

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill

What's in it for Social Coops?

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Some positives

- Promotion of “preventative services”
- Promotion of social enterprises, cooperatives, user-led services, and the third sector
- New duty to assess the needs of carers
- Promotion of Direct Payments

Promotion of “preventative services”

“A local authority must provide or arrange....
services...

- (a) contributing towards preventing or delaying the development of people’s needs for care and support;
- (b) reducing the needs for care and support of people who have such needs;
- (c) minimising the effect on disabled people of their disabilities;
- (d) contributing towards preventing people from suffering abuse or neglect;...”

Promotion of “preventative services”

“The (preventative) things that may be provided or arranged in discharging the (local authority’s) duty...are not limited to care and support (or only support for carers”

Promotion of “preventative services”

Social coops could be well-placed for the provision of preventative services (and dependency-reducing services) such as:

- Low-level help
- Collective self-help
- Well-being activities
 - including cooperative social and economic action

Promotion of SEs, cooperatives, user-led services, and the third sector

“A local authority must promote—

- (a) the development in its area of social enterprises to provide care and support and preventative services;
- (b) the development in its area of co-operative organisations *or arrangements* to provide care and support and preventative services;
- (c) the provision of care and support and preventative services in its area in ways that involve service users in the design and running of services;
- (d) the availability in its area of (services) from third sector organisations.”

Definition of a social enterprise

“...an organisation which a person might reasonably consider—

- (a) carries on its activities wholly or mainly to provide benefits for society (“its social objects”),
- (b) generates most of its income through business or trade,
- (c) reinvests most its profits in its social objects,
- (d) is independent of any public authority, and
- (e) is owned, controlled and managed in a way that is consistent with its social objects”

Definition of a coop

- There isn't one
- Future regulations may clarify what constitutes a “co-operative organisation or arrangement”
- But there is no intention to write such a regulation unless it becomes an issue

New duty to assess the needs of carers

Social coops could be well-placed for the provision of services for, and by, carers, such as:

- Low-level help
- Collective self-help eg:
 - Reciprocal respite
 - Information exchange
- Well-being activities
 - including cooperative social and economic action

Direct Payments

- The new Bill encourages the expansion of Direct Payments in Wales, making it available to adults, children and carers
- It removes some fettering of its use (eg. to purchase from local authorities)
- It clarifies various rules and responsibilities
- It requires payments to be at reasonable levels

Direct Payments

- It doesn't say anything to encourage collective options for DP users
- But...
- Increased availability and uptake of Direct Payments could provide an opportunity for social coops to grow

Duty to co-operate!

- Sadly, this new duty only relates to local authorities and their “partners”
- Partners are defined as relevant statutory agencies
- There is no duty to co-operate with co-ops, or any other third sector agency
- But increased integration of health and social care could open another door for coops

Some negatives

- The references to “ social enterprises, cooperatives, user-led services, and the third sector” are isolated and few
- The bulk of the Bill appears to be a legislative tidying up exercise, rather than a platform for developing “sustainable social services”
- The Explanatory Notes do not provide a single word of expansion to the bare words in the Bill (as quoted above)
- The Explanatory Memorandum makes one reference to coops in terms of “supporting service users setting up a co-operative *arrangement* for helping each other with low level day-to-day needs”.
- The Impact Assessment says that the estimated cost (or investment commitment) of developing “social enterprises, cooperatives...”, is zero (and likewise the cost of shifting to a preventative approach)

Glass half full?

- Coops are in the Bill – and the private sector is not
- Social enterprises (as defined) sound like they could easily embrace cooperative structures, as could user-led services
- Prevention services, carer services, and Direct Payments, all provide opportunities for coop development
- The necessity for sustainability will not go away...