All Wales Academic Social Care Research Collaboration (ASCC):
Adult Social Care & the Foundational Economy

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Project overview

- International literature review of social enterprise activity in social care provision

- Qualitative interviews with a variety of stakeholders (social enterprises, local authorities & WG)

- Case studies with two social enterprises (one emerging start-up, one established)

Principal themes from the literature

- The importance of the specific social histories of TSOs in different countries/regions.

- The relationships between governments and TSOs, particularly with regard to health and social care policy.

- Substantive differences between TSOs and other types of social care provider (statutory/'for profit'), and commonly assumed benefits.

- Difficulties measuring the value and success of SEs – short, medium and long term.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- There is scope for SEs to increase their share of social care provision, and a variety of social and political drivers pushing for this.

- But, this is unlikely to occur without dedicated support and guidance from those with the expertise to develop these businesses & ensure long term viability. Or policy change.

- There are a variety of barriers to delivering high quality social care via SE models, but the associated benefits to service users are potentially significant

- There is a perception of disconnect between political statements of intent and the pragmatic implementation of support for SE initiatives 'on the ground'.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- ## Factors affecting SE viability:

RES: And very often I think when people first start at the earliest stages in the small social enterprises is it starts from a passion and they're very much a social side ...

INT: Yes.

RES: ... and there's not enough help to actually say actually there's no point in starting unless you've got your trading arm.

INT: Yeah.

RES: Like you know and your trading arm will feed in for your social value, like you know so sometimes just getting it into their head that that trading arm can be something totally different to what their social value is.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- ## Factors affecting SE viability:

RES: … the key messages from us would be that without… investment is a huge part, 80% of growing the business because it is very much about access to finance which is a huge issue for social enterprise, I think, because of the way they are set up and structured, and there's a major gap in the market at the moment in terms of, you know, pump prime kind of upfront investment for new business. For new social enterprise business. Erm, and also there's a gap where social grants can plug gaps where loans can't or have a mixed bag of finance. I think that's going to be a huge detriment to the sector going forward, especially you know if they are looking at this act as seriously as they say they are. There needs to be more than £2 million or £3 million investment across the patch… and perhaps there should be pilot projects where they'll just do a two year investment programme in one local authority. And just look at the growth of the sector if they specifically target one sector. We'd obviously be welcoming that if there was a possibly for that.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- Widely different approaches within LAs:

RES: ... local authorities across Wales have taken different approaches... and you could probably argue that in [LA1] they've taken the salami approach where they're slicing away at different things... and looking at what they can take out. Whereas [LA2]... they're taking a holistic view to social enterprises and saying, okay, let's look at the department as a whole. And let's look at how, how can we take ... how can social enterprise fulfil er, those potential gaps that could be created because of the efficiencies.

INT: Yes.

RES: ... I think that's a better approach from my point of view, only because if you look at [LA1] and you look at the way some of the social enterprises are developed, you've got certain departments who just appoint an officer and say, you go off and do a social enterprise and they've got no background in it, if you see what I mean... you've got other departments where they'll try and look at consultants to try and provide that support.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- Widely different approaches within LAs:

RES: ... Conversations with the other five local authorities have been, they just don't get it... Because we've had years of investment and support in social enterprises. So we could get rid of some of the blah-blah early on... So therefore we were able to hit the ground running a bit as kind of where we were in [LA]. So when I talk about social care and being the way forward for social enterprise support in Wales because of all these others things, the other local authorities look at us a bit weird because they just carried on doing community halls. So where we would have been 10 years ago... Not always community halls, other things, but they don't see [social care] as such an important part of the fabric.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- ## Commissioning & tendering practice:

RES: You've got to be black and white in your marking and your scoring… So you do your weighting… What's important to you and can you put weighting against localism… like you know, third sector, social value, instead of like just cost… 'Cos you know in the scoring there's a technical score isn't there and there's a quality score and they might do well in the quality because they really can sing and dance about what they're doing …it's a social value. But the technical side might let them down a little bit.

INT: Yeah.

RES: Like so there may be a capacity building, you know kind of a training mentoring element… Like that doesn't mean they can't do it, maybe they just can't write it … you know what I mean, or identify it in that way.

Emergent themes from stakeholder interviews

- ## Commissioning & tendering practice:

RES1:   If you're supporting social enterprise, you know, who could be operating at very much lower levels... I guess the fear is that you can set these things up and then if it can't secure that contract or it may secure that contract for a couple of years but longer term it then loses that opportunity to be able to do that.

INT: Yeah.

RES2:   ... if you do look at somewhere like the older people's care contract, and they've gone to five other bigger agencies that employ five hundred plus staff... if local authorities wanna do high level because they can't be bothered with the paperwork or they accept that we can't, we haven't got the resources to deal with these smaller contracts, how can these smaller local social enterprises then get a foothold and then, sort of, compete... they're never gonna have that opportunity so there needs to be, sort of, opportunities to be able to link in that way.

Recent project output

- A co-authored paper from CRESC for the FSB Wales.

- Adult social care in Wales was used as a case study to support the argument that WG has the opportunity to do things differently, taking greater control over the building of social care premises in a way that is preferable to presiding over a gradual transfer of capacity to financialised chains which will ultimately displace smaller businesses in socially undesirable ways.

Future research

- The current project has raised many questions for future research, not least of all around the issues of commissioning, valuing and evaluating SEs in Social Care in Wales.

- A proposal is being developed to be submitted to the Social Care Research Award 2016, Health and Care Research Wales.