses which have been Welsh in nature and perspective, delivered in both Welsh and English. He has now retired from full-time work but continues to teach part-time as a community education tutor. He has practical experience in the field of community development over a period of some fifty years. Currently he is a director of several community enterprises, nationally, and locally in the Ffestiniog area where he lives. These local ventures include the community hotel, Y Pengwern in Llan Ffestiniog, Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog which is a network of 16 social enterprises in the Ffestiniog area (website: cwmnibro.cymru) and Cymunedoli Cyf. (Cysylltu@Cymunedoli. Cymru) which is a network of nearly 50 community enterprises across the county of Gwynedd. He is also currently a member of the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) funded research team looking at aspects of community tourism in north Wales.

Iwan Thomas - Community Movement Cymru

Iwan is the Chief Executive Officer of PLANED, and joined the organisation in October 2018 having worked in the public sector for over 20 years. Prior to joining PLANED, Iwan was the Regional Programme Manager for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board for five years, and also worked for the Local Government Data Unit Wales as its first appointed Senior Consultant. In addition to a Master's Degree in Business Administration, Iwan brings considerable experience from working across the private, public and third sectors in partnership across Wales, with current posts including being the Chair of the Board of Governors at Pembrokeshire College; an Independent Board Member of Hywel Dda University Health Board; and a Director on the Board of Visit Pembrokeshire.

Michael Woods - Aberystwyth University

Michael Woods is Professor of Human Geography at Aberystwyth University and Director of Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales - the Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership that aims to connect research, communities and policy. He has worked with rural communities in Wales for over 25 years, including as part

of the Wales Rural Observatory and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) and on studies of Town and Community Councils for Welsh Government.

Jess Mead Silvester - People's Economy

Before joining People's Economy as Wales Senior Programme Manager, Jess spent five years as a community development worker for a resident-led group in Maesgeirchen, working with residents to bring their visions for their community to life. Before that, she did a PhD in polar ocean processes linked to climate systems. She dreams of a world where we live in balance with each other and our planet and is optimistic we can imagine and make a more just future shaped by what matters to people and communities, within planetary boundaries – just. She thinks economic change is key to making this happen.

Andrew Flynn - Cardiff University

Andrew Flynn is Professor in Environmental Policy and Planning in the School of Geography at Cardiff University. His research has focussed on three themes: the changing nature of the local state and how it is increasingly performing multiple environmental functions; the governance of sustainability in which he has explored the ways in which sustainability is constructed through the activities of local and national actors; and private interests and standard setting which has involved analysing the ways in which private interests interact with public bodies to produce standards that are, in turn, shaping ideas of the environment and the role of government.

Scott Orford - Cardiff University

Scott Orford is a Professor of GIS and quantitative human geography in the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, a Co-director of the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD), and academic lead of the Welsh Government and Carnegie UK Trust funded Understanding Welsh Places website and research project. He has research interests in the geographic analysis and modelling of socio-economic processes and has worked on projects in a variety of social science areas such as health, demographic and population studies, housing and housing markets, accessibility to services and community assets, and mapping variations in social inequalities. He is currently researching innovation community digital mapping and in open data presentation using interactive and collaborative dashboards and websites with an emphasis on Welsh data

Eleri Williams - Building Communities Trust

Eleri is the Policy and Research Advisor at BCT. She has a decade of experience in the third sector, having worked extensively supporting people seeking sanctuary and helping to create the Welsh Refugee Coalition, alongside direct awareness-raising work co-produced with experts by experience. She also worked for Swansea CVS, facilitating their youth-led grants panel and on a project focused on diversifying trusteeship and third sector governance. Eleri has joined BCT from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, where she led on equality policy work, after a short spell as a qualitative researcher at Swansea University's school of law. Eleri is driven by a strong sense of social justice, ensuring that seldom heard voices are a key part of policy making conversations. Eleri enjoys learning Welsh and is doing foundational level currently. Outside of work, Eleri enjoys trying to garden and looking out for sausage dogs whilst walking.

Christala Sophocleous - Swansea University

Dr Christala Sophocleous is a Senior Lecturer of Social Policy at Swansea University. She teaches across several undergraduate programmes and supervises master's and PhD students. She has a long-term interest in supporting communities to engage with public policy and maximise the benefits for local people. Her research interests include exploring how communities engage with public policy, how inter sector partnership working can support communities and, the growing differences in welfare within the UK's four nations, emerging as a result of political devolution.

Dave Horton - SPARK

Dave Horton is a community development practitioner and consultant with over 20 years' experience 'on the ground' in communities. Currently based in Ely, Cardiff, he has played a key role in the formation of ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely) a highly successful community development organisation. He is interested in Asset Based Community Development and Co-production, and particularly in how these approaches can be used to challenge stigma and create change in communities experiencing disadvantage. He has been working with Cardiff University's Third Sector Research Partnership to help build research skills and capacity in small Third Sector Organisations, seeking to co-create knowledge that can be used in and by communities.

Anna Skeels - SPARK

Anna Skeels is a Research Fellow in Cardiff University's new Social Science Research Park (SPARK). As part of this role, Anna co-leads on the development of SPARK's Third Sector Research Partnership, collaborating with Third Sector organisations and academics across Cardiff University to support a vibrant Third Sector research culture. Anna has a PhD from Swansea University's Centre for Migration Policy Research, has worked in the voluntary sector in Wales on a range of issues relating to children and young people's participation and protection and, more recently, overseas as researcher and practitioner in humanitarian settings with Save the Children.

Amy Nicholass - THINK Project

Amy Nicholass is currently the Community Led Action Research Facilitator Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales with Together for Change Pembrokeshire but prior to this role she was the Project Manager for the Transport and Health Integrated Research Network - THINK at Aberystwyth University from 2022 to 2024. With a background in Environmental Science, Amy has spent the last decade supporting organisations to reduce their negative environmental and social impacts.