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# CYTŪN POLICY BULLETIN

## MAY 2018

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### GOD BLESS THE NHS!

[St David's Uniting Church in Pontypridd](#), linking with Cytûn, is encouraging people of all faiths and none to join in celebrating the NHS's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The Welsh inspiration of the NHS, through [Aneurin Bevan's experiences in Tredegar](#), is well known.

On its dedicated [website](#), the church says, "For us at St. David's Uniting Church, much of the impetus to do this comes from our Christian faith. What does the Church have to do with the NHS? Well, apart from the long history of Christian pioneers in the medical profession (see St Basil of Caesarea, St Camillus, Sir Thomas Browne, Betsi Cadwaladr, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Fry...) and the simple fact that all within the Church benefit from it, there are a plethora of reasons why the church should be interested in and encouraging of the idea of free health care for all.

The guiding principles of the NHS are very much aligned with those found in the Bible – of a society where the needs of everyone are the concerns of everyone; where compassion and care are not contingent upon financial assets but are intrinsic to our very humanity; where the vulnerable and the ill are to be treated as people, not consumers. We believe that when God came to us in human form he cared for the vulnerable and healed the sick; challenged an obsession with wealth and charged us to love neighbours and strangers; he washed feet, touched lepers, treated young and old with dignity and heralded a kingdom of justice and joy in which all would be made whole."

You can celebrate at any time during 2018. Here are some suggestions:

- Hold a Birthday party for the NHS.
- Click [here](#) to upload a short video of your group saying/singing 'God Bless the NHS'
- Collect people's experiences of the NHS on postcards or thank you notes and arrange to deliver them to a local hospital, surgery, dental practice etc.
- Invite a local historian to give a talk on the history of medical practices in your area.
- Organise an act of worship which gives thanks and prays for all those working in the NHS. Explore your faith's history of working with those in the medical profession.
- Give a concert of thanksgiving.
- Deliver a Birthday card to your local politician, showing your appreciation of the NHS and desire for it to be properly supported.
- Invite local schools to celebrate through drama, dance, music and art.
- With appropriate licences, arrange a book group or film screening which focuses on the founding or running of the NHS e.g. A.J. Cronin's 'The Citadel' or Ken Loach's 'The Spirit of '45'.



The [Bevan Commission](#) based at Swansea University is launching a 'Big Conversation' to get a better understanding of what people think about the future of the NHS in Wales, in order to develop solutions that will address health and care challenges. This will ensure that people's views and experiences are heard, acted on and can help shape the way health and care is planned and delivered in Wales, now and in years to come. The initial outputs will be presented at the [Bevan Commission International Conference 2018 in July](#).

# FOODBANK USE CONTINUES TO RISE AS UNIVERSAL CREDIT BITES



Picture: Church in Wales

Between 1st April 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, Christian founded charity [the Trussell Trust](#)'s foodbank network distributed 1,332,952 three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis across the UK, a 13% increase on the previous year. 484,026 of these went to children. This is a higher increase than the previous financial year, when foodbank use was up by 6.64%.

The number of parcels distributed in Wales rose to 98,350. This compares to [95,190 in 2016-17](#), a rise of just 3.3%. However this figure does not include foodbanks run by other organisations – and the roll-out of Universal Credit is expected to hit Wales especially hard during 2018 (see below).

[The data](#) highlights the growing proportion of foodbank referrals due to benefit levels not covering the costs of essentials, with 'low income' accounting for 28% of referrals UK-wide compared to 26% in the previous year. This has significantly increased since April 2016, suggesting an urgent need to look at the adequacy of current benefit levels.

Debt also accounted for an increasing percentage of referrals – 9% up from 8% of referrals in the past year – and the statistics show the proportion of referrals due to housing debt and utility bill debt also increasing significantly since April 2016.

The other main primary referral reasons in 2017-18 were benefit delays (24%) and benefit changes (18%). Whilst referrals due to 'benefit sanction' have declined over the last year, those due to 'reduction in benefit value' have the fastest growth rate of all referrals made due to a benefit change, and those due to 'moving to a different benefit' have also grown significantly.

Universal Credit (UC) is not the only benefit causing difficulties for people who access foodbanks, but it is a significant factor in many areas. New analysis of foodbanks that have been in full UC rollout areas for a year or more shows that these projects experienced an average increase of 52% in the twelve months after the full rollout date in their area. Analysis of foodbanks either not in full UC areas, or only in full rollout areas for up to three months, showed an average increase of 13%. As reported in Cytûn's [March 2018 Policy Bulletin](#), Universal Credit roll-out in Wales is gathering pace during 2018.

The release of the figures is accompanied by the publication of [Left Behind: Is Universal Credit Truly Universal?](#), a new report into Universal Credit and foodbank use. The findings, from a survey of 284 people on UC referred to foodbanks, show the adverse impact of the initial wait, the lack of available statutory support, the inability of UC payments to cover the cost of living for people who most need it, and poor administration.

Trussell Trust is consequently calling for benefit levels to be updated in line with inflation to ensure payments keep pace with the cost of living, particularly for disabled people and families with dependent children who are particularly at risk of needing a foodbank, and for a requirement to be placed upon Local Authorities to deliver a true Universal Support service to everyone who starts a Universal Credit claim. It is also asking for an urgent inquiry into poor administration within Universal Credit, so errors such as incorrect payments along with poor communication issues can be tackled.

## **FAITH COMMUNITIES FORUM DISCUSSES ISSUES OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE**

At a packed meeting on 16 April, chaired by Julie James AM, Leader of the House and the Cabinet Secretary who leads on equalities, leaders of the principal faith communities in Wales got to grips with a range of issues which are facing people of faith in Wales today.

Rocio Cifuentes, Director of EYST (the Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales) reported on a conference entitled **Race, Poverty and Representation** held on March 20, and flagged up some of the issues which will feature in the conference report, such as:

- The confidence to report hate crime
- The growth in reports of racist incidents in schools and the need to include relevant history in the new curriculum. (It was agreed that the November Forum meeting will discuss the new school curriculum in greater detail).
- A perception that institutional racism is an even bigger problem than hate crime.
- The disproportionate impact of low pay on minority ethnic and faith groups, and the lack of BME representation at management level and on recruitment panels.

Sinead Gallagher, the **Welsh Government's Employability Delivery Manager** gave an overview of the recently launched Employability Plan. Central to the Plan is a Fair Work agenda, with a focus on equalities and equality of opportunity. This links with the Economic Contract proposed in the Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan which seeks to focus government support on employers who not only benefit the economy but who take a moral lead in developing staff. Research has been commissioned on fair work on the Valleys Taskforce areas to look at the effect of using government funding levers to engage in fairer recruitment training.

Steve Chapman, the Welsh Government's Anti-Slavery Co-Ordinator gave the Forum an update on his work. He said that agencies were rescuing more people – a total of 193 in 2017. 8000 people had received free training in 2017. All Welsh local authorities are involved in a programme rescuing children - 84 in 2017. An operation against the so-called 'County lines' in which children and vulnerable people are exploited as part of the illegal drugs trade had led to the first conviction in Swansea on 13 April. The modern slavery



helpline **0800 0121700** is a vital resource. Steve commended also the use of an ethical supply chain code of practice in Welsh Government procurement policy.

Faith representatives thanked Julie James AM for writing to all imams on April 3 expressing her solidarity and support for the Muslim community in Wales, in response to hateful letters sent in some households in England. A number of community events were held on the day to show a positive and cohesive picture of Welsh communities.

## **FUNERAL POVERTY**

The Fair Funerals Campaign, led by Quaker Social Action and in which some other Cytûn member churches have also been involved, are delighted that the UK Prime Minister has announced a Children's Funeral Fund for England. Thus England will be following Wales' example by getting rid of funeral fees for children, following a campaign led by Carolyn Harris, MP for Swansea East and Deputy Leader of the Welsh Labour Party.

# TALKING THROUGH THE IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT



In partnership with local churches in Lampeter and Cytûn groups in north Wales, Cytûn has held two public meetings to enable people to listen to one another about the implications of Brexit and what kind of country we would like to live in once we have left the European Union.

There was lively discussion on issues as varied as the future of agriculture and

health and social care; the future of work and migration; our identity as individuals and as a nation; tourism and fair trade. Everything that was said will help inform the work of Cytûn's Wales and Europe Working Party, and it is hoped that (anonymous) extracts from the conversations can be published along with other material in due course.



Meanwhile, the Working Party has continued to monitor the developments in public policy and legislation, especially the continuing debate regarding the shape of devolution in post-Brexit Britain. This is not an abstract constitutional issue, but will affect which level of government citizens need to turn to for help and support in future.

At the end of April, the Welsh and UK Governments came to an [agreement](#) on how responsibility will be shared out during a period of up to seven years after Brexit, as work proceeds to replace the current European Union framework of law with a new UK frameworks in areas such as agriculture, the environment, and economic relations between the constituent nations of the UK. All the Working Party's briefings can be found at: <http://www.cytun.cymru/waleseurope/index.html>

## THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WALES

At the same time as our relationship with Europe and the devolution settlement are in flux, so too is local government in Wales. The Welsh Government has announced new [proposals on the reform of local government](#) (the fourth in three years) and Cytûn is preparing to respond. The Wales & Europe Working Party has expressed its concern at the effect of multiple instabilities in our governments, and denominational officers have contributed their thoughts. **We now want to hear from church members and other readers of this *Bulletin* who are local councillors, work for local government or engage with it.** Comments should be sent to [gethin@cytun.cymru](mailto:gethin@cytun.cymru) by May 30<sup>th</sup>.

A separate review is being conducted into the [future of Community and Town Councils](#) in Wales – the most local layer of government. Cytûn is preparing a response to this also and would **welcome input from town and community councillors** and other readers. On May 24<sup>th</sup> many community groups, including some churches, will be holding 'pop-in' sessions to collect people's views – look out for local publicity. There is a [short public survey to submit your views](#), you can tweet using #MyCommunityMyCouncil or contact the panel directly by email: [Adolygiad.CTC.Review@gov.wales](mailto:Adolygiad.CTC.Review@gov.wales).

## Measuring the Mountain – Understanding Experiences of Social Care in Wales



Measuring the Mountain is an all-Wales project evaluating the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. It is a collaboration between the public sector, third sector and, most importantly, the people who live here. Funded by Welsh Government, the project will collect stories from people with recent experience of social care in order to build a picture of what social care feels like for the individuals involved.

The Measuring the Mountain team hope to work with organisations across Wales, both to let people know about the project and to help create a network of Listeners. Listeners will support people to share their stories and will play a vital role in ensuring that everyone who has a story is able to share it. Listeners can be staff or volunteers: volunteers will be able to join Spice's Time Credits network and earn Time Credits for the stories they collect.

Measuring the Mountain will share their findings with Welsh Government, social care professionals, participants and, through their website and presentations, with people in Wales. In September, the project will host a Citizens' Jury at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea, to look more closely at key issues that arise from the stories. Members of the public will examine a policy question, draw conclusions and present their recommendations.

If you have a story to share, or if you know others who do, please get involved. Further information about all aspects of the project, including how to be a Listener, share a story or get involved in the Citizens' Jury can be found on their website [www.mtm.wales](http://www.mtm.wales) / [www.mym.cymru](http://www.mym.cymru) Or you can contact Katie, the project manager - [kcooke@interlinkrct.org.uk](mailto:kcooke@interlinkrct.org.uk) / 07964 407 739.

## PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING LAW

The laws around how owners can and cannot alter their buildings are often difficult to navigate, and cause frustrations for churches as for others. Equally, many local residents who wish to support or oppose developments can find it difficult to know how to do so.

There are currently a number of reviews being undertaken. The [Law Commission](#) is aiming to produce a new Planning Code for Wales. Cytûn responded to the consultation expressing concern at the failure to mention listed places of worship – apparently an oversight by the Commission. As the Commission considers the future, Welsh Government is consulting on current [guidance regarding listed places of worship](#), especially those covered by the so-called 'ecclesiastical exemption' (Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and some Baptist churches). Cytûn will respond on behalf of our members.

Cytûn gave evidence to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee of the Assembly in November 2017, arguing that the large number of listed places of worship in Wales causes severe problems to some of our member churches, and to local communities, as they cannot all be adequately preserved. The Committee published its [report](#) in April and expressed sympathy, but rejected our arguments for change.

Welsh Government is consulting also on a new edition of the guidance document [Planning Policy Wales](#), on the proposed [National Development Framework](#) and on how decisions are made regarding [major infrastructure development](#). These will affect the shape of Wales for years to come. Cytûn will respond to the matters directly relating to churches (but not on wider issues).

## PRISONS AND PRISONERS IN WALES



On 27 March, former chaplain at Altcourse Prison, Revd Nan Wyn Powell-Davies of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, gave [evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee](#) of the House of Commons about the need for better provision in prisons for those who speak Welsh. She felt that the cultural, emotional and mental health needs of such prisoners were often ignored – and the Prisons Service does not even know how many such prisoners there are. There are particular issues around women and young prisoners, as there are currently no facilities for them in prisons in Wales.

Prison provision is a UK Government responsibility. However, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Public Services, Alun Davies AM, has [announced](#) that the Welsh Government will not support further prison building in Wales until there is resolution of issues surrounding the consequent pressure on devolved public services, and further consideration of the devolution of and access to justice in Wales currently being examined by the [Commission on Justice in Wales](#).

## ORGAN DONATIONS IN WALES RISE

The Welsh Government has stated that a [record number of people in Wales donated organs in 2017-18](#) – a total of 74. As the statement acknowledges, numbers do fluctuate so it will be some time before the effect of the change in the law to a “soft opt-out” system of donation in Wales can be reliably measured. Some Cytûn member churches supported and others opposed this change in the law. A [Private Members’ Bill](#) has been laid before the UK Parliament to introduce a similar change in England, and a Government Bill along the same lines is likely to be introduced in [Scotland](#) also.

## RELIGION IN THE WELSH THIRD SECTOR

The newly launched [WCVA Third Sector Data Hub](#) contains fascinating information about the more than 32,000 third sector organisations in Wales. These include charities, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations of all kinds, large and small; local, national and international. The data show that religious organisations form the third largest group within the sector – behind sports and recreation and community organisations.

## CONTACTING THE CYTÛN POLICY OFFICER



Parch./Revd Gethin Rhys - Swyddog Polisi/Policy Officer  
Cytûn - Eglwysi Ynghyd yng Nghymru/Churches Together in Wales  
58 Richmond Road, Caerdydd/Cardiff, CF24 3AT  
Tel: 029 2046 4378 Mudol/mobile: 07889 858062

E-bost/E-mail: [gethin@cytun.cymru](mailto:gethin@cytun.cymru)  [@CytunNew](https://twitter.com/CytunNew) 

*Hapus i gyfathrebu yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg. Happy to communicate in Welsh and English*

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