

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY EOC 08-02(p1)

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Date: Thursday 12 December 2002
Time: 9.00am
Venue: Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly Building
Title: Minister's Report

Purpose

1. To provide an update on matters arising since the Committee's last meeting on 14 November 2002.

Recommendation

2. Members to note the contents of the report.

Update on the development of a voluntary code of practice for recipients of assembly grants

3. A draft of the code is with the Office of the Counsel General for legal advice. The code as drafted follows very closely the relevant parts of the Voluntary Code of Practice for Suppliers, which was cleared in detail with all the relevant equality bodies. After clearance by OCG, a paper will go to the Executive Board making proposals for the detailed implementation of the code.

Diversity Day

4. The Assembly's first diversity day was held on 11 December, with events in Cathays Park and Cardiff Bay as well as our regional offices. The aim was to improve staff understanding in promoting equality and focus on a number of different winter religious festivals. Two events are being held on 12 December to disseminate best practice among staff. An equality training session will be held on 13 December for members of the Senior Civil Service.

Race Equality Plans

5. Two pilot schemes are underway to assist divisions in developing their race equality scheme assessments. The first involves Personnel and Local Government Modernisation Divisions. The intention is to use these as the benchmark for other heads of division and also share the expertise gained in the process. There will also be a group level project involving the Economic Development Department to assess the effectiveness of assessment at group level.

International Congress of Young Disabled People.

6. 2003 has been designated European Year of Disabled People. The Assembly has agreed funding of £125,000 to part fund an International Congress of Young Disabled People. (Additional funding is also being sought from the business community and European Community sources). This will be a high profile event held at Swansea University in the first week of July 2003. A steering group chaired by Dr Kevin Fitzpatrick (DRC Commissioner) and supported by voluntary organisations from across Wales is organising and leading on this exciting and innovative project.

7. The programme for the week of events is being developed by disabled young people from across Wales including the young people who attended the 'Have Your Say' event in December 2001, held in the Assembly Chamber.

8. The young people have also developed the logo and decided on the title for the event as 'Rights into Action 2003 (The first international congress of young disabled people)'. The objectives for the event are:

- To enable young disabled people in Wales to establish ties with their peers in other countries and to have fun in the process
- To market the existence of the European Year for Disabled People in Wales and beyond
- To enable young people themselves to be involved in planning, delivery, and determining any subsequent policy change or work
- To raise awareness of rights amongst young disabled people in Wales
- To increase pressure on European legislators to strengthen civil rights legislation for disabled people.

Equal pay seminars for the higher education, local government and NHS sectors in Wales

9. The Joint Working Group on equal pay suggested that seminars on equal pay be delivered to the Higher Education, Local Government and NHS sectors in Wales.

10. Following consultation between the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Trade Union Congress Wales (TUC) and Assembly officials from Higher Education, Local Government and the NHS Divisions, it was agreed that seminars would be held to encourage and develop the equal pay process / campaign.

Higher Education Seminar

11. The Higher Education seminar was due to take place on 21 November 2002. However, this has now been postponed and re-scheduled for 20 January 2003 at the Lake Country House, Llangammarch Wells.

12. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning will be attending the re-scheduled event. Invitation letters have been issued

NHS Seminar

13. The NHS seminar took place on 27 November 2002 at the Lake Country House, Llangammarch Wells.

14. The seminar was attended by over 30 people from 11 out of the 13 Trusts.
15. Speakers included Carwyn Jones AM, Minister for Open Government, Sharon Holder of the GMB Union, Clive Warbrick of the Department of Health Project Reform Team and Stephen Redmond, the Human Resource Director NHS Wales.
16. The event was extremely well received and the evaluation forms showed that everyone felt the seminar was extremely helpful and worthwhile. There was a particular expression of appreciation for the information provided by Clive Warbrick and Sharon Holder as both have been and remain involved in the NHS agenda for change negotiations.

Local Government Seminar

17. The Local Government seminar was due to be held on 28 November 2002. Unfortunately, this seminar had to be postponed but has been re-scheduled for 24 January 2003 at the Lake Country House, Llangammarch Wells.
18. The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities is unable to attend the seminar and deliver the keynote speech but the Minister for Open Government has kindly agreed to step in to provide Ministerial support for the event.

Meetings and Events

19. The Minister has attended the following meetings/events:

14 Nov - Attended Understanding Disability Awards at the CIA, Cardiff

The Understand Disability Awards Presentation was held on Thursday 14th November 2002 at the Cardiff International Arena. Held by the Cardiff and the Vale Parents Federation, the aim of the awards is to recognise the good work being done to promote positive attitudes towards people with learning disabilities.

Awards were presented in 3 categories: an employer (winner: KFC GB Ltd), an individual (winner: Dilys Price), and a school (winner: Llanedeyrn Primary School).

29 Nov - Meeting with Jerome Mack regarding AM Equality Awareness Training. I met Jerome Mack to discuss future plans for equality training in the Assembly. The Cabinet will receive training in January and February 2003.

3 Dec - Attending European Day of Disabled People, Temple of Peace

A lunchtime event held by the Wales International Disabilities (WILD) Group to celebrate the European Day of Disabled People at Cardiff University's Conference Centre, Cardiff.

The WILD Group is an informal network of voluntary organisations working to promote the rights of people with learning disabilities within an international context. Adele Cherrill, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Glamorgan, talk about the plain English booklet on the Human Rights Act she has helped WILD produce for people with learning disabilities.

4 Dec - Opening Welsh Refugee Council Offices, Newport Road, Cardiff. Following the review of the WRC in 2000, I am pleased at the progress they have made in implementing the review's 68 recommendations. One of the recommendations was to find more suitable premises for the work they deliver to refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. I was happy to open the new Welsh Refugee Council premises in Cardiff on 4 December 2002.

11 Dec - Meeting with Yasmin Hussein, new Head of Equality Policy Unit – Ms Hussein is making her initial visit to the National Assembly and was scheduled to have some introductory meetings on that day. She hopes to attend at least part of the Committee meeting on 12 December.