

# **PAYING FOR CARE IN WALES**

## **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT EVENTS**

**30 November 2009 (Llandudno) - 14 January 2010 (Cardiff) –  
1 February 2010 (Ffos Las, Carmarthen)**

### **Introduction**

1. The Welsh Assembly Government held three national consultation and engagement events for stakeholders as part of its public consultation on its Green Paper 'Paying for Care in Wales'. These events were held during the fourteen week consultation period in Llandudno (30 November 2009), Cardiff (14 January 2010) and Ffos Las, Carmarthen (1 February 2010).

2. The format was similar to that used during the initial consultation in 2008-09, as evaluation had shown that this approach had worked well. An additional event was held in West Wales to ensure better regional coverage. A wide range of stakeholder groups were invited to send delegates to these events, including local authorities, national and local voluntary organisations, service user and older people's forums, equality bodies, businesses and trade unions. There were 71 delegates at the Llandudno event, 45 at Cardiff and 65 at Carmarthen. Bad weather affected the numbers at the Cardiff event.

3. Although efforts were made to broaden the range of participants at the events, most of the delegates were from within local government, older people or from the third sector, and therefore already familiar with the social care system. Particularly lacking in the debate so far have been the views of younger people of working age (especially under age 45 – i.e. the generations behind the 'baby-boomers'), who would also be particularly affected by any longer-term reform options. The need for further work in engaging the wider population needs to be borne in mind when reading the feedback from the consultation events.

4. The Llandudno and Carmarthen events were chaired by Rob Pickford, Director of Social Services for Wales, and the Cardiff

event by Steve Milsom, Acting Head of Older People and Long Term Care Policy Directorate at the Welsh Assembly Government. 5. The keynote address at each conference was given by Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services. There was also a panel session in which various leading stakeholders gave their perspectives on the Green Paper proposals. There were three workshop sessions throughout the day, when delegates were able to engage with the consultation questions set out in the Green Paper.

## **Aims**

6. The aims of these events were:

- To give stakeholders the opportunity to hear at first hand the latest proposals put forward by the UK Government, and the Assembly Government's views on them;
- To give stakeholders the opportunity to give their views on the various funding options, and to interact and network with other stakeholder groups; and
- To encourage and equip stakeholders to continue the debate among their own organisations and within their own communities, leading to a wave of informed consultation responses.

7. Delegates were asked to keep two key questions in mind during the group discussions:

- What do these funding options mean for Wales?
- How might they work within a Welsh context?

## **Headlines**

8. The workshops stimulated much lively discussion around the consultation questions, and the many points made may be found in the detailed write-ups attached. The emerging 'headline' findings were as follows:

- Most people thought that the fairest solution would be a system where everybody in society had to contribute to care

costs according to their means, so that those who developed social care needs would receive it free when they needed it.

- A large majority want to see a compulsory system in place for individuals to contribute to care costs. There was a strong view that if it was optional as to whether people 'saved' for their care, then (as with pensions) many would not do so. This would lead to unfairness and to the state picking up the costs of those who had spent their money on other things than planning their care.
- Most people did not think that the rationale for ruling out the tax option had been properly explained. In deciding how revenue from tax was spent, the feeling was that social care should be given more priority. There is already a system in place for collecting tax and National Insurance, so establishing another for care costs was felt to be unnecessary.
- Payments over an individual's lifetime was considered to be the best way forward – whether that is tax or National Insurance – as this would be transparent in 'pooling' the risk of high care costs. This is perhaps the closest Welsh stakeholders came to the 'Comprehensive' option.
- The proposals for transitional levies of £20,000 on retirement/death were not seen as acceptable. It was also unclear as to how many years this would be necessary before lifetime contributions would be viable.
- Stakeholders felt that they simply did not have enough information about the options and their impacts and the absence of any details on costs was especially difficult in debating the way forward
- In respect of proposals to reform Attendance Allowance (and Disability Allowance for 65+) there was a very significant and negative reaction to any withdrawal of this benefit and the flexibility it offers.

9. The Welsh Assembly Government would like to thank all those who contributed to making these consultation events a success, particularly the panel members, facilitators and scribes for their contributions on the day. Finally, we would like to thank all the delegates for their lively and constructive engagement with the issues in the workshop groups and plenary sessions.

Detailed write-ups from each of the workshops may be found in the annexes to this document.

Annex 1 – Llandudno \*

Annex 2 – Cardiff \*

Annex 3 – Carmarthen \*

\* see separate documents

Also annexed below are the Deputy Minister's speech, and a summary of the panellists contributions.

Annex 4 – Deputy Minister's speech

Annex 5 – Panelists' contributions

## **Paying for Care in Wales: Green Paper consultation on options for reform**

### **Stakeholder Consultation Event**

**1 February 2010 – Ffos Las, Nr Carmarthen**

[The Deputy Minister began her speech in Welsh. The English text is below.]

Mae'n bleser mawr gen i fod yma y bore 'ma, ar gyfer yr olaf yn ein cyfres o ddiwyddiadau ymgynghori rhanbarthol ar y Papur Gwyrdd ynghylch Talu am Ofal. Bydd rhai ohonoch, dw i'n gwybod, wedi cymryd rhan yn yr ymgynghoriad cyntaf yn 2008, pan edrychon ni'n gyffredinol ar sut i ddiwygio'r system bresennol o dalu am ofal yng Nghymru. Heddiw, rydyn ni'n mynd â'r drafodaeth honno gam ymhellach, drwy ganolbwyntio ar y cynigion penodol ar gyfer diwygio sydd wedi'u crybwyll gan Lywodraeth y DU. Dw i'n edrych ymlaen at drafod y materion hyn gyda chi, wrth i ni geisio cael consensws ar y ffordd orau ymlaen i Gymru. Bydd eich safbwyntiau chi'n helpu i lywio ein trafodaethau â Llywodraeth San Steffan ynglŷn â'r mater hollbwysig hwn.

Does dim amheuaeth bod angen newid y system bresennol. Mae llawer mwy ohonom yn byw bywydau hirach, iachach a mwy actif – ond rydyn ni hefyd yn gwybod y bydd gan fwy ohonom anghenion o ran gofal a chymorth yn y dyfodol. Mae gennym ni i gyd hawl i wasanaethau gofal hygyrch o ansawdd uchel pan fydd eu hangen arnon ni.

Yn y dyfodol, bydd cyfran is o bobl o oed gweithio, a chyfran uwch o bobl y bydd angen gofal a chymorth arnyn nhw, tra fo cost gofal wedi codi ac yn debygol o barhau i godi'n gyflymach na chwyddiant. Fel y gwyddoch, fydd y system bresennol ddim yn gallu ymdopi â'r pwysau hwn. Dim ond os cawn ni newid sylweddol yn y system, ac yn y ffordd rydyn ni'n talu amdani, y bydd modd bodloni ein gobeithion ar gyfer gwasanaethau.

Fe wnaeth ein hymgyngoriad cychwynnol ystyried ein disgwyliadau o ran gofal, yr hyn rydyn ni'n barod i'w dalu, a faint o gyfrifoldeb ddylai fod gan unigolion, teuluoedd a'r wladwriaeth. Roedd y rhan fwyaf o bobl o'r farn mai'r ateb tecaf fyddai system lle byddai'n rhaid i bawb mewn cymdeithas gyfrannu yn ôl ei allu, fel bod y rhai fyddai ag angen gofal yn ei gael am ddim. Daeth y Grŵp Cynghori Rhanddeiliaid, a sefydlwyd gennym i ystyried y materion hyn yn fanwl, at yr un casgliad. Yn gyffredinol, rhaid inni anelu at greu system sy'n decach ac yn fwy fforddiadwy i unigolion ac i'r gymdeithas gyfan, system sy'n gynaliadwy yn y tymor hwy.

Rhaid iddi hefyd fod yn system sy'n gweithio i Gymru, sy'n cyd-fynd â'n dull o ddarparu gwasanaethau. Yn yr ychydig flynyddoedd diwetha, rydyn ni wedi datblygu dull unigryw o ymdrin â gofal cymdeithasol yng Nghymru. Mae ein strategaeth, 'Bywydau Bodlon, Cymunedau Cefnogol', yn amlinellu ein gweledigaeth ar gyfer gwasanaethau cymdeithasol gwell. Mae angen sicrhau bod pobl yn cael gofal mwy hygyrch a phersonol, a hynny'n gynharach, er mwyn eu helpu i barhau i fyw'n annibynnol. Yn y cyd-destun hwn, rhaid i mi gydnabod y gwelliannau mawr sydd wedi'u gwneud ym maes gwasanaethau cymdeithasol yn y degawd diwetha yn ôl

y dystiolaeth yn “Dysgu Gwersi o’r Siwrnai” a gyhoeddwyd gan yr Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru ym mis Mehefin 2009. Dw i hefyd am gadarnhau bod yn rhaid i’r gwasanaethau cymdeithasol barhau i fod yn wasanaethau sy’n greiddiol i lywodraeth leol, yn cael eu darparu fel gwasanaethau cymdeithasol integredig sy’n canolbwyntio ar deuluoedd.

[It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning, for our third and final regional event for stakeholders on the Paying for Care Green Paper. Some of you, I know, will have taken part in our initial consultation in 2008, when we looked in general terms at how we might reform the current system of paying for care in Wales. Today we are taking that debate a step further, by focusing on the specific reform proposals which have been put forward by the UK Government. I look forward to engaging with you, as we try to build a consensus on the best way forward for Wales. Your views will help inform our future discussions with the UK Government over this crucially important issue.

There is no doubt that the current system of paying for care needs to change. We know that many more of us are living longer, healthier, active and engaged lives – but we also know that more of us will also live with needs for care and support in the future. We also, quite rightly, want to have accessible and high quality care services when we need them. In future there will be a lower proportion of people of working age, and a higher proportion of people will need care and support, whilst the cost of a care has been and is likely to continue to rise faster than inflation. As we

know, the current system will not be able to cope with these pressures. Our ambitions for services can only be achieved if there is a radical reform of the care system and how we pay for it.

Our initial consultation considered our expectations for care, what we are prepared to pay, and where the balance of responsibility lies between individuals, families and the state. Most people thought that the fairest solution would be a system that everybody in society had to contribute to according to their means, so that those who developed social care needs would receive it free when they needed it. These were also the conclusions of the Stakeholder Advisory Group we set up to consider these issues in depth. Our overall aim must be to create a system that is fairer and more affordable for individuals and for society as a whole, and that is sustainable in the longer term.

It also has to be a system that works for Wales and that fits with our approach to service delivery. We have, over the past few years, developed a distinctive approach to social care in Wales. In our strategy 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities' we set out our vision for improved social services. We need to ensure that people are provided with more accessible, personalised care at an earlier stage, helping them to maintain their independence.

In this context I must recognise the significant improvements in social services over the past decade as evidenced in "Learning from the Journey", published by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate and Wales Audit Office in June 2009. I also want to

reiterate that social services must remain a core local government service, delivered as integrated family based social services.]

There is however further improvement that we all want to see. In November last year I set up an independent commission to consider how best social services and social care can meet the needs of the citizens of Wales over the next decade. The Commission started its work earlier this month, and will publish its findings in the autumn. It is chaired by Professor Geoffrey Pearson, Emeritus Professor of Criminology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and the other members are Julie Jones OBE, Chief Executive of the Social Care Institute for Excellence, and Rhian Huws Williams, Chief Executive of the Care Council for Wales. I am confident that together they have the knowledge and expertise to consider how we should respond to the challenges we face.

I have asked the Commission to consider how we can:

- support the further development of professional practice;
- build inclusive social services based on the contribution of all partners who work in social care;
- effect a step change in collaboration between social services and with other key services; and
- ensure that social services are integrated and are capable of meeting the needs of all citizens, from childhood through to old age, in the most effective way.

In considering these issues the Commission will be asked to have regard to the impact of changing public expectations, demographic

changes and a range of resource scenarios that ensure a sustainable service. I have asked the Commission to give all interested parties the opportunity to give their views - particularly service users and carers. And I will ensure that the Commission considers the outcomes and conclusions of this consultation on Paying for Care.

Within the framework of devolved powers under the Government of Wales Act 2006, we are developing a distinctive and innovative legislative programme to improve social services in Wales. Our Assembly Measure on non-residential social care charging will help create a fairer and more consistent system across Wales. Our Children and Families Measure will help us improve the quality of life and equality of opportunity for disadvantaged children and families across Wales. And our Carers Legislative Competence Order will enable us to bring forward legislation to assist carers.

Against this background, it needs to be acknowledged, however, that radical reform of the system of paying for care will have to be led by the UK Government. The main levers to bring about change are non-devolved, and the legislation is set in statute on an England and Wales basis. The Green Paper outlines the UK Government's proposals, and invites Welsh stakeholders to consider how well the various options fit into the context for service delivery that I have just outlined.

The five funding options discussed in Chapter 3 of the Green Paper cover most of the main models that have been put forward in various reports and forums over the past few years. We have

deliberately made the consultation questions as wide as possible to stimulate an open debate about the advantages and disadvantages of each model.

Two of the five options are dismissed by the UK Government. The 'Pay for Yourself' option would put the responsibility for paying for care firmly on the individual. It would potentially leave many people without the care they need, and would be fundamentally unfair. At the other end of the scale, the 'Taxation' option would put the responsibility firmly on the state, which would raise the necessary revenue by increased taxation. This has been ruled out because it would require a significant increase in tax, and place a heavy burden on people of working age.

The options favoured by the UK Government are based on the principle that the new way to pay for care should be a partnership between the individual and government. Under the basic 'Partnership' option everyone who qualifies for care and support would have a proportion of their costs paid for by the government, and would have to fund the rest themselves. There are various ways in which individuals could prepare to meet their contributions, and these form the basis for the remaining two options – the 'Insurance' option, under which individuals could choose to take out insurance in case they needed care in the future; and the 'Comprehensive' option, under which individuals would be required to pay into a state insurance scheme.

The Green Paper also considers wider issues such as how we meet the care needs of younger disabled people, whether people

should get the same level of financial help with their care and support wherever they live in Wales, and where welfare benefits might sit within a new system. I am sure these will all prompt lively debate.

Another significant proposal is that there might be a case for integrating certain disability benefits, such as Attendance Allowance, with the social care system. This is only a proposal at this stage, and no final decisions have been made. I recognise that the issue of how this might affect paying for care in Wales is important to many people. Whilst benefits are a non devolved matter, the UK Government has given a commitment to work closely with the Devolved Administrations to reach a shared view on how to ensure that we obtain the best possible outcomes for all people in the UK. I am committed to an effective dialogue with my Ministerial counterparts in the UK Government to help achieve this, and to ensure that the views of people in Wales made through this consultation are heard.

It is more than sixty years since the foundations of the Welfare State were laid here in Wales, and although the way we pay for social care has evolved over that time, there has never been a major reform of the system of paying for care. It is our responsibility to ensure that we build a system that can respond to the demographic and other challenges we know will confront us in the coming decades. This debate on the Green Paper should help us to achieve that. Thank you very much for your willingness to engage with us over these issues to date, and I look forward to receiving your views on the proposals that have been put forward.

## **PANEL PERSPECTIVES**

### **RHIAN DAVIES**

Chief Executive of Disability Wales, chair of the Coalition on Charging Cymru, and a member of the statutory Wales Committee of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Rhian reaffirmed Disability Wales' firm view that social care, like health and education, should be free at the point of delivery and paid for from general taxation.

The UK Government had ruled out the taxation model on the grounds that it is too expensive and that it will place too great a tax burden on younger working people. Rhian raised various challenges to this position.

Firstly, the Government had not provided any information from which the public could draw conclusions. What, for example, would the tax increase actually be? If the increase did prove to be unacceptably high, that would stimulate a debate on public spending priorities, particularly the priority should be placed on funding social care.

Secondly, was the argument that the tax burden would fall on younger people a valid one, given that most people continue to pay tax on their pensions and other income for many years beyond their actual working life? Older generations were also often helping younger people with university fees, buying their first home and childcare.

Finally, with her equality hat on, Rhian suggested that the Government's position could be challenged on equality grounds, in that trading off the needs of one age group against another would fail to foster positive intergenerational relations.

In Rhian's view, the Green Paper was clearly signposting the discussion towards the 'Comprehensive' model, as being closest to the general taxation option. She suggested that the comprehensive model would seem like a sword of Damocles hanging over people once they reached their 65th birthday.

She concluded that, in Wales, people very much favoured the taxation model because this fitted with our values and tradition of collective social responsibility. The challenge we face – mindful of the imminent General Election – was whether to accept the comprehensive option as the least worst option, or to fight for what we believe in, a social care system that is free to all at the point of delivery.

## **YVONNE APSITIS**

Vice President of United Kingdom Home Care Association, and co-ordinator of the Expert Reference Group for Domiciliary Care Wales.

Yvonne sought to cover the issues around paying for care from a domiciliary care perspective. She began by reminding the conference that historically the focus has been on paying for residential care. However, because the choice of the general public and the policy of government is now for people to have care in their own homes, the paying for care debate had to focus much more on domiciliary care.

We know very little about how much domiciliary care might cost in the future, but what was clear was that when (as increasingly is the case) we are caring for some of the most heavily dependent people in society at critical points in their lives, we cannot continue to rely on the low paid insecure workforce of today.

It was also not clear from the current consultations who would be able to access publicly funded services. Neither, therefore, could we estimate the percentage of the general public who may need to secure and possibly fund their own services - especially the growing percentage of people whose needs (although very real in terms of low level personal care, general maintenance, cleaning, laundry and the like) no longer trigger publicly funded, and who therefore have to pay and make their own arrangements.

The lack of detail, and of costing models, in the Green Paper, compounded the challenge around paying for care by prompting the question: pay for what?

The United Kingdom Home Care Association had in the past seen the question of funding as a political issue and outside its role as a professional association. But, having explored all the Government options, UKHCA did not believe that any of the three Government-preferred options would provide security of demand and ensure viability of provision. UKHCA therefore supported a fully national scheme, with Government setting and funding the levels, as this would provide home care providers with the sufficiency of demand rather than leaving it to each local authority to devise on an individual basis.

It was also the UKHCA's view that the UK Prime Minister's recent announcement on free personal care for those at home with the highest needs, totally undermined the Government's argument against a tax funded scheme. The basic problem was that we want a Swedish welfare state in terms of standards, only to pay American rates. The domiciliary care sector wants to deliver sustainable services fit for the future, but the cost will need to be fully recognised, and the sector fully and securely funded by whoever will ultimately be required to pay for that care.

## **WENDY BOURTON**

Chair to the Welsh Assembly Government's National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales, and Chief Executive of Care and Repair Cymru. (Llandudno and Ffos Las consultation events)

Wendy spoke in her capacity as Chair of the National Partnership Forum (NPF) for Older People. The NPF was keen to put paying for care within the wider debate about an ageing society. There was a huge commitment in the Stakeholder Advisory Group and within the NPF membership towards mutuality and social responsibility and away from an individualised notion of our paying for care.

The really important issues in this debate was having care when you need it and maintaining independence. Enabling people to stay independent within their communities for longer, required real planning across the piece in terms of housing, including quick adaptations and suitable housing options - so we can have the homes that give us the greatest independence for longer. It also required good information service, so that people can make informed choices about changing their homes as they aged, or look at other housing options.

There was also a huge concern within the NPF around the manner in which care and support is delivered, and the way we as a society value care workers.

Finally, with regards to benefits and Attendance Allowance, Wendy emphasised the need to move beyond the fiscal and to understand what these benefits give people in terms of empowerment and making them feel they have their own money with which to do things.

## **MARIO KREFT**

Proprietor of Pendine Park care organisation in Wrexham, Chair of the North Wales Care Homes Association, and honorary Chief Executive of Care Forum Wales. (Llandudno consultation event)

Mario defined the paying for care debate as one of the 'debates of the century' and long overdue. At its centre was the definition of care. Social care was, he suggested, a form of 'quantitative easing' for our communities. Social care was the glue that sustains communities.

He also suggested that, if we are going to be really serious about promoting well-being, we need to look at the appropriateness of some people's homes, and get our heads around the idea of 'last time buying'. Was it really sensible, with some of the worse housing stock in Europe, to keep people in their home just because they have been there for the past 40 years?

Also, more needed to be done to make sure that services are not just affordable but are actually fit for purpose. He invited delegates to consider, in their workshop sessions, how we are going to sustain whatever it is we are going to buy if we do not have a workforce that is professionally geared up and that is supported. He suggested that whereas many of us would be pleased at a party to say that our son or daughter was doing IT or something similar, not many would be so proud to say that our daughter or son was going into the care professions.

## **MIKE KEMP**

Director of a nursing home in Barry that specialises in palliative care, and member of the council of Care Forum Wales. (Cardiff and Ffos Las consultation events)

Mike explained that Care Forum Wales represented providers who provide services from domiciliary care through residential care to hospices, to people with learning difficulties and to children's services. Its members included independent providers, third sector providers and local authorities. As a result, Care Forum Wales tried to take a very holistic view on care and care in the community. There was, however, one sector Care Forum Wales did not represent: the invaluable army of informal carers, who provided 70 per cent of all care in Wales.

The main issue facing informal care was that an increase in the number of elderly people requiring care was going to occur at the same time as a decrease in the younger carers available to look after them.

Members of Care Forum Wales were concerned to play their full part in providing high quality care at modest prices. Mike reminded the conference that partnership was not only between individuals and the state – there was also partnership involving carers and providers.

Providers needed to be involved at all levels of planning for the future. They needed to learn to contribute and to innovate, but could only do this if they were accepted as a full member of the team which analyses and plans for the future.

Mike suggested that the one key thing we needed to establish was the realistic and true cost of the provision of care that we as a nation will be able to afford to provide. His concern was that we have an aspiration that is presented to the community; this then became a right; and if we weren't then able to prepare and fund these rights, the population would become very disillusioned and upset because the money that they were putting into the system wasn't coming back to them – and the whole system then became discredited.

## **ABIGAIL HARRIS**

Corporate Director for Wellbeing at Bridgend County Borough Council, representing the Association of Directors of Social Services Wales. (Cardiff consultation event)

Abigail stressed the sense of urgency felt within the Association of Directors of Social Services around paying for care. Local government was already facing the challenge of meeting all its needs within a very tight financial regime, and the situation over the next few years was going to become even more challenging. It was a debate that affected all of us, and younger people needed to be engaged in this discussion too.

From a social services point of view, it was important to ensure that paying for care was part of a wider discussion about service organisation, as these two things were inextricably linked.

Everyone recognised that the current situation was unsustainable. We know what the demographic profile looks like and the pressures in the system this will cause. We also know that expectations are changing rapidly. We know people will demand high quality services, will demand to have choice about the services they receive, and will want to retain control over their lives. The current system is based on the National Assistance Act 1948, and 60 years on we need to reflect on models of service and how we deliver, and move away from out-dated concepts. Also the legislative framework is a little bit piecemeal, and we need to take this opportunity to look at how all the legislation fits together.

The other thing to reflect on was ensuring that we have the right kind of workforce to deliver the services we need. They need to be competent, professional and confident in what they are doing. This is an important debate that raised the profile of social care across the board. Often we pick up on fairly negative publicity round our social care services, but this was an opportunity to have a positive discussion.

Abigail finished by saying that social services supported the concept of shared responsibility – ensuring that there is a system that does not mean that some people can choose to opt in or opt out – and supported there being a comprehensive system to ensure that there is fairness and equity.

## **BRUCE McLERNON**

Director of Social Care, Health and Housing in Carmarthenshire, representing the Association of Directors of Social Services Wales. (Ffos Las consultation event)

Bruce began by highlighting the need for change. The current system is unsustainable and needs to change, and the Association of Directors of Social Services welcomed the current debate. He stressed that the debate was not just being driven by economic concerns around the viability of the current system. We have an army of baby boomers who are all marching towards retirement, and who have a high set of demands and different expectations of what they want in retirement to that which the current system is geared to provide. Moreover, the current system is 60 years old, and was built on out-dated concepts and institutional approaches to meeting social care needs.

A number of reports had highlighted the need for change, going back to the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care in 1999. When those reports were being developed no one had foreseen the current economic outlook, but the economic situation had already been referred to local authorities. Social services departments are having to raise eligibility criteria for people to access services, and are having greater difficulty addressing the preventative agenda.

Each year social services were over-spending on the monies available for social care, and that overspend on social care was impacting on other departments in the local authority. The current system is therefore clearly unsustainable.

Bruce suggested that we needed to look at the funding of social care in terms of all the services social services were engaged with. Directors of social services welcomed the fact that Ministers saw social services rooted in local government as the way forward. Joined up approaches to promoting independence, delivering justice, and pro-active preventative programmes reducing the demand on social services were only possible as part of wider local government services.

There was a need for clarity over social care funding. The present system caused confusion for the public because they saw the NHS free at the point of delivery but social care as a means-tested service, and that creates conflict.

Considering taxation, Bruce questioned whether taxation and social insurance were two different things. The UK Government may have said that they did not want to consider taxation, because they did not think it is viable, but if it was good enough for the NHS, why was it not good enough for social care?

Finally, on the issue of integrating welfare benefits into social care, he recognised the concerns of many disability groups at the risk this presented, but there were inconsistencies between social care and the disability benefit systems, and there was a need to ensure that they did not operate in isolation of each other. Bruce reminded the conference of what happened when local government was responsible for taking over the funding of residential care from the social security system in the 1970s. The cost to the taxpayer in 1979 was £10 million, but in 1989 it was £1 billion. There were consequences for local authority spending – and hence the issues they now faced around eligibility criteria.

## **BEVERLEA FROWEN**

Director of Social Services and Health Improvement, Welsh Local Government Association. (Cardiff and Ffos Las consultation events)

This is a fundamental debate, and Bev began by asking if we were reaching the people who needed to be in this debate, especially those younger members of society who will be paying and working for a long time.

The challenge, she suggested, was to find a system that was fair, but also to stop thinking that social care was an adjunct and add-on to the NHS. If we are going to create a society where everyone has an opportunity to live well, longer and in a more sustained way, then it is the totality of councils that need to be involved in that. The Welsh Local Government Association was very pleased that social services and councils were still at the heart of providing care and support for communities, but recognised that councils have to work much more in galvanising local authorities' resources for housing, roads transport, and communities. Service transformation will run alongside the debate about how we are going to pay.

The issue about Attendance Allowance would be a tricky one for us in Wales, because of the very high numbers of people claiming benefits. Those benefits also trigger access to other benefits, so we would need to be very clear about what is coming out of one system and being put into another pot.

Bev also drew attention to the huge social issues that have to be tackled along with this, including the relatively high incidence of ill health and long-term chronic sickness in Wales, and the parts of Wales where many families were on the third or fourth generation who had never known work.

Moreover, expectations continued to rise, especially on councils – and Bev asked how local authorities were going to fund this if they did not have an increase from somewhere else.

Finally, the debate was important because many people had no real understanding of what social care was. Everyone was touched by the NHS but many, many people did not understand social care and did not understand what local authorities did. This debate, therefore, went to the heart of what we mean by a rights-based society in Wales and what we meant by 'supportive communities' (the part of the 10-year Social Services Strategy 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities' that had yet to be fully articulated).