

Select Committee on Public Services

Oral evidence: Public services: lessons from coronavirus

Wednesday 15 July 2020

3.55 pm

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Members present: Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (The Chair); Lord Bichard; Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth; Lord Davies of Gower; Lord Filkin; Lord Hogan-Howe; Lord Hunt of Kings Heath; Baroness Pinnock; Baroness Pitkeathley; Baroness Tyler of Enfield; Baroness Wyld; Lord Young of Cookham.

Evidence Session No. 14

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 90 - 95

Examination of witnesses

Anna Fowlie, Dr Victoria Winckler and Anthony Soares.

The Chair: In this session we are looking at the devolved Administrations. It is always difficult in general inquiries for the Parliament in London to quiz the devolved Administrations. We hope that we have found a range of organisations from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales that know what is going on in those Administrations, certainly more than I do and more than most of the Committee. We do not have any Scots on the Committee, nor do we have anybody from Northern Ireland, but we have two from Wales and we will make sure that both have the chance to ask a question.

We welcome Anna Fowlie from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations; Dr Victoria Winckler, director of the Bevan Foundation; and Anthony Soares, director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Northern Ireland. I ask you to introduce yourselves when you first speak.

Q90 **Lord Young of Cookham:** May we start with the big picture, which is how the devolved Administrations have co-operated with local government to deliver services during the pandemic?

As a footnote to that, to what extent do you think that relationship is affected by the relative size of both Wales and Scotland to England, where the reach of the national government has to be much broader than it is in any of the devolved Administrations?

Anna Fowlie: It is difficult to comment on it when I am not from local government—I see this system very much as an outsider. It is certainly much easier in terms of scale in Scotland for local government and the Scottish Government to work together. There are only 32 councils. They are unitary authorities that have quite well-established partnership working. They have co-operated on things like the establishment of Public Health Scotland, which is jointly run by Scottish Ministers and local politicians, and employment support. They work well together.

At the beginning of a crisis there is an understandable tendency to go to command and control—centralisation of control. As we enter the recovery period, it will be interesting to see decision-making resettling and going back to more local levels, because, quite understandably, it has felt quite centralised.

Broadly, the foundations are there for good relationships, albeit that there are always tensions around funding, funding settlements and that kind of thing, of which you are well aware and have just discussed. I think good foundations exist in Scotland and that it is much easier than it is in England.

Dr Victoria Winckler: I am from the Bevan Foundation, an independent think tank. Like the experience in Scotland, my views are those of someone not involved in face-to-face discussions between the two tiers of government. There are established mechanisms for working between the Welsh Government and local authorities. There are only 22 unitary authorities in Wales. As far as I see, the relationship has worked reasonably well—in some areas, very well.

As Anna said, tensions are bound to emerge as we come out of lockdown, particularly around funding, although the Welsh Government have provided supplementary support for key areas of local government activity. It remains to be seen, but because of the crisis there has been mostly a good relationship and things have got done.

The Chair: Anthony, I know that things are different in Northern Ireland. The devolved Administration has just been set up again, and historically local authorities have not had that level of autonomy. Even so, we would like to hear your view.

Anthony Soares: I am director for the Centre for Cross Border Studies.

I would like to preface my answer with two comments. First, our area of speciality is particularly cross-border co-operation and cross-jurisdictional co-operation at all levels.

My second comment relates to exactly what the Chair has just pointed out about local government and co-operation with the devolved Administration in addressing the current crisis. The devolved Administration here has become fully functional again only since January. One of the first things it had to do within weeks of its return was face this crisis, and it is reworking that relationship with local government.

I must say that in general terms, looking at the overall approach to the Covid-19 crisis, things have been working reasonably well. We have seen huge decisions being made very quickly. Sometimes that speed means that some issues have to be resolved at a later date, but generally things have been working fairly effectively in the relationship between local government and central government.

I have to note that for local government and the predicted challenges that it will face arising from Covid-19, some of the local authorities will be in the border region. Two of the four local government districts in Northern Ireland are predicted to have real challenges in loss of GVA and employment: Newry, Mourne and Down, one of our border councils, and Mid Ulster. That will face severe challenges in the coming months and years.

Lord Young of Cookham: To what extent is the good relationship dependent in any way on the good personal relationship between Ministers and leaders of local authorities, or is the structure responsible for that good relationship irrespective of the personalities involved?

Dr Victoria Winckler: That is a very interesting question. Inevitably, in a small country with a small number of authorities, there are personal relationships between the leaders of the respective bodies. Sometimes that can help and sometimes it can be a hindrance, because there may not be the right degree of challenge and questioning. In this case, I think it helped that the values of both Administrations were similar on the whole and that there was a sense of shared purpose and need for action. As far as I can tell, for the most part that resulted in differences being put aside to get on with the job.

That is not to lead you to believe that there are never any disagreements between the two—there most certainly are—but in the current crisis I would say that they have been satisfied.

Anna Fowlie: I would agree. There are good relationships at a personal level, particularly when you are of the same party, but there are also very poor relationships. You can see that tension where the party in government is also the party in power in particular local authorities, although with proportional representation that tends to be shared. It is harder for them to challenge, as Victoria said. They *are* still challenging, but a lot of it comes down to the simplicity of the structure.

In everything we do in our work, it is the relationships between people that makes it work. That has really helped in particular in getting funding out very quickly. The Scottish Government announced funding very early in the pandemic—18 March—for local authorities and the voluntary sector to address issues arising. We all worked on it collectively and it was really positive.

Anthony Soares: The Committee will be well aware of the importance of relationships in the context of Northern Ireland, which can sometimes be challenging, but I must agree with the other two witnesses. In Northern

Ireland, we have seen the same. Despite whatever disagreements may exist between parties and levels of government over certain issues, when it comes to this crisis people have come together.

It has been coming together in the devolved Administration, as in the Northern Ireland Executive and government departments working in partnership with local government and, most importantly, with the community and voluntary sectors. It is a vertical approach to things, but also a horizontal one in terms of community and voluntary sector organisations working with one another, local councils working with one another and government departments working together in addressing the current crisis.

Q91 Lord Bichard: I want to build on Anthony's last comment. How well do you think the devolved Administrations have worked with the voluntary sector or non-statutory sector, whatever you want to call it, to deliver services for public good during the pandemic? To ensure that we do not stay at too general a level, are there any particular examples of good practice that you think we could all learn from? Are there any structures that have helped this relationship?

Anthony Soares: I will give you one concrete example. The Minister for the Department for Communities established the Emergencies Leadership Group, which brings together representatives of organisations from the third sector, including the umbrella body for the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, which is the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action.

The Emergencies Leadership Group, which is co-chaired by the department and an organisation in the third sector, established five strands to address the challenges brought about by Covid-19. The five strands include ensuring access to medical supplies for vulnerable and isolated people. The second is about ensuring access to food for the most isolated and vulnerable people in Northern Ireland, and the establishment of a community helpline to give appropriate advice to citizens in Northern Ireland, ensuring that there are volunteers to deliver vital services in a safe way that protects themselves and those they are seeking to help.

The fourth strand is well-being, ensuring that people living in isolated circumstances maintain their physical and mental well-being.

The fifth strand is communication and engagement, a really important element, which is the link between the devolved Administration and the community and voluntary sector, ensuring that both levels understand the needs and capacities, and if there are any challenges how they might address them. That is a very specific example of how the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Executive have ensured a good working relationship with the community and voluntary sector here in Northern Ireland.

Lord Bichard: Were there any partnership structures of that sort in place before the pandemic between the government or statutory sector and the

voluntary sector?

Anthony Soares: To give you one example, there is an overarching structure. There is a concordat between the Northern Ireland Executive and the community and voluntary sector here. It has worked fairly well, depending on certain circumstances over time, but we have also introduced similar structures in response to other situations that we face in Northern Ireland, remembering that this is a fairly new situation, given that the devolved Administration became fully functional again only in January.

Lord Bichard: Anna, what has it been like in Scotland?

Anna Fowlie: We are building on strong foundations. We have quite good close working between my own organisation and the wider sector and the Scottish Government. A week before lockdown in Scotland the equivalent department that Anthony talked about got in touch with us to ask whether we would be a resilience hub for the voluntary sector throughout the pandemic.

That started off as an information hub, but it has turned into something that I think is a good specific example - on funding. Lots of funding streams were announced. Some looked fairly similar and came from different departments in government, but we managed to get independent funders to work with us to do the mechanics of the grant-making and for SCVO to be the front door, as it were, so organisations had to apply only through one platform and then they would be directed to the correct fund.

That was a first. We hope that will continue, because it made it much simpler for all the different community organisations, especially the smaller ones, to access funding and support.

We already have a few joint working arrangements in place. On homelessness, for example, there has been really constructive partnership work. It tends to be not just the voluntary sector and government; it also involves local government, so those partnerships tend to be tripartite. They might be with single organisations, but they are generally with a group of organisations.

Lord Bichard: Were those in place before the pandemic?

Anna Fowlie: For homelessness and topic-specific ones, absolutely, but the funding one emerged only from the pandemic, because that is where the funding emerged from. It is not all perfect; there are some things that are not particularly brilliant, but the basics are pretty good, and I think it has got better.

Lord Bichard: You mentioned one example, but have you seen initiatives, partnerships and arrangements working during the pandemic that you would like to see sustained in the future?

Anna Fowlie: Yes, definitely, particularly on food security and access to food. There was an immediate problem with access to food, but food security has been an issue across the UK, not just in Scotland. Dependence on food banks and all that kind of thing is growing. Specific work is now being done, in partnership, on food security and access to financial security, which will be really helpful and will grow and build.

There has been some good work on digital connectivity and digital inclusion. I have learned the phrase "data poverty". I have heard many phrases during the pandemic, but that was a new one on me. Data poverty probably emerged in week three. We have done some really interesting work with local third sector organisations, the Scottish Government and local councils to address that and to get devices and connectivity to the most vulnerable people, such as asylum seekers, so that they can engage in education and find out information. A lot of the information about Covid is online and it is hard to access if you have only a pay-as-you-go Tesco mobile, or something like that.

Lord Bichard: I might return to data in a moment. Victoria, what has it been like in Wales?

Dr Victoria Winckler: There has been work at multiple levels. The relationship between the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Welsh Government worked very well and a funding stream came on tap quite quickly. The WCVA managed that, although there were also other sources of funding.

There was also sector-specific liaison, particularly on homelessness, but for the majority of voluntary organisations the relationships were at local level, because those that did not close very quickly went into emergency mode doing the things that Anthony described: providing food and supplies, helping with digital connections, and so on.

There has been a lot more variation across Wales in how well that has worked, which probably reflects the nature of pre-existing relationships. Although in theory there are compacts between local authorities and the third sector and structures to liaise with other bodies, which are called public sector partnership boards, they went almost into fighting mode. We have heard that it has been uneven. Where it has worked, it has worked very well. Where it has not worked so well, it has been really unfortunate.

It is worth remembering that the Covid outbreak arrived not long after many communities in Wales had been damaged by floods, so local authorities and voluntary groups were already in emergency mode in responding to that.

There are gaps. It would be wrong of me not to mention some of those gaps. In particular, some emerged in food security, as Anna mentioned. Although there are active programmes at the moment to try to meet some of the needs for digital inclusion, whether they will be ramped up on the scale that will be needed as we emerge from lockdown remains to

be seen. The response on food and support for people who were shielding was probably one of the problem areas, but there were very successful areas, too.

Anthony Soares: I want to underline a point that has been made about digital poverty. That is a real issue. The community and voluntary sector have tried to address several challenges arising from Covid-19, and there has been a reliance on digital in doing that. One thing quickly came up, although it should not surprise us. One of the things that we are seeing in the way we have co-operated with one another at all levels is that assets that were there before the crisis have really revealed themselves as such, but there are underlying challenges that were there before Covid. Covid has highlighted them and we need to address them.

One of them is digital poverty, particularly in rural areas. Again, in our area of work as an organisation, that generally means the border region, which is predominantly rural. Time and again we are seeing difficulty in accessing services when those services are being provided through a digital platform, particularly in rural areas.

Lord Bichard: We have heard in other sessions that data sharing is a problem in increased collaboration between local government and central government and the voluntary sector. Has that reared its head?

Dr Victoria Winckler: We have just completed a small project looking at the community response in one part of Wales. Of the many challenges, that one was not raised with us. We were aware that lots of corners were cut in the emergency response, so the community response may well have been a corner that was cut. I do not know whether it was, but it was certainly not raised as an issue with us.

Anna Fowlie: The only time it came up for me—it might seem like a minor thing, but in retrospect it would have been really helpful—was in relation to funding applications. Both local authorities and other umbrella bodies asked us whether we could provide them with information about the organisations that did not get funding so that they could support them. We never thought to ask people, “Can we share your information?” I think we were caught out by GDPR. That was unfortunate, because it would have made it simpler for those organisations to get access to help from other sources.

Anthony Soares: Apart from those internal within-jurisdiction problems of data sharing, there is the added dimension of Northern Ireland in its relationship with the Republic of Ireland. With the tracing apps being developed and launched by the Northern Ireland Administration and the Irish Government, for example, how do you exchange information as you cross the border and ensure compatibility between the two? How do you share the information between the two? That will be an even more significant challenge come 1 January 2021.

Q92 **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** We have seen evidence that the devolved Administrations have to some extent achieved more integration

between health and social care than has been the case in England. Would you agree? If so, to what extent has that integration prepared health and social care systems for the pandemic's challenge?

Dr Victoria Winckler: The different arrangements in Wales for the delivery in particular of healthcare and the relationships already established between healthcare providers and social care providers have probably eased the approach to the pandemic. That said, it has not been without its issues in the transfer of patients, testing and so on, which I am sure you are familiar with, and it is not quite so different from that experienced elsewhere.

In any situation, integration of shared values, protocols and procedures helps. It certainly was one factor in how Wales approached it. I would not like to pretend that everything was perfect.

Anthony Soares: I cannot say that things have been perfect in Northern Ireland, either. We just have to reflect on the fact that the New Decade, New Approach deal that enabled the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Executive pointed to serious challenges in the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland. Those challenges have been ongoing for years and need to be addressed. The whole health and social care services are generally integrated in Northern Ireland in their delivery organisations, but the provision of social care is often shaped by different legislation in comparison with healthcare, and there is a lot more diversity in the providers of social care, with both the private and voluntary sectors being involved.

The New Decade, New Approach deal pointed to the Bengoa report on the health and social care system in Northern Ireland and the challenges that needed to be addressed. One of the things that report pointed to was that there was integration of provision at the level of those involved in the whole health and social care system, but there was a lack of strategic or political leadership in setting a strategy to achieve the full integration that is needed.

However, the health and social care system's approach to the Covid-19 crisis has been absolutely astounding; it has been extremely successful in dealing with it in general terms. There have been some challenges, with pressures being placed on the social care provision coming out of the healthcare system. Let us say that there have been certain difficulties in ensuring that those moving from the hospital to social care setting have been tested, or their Covid-19 status established.

There have been occasional challenges, but I have to say that the overall performance of the health and social care system in Northern Ireland has been generally positive.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Anna, what has been the experience in Scotland?

Anna Fowlie: We have had a statutory process of integration of health and social care in place since 2016. Integrated joint bodies were set up

and run jointly by the NHS boards and local authorities, and they oversee the running of the health and social care partnerships. Therefore, the mechanisms were there, and the right people were around the table at the start of this and already had established relationships. Like any partnerships, some will work better than others, but the mechanism is established.

There is also joint leadership in the form of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and the COSLA (the local government association in Scotland) Spokesperson for Health and Social Care. Therefore, they already had that joint leadership role and have worked together over this.

That definitely does not mean that everything has been perfect. We have had exactly the same problems that have just been described in care homes and with PPE. All those things have been very publicly called out. I think the social care sector would say—I am sure the Scottish Government would disagree—that it has definitely come second to the NHS, understandably because acute services were the thing at the beginning, but it has brought into sharp relief again that it is not quite as integrated as we like to think.

There is very much a protective attitude towards the health service because it belongs to government, which I can understand, and the plethora of different providers that Anthony talked about makes it really hard to engage with social care.

One of the real successes we have seen is that a few years ago the Scottish Government committed to paying the Scottish Living Wage to all front-line workers in social care. They would say that they have funded that, and local authorities would say that they have not, but let us just go with the fact that funding has been available for it.

Normally, that is negotiated every year at national level and then renegotiated 32 times at local level before it is implemented. This year, because it was just at the start of the crisis when everyone was talking about having to value social care, it just went through and we did not have to renegotiate it a million times.

We will wait and see whether that is one of the corners that have been cut and somebody might think, “I’m not too sure about that”, but it has been one really positive thing. Social care workers have seen that delivered quickly.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: That is fascinating.

Q93 Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: I thought those were very interesting answers about the integration of health and social care. The impression I get is that, in different ways, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have structures that help to integrate at a certain level, but at heart you still have the distinction between free-at-the-point-of-use NHS services and means-tested social care, although I know that in Scotland some elements of personal care are free. Would you confirm that? In other

words, you can go only so far with structural integration until you come up against this fundamental difference.

Anna Fowlie: I would agree. The structures can be there, but they are not the same service and they are not valued in the same way. I could probably give you lots of examples where the voluntary sector in particular is not only a social care service but is also the voluntary sector, so you are doubly disadvantaged and disregarded.

However, this is a lot about relationships. In many places, that works better than others, but there is a definite disparity. You can see that in lots of campaigns. We talk about protecting and valuing the NHS, which is fabulous, but it is always, "Oh, *and* other key workers" and "and social care—not *just* the NHS". You think, "Wouldn't it be nice to recognise and value social care and have a time when we don't think that paying a living wage is a great achievement?" Because that seems to be a basic necessity. We should be aspiring to a lot more than that.

Dr Victoria Winckler: Structures help, but Lord Hunt is absolutely right: we are dealing with two different systems that have resulted in different terms and conditions for different staff and different kinds of access. We have some anecdotal evidence that the different access arrangements whereby some are means-tested and some are not cause bumps in the road in transferring people between one setting and another.

The third sector was almost the Cinderella of the whole process, if you like, in that people would talk about care homes and domiciliary care, but the charities and community groups also supporting people tended to be at the end of the line. The view of the Bevan Foundation is that this has exposed and brought forward the urgent need to develop a better system of social care, but that is perhaps for another day.

Anthony Soares: I would agree with what has been said. It is an issue of value. What value do you give social care, and the need to value it?

It is also about structures. The structures might be perfect, but unless you have the political leadership at the top to drive that integration forward and value social care in the same way as you value primary healthcare, that is another obstacle.

On the particular situation in Northern Ireland, I go back to the New Decade, New Approach agreement. One of the things it pointed out as a priority for the incoming new Administration was addressing nurses' pay. We already had a challenge with nurses' pay that had to be addressed as the new Government came in. Then Covid hit, which highlighted the social care aspect and the need to value that. It is about political leadership and making that integration a reality, but that is based on valuing primary healthcare and social care equally and addressing that issue head on.

Anna Fowlie: It is very difficult to achieve any parity of esteem when the relationship between social care and the rest of the system is one of commissioning and procurement. That turns it into a transaction and the

drive to the lowest cost. We have moved on slightly in that, but that is still a very prevalent culture and it makes it really difficult to get that proper partnership and parity of esteem.

Q94 Lord Davies of Gower: My question is about public services. There is little doubt that it has been an interesting time in Wales. From a Welsh perspective, there have been some disparities in policy with central government, which has caused some confusion. Since the coronavirus outbreak, how well do you think the devolved Administrations have co-operated across borders within the UK, or indeed across the border with Ireland, jointly to deliver public services?

Anthony Soares: I must admit—I do not mean this to sound facetious—that when I listened to the BBC national news recently talking about confusion at the Welsh-English border or Scottish-English border I had to smile, because that is what we have to deal with on the Northern Ireland-Ireland border all the time. It is nothing new to us, and all of a sudden it is a reality to those in Westminster, maybe because they do not realise that there are borders, whether they are internal UK borders between the devolved Administrations or the border between part of the UK and another sovereign state that is also a member of the European Union. That brings up challenges and difficulties.

This really highlights that government at all levels—central government and the devolved Administrations—have to remember that when they are developing policies, measures and strategies, their citizens move across borders. People move across borders from one jurisdiction to another. Therefore, when implementing something, government must recognise that people do not stay put, just as goods do not stay put.

Very often, in order to ensure that in some cases public services are economically viable, one of the easiest solutions is to provide those services on a cross-border basis. You immediately ensure that there is greater throughput in your service if you enable access to it from other jurisdictions, whether that is an internal border within the UK or a border between one sovereign state and another.

During this crisis we have seen that there is co-operation for assets that exist. There is co-operation between local authorities and cross-border co-operation. It differs in quality, depth and the priority given to it, but it exists.

This crisis has also ensured the delivery of public services on a cross-border basis. It highlights the fact that we need to implement what we in the Centre for Cross Border Studies call border-proofing, which is assessing what the impact will be of whatever measure you are thinking about introducing, and seeing the opportunities if you do collaborate on a cross-border basis.

This comes back to one other fundamental issue. We have to be curious and generous. We have to be curious about what is happening on the other side of the border, whether it is an internal UK border or an

external one, and find out what is happening in the policy domain in the other jurisdiction; and you have to be generous in sharing with others what you are doing on your side of the border to ensure that you capture the opportunities that are there, especially in the provision of public services.

Lord Davies of Gower: That is really helpful and interesting. Dr Winckler, would you like to comment on that?

Dr Victoria Winckler: Clearly, I do not have an inside track on the nature of the relationship between the two Administrations, but I have read the media reports, as I am sure you have, which have given a sense of a deteriorating and perhaps in some instances non-existent relationship between the two.

One thing that has happened—possibly as a result of that or possibly as a cause of that, I do not know—is that clearly there is increasing divergence between restrictions in Wales and those elsewhere. Every day now, Wales announces a very different approach and path from that in England.

One quite interesting thing is the very high support reported by numerous surveys by the Office for National Statistics, Ipsos MORI and very credible sources. They suggest higher support for lockdown measures and social distancing than are reported for England. I do not know what that says about the relationship and public views about the divergence. Perhaps you can only go by what is reported in the media.

Anna Fowlie: There is no one answer to that. There is good cross-working on some issues and much less on others. Certainly, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland there is really good productive working at government level. I work regularly with my counterparts in other parts of the UK, including England. We have single campaigns that we do together. Just now, for example, on the fact that the sector has never been more needed.

We work with the Scottish Government all the time. Most of the areas we work on are devolved, but there is always a knock-on effect from what happens at a Westminster level. What has been really confusing for our sector and probably for everybody—I am only aware of our sector—are the different announcements about different support packages.

In the media and in politicians' speeches, the UK Government just announces stuff as if it applies everywhere. Sometimes it does and sometimes it does not. I know that in speeches you cannot always say, "This doesn't apply", or, "That doesn't apply", but you could just say "England" rather than making it sound as if it applies to everybody. We get lots of questions to the effect, "Why can't we access that?" or, "What are the implications of that?" The Scottish Government did not know, for example, that things were going to be announced.

However, on something like public health, even though we are all taking different decisions in different countries, we still work together and talk to each other. Last week, the Chancellor announced support in the form of the Kickstart scheme and other stuff on jobs. People in the Scottish Government saw it on the news. How does that fit with Scotland's own internal policies, because there is an interaction between reserved and devolved matters? It is fine if something is clearly reserved, such as foreign policy, but things like employability and benefits that are a blend of devolved and reserved make it really confusing for people working in our sector and no doubt for the public as well. Things could be a lot better.

Lord Davies of Gower: Dr Winckler, one of the upsetting things about the pandemic is the fact that some of the poorer areas in Wales—I think particularly about EU objective 1 areas, such as the valleys—have been very badly hit. I know that the Bevan Foundation has been very involved with these issues. Have we got the right strategy there, or how should we move forward in helping these people?

Dr Victoria Winckler: I think you could have predicted that the outbreak would have a more severe impact in parts of the South Wales valleys or in deprived communities—not just the valleys but in some of our cities as well—because of all the demographic risk factors, housing risk factors and the fact that many people in those communities work in key worker jobs. Therefore, they are in contact with the public and are at much greater risk of infection. Indeed, that has been borne out in parts of Cardiff and parts of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil.

Going forward, I think the risks are a complex mix of health-related and economic risks. Our own work has shown that the places at biggest risk of health consequences are those that have workers at greatest risk of losing their jobs, or where they have already lost money and have high universal credit claims.

We are working on a plan to try to move forward communities such as those. They will require significant public investment and support, but there is a route forward that is based on investment in what we would call green and social infrastructure. We have a desperate need for social housing and energy efficiency in our homes, and an urgent need for nature restoration. All those can create jobs and social good as well.

I am not quite sure whether that answers your question, but I hope it went some way.

Lord Davies of Gower: It did.

Q95 **Baroness Pitkeathley:** I should declare an interest as president of the NCVO. Anna, you mentioned services being provided under contract and through procurement. Do you think the reaction we have seen to the pandemic will lead to any permanent change or rethink of that structure?

Anna Fowlie: I certainly hope so. An economic recovery advisory group report, known as the Benny Higgins report, came out a couple of weeks

ago. That recommended that procurement should be completely rethought. We are looking at it within a social renewal advisory group as well. It comes up as a hardy perennial.

Local government is also saying that we need to do this differently, and government is also showing interest. An email popped in yesterday to me from a new head of procurement in the Scottish Government asking to speak to me. I thought his ears must have been burning! I am hopeful that we will see that what works for goods, paperweights, pencils or whatever does not work for people, particularly things like payment by results. We have seen payment-by-results models. They were never good, because they are all about outputs and inputs, not outcomes, but they have really had a light shone on them in the current pandemic. I am hopeful that we are getting the right words coming from politicians and officials, so I hope that we will get some movement on that.

The Chair: I think that is all the formal questions. I would have loved to pursue with Anthony the services that people just walk across the border to at the moment and what on earth will happen to them, but I suspect that what comes next year will be even more important than what has happened this year, so I will not go there.

May I say thank you to all of you for your very interesting and useful comments this afternoon? Should you have anything that you think you should have said, or that you wish we had asked, please let us know afterwards and send us some further comments. Thank you for the comments you have already sent in, as well as what you have said this afternoon. We are grateful to you for spending that time and putting so much thinking into it.

We are very grateful to the witnesses in both sessions for the interesting and challenging things they have said to us.