

Chapter 6.

Promoting Equality

- 6.1 Full Departmental contributions by portfolio area are attached at Annex B. This chapter will examine what the Welsh Assembly Government has done to promote equality of opportunity during the financial year 2005-2006 grouped under the key themes of Wales: A Better Country.^[41] Selected examples by portfolio area are also highlighted as case studies in this chapter.

More and Better Jobs and Skills

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks

- 6.2 The creation of more and better jobs and a more skilled workforce is a strategic priority for the Welsh Assembly Government. We have already achieved a great deal - unemployment is down 30 per cent and employment is up 125,000 since 1997. Structural Fund Programmes had committed £1.46 billion to 2,655 projects by the end of 2005, which represents a total project investment of £3.5 billion in Wales. It is anticipated that the Objective 1 Programme will have created up to 40,500 net additional jobs by the end of the current Structural Fund Programmes.^[Para55]

Current data

- 6.3 Welsh Local Labour Force Survey^[15] data shows that the unemployment rate fell from 6.1% in 2001 to 5.2% in 2004, but this has since risen again to 6.0% in 2005, close to its 2001 level. However the female unemployment rate fell from 4.6% in 2001 to 4.1% in 2003 and remained at this level in 2005. The Report into Inactivity in Wales 2003^[13] indicates a higher level of inactivity amongst ethnic minority groups (33.8%) than for white groups (25.5%). This figure falls substantially, when taking into account that a large proportion of the economically inactive are students, to 25.8% and 22.8%, respectively. Using the latter measurement, the difference between the inactivity rates of minority ethnic and white groups in Wales amounts to 13%, considerably less than in the UK as a whole where this was more than 50%.
- 6.4 By examining census data from 2001^[12], it becomes clear that a large part of the differences in activity levels between minority ethnic groups is explained by gender differences. For example, the economic activity rate (of those aged 16-74, excluding students and the retired) for the Bangladeshi group (53%) was much lower than that for the population as a whole (75%) although the rate for Bangladeshi men (83%) was actually slightly higher than that for the male population as a whole (82%). This position was very similar for the Pakistani group (An

overall rate of 57% composed of a relatively high activity level for Pakistani men of 81% in comparison to Pakistani women 34%).

- 6.5 In Wales economic inactivity rates for those with a disability were substantially higher than for those with no disability although the rate has been falling each year. According to the Local Labour Force Survey 2005,^[15] the inactivity rate for those with a disability was 59.3% in 2001 compared to 54.9% in 2005. It should be noted that the inactivity rate for females with a disability is higher than that for males (57.5% and 52.6% respectively). The rate of economic inactivity is higher for those with a disability in Wales than that for the UK as a whole (54.9% and 48.3% respectively), this gap has been closing since 2001.

Our response

- 6.6 Structural Fund Programmes^[53] in Wales provide grant aid for projects that encourage and facilitate economic regeneration and revival in areas where the decline of traditional industries has caused serious economic and social problems. Equal Opportunities (covering the areas of disability, gender, race, Welsh language) are mainstreamed into the European Structural Fund Programmes^[53] as one of three Cross-Cutting Themes.
- 6.7 In addition, there are certain priorities and measures within the Programmes which specifically focus on equality issues, for example Objective 1, Priority 4 Measure 5 is aimed at improving the participation of women in the labour market. Data on activities and results are submitted by project sponsors on a quarterly basis. In 2004, the Wales European Funding Office strengthened the monitoring of Equal Opportunities data by drawing up additional guidance to all project sponsors, including issue of a sample monitoring form. This work has continued with individual sponsors to support them in the monitoring process.
- 6.8 January 2006 monitoring data figures show that progress continues to be made towards achieving the Equal Opportunities targets in many of the Priority and Measures with some targets being exceeded. For example, an Objective 1 Priority 1, Measure 2 target for the number of new SMEs owned by women, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, and Welsh speakers which have been given advice / information or assistance, has been exceeded by 77%. Further specific data can be found in section 4 of the Objective 1 Programme Monitoring Committee report available via the WEFO website.^[56]
- 6.9 We are seeking to enhance prosperity and the spread of that prosperity in Wales by helping to create an environment within which a greater number of sustainable businesses can start up and be developed by a more diverse group of people and owners. Access to business support programmes remains open to all, however dedicated positive action to

assist under-represented groups including minority ethnic groups, women, and disabled people is provided.

Case Study – The Potentia Programme^[51]

Research conducted for the Welsh Assembly Government into new business start-ups, shows that in the past women, disabled people, lone parents, Welsh speakers, ethnic minorities, young people and the over 50's haven't always accessed mainstream business advice services. Meeting this challenge head on, Potentia was established to make sure that aspiring entrepreneurs from within these groups get the advice, guidance and support they need in a way that is most accessible and appropriate to them. The project will be specifically tailored to their particular needs and will provide the impetus and catalyst needed to help them start their own businesses.

Potentia has always been recognised as medium-term intervention and the long-term aim has been to mainstream the delivery of these pre business start projects into the mainstream business support provision. The aim has been to provide support to these groups facing more barriers than most when setting up in business, through working in conjunction with its delivery partners, including Menter a Busnes, Disability Wales, Prime-Cymru, BOS, Chwarae Teg and the Ethnic Business Support Programme.

Potentia is bridging the gap between grassroots communities whilst working with the mainstream providers helping them to identify where they are in terms of diversity (looking at policies, procedures, recruitment, procurement and service delivery) and putting in place any development required to meet the challenge of being able to support these groups through tools devised by the Welsh Assembly Government and their partner groups.

Business Eye is the main portal for access to all business support. During the year 2005-06, the percentage of users of the service from minority ethnic groups on a monthly basis averaged some 4% of all its customers. Against a base population share of just over 2%, this suggests that a higher rate of take-up than from the population as a whole. The Potentia Programme achieved the following outputs during the year:

- Nearly 4,300 individuals from under represented groups were given at least one hour of business advice/assistance.
- This has resulted in 448 businesses being started up as a result.

6.10 In November 2004, 'Genesis Wales',^[57] a strategic All Wales project, was approved. The project aims to provide a comprehensive package of advice, guidance, support and childcare for individuals, predominantly women, who wish to access work, training and / or learning opportunities. The project is making good progress with an increase in beneficiaries and is on course to meet its targets. An

evaluation will be undertaken once the project has been completed (in June 2008) to inform policy on overcoming the barriers faced by women returning to employment and training.

Social economy

- 6.11 We also provide support for grassroots/social economy businesses. Grassroots/social economy businesses are, because of their very nature, most likely to be operating in areas of disadvantage or deprivation, for example in areas where statutory services are not in place, or where there has been a market failure. It is here that social enterprises are likely to step in, and all support to this sector will therefore help in some way to reduce this gap.
- 6.12 The social economy budget of £1m is used to support some individual projects, but mainly to lever in European Structural Funds.^[53] Within the current programme Objective 1, priority 3, measure 4 alone has committed over £20m to 62 projects in the social economy. Work has been ongoing on procurement to ensure that social enterprises are able to succeed at winning public sector contracts. In addition, some 18 social economy projects were awarded grants totalling £2,528,955 for 2005/06 under the Community Facilities and Activities Programme.^[58] Some specific examples of approved projects are:
- £253,000 to Refurbs Flintshire for the refurbishment of furniture and white goods.
 - £192,500 to Abergele Youth Action Café Ltd.
 - £24,500 to Towyn, under 5s Playgroup.

Education and Life Long Learning

- 6.13 There are now 1,700 more teachers since 1998 and 5,700 more school support staff. We have reduced almost all infant classes to a maximum of 30 pupils, and primary school free breakfasts have been piloted in Communities First areas since September 2004. We have invested over £100m per year in school buildings since 2002 and from 2005-06 onwards this has risen to £143m per annum. The take-up of Modern Apprenticeships has increased significantly in Wales and there are some 13,400 on the programme, an increase of over 1000 since December 2003.^[Para 55]

Current data

- 6.14 The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)^[59] collects data on the ethnic background of pupils aged 5 or over in maintained primary, secondary, and special schools. Data for 2004-05 shows that around 4% of pupils aged 5 or over in the schools identified were from minority ethnic backgrounds and that of those, around 70% were from Asian or mixed backgrounds. The majority of pupils, some 400,000, were white. Of the remaining pupils, some 2,000 stated they were from other ethnic

backgrounds whilst for nearly 12,600 pupils information was not available - for example the parent or child did not want to specify.

- 6.15 Of the pupils for whom information was available, 96% were white whereas pupils of Asian or Mixed ethnic backgrounds each accounted for just over 1%. The least predominant group are the Chinese who make up only 0.2%. The distribution of minority ethnic pupils aged 5 or over is broadly similar to that of the population as a whole, 36% Asian, 35% mixed, 12% other, 11% Black and 6% Chinese.
- 6.16 Data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)^[60] provides detail on enrolments at Welsh Higher Education institutions by ethnic background. Since 2000/01 the proportion of all enrolments which were known to be of white ethnicity has fallen from 96.1 per cent to 94.8 per cent, whilst enrolments by persons of all minority ethnic backgrounds have increased. The number of enrolments from minority ethnic groups has increased by over 2,000 over the period. The predominant minority ethnic group remains those of Asian background, with 42 per cent of all minority ethnic enrolments. However this has fallen from 47 per cent in 2000/01, due to an increase in enrolments from mixed backgrounds. The proportion from Chinese and Black backgrounds has remained fairly stable although numbers have increased. Postgraduates were more likely to be from minority ethnic backgrounds - just under 7 per cent compared with 5 per cent of undergraduates.

(Care should be taken in interpreting the following analyses, as over the period there has been a decrease in the proportion of enrolments for which the ethnic background is unknown; 11 per cent in 1998/99 compared with 3 per cent in 2004/05. Therefore it is possible that some of the changes over the period are due to improvements in the quality of the ethnicity information).

Our response

Better Early Years Provision

- 6.17 Better early year provision is essential to counter early disadvantage and ensure that the youngest children are enabled to learn how to learn, attain well and make the most of their talents is integral to achieving equality of opportunity. The Flying Start Scheme^[61] for 0-3 year olds in disadvantaged areas has been developed and will be implemented for 2006-07. Key to the development of the programme was engagement with black and minority ethnic groups to ensure that it would meet their specific needs. A commitment to continuing dialogue and engagement has been made.

Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant

- 6.18 The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is distributed annually via a specific grant to local authorities. The objective of this grant is to improve the equality of educational opportunity for all minority ethnic groups including, in particular, measures to assist pupils for whom English is an additional language and measures to improve standards

of achievement and to tackle the risk of under-achievement. £5m is available in 2006-07 – level funding on 2005-06. EMAG is distributed to all 22 LEAs on a formula basis. This formula takes account of the number of identified children from a minority ethnic background plus an assessment of their linguistic ability.

Asylum Seeker Education Grant

6.19 This grant is designed to support authorities in the provision of additional school places and central support requirements for pupils who are asylum seekers. It also offers a small amount of assistance for adult asylum seekers who have enrolled on a course of English as an additional language provided by the authority. Since 2003-04, the grant has also taken into consideration the significant additional costs associated with those asylum seeker pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. The grant is worth £2.4m in 2006-07. LEAs will be invited to submit bids in September based on the number of asylum seekers in their area from March to August. In 2005-06, funding was divided between the five LEAs who applied – Wrexham, Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Bridgend.

Education of Travellers and Displaced Persons Grant

6.20 The Education of Travellers and Displaced Persons Grant Scheme aims to improve the attendance, participation and achievement of Gypsy and Traveller pupils in the education system in Wales. It does this by providing funding for additional staff and non-staff costs to assist with the education of Gypsy Traveller pupils. £900,000 is available under the scheme in 2006-07 – level funding on 2005-06. Sixteen bids were received covering 17 local authority areas.

Better Support for Learners with Additional Needs

6.21 An inclusion policy and performance framework for Wales ensures that all learners' individual needs are considered. This policy area covers disabled pupils, minority ethnic groups and others with additional learning needs. Outcomes of this work are increasing engagement and retention amongst the most disaffected though working in partnership with schools, Local Education Authorities and others to improve behaviour and attendance and address bullying.

6.22 To fulfil our aims as a country where there are high levels of achievement and where children, young people and adults are empowered to achieve social and economic well being, vital to developing a prosperous economy, our top equality policy outcomes are:

- Representative participation of Minority Ethnic groups in Early Years education.

- Parity of achievement of Minority Ethnic groups in schools in Wales. Certain ethnic groups underachieve in comparison with others and the social, cultural and personal factors affecting this need to be identified and addressed.
- To ensure a fair gender balance of the new student finance arrangements.
- Widening access to disabled students – disabled students can feel limited in their academic and vocational options in post-16 education.
- Better education of teachers and pupils in disability equality, so that disability is no longer thought of as unusual, merely something requiring adjustments in some cases.

Case study – Workplace ESOL Development Programme

ELWa^[62] has provided funding for a Workplace English as a Second Language (ESOL) Development programme for the Hospitality and Catering Sector through the Common Investment Fund.

Cardiff has a growing reputation as a European entertainment hub (over the past four years Cardiff has seen a 30% rise in the number of hotels, 35% increase in the number of bars and 20% more restaurants). The potential recruitment headache has been eased by the flow of workers arriving in the capital city from abroad eager to snap up the positions and contribute to the Welsh economy. Although many of the new arrivals possess the exact skills enabling them to fit seamlessly into the city's hospitality and catering industry, language can sometimes be a barrier.

To enable Cardiff's continued growth and to enable these new citizens to fully participate in the community it is vital that they acquire and improve their English language skills. The workplace ESOL project was piloted with five employers and some 50 employees in Cardiff's hospitality and catering sector. The employers included St David's Hotel, Hilton Hotel and Le Monde restaurant.

The project designed ESOL programmes and resources relevant to the needs of employers with the sector. Individuals also learnt about Cardiff and Welsh culture and had a taster session on the Welsh language. Employers have recognised the benefit in the programme for attracting, retaining and developing staff which ultimately leads to improved customer service.

Improving Health

Department of Health and Social Services, Office of the Chief Medical Officer and Office of the Chief Nursing Officer

6.23 Improving health in Wales is a strategic priority for the Assembly Government. We have made progress and there are now 7,300 more nurses and 450 more consultants working for the NHS than in 1997. Improvements have been made in hospital waiting times, and the prescription charge has been reduced to £3 from April 1st 2006, and we are on course to abolish them altogether by 2007. Capital investment in the Health Service is being trebled and 7 new community hospitals are on their way. We have invested nearly £10m to provide free swimming in local authority pools for children and young people and for older people aged 60 and over. Free Swimming is our largest health intervention initiative and the first national initiative of its kind in Europe. ^[Para 55]

Current data

6.24 There is substantial variation in the levels of health, and levels of ill health remain relatively high. The 2001 Census for England and Wales^[12] asked about people's general health: seven of the nine worst scoring authority areas were in Wales and the percentage of people saying that their health was 'not good' was in excess of the English average in every Welsh local authority area. Inequalities in health between different groups need to be seen against this background.

6.25 Key statistics from the most recent Welsh Health Survey (October 2004-September 2005)^[17] indicate that 23% of adults reported being treated for either a heart condition, high blood pressure or both, 14% reported being treated for a respiratory illness and 12% for back pain. Limiting long-term illness was reported for 27% of adults and 4% of children, as would be anticipated, this increases with age. The percentage of adults who reported long-term limiting illness was 11% in the age range 16-44, 33% within the range 45-64 and 54% in the age range 65+. These results were broadly the same for both male and female respondents.

6.26 In terms of health service usage, 17% of adults reported talking to a GP about their own health in the past fortnight and 19% reported being outpatients at a hospital during the three months prior to the survey taking place. When asked questions about their lifestyle, 28% of adults said that they currently smoked. The proportion of smokers in the population decreases with age with 33% of adults in the age range 16-44 being smokers, 28% in the age range 45-64 and 15% aged 65+. There were slightly more male than female smokers in each age range.

Our response

- 6.27 The Inequalities in Health Fund (IiHF)^[63] was established in 2001. There are currently 62 live projects across Wales's most disadvantaged communities, and projects cover most Communities First areas. The IiHF^[63] was recommended by the Townsend Report 'Targeting Poor Health'^[64] in order to improve access to services and reduce inequalities. Projects are focusing on coronary heart disease and are providing access to a range of services and activities for people with heart disease or considered to be at risk.
- 6.28 The core principle of the Fund/projects is that they are helping to tackle inequalities in services and access to advice on healthy lifestyles. Some projects are delivering improvements by health screening delivered in primary care or community settings for hard to reach groups. Others are engaging in setting up disease registers and others in referrals for lifestyle advice. There are four projects focussing on minority ethnic communities, one project which focuses on gypsy travellers, and other projects include activities geared towards children and/or adults considered at risk of chronic heart disease.
- 6.29 All of these projects are providing evidence that they are making a positive difference to individuals and helping to tackle inequalities e.g. access to services or advice previously not available. Examples include:
- Providing screening and assessment services in areas where they did not exist before.
 - Helping people to lose weight through advice on diet and exercise and improving people's health and well being.
 - The minority ethnic projects have succeeded in developing gender specific exercise classes and in tailoring advice about health and well-being in a culturally sensitive way.

Individual projects collect data on outcomes and independent evaluation is on-going. A position report 'Inequalities in Health Fund – Making a Difference' published February 06 provides further examples of some outcomes to date. In addition to this data, quarterly monitoring returns have added a question to record uptake by people with a disability.

- 6.30 We are actively seeking to redress the balance in health outcomes for people living in areas of poverty and deprivation and the link with the Communities First Programme ensures that health inequalities are tackled in areas where poverty and deprivation are highest. The recent equality audit identified the Inequalities in Health Fund^[63] as providing an excellent portfolio of good practice and raising the profile health inequality. It also praised the specific actions relating to diverse groups, such as our guidance for parents from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Equality Training and Advocacy Grants

6.31 A number of specifically tailored activities were undertaken to improve services for minority groups. Through our Equity Training and Advocacy Grants, a total of 25 projects were funded to address inequalities in access to health care and to develop advocacy for better health within different organisations. There are a number of actions specific to the target group, examples include:

- Multi-professional cultural diversity training;
- Training addressing health needs of asylum seekers and the gypsy & traveller population;
- Provision of Somali interpreters for antenatal drop-in clinics and Maternity Arabic Advocacy Service.

Training and practical input has promoted cultural competence by increasing awareness regarding the needs of minority ethnic groups and has provided means to identify ways to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers.

Guidance on health services for minority groups

6.32 We have developed Service Development & Commissioning Guidance for Selected Minority Groups. The guidance covers healthcare access for four selected minority groups:

- Gypsies & Travellers
- Asylum Seekers & Refugees
- Homeless
- Minority Ethnic Communities

The guidance contains key actions and examples of best practice with a maturity matrix to assist organisations focus actions to address the following issues:

- Access to Primary Care (including issues regarding information)
- Lack of involvement in planning and development of services
- Culturally alien services
- Discrimination

The guidance has been produced and disseminated at regional workshops in July, however it is currently too early to measure the impact which this has made.

Case Study - Health Challenge Wales Grant Scheme^[65]

The aim of the scheme is to develop the capacity and capability of national voluntary organisations in Wales by working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government in promoting health and well-being. Due to the nature of the grant scheme most recipients work with disadvantaged groups thus addressing inequalities.

The grant scheme is still running and each initiative has put evaluation plans in place. Progress reports received so far, indicate that in the main, the projects are producing successful outcomes. There are currently 19 organisations receiving funding. Examples include:

MEWN Cymru is using the grant to fund an ethnic minority women's health project. They are delivering training to health professionals about the issues faced by minority ethnic groups. They are also delivering health information sessions directly to the women. The project has established credibility in the field and health organisations are requesting the training. Trust has also been built up with minority ethnic women and MEWN Cymru has been able to get across important health messages.

Other examples include: Innovate Trust who have a project for people with learning disabilities informing them of the importance of keeping active and looking after their health and well-being and the National Federation of Women's Institutes is working with disadvantaged young people teaching them how to cook inexpensive healthy meals. This course has proved successful and requests are being received to extend the course to older clients. The Terrence Higgins Trust receives support for the Wales HIV Network project.

Case Study - Free prescriptions

The abolition of prescription charges was a manifesto commitment to ensure equal access to medication for all in Wales.

The policy is being introduced by a series of staged reductions in prescription charges. On 1 April 2005 the charge was reduced again in Wales to £4 per item as oppose to £6.50 in England with pre-payment certificates also proportionately reduced to £57.46 (£93.20 in England).

From 1 April 2006 the prescription charge will be reduced again to £3 (£6.65 in England) with pre-payment certificates reduced to £43.09 (£95.30 in England). Entitlement cards will also be introduced from 1 August 2006 to ensure that those living in Wales who are registered with GPs in England will benefit from the lower Welsh charge.

Complete abolition of charges in Wales will take place on 1 April 2007.

Smoking cessation

- 6.33 Our Service Level Agreement with the National Public Health Service (NPHS)^[66] for smoking cessation services in Wales highlights the need to target clients from socially disadvantaged groups. The NPHS^[66] has been requested to pay particular attention to pregnant smokers and smokers from manual socio-economic groups to tackle inequalities in health and reduce social exclusion.

Strategy for Older People

- 6.34 The aims and objectives of our Strategy for Older People^[67] are set in a context of equality. The Strategy makes clear that in addressing the implications of an ageing population, we must take full account of equality of opportunity for all. As part of the Strategy for Older People in Wales, the Assembly Government commissioned a Research Project looking at the specific needs of Black and Minority Ethnic elders.
- 6.35 The research project was undertaken by Salford University following a competitive tendering exercise. A total of 677 older people (aged 50 and over) from a broad range of the BME communities across Wales were interviewed. Following this exercise, 5 focus groups with a selection of the interviewees considered the issues that arose from the interviews in more depth. A total of 43 older people were involved in the group discussions, with participants from a range of BME communities.
- 6.36 It identified the needs of BME elders and made recommendations for service provision and policy. The work was completed in March 2006. The report is currently out for consultation until December 2006, and recommendations will be forwarded to the Minister following the completion of the consultation phase. Under the Strategy, we have also undertaken a Literature Review/Scoping Study on researching the needs of Lesbian Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gender older people. Funding from the Strategy has also been utilised by Age Concern Cymru to establish networks for organisations concerned with the interests of BME and LGBT older people in Wales.

National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales

- 6.37 The National Service Framework (NSF)^[68] is our 10-year strategy, which will have a strong influence on the health & well being of children and young people through setting national standards. It contains key actions to improve equality of access to services, equal opportunities and inequalities of health. It identifies a specific focus on disabled children and children in special circumstances, and also places a strong emphasis on the need for social inclusion. A web based self-

assessment audit tool (SAAT) has been developed, for local partnerships to use in determining progress in implementing NSF actions. Progress on implementation of the standards will be monitored and evaluated at both local and national levels.

Mental health services

- 6.38 A Race Equality Action Plan for Adult Mental Health Services^[69] in Wales has been developed. The Action Plan^[69] contains a series of key actions for local health and social care organisations to deliver in order to provide equitable, accessible and appropriate mental health services (inpatient and community) for people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Action Plan^[69] will be issued across Welsh NHS Trusts, Local Health Boards and the relevant Local Authority Departments (i.e. Community Mental Health Teams) in September 2006. The recent Equality Audit has acknowledged the real progress made with regard to mental health services in Wales in terms of good practice and the use of data.

Case Study - Expert Patients Programme (EPP) Wales

The Expert Patients Programme is a course for people living with long term conditions and has helped people change their lives for the better. The course is currently available in 10 languages, Braille, audio and an online system is under development. The following is the view of a course participant, volunteer tutor and now an Expert Patients Programme (EPP) member of staff:

“Since childhood I have lived with Diabetes and Asthma. There were often difficult times when I felt very unwell and unable to play a part in day to day activities. It hit me quite hard when at the age of eighteen my illnesses prevented me from going to University to study law, this was something that I had always wanted to do.

Sometime later when my health began to improve, I decided to find a job. It was a real shock to me when an employment adviser said that ' I would be lucky to get a job' and proceeded to give information about benefits that I was entitled to. It felt as if I had been labelled 'unemployable' and 'disabled', something that I had never considered. This experience led to a downward spiral and I became very depressed. Over the years I found living with depression very difficult, it robbed me of my personality, joy and self worth and made me feel very vulnerable.

About two years ago just at the time when my confidence was at rock bottom, I heard about the Expert Patients Programme (EPP) Wales, and decided to train to become a volunteer tutor. I found the course very empowering. It helped me to understand that feelings of helplessness and frustration with my illnesses were quite normal. The course gave me an opportunity to learn new skills to manage my symptoms, which helped me to move on and to minimise the impact of my long-term health condition on my daily life.

As a volunteer tutor I have really enjoyed delivering EPP courses within the local community. The opportunity to connect with people living with many different health conditions continues to be of immense value. I have learned that whatever long-term health condition/s a person is living with, that the challenges are the same, e.g. dealing with pain, fear, uncertainty, anger, eating healthily, taking regular exercise and planning for the future. Being able to express my feelings in a supportive environment of a course has enabled me to gain confidence, energy, humour and sense of peace. Furthermore the self -management skills that I have learned have for me become a way of life. I have learned the art of setting realistic goals and to control how I respond to these.

Whilst attending a course the tutor gave me a contact to seek help with finding work. It was good to have advice and support about how to apply for a job and to prepare for an interview. I am now 39 years of age and have just completed my first ever year of employment. Being in a job which I enjoy means so much, has made a real difference to my life”.

Developing Strong and Safe Communities

Social Justice and Regeneration

- 6.39 The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the development of strong and safe communities in Wales. The Social Justice Report 2006^[70] sets the context clearly around this priority area, setting out the building blocks for strong and safe communities – living in safe surroundings, in decent sustainable environments and with a strong cultural life.
- 6.40 Progress has been made across this diverse agenda, for example extra money has been invested for drug and alcohol misuse projects across Wales with over 4,500 additional treatment places created in the last 3 years. Free bus travel has been introduced for people aged 60+ and for disabled people. We are providing local authorities with a sustainable waste management grant totalling £93 million over the three years 2004-05 to 2007-08. Following the introduction of free access to all Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales sites, there were more than 1.3m visitors to the National Museums & Galleries of Wales during 2004-5, an increase of 8% on the previous year and 77% since the last year of charging.^[Para 55]

Current data

- 6.41 There is data on inequality in respect of establishing and sustaining strong and safe communities in Wales. In terms of crime, data is available by age, gender and ethnicity, but not under other equality strands (British Crime Survey – Crime in England and Wales 2005-06^[19] (Home Office) and a Statistical Focus on Ethnicity in Wales).^[16] This information tells us that in Wales men are much more likely to be convicted of criminal offences than women, young people are much more likely to be convicted of offences than older people, and people under 30 are about twenty times more likely to be convicted of offences than people over 50.
- 6.42 The British Crime Survey (BCS)^[19] shows that in England and Wales, overall crime is stabilising after long periods of reduction. Since peaking in 1995, BCS crime has fallen by 44%, with domestic burglary and vehicle crime falling by over a half (59% and 60%, respectively) and violent crime has fallen by 43%. According to the BCS, recorded crime in Wales alone has fallen by 3% during 2005 – 06 compared with a fall of 1% for England and Wales as a whole. Wales was one of the three regions in England and Wales with the lowest rate of crime per 1,000 population.
- 6.43 Data is available on housing by age, gender, ethnicity, health status, religion and Welsh language from “The Age Related Housing, Domiciliary Care and Support Requirements of Older People in Wales”

[2003]^[14] and the 2001 Census.^[12] The population of Wales is ageing and we know that older people in Wales are more likely than younger people to experience poor housing conditions, to lack modern amenities or facilities in their homes, and to need adaptations to enable them to live independently. There are three times as many women over the age of 70 living alone than men, and four times as many over the age of 85; a gender issue for consideration in terms of service delivery.

Our response

- 6.44 Communities First is the Assembly Government's long term strategy for improving opportunities and quality of life for people living and working in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. We support the Black Ethnic Support Team (BEST)^[71] and the Black Voluntary Sector Network ((BVSN)^[72] through the Communities First Support Network) to help engage minority ethnic individuals in Communities First areas across Wales.
- 6.45 The revised Communities First Guidance was re-written during 2005/06. Equality issues are highlighted with specific information on race, disability, children and young people, older people and the Welsh language. The guidance is currently out to consultation. Work has also begun on reviewing the support arrangements available to Communities First Partnerships. The current arrangements will remain in place until the end of March 2007, with revised arrangements (based on the outcome of the review) to be in place from April 2007.

Case Study – Barriers to social inclusion funding

The Royal National Institute for the Blind^[73] was awarded a total of £752,401 under the Communities First Programme over six years (2001-07) to identify main barriers to social inclusion for people with severe sight loss, and to develop the priorities for action to overcome these barriers.

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People^[74] was awarded funding under the Communities First Support Fund to help deaf and hard of hearing people participate fully in the Communities First process. The aim of the project is to increase confidence and skills through a range of practical activities such as training, workshops and interactive events.

Community Safety Strategies

- 6.46 We continue to contribute to the development of initiatives, projects, policy and legislation for England and Wales related to crime and disorder reduction, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime whilst, ensuring that the needs of minority groups are adequately reflected

and that hate crime is highly placed on the Assembly's community safety agenda.

- 6.47 This year has seen the continued implementation of Community Safety Strategies for each of the 22 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Wales. We work closely with the CSPs in Wales to promote the particular needs of minority ethnic groups within their triennial strategies to tackle crime and disorder. The 2005-08 Community Safety Strategies have now been published by each partnership. Efforts are made to engage with local groups and communities to encourage maximum involvement with the Strategy.

Case Study - Substance Misuse Strategy

The Substance Misuse Strategy is aimed at ensuring that all those who need treatment are provided with it irrespective of race, disability, age or gender. One of the projects funded by the Assembly is Turnaround. It aims to transform the lifestyle of all 14 to 19 year olds who have become engaged in significant substance misuse and as a result have become a challenge and burden to the community, as well as being a risk to themselves. Turnaround aims to transform their lifestyle and enable them to participate in mainstream education and employment.

The evaluation of the project shows that it has been extremely successful in helping young people to reduce their overall substance use, improve their behaviour by increasing their ability to control their anger, deal with disappointment and express emotion.

As at December 2005:

- 90% of clients did not offend whilst attending the project
- 80% of clients entered work, full time education, training or work experience.

Parents' feedback indicated that:

- 100% felt the project improved communication skills;
- 74% of parents considered the project had a positive impact, helped with behaviour and improved self confidence.

Work is now ongoing to improve access and availability for treatment for all individuals that need help. An audit of treatment services for all client groups is due in Summer 2006.

Housing

- 6.48 Our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy^[75] is designed to improve the housing outcomes for BME individuals and households

in housing need. The strategy contained a range of interventions including research projects such as “The housing and socio-economic circumstances of BME people in Wales”, broadening consultation to ensure BME issues were mainstreamed, for example in Supporting People guidance and the provision of training on racial harassment for social landlords.

- 6.49 A revised National Homelessness Strategy^[76] has been developed. It is known that homelessness impacts more heavily on disadvantaged groups, and in addition to specific actions to mainstream equality and diversity issues in the strategy and services following that strategy, there is also an overall positive impact on equality of opportunity through generic action to tackle homelessness.
- 6.50 The need to ensure that homelessness services “are designed in accordance with the equality and diversity needs of the community” is identified as one of the four fundamental themes of the strategy.^[76] Equality of access is one of the six sections of the strategy’s action plan defining activity to address the needs of; refugees, BME groups, lesbian, gay and bi-sexual people, people with disabilities, women, older people and gypsies and travellers. The strategy is supported by a range of actions and grant schemes to funds front line services providing advice assistance and support.
- 6.51 This year has seen a number of projects funded to address the specific needs of minority groups including:
- Funding the Welsh Refugee Council^[77] to provide a Refugee Well Housing Project which provides housing advice and support to access accommodation.
 - Through Supporting People we have funded a range of supported housing services including supported housing for the particular needs of BME women fleeing domestic abuse in the form of 6 projects operated by BAWSO.^[78]
 - An All-Wales housing advice service for LGB people run by Tai Trothwy.^[79]
 - A specialist housing advice service for people with disabilities in South East Wales.
 - In addition we funded Tai Pawb^[80] the BME housing organisation for Wales which supports housing organisations to deliver the BME housing strategies which they developed in response to an Assembly Government requirement.

Transport

- 6.52 We know that transport can have a huge potential impact upon disadvantaged communities and can promote social inclusion. We recognise the role that affordable transport has to play in the well being of communities in Wales and the need to improve accessibility and mobility for everyone. Progress has been made on extending reduced cost and free bus travel. A scheme has been developed which is managed by the Community Transport Association^[81] to demonstrate ways of providing free travel for severely disabled people on community transport. A finalised project provides half fares on buses for 16-18 year olds in Bridgend and North East Wales.
- 6.53 The Draft Wales Transport Strategy (Connecting Wales) focuses on the role transport can play in delivering wider policy objectives in areas such as spatial planning, economic development, education, health, social services, environment and tourism. The Strategy is positioned as a framework document that will become the focus of the Regional Transport Plans and the Assembly Government's future transport programmes. In line with our move towards impact assessment, the Strategy has passed through the Gender, Disability and Race Equality Impact Assessment processes.

Sustainable environment

- 6.54 We have undertaken work to develop our Environment Strategy^[82] for Wales. The consultation document was sent to the statutory equality commissions and groups representing minority and disadvantaged groups. The Black Environment Network^[83] is represented on the Environment Strategy Reference Group, which steered the development of the Strategy and which will assess progress in implementation.
- 6.55 Organisations representing disabled people and minority ethnic communities provided written responses to the consultation or attended the consultation workshops on the Strategy, including Disability Wales^[84] and the Black Environment Network.^[83] Specific workshop events were held regarding health for children and young people, and the Wrexham workshop was held at St Christopher's Special School and a diverse group of children and young people participated in the event.
- 6.56 REIA screenings were undertaken as part of the development of the consultation document, the final Strategy and the Action Plan. The Strategy specifically identifies the environmental issues where there is a significant equality impact. Although it is too early to identify outcomes at this stage, the recent equality audit identified that:
- Social cohesion is demonstrated as a fundamental value on which this strategy is built.

- Resource plans related to this strategy take due account of equality and diversity needs.
- The strategy demonstrates how it intends to improve health/social/economic status for all groups.
- Robust consultation and involvement processes were influential in setting policy direction.

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

6.57 In order to improve access to all forms of art across Wales, in May 2005, we published (via the Arts Council for Wales) a new 3-year Arts and Disability Strategy, "Moving Beyond",^[85] which was developed in conjunction with Disability Arts Cymru^[86] (formerly Arts Disability Wales). Disability Arts Cymru^[86] received £78,375 in revenue support to continue to deliver the programme outlined in last year's report. There has been an increase in the number of projects run and there have been new initiatives such as the Unusual Stage School, a residential stage school for deaf or people with disabilities over 18.

- Disability Arts Cymru^[86] also began work on a review of audience development issues for people with disabilities.
- DDA Capital projects in 2005/06 included a grant of £280,000 to Swansea Little Theatre and a grant of £45,000 to Torfaen to make the Art Gallery fully accessible.

Case Study - Touch Trust^[87]

Touch Trust is a resident of the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC).^[88] The Welsh Assembly Government is providing £100k in 2005/06 to develop its ground breaking work with profound physical and learning difficulties. Touch Trust Therapy Programmes help young people to communicate, develop movement skills and relax. The Touch Trust programme uses art, music and movement to develop communication.

- The Trust has enabled the WMC to welcome people with profound difficulties to the centre.
- The Trust uses performers with disabilities to develop and run sessions.
- The Trust is fully equipped to cope with profound physical difficulties and engages in a broad range of groups.
- The Arts Council of Wales undertook a review of the work of Touch Trust and will be reporting this summer.

