



**Wales Centre  
for Public Policy**  
Canolfan Polisi  
Cyhoeddus Cymru



# Welsh Policy and Politics in Unprecedented Times

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019**  
**The Mall Room, Taliesin Create,**  
**Swansea University**



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## Agenda

10.00 – 10.30 **Arrivals and registration**

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10.30 – 12.00 **Panel One: Knowledge and evidence in Wales and its role in policy-making**

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***Discussant: Anna Nicholl (Wales Council for Voluntary Action)***

**Michelle Black (University of Sheffield), Claire Beynon (Public Health Wales), et al:** 'Learning across the UK: A review of public health systems and policy approaches to early child development since political devolution'

**Paul Worthington and Helen Hodges (Cardiff University):** 'The nature and scale of debt to public services and the citizen perspective: A poverty of evidence?'

**Nerys Edmonds and Liz Green (Public Health Wales):** 'Synthesizing emerging evidence to promote and protect health and well-being in uncertain times: A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of Brexit in Wales'

**Helen Hodges (Cardiff University):** 'Have we got the right data to solve the problem? Variations in the rates of looked-after children in Wales'

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12.00 – 12.45 **Devolution and Brexit - 'in conversation' with Jo Hunt and Hugh Rawlings**

**Jo Hunt** is Professor of Law in the Cardiff University School of Law and Politics. She researches aspects of regionalism and devolution in the European Union and was appointed as Senior Fellow under the ESRC's UK in a Changing Europe initiative.

**Hugh Rawlings** is the Director of Constitutional Affairs and Inter-Governmental Relations in the Welsh Government. He has worked on devolution issues since 1997, including the policy issues reflected in the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006 and the Wales Act 2017, as well as the devolution aspects of the legislation giving effect to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

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12.45 – 13.30      **Lunch break and Poster presentations (lunch provided)**

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**Esther Dorado Ladera (Academia Europaea):** 'Making sense of science under conditions of complexity and uncertainty'

**Sara O'Shea (Swansea University):** 'Big ideas in a micro village: Evaluating a young persons' supported housing project in Llanelli'

**Suzanna Nesom (Cardiff University):** 'The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) and the formulation of wellbeing plans'

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13.30 – 15.00      **Panel Two: Theories and methods in policy change: A Welsh and devolved perspective**

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**Discussant: James Downe (Cardiff University)**

**David Beel (Manchester Metropolitan University), Martin Jones (Staffordshire University), and Ian Rees-Jones (Cardiff University):**

'City-Region Limits: Questioning local growth narratives in medium-sized UK cities'

**Elizabeth Woodcock (Bangor University):** 'Collaborative research, integration of interests and cross-sector delivery of policy'

**Jonathan Webb (Institute for Public Policy Research):** 'Advocacy coalitions and policy change in devolved contexts: What determines effective mobilisation across political and policy systems?'

**Daniel Roberts (Swansea University):** 'Entrepreneurship policy in Wales'

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15.00 – 15.15    **Break**

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15.15 – 16.45    **Panel Three: The future of policy and politics in Wales**

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***Discussant: Leighton Andrews (Cardiff University)***

**Leighton Andrews (Cardiff University):** 'Welcome to Ukania: a provocation'

**Bob Smith (Cardiff University):** 'Delivering affordable housing in Wales in challenging times'

**Rachel Minto and Alison Parken (Cardiff University):** 'What will we do without the EU? Promoting equality in post-devolution Wales'

**Ian Stafford (Cardiff University):** 'Never so close, but never so far away? Exploring perceptions of trust and transparency in Wales'

## Conference Overview

Austerity, further devolution of powers, issues such as an ageing population and climate change, and of course Brexit, are all important conditions and events leading to uncertainty, instability and an unprecedented situation in Welsh policy and politics. These issues affect how and why policy is made and services are delivered. This is also an opportune time requiring reflection and analysis, where multiple stakeholders – ministers, civil servants, politicians, professionals, academics and citizens – are reviewing and redefining the purpose and outcomes of policy and politics in Wales.

This event brings together academics at all stages of their career with representatives from Welsh Government and civil society to discuss these questions, current and future practices, and opportunities for Welsh policy and politics. The day is organised into three panel sessions with paper presentations (10-15 minutes for each presentation) followed by 10-15 minutes of discussion by a discussant, with questions and answers from the room. There will also be a lunchtime ‘in conversation’ session with Jo Hunt and Hugh Rawlings discussing Brexit, the devolution of new powers to Wales, and the role that various Welsh policy stakeholders – government, the legislative powers, civil society and universities – can play.

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## Paper Abstracts

### **Learning across the UK: A review of public health systems and policy approaches to early child development since political devolution**

*Michelle Black, Amy Barnes, Susan Baxter (University of Sheffield), Claire Beynon (Public Health Wales), Mark Clowes (University of Sheffield), Mary Dallat (Public Health Northern Ireland), Alisha Davies (Cardiff University), Andrew Furber (Public Health England), Elizabeth Goyder (University of Sheffield), Catherine Jeffery (NHS Borders), Evangelos Kritsotakis, Mark Strong (University of Sheffield)*

**Background:** Giving children the best start in life is critical for their future health and wellbeing. Political devolution in the UK provides a natural experiment to explore how public health systems contribute to children's early developmental outcomes across four countries.

**Method:** A systematic literature review and input from a stakeholder group was used to develop a public health systems framework. This framework then informed analysis of public health policy approaches to early child development.

**Results:** A total of 118 studies met the inclusion criteria. All national policies championed a 'prevention approach' to early child development. Political factors shaped divergence, with variation in national conceptualisations of child development ('preparing for life' versus 'preparing for school') and pre-school provision ('universal entitlement' or 'earned benefit'). Poverty and resourcing were identified as key system factors that influenced outcomes. Scotland and Wales have

enacted distinctive legislation focusing on wider determinants. However, this is limited by the extent of devolved powers.

Conclusion: The systems framework clarifies policy complexity relating to early child development. The divergence of child development policies in the four countries and, particularly, the explicit recognition in Scottish and Welsh policy of wider determinants, creates scope for this topic to be a tracer area to compare UK public health systems longer term.

## **The nature and scale of debt to public services and the citizen perspective: A poverty of evidence?**

*Paul Worthington and Helen Hodges, Wales Centre for Public Policy, Cardiff University*

We were commissioned to produce an evidence review which considered how public services and their contracted partners could better respond to vulnerable debtors. In addition to quantifying the scale and nature of the problems, particularly those associated with council tax and rent arrears, and approaches to addressing these, there was a focus on understanding the citizens experience of debt. This, it was felt, would bring real experiences and context to the issue.

We reviewed over 60 pieces of evidence from government, regulators, think-tanks, academics, non-profit and for-profit organisations. This included case studies of innovative approaches to debt collection used by local authorities and housing providers that could potentially be relevant in Wales.

This presented evidential challenges. There is clear evidence of the extent and impact of debt across the UK; some 67,600 of households in Wales have problem debt, but each individual or household experience will differ (ONS, 2018; StepChange, 2015, 2018; Money Advice Service, 2017). Studies show that for many, debt and financial pressures are a real, continuing source of anxiety and uncertainty, often exacerbated by income uncertainty, unemployment or other vulnerabilities (Greenall and Prosser, 2017; Shelter Cymru 2016; StepChange, 2015; The Children's Society, 2014 and 2015; Hartfree and Collard, 2014). They report the experiences of individuals and households in trying to manage those challenges and their relationship with local authorities and housing providers.

The accounts are personal and powerful. However, we were mindful that many were produced as campaigning literature rather than for peer-reviewed publications. Equally, casework analysis from some agencies may not necessarily be generalizable and Welsh-specific data – whilst useful - was limited (Protheroe et al, 2017).

There is some published good practice from local authorities and housing providers but evidence is rarely systematically reviewed and reported largely through literature such as annual reports (HQN Ltd., 2018).

This session will summarise the approach taken to develop a robust evidence base and meet the requirements of policy makers.



## **Synthesizing emerging evidence to promote and protect health and well-being in uncertain times: A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of Brexit in Wales.**

*Nerys Edmonds and Liz Green, Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, Public Health Wales*

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will become statutory in Wales as part of the implementation of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. A HIA of the potential health and well-being impacts of a policy can be a useful and informative process, which can support policy makers to take evidence based decisions and appropriate actions. This HIA was conducted at a time of political uncertainty and debate on the possible nature and outcomes of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit). It is a unique analysis, which assesses the implications of Brexit from a Welsh perspective using the public health "lens" of the social determinants of health and population well-being.

**Aim:** To assess the potential impact, extent and nature of Brexit on health and well-being in Wales, and to inform decision-making, planning and policymaking.

**Methods:** A comprehensive HIA was conducted over a six-month period in 2018/19, steered by a Strategic Advisory Group. Methods included; a literature review; stakeholder workshop; interviews with policy leads, a community health profile, and report with evidence synthesis.

**Findings:** Trade agreements, economic impacts, changing relationships with EU agencies, uncertainty and loss of regulatory alignment were key pathways for health impacts to occur. Potential impacts included; food standards and safety; environmental regulations; working conditions;

and health and social care. Many impacts will affect the whole population. Vulnerable populations included; children/young people; those at risk of unemployment; and Welsh areas receiving significant EU funding. Potential indirect impacts were identified on mental well-being.

Conclusion: Brexit has the potential to impact significantly on the determinants of health. The HIA should inform cross-sector planning and policy to ensure that the health and well-being of the people of Wales is considered at every juncture. Organisations should use the Well-being of the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to frame their response to Brexit.

## **Have we got the right data to solve the problem?**

*Helen Hodges, Wales Centre for Public Policy, Cardiff University*

There are currently in the region of 6,400 children looked after by Welsh local authorities. These, along with those on the child protection register, are some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Yet the cost of providing accommodation and other services for them is placing a huge strain on local authority budgets at a time when they are already being squeezed. In investigating what could safely be done to reduce the numbers entering care, it is necessary to understand what is driving this increased demand.

The small number of local authorities in Wales represents a methodological challenge, particularly when using published data which is subject to suppression. Notably it limits the potential for replicating the types of modelling that have been undertaken with English data.

However, at a time when there is unprecedented pressure on resources, with over-stretched services not having the capacity to intervene until crisis point, there is an even greater call to find solutions.

Factors such as deprivation, parental substance misuse, living in a household where there is domestic violence and parental mental ill health have been put forward as potential explanations. Data is collected which could inform the evidence base. However, the nature and presentation of the data from the Welsh Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the Looked After Children Census, and the Children Receiving Care and Support Census also presents problems, with individual level typically being aggregated to a local authority level.

In light of these issues, the session will consider whether we should be looking to apply novel statistical techniques such as Bayesian approaches in our search for potential explanations for the amount of variation within Wales. Since these are unfamiliar to many in the social sciences, there will also be an emphasis on the advantages of looking to other disciplines for new methodological ideas, drawing upon my doctoral research.

### **City-Region Limits: questioning local growth narratives in medium-sized UK cities**

*David Beel (Manchester Metropolitan University), Martin Jones (Staffordshire University) and Ian Rees Jones (Cardiff University)*

Within the UK and as well as further afield, the concept of localism and spatial delineation of the 'city-region' have seen a renaissance as the

de-facto spatial political units of governance for economic development (Clarke & Cochrane, 2013). In the UK this has been led by the UK Government, as they have sought to reshape the ways in which economic development takes place and although this shift in governmental delivery began under New Labour. It was much vaunted by the UK Coalition Government (Deas, 2013), subsequently by the continuing Conservative administration (Conservative Party, 2015). This has policy landscape has found a presence in Wales too, with the two Welsh city-regions (Cardiff and Swansea) both gaining city-deals via the UK and Welsh governments. The process of city-deal making though is one that seeks to enable elite actors to deliver economic growth within the respective city-region. In this paper, we follow the development of Swansea Bay City Region to consider the ways in which the neoliberal city-region model is limited. This is questioned via comprehending how the scale and differences across the Swansea Bay City Region stretch the spatial construct to its limits and as a smaller, geographically peripheral UK metropolitan centre, it struggles to embed the dynamics of the city-region neoliberal growth machine model into a local growth framework.

## **Collaborative research, integration of interests and cross-sector delivery of policy**

*Elizabeth Woodcock, PhD researcher, Sociology and Social Policy, Bangor University*

This paper argues that cross-sector collaboration to implement policy is necessary to address the complex challenges of national well-being and sustainable development in the current context of Brexit. Knowledge

generated through participative, collaborative research can integrate multiple interests. It can ensure that policy is more widely implemented across sectors of society than policy based on knowledge gained without such a process of integration.

Participative research into the conditions for cross-sector collaboration in Wales shows that the foundation for the process to integrate interests is good communicative capacity. This is the practice of building social capital amongst partners, developing a common vision, and considering multiple perspectives. These practices develop through open dialogue, reflection on the current situation and deliberation over creative ways to work together to change the situation.

Over the past 2 years I have brought together a cross-sector research group including representatives of environmental and third sector infrastructure organisations, Natural Resources Wales, the Public Health team, Health Board and Local Authorities. Developing our communicative capacity has led to a common vision based on reciprocal benefits, strengthening the legitimacy and interdependence of partners and leading to a willingness to pool resources.

In contrast, the conditions for good communicative capacity can be lacking in Public Service Boards (PSB), the key institutions for implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. My concurrent observation of Gwynedd and Môn PSB shows a persistence of segregated thinking, lack of mutual understanding and limited deliberation over ways to work together for reciprocal benefit. This lack of understanding of the principle of integration results in the choice of well-being objectives based on competing interests within the Board and that have little relation to the national well-being goals, and limited active

collaboration of the public bodies or with the third sector to implement the policy.

Our experience of developing a policy that integrates multiple interests and the contrasting situation of the Public Service Board's development of its well-being policy provides in depth data to inform the Welsh Government's own ways of developing and implementing policy.

### **Advocacy coalitions and policy change in devolved contexts: What determines effective mobilisation across political and policy systems?**

*Jonathan Webb, Institute for Public Policy Research*

Policy making in Wales is often characterised by the small size of its policy networks, the emergent and overlapping nature of its policy subsystems and its multi-level dynamics (McTavish, 2015). Despite this, there are relatively few 'bespoke' theories of policy making and policy change that take into account the distinct features of a small countries and regions with devolved competencies.

To advance our knowledge of policymaking and policy change in devolved contexts, this paper applies a novel version of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Youth homelessness policy is used as a case study to demonstrate how actors navigate devolved political systems to enact or resist change. Using semi-structured interviews and adopting a comparative case study design of policy change in the devolved contexts of Wales and Alberta, this paper demonstrates the

distinct role that key advocacy actors play in reframing policy problems and helping policy makers resolve policy dilemmas.

Synthesising these insights with the existing literature, this paper demonstrates the distinctive role that powerful advocacy actors, as opposed to broad membership coalitions, can play in shaping devolved policy making. This dynamic differs from the existing accounts of policy making in larger non-devolved policy systems, emphasising a unique feature of devolved policy making.

## **Entrepreneurship Policy in Wales**

*Daniel Roberts, PhD Student at the School of Management, Swansea University/Research Officer at Gorwel*

One of the key metrics of success for devolution in Wales has been the performance of the economy compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. The Welsh Government has had control of significant economic levers since 1999, which it has attempted to use to improve the business environment in Wales. Through a review of key economic strategy documents and political party manifestos, this paper seeks to analyse the interpretations of entrepreneurship that Welsh Governments and Welsh political parties have held from 1999 to 2016, and how they have shaped the entrepreneurship policy agenda. The study found that Welsh parties and successive Welsh Governments have acknowledged entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic development, and developed policies to remove economic, social and cultural barriers to enterprise in Wales. It is suggested that policy-making in the area of entrepreneurship is diverse and different political parties have different

solutions to tackling Wales' under-performance in economic terms, although there is also significant evidence of agreement and overlapping policy agendas. It is argued that over time, and under different economic and political pressures, entrepreneurship policy has shifted from a focus on start-up rates towards a more holistic definition of enterprise and entrepreneurial skills. Wales faces major economic and political changes in the shape of Brexit and the devolution of further economic powers to the Welsh Government. A greater understanding is needed of how the policy instruments at the disposal of the Welsh Government impact the business environment in Wales, and whether the interpretations of economic development and entrepreneurship policy held during the first twenty years of devolution will remain appropriate and relevant in the changing political and economic climate.

## **Welcome to Ukania: A provocation**

*Leighton Andrews, Cardiff Business School*

Whether Brexit happens in 2019, with or without a referendum, it has already had a significant impact on the norms of the Westminster system. The government has been found in contempt of Parliament, and there are significant and continuing examples of breaches of the norms underpinning the UK Ministerial Code. Devolution, and in particular the development of the Good Friday Agreement, was agreed in popular votes that assumed membership of the European Union and legislated in the context of membership of the European Union. With both U.K. main political parties signed up to delivering some form of Brexit, the SNP continuing in power in a Scotland that voted remain, remain-voting Northern Ireland's Assembly suspended while the current UK



Government is dependent on the pro-Brexit DUP, the context of devolution has radically changed. Though Wales voted to leave, it has been argued that Brexit was made in England. Meanwhile, thousands of UK citizens are signing up for dual nationality, whether with Ireland or other member states, while millions of others simply resent being deprived of their European citizenship. What challenges then face the current constitutional settlement in the United Kingdom after Brexit, and Wales in particular with its peculiar public sphere? Finally, this provocation examines potential post-Brexit constitutional outcomes. Can the Westminster Model and the current devolution settlements meaningfully hold, is Gordon Brown's progressive unionist political imaginary still viable outside the European Union, or should we be dusting off the collected works of Tom Nairn?

## **Delivering Affordable Housing in Wales in Challenging Times**

*Bob Smith, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University*

Over almost 20 years the Welsh Government has had devolved powers and policies for encouraging the delivery of affordable housing in Wales. The current Administration has set a target of 20,000 additional affordable homes over the period 2016-2021, and at the same time is seeking improvements in the design, quality and energy efficiency of the housing stock. This paper will examine the evidence of changing housing requirements in Wales and the challenges which Wales faces to deliver an increased supply of affordable housing against a backdrop of continuing pressures on public expenditure to support housing and the constraints of non-devolved welfare policies. The Welsh Government has a limited set of policy tools designed to encourage the increased

supply of affordable housing. In spring 2018 the then Minister for Housing and Regeneration announced an independent review of affordable housing supply in Wales, which is due to report by the end of April this year. This paper will evaluate some of the current policies and reflect upon new ideas emerging in Wales as well as the gaps in evidence and capacity needed to address current and future challenges in relation to meeting the need for additional affordable housing.

## **What will we do without EU? Promoting equality in post-devolution Wales**

*Rachel Minto and Alison Parken, Cardiff University*

This article explores how the European Union (EU) has shaped the development of equality agendas at a regional level, using Wales as a case study. Since 1997 – in the context of the UK’s EU membership – processes of devolution in the UK have de-centralised law-making. Notwithstanding the reservation of most social policy to the UK Government, devolved administrations have developed distinct approaches to equality, which display a notable European-dimension.

The launch of devolution coincided with major EU-level changes to the governance of equality (1997 Treaty of Amsterdam), specifically the introduction of ‘gender mainstreaming’ (to promote gender equality throughout policy-making) and the extension of anti-discrimination protections. Against this European backdrop, firstly, we examine how the EU provided advocates of gender equality in Wales the opportunity to introduce a uniquely expansive equality duty to be mainstreamed throughout policy and legislative development (Government of Wales

Act 1998, 2006). Secondly, we explore how equality actors in Wales applied the European requirement for gender mainstreaming in European Structural Funds to ensure that all projects demonstrate equality, and, furthermore, how they built upon the European requirement, to include disability and ethnicity. Our analysis highlights the EU's significant shaping influence over Wales' post-devolution approach to equality. It exposes how the 'parents' of devolution in Wales employed both mechanisms and discourses of Europeanisation and regionalisation to promote a distinct social justice agenda. Given the opportunities that the European-level has provided regional equality actors, we argue that Brexit could strengthen calls for an extension of devolved power over social policy.

## **Never so close, but never so far away? Exploring perceptions of trust and transparency in Wales**

*Ian Stafford, Cardiff University*

A recurring theme in much of the immediate academic work following the introduction of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in 1999 was the potential for the new devolved arrangements to deliver a 'new politics' (Mitchell 2000; McGarvey & Cairney 2008). Bradbury and Mitchell (2001, P.257) note that the focus of much of this attention lay on the potential shift towards 'a more consensual elite political culture' characterised by a move away from the adversarial politics of Westminster, and the promise of policy innovation delivered via 'a more open and collaborative style of decision-making'. In the Welsh context, these themes were notably highlighted in the prominence of the discourse of 'inclusiveness' in the pre-and-post devolved contexts, and

the potentially transformative role that devolution could play in relation to civil society in Wales (Chaney & Fevre 2001; Day, Dunkerley & Thompson 2000). Although the extent to which the rhetoric of 'new politics' was delivered in reality was significantly challenged in the early years of devolution, a focus on partnership and collaboration has continued to define research on policy and decision-making in the Welsh context (Chaney & Fevre 2001; Entwistle 2006; Bristow et al. 2009; Entwistle et al. 2014; Entwistle et al. 2016).

The paper examines the perceptions of decision and policy-making within Wales from Civil Society actors almost two decades after the introduction of devolution. Specifically, it focuses on two interlinked questions. Firstly, how can we characterise the development and role of trust within policy & decision-making in Wales? Secondly, what role do formal and informal transparency mechanisms play in potentially reinforcing these levels of trust? The paper draws on twenty-one semi-structured interviews carried out in late 2017 with different types of policy actors, including local government, the media, interest groups and politicians, and drawn from a wide range of policy fields. The paper provides an overview of the emerging findings from the Welsh case study element of a wider comparative research project, 'Building Trust? Institutions and interactions of multi-level governance in the UK, Germany and France', part of the WISERD Civil Society Research Centre.