Putting co-operative principles at the heart of a new National Care Service

At Prime Minister's Questions on 14 October, Andy Burnham said co-operative principles would be at the heart of England's new National Care Service. What would that mean for someone waiting for support, a care worker rushing between visits or a family carer trying to get a break?

On Sunday 22 November, the South East Wales Co-operative Party is bringing together online voices from the co-operative movement, trade unions and local government to ask what England's plans could mean for Wales, and what the four nations can learn from one another.

Quality must drive reform in every service. That means asking who sets standards, who answers when care falls short, and what power people who draw on care, paid workers and unpaid carers have over decisions. It also means asking what co-operative ownership could add, from giving people a formal say in how care is run to keeping more of the benefit in the community.

Wales has its own experience to bring. Section 16 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 mandates local authorities to promote the local development of social enterprises, co-operative organisations, and third-sector organisations that provide care, support (including carer support), and preventative services.

England has announced a phased service with free personal care for older people, while the Casey Commission continues its work on delivery. Questions remain about the roles of councils, Mayors and the NHS, and about what reform will mean for working-age disabled adults.

Where has Section 16 and the Welsh commissioning framework changed what people can access or who provides their care? What is the biggest barrier to making that happen more widely, and what could a council or the Welsh Government do about it?

For England, what should a National Care Service guarantee everywhere, and which decisions should be made locally? What is the biggest barrier to giving people who draw on care, paid workers and unpaid carers a real say, and where is the opportunity to give them decision-making power?

Social care all too often becomes a "David V Goliath" struggle with a local authority care provider, where "one size fits all" really isn't the best outcome for the recipient. In Wales the 2014 Act has a guiding principle of "co-production", but local authorities struggle with the concept or simply sidestep it.

Perhaps as a result the last Welsh government passed the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025, giving care recipients a route out of local authority control. However, many are finding the route to Continuing Health Care via a Local Health Board almost unfathomable, so as to lead nowhere?

We will ask, what can Wales and England learn from Scotland's joint planning of health and social care and Northern Ireland's experience of delivering them within an

integrated system? What would you borrow, and what safeguard would you put in place to keep social care priorities visible when the NHS is under pressure.

We'll put a version of the Makerfield Test to the panel. Would the proposed changes make daily life better for someone who needs care, someone who provides it and someone caring unpaid? How would they know?

Join the discussion on 22 November 2026, 5.00 - 6.15 pm. If you draw on care, work in care, support someone unpaid or help shape local services, bring a question or an example of what you would change. Meeting ID 883 4233 1414 Passcode 697929
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88342331414?pwd=3k23EPPudP2d2HsowzLlB9S06v1qLW.1