



# Growing inequalities in Wales

## “I look up to him ...”

In recent years, equality of outcome - the notion that what we should strive for is a society in which resources, particularly income, is distributed as equally as possible - has become unfashionable. In fact, that's putting it generously. Successive UK governments have promoted the idea that it shouldn't much concern us how big the gap gets between rich and poor. All that matters is that people at the bottom have some notional opportunity to get richer too.

Yet a series of high-profile recent studies have shown that the idea that income inequality is a price worth paying (or not necessarily a cause for social concern at all) is dangerously misplaced. Works such as *The Spirit Level* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (Penguin, 2010) and a range of recent analyses by the social geographer Danny Dorling, stress that income inequality is harmful to everyone in society, in deep and often unexpected ways. Everything from crime to life expectancy, from happiness to the sense of social cohesion, is adversely affected by greater income inequality.

The clearest evidence for this comes from the comparison of rich countries, where the most unequal (usually the UK and the USA) consistently fare worse according to all available indicators than the more equal (such as Denmark and Japan). More equal societies are simply, suggests the evidence, better places to live. And they're better for everyone - not just those on the lowest incomes. Even the rich live longer, for example, in more equal societies.

## Unemployment - A bleak picture

The latest unemployment figures present a bleak picture for Wales. The figures for Wales released in November show that almost 134,000 of the working age population are out of work, up by over 11,000 on the quarter. This represents 9.4% of the working age population who are now out of work in Wales - up from 8% at the beginning of this year. The published figures show that unemployment has been rising faster in Wales than it has in England, which means solutions need to be found in Wales to meet our very specific needs.

The Welsh Government have announced that further funding will be made available to businesses to enable them to create new jobs. This follows the announcement last month of the Jobs Growth Wales programme - which provides young people with a job for a sixth month period and is expected to create 4,000 jobs per year over a 3 year period.

Given these decisions by the Welsh Government, it seems important to ask if making more money available to businesses to create jobs is the best long term solution to tackling unemployment? Is it more effective than other ways of



stimulating growth, such as improving transport, reducing regulation, investing in universities, encouraging entrepreneurs? What specific combination of these solutions might be best? Without robust and longitudinal evidence we simply cannot say. More research is needed to better understand the impact of different policies aimed at reducing unemployment.

## Did you know that in Wales ...

- 250,000 people want a job but cannot get one
- 23% of people live in poverty
- Only 1 in 5 of the poorest children get good GCSEs
- Professional women typically live 12 years longer than unskilled men
- More than 14,000 people in Wales were homeless last year

Further information can be found at [www.bevanfoundation.org](http://www.bevanfoundation.org)

## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN WALES

*The number of young people in North Wales on benefit for at least six months has risen by more than 100% in some constituencies. There was a rise of 435 in the long-term unemployed among the 18-24 age group between January and September.*

*There were jumps of 106% in the Vale of Clwyd, 100% increase in Aberconwy, 90% in Arfon, 80% in Clwyd West, 68% in Ynys Môn, 50% in both Wrexham and Clwyd South, 40% in Alyn & Deeside, 9% in Delyn and no change in Dwyfor Meirionnydd.*



## Prisons Week 20th to 26th November



The prison population in England and Wales has reached a new record (November 2011), taking it to an all-time high of 88,115.

There are now only 1,221 places available across prisons to deal with further rises. The rise in the population has been put down to those being jailed or remanded following England's riots in August. Figures released in October suggested that the riots would contribute to the prison population growing by about 1,000 over the next year.

Juliet Lyon, director of campaign group the Prison Reform Trust, said it was "crunch time" for the government.

"Unless a check can be put on ever-lengthening sentences and the use of prison for people who are mentally ill, addicts and petty offenders, pouring more money down the ineffective prison drain is inevitable," she said.

A decade ago a collection of essays (titled 'Prisons: A study in vulnerability') was commissioned by the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility to help Christians consider the issue of vulnerability in the prison context. Each chapter was written by an expert and the concluding chapters dealt with prison chaplaincy and the theology of vulnerability. The then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was quoted in the preface - "You have to pray daily - get down on your knees - as far as prisons are concerned."

"To open eyes that are blind, to bring captives out of prison, out of the dungeons where they lie in darkness."

(Isaiah 42:7, NEB)

## Work re-commences on the St. John's Family Centre in Brecon



### Recap on progress so far

Following a successful bid to the National Lottery tenders were sought in May 2010, J.L. Stephens were appointed as Contractors, building work began in the autumn of 2010, with a completion date in August 2011.

The work has involved complete renovation of part of the old St. John's building along with the new build of several office rooms, small courtyard and staff room.

### Hidden surprises

Discovery of pipework running under part of the new build in the spring of 2011 led to a temporary halt in building work whilst negotiations took place between the architect, client, contractors, planners and the Big Lottery. A revised building design was agreed which will allow for the same floor space and outcomes for the project and a new completion date of April 2012.

A process of community profiling has been continuing which has looked at need within the Brecon area for the Centre. Considerable interest has been expressed for use of the building as a family centre which will complement and not be in competition with existing provision. In the new year revenue funding will be sought for staffing and operation of the Centre.

For fuller information please look up <http://swanseabrecon.org.uk/> which gives details about all the work and projects of 'Faith in Families'.

Faith in  
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