



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Val Lloyd AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

Your ref: P-03-170

29 January 2009

Dear Val,

Petition from Mencap Cymru – more employment opportunities for people with a learning disability

Thank you very much for your letter of 16 January regarding the Petitions Committee's consideration of Mencap Cymru's petition to:

“urge the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in employing more people with a learning disability, and to encourage other public sector employers such as the NHS and local authorities to employ more people with a learning disability.”

The Assembly Commission Recruitment Policy states that all appointments must be made on merit following open and fair competition, therefore certain groups cannot be targeted for employment. However the Assembly Commission has developed initiatives to increase the amount of staff from underrepresented groups. Officials have met with Mencap caseworkers sometime ago to discuss how we might encourage more people with learning disabilities to apply for work with the Assembly Commission. At the time, no suitable opportunities were identified but it was agreed that Mencap would be alerted by our HR team as to when suitable vacancies become available. As I understand, the HR and Equality and Access Team welcome the opportunity to work with MENCAP and re-examine how we might assist MENCAP in their objective.

We are currently exploring the option of working with organisations such as MENCAP, the Job Centre and Remploy to offer 'train the trainer' sessions with the purpose of the organisations being able to provide information to their clients on our recruitment system etc. We will look at the feasibility of extending this across the other equality strands.

Also, the Assembly Commission operates the 'Positive About Disability – Two Ticks' Scheme which guarantees interviews to disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria specified for the job specification. The Scheme also extends to people with learning disabilities. Furthermore, candidates that are invited to interview are encouraged to inform the HR Recruitment Team whether they have any special requirements so they can be assisted by whichever means possible. I hope that this offers reassurance to people with learning disabilities who might consider applying for a post in our organisation.

It might be helpful if, when our HR and Equality and Access Teams have reconvened with colleagues from MENCAP and the other relevant organisations, I report back to you on the outcome of those meetings.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Barrett AM,
Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly

Brian Gibbons AC/AM

**Y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth
Leol**

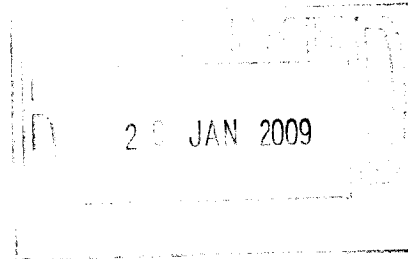
Minister for Social Justice and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-170
Ein cyf/Our ref BG/00042/09

Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



28 January 2009

Dear Val,

Petition from Mencap Cymru – more employment opportunities for people with a learning disability

Thank you for your letter of 19 January, about the employment of people with a learning disability within the Welsh Assembly Government, Assembly Commission and across the Welsh public sector. I understand that you have also written to the Permanent Secretary who I believe will respond to you separately about the employment practices of the Welsh Assembly Government.

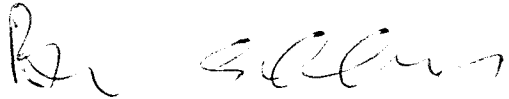
In terms of policy development, the Welsh Assembly Government is working to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people in Wales. This is reflected in the Welsh Minister's report on the implementation of the Disability Equality Duty published on 1st December. This first report provided an overview of how public authorities in Wales are embedding disability equality into their work.

Our report sets out recommendations for how the Welsh Assembly Government will take forward and co-ordinate action by public authorities to further improve on equality of opportunity for disabled people. A copy of the report can be found on the Welsh Assembly Government website: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/?lang=en>

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people in society. Our aim is to develop policies and deliver services that are exemplar to meeting and responding to the needs of the people of Wales. In working towards this goal, we will publish our first Single Equality Scheme shortly. It will allow us to look at and tackle key equality, diversity and human rights issues across all equality strands. It will help to identify where people might face multiple barriers in their everyday lives, including access to training and employment.

This will be supported by the Welsh Assembly Government's method for equality impact assessment, known as Inclusive Policy Making (IPM). The guidance also adopts a multi-strand approach and aims to reflect the principals of human rights. When used effectively, Inclusive Policy Making can remind people who develop policy and deliver services that the needs of the individual are central to what we do as a government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Gibbons', written in a cursive style.

Brian Gibbons AM

Dame Gill Morgan DBE

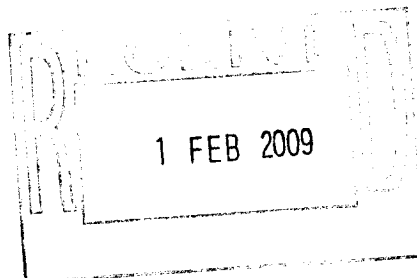
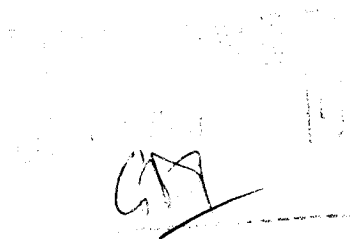
Ysgrifennydd Parhaol • Permanent Secretary



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-03-170

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Val Lloyd
Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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30 January 2009

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter dated 19 January 2008, regarding the employment of people with a learning disability. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to increasing the number of people we employ from underrepresented groups and already runs a supported employment scheme for candidates with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, special needs and/or mental health problems.

We have supported 11 candidates on this scheme since April 2008, 8 of whom have identifiable learning disabilities including Downs Syndrome, Aspergers and Autism. The scheme is run with a consortium of supported employment organisations and referrals come from various organisations such as Quest, Shaw Trust, Elite and Mencap.

The scheme requires the candidates to first complete a job preparation phase for up to 30 days (unpaid whilst they remain on their benefits). During this phase candidates are accompanied by a support worker to help them learn the role and manage the tasks. During this phase their suitability for a paid placement is assessed. If they are suitable then a paid placement is offered for a maximum of 50 weeks. Candidates are paid at team support level.

Since April 2008, 2 of the 11 candidates have been assessed as unsuitable for a paid placement. In addition a work placement for one candidate was ended early, as the work was too complex for them to manage. The remaining candidates have successfully progressed onto the paid placement phase of the scheme. All the candidates work part-time from a minimum of 8




hours a week to a maximum of 21 hours a week. Support workers continue to provide help and support throughout the placement to both candidates and line managers.

If you would like any additional information about the supported employment scheme offered by the Welsh Assembly Government, please contact the HR Strategy and Change Equality and Diversity Unit at the following address:

HR Strategy and Change Equality and Diversity Unit
Welsh Assembly Government

3rd Floor, East Wing,
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF24 2RH

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gill Morgan', written in a cursive style.

GILL MORGAN

Jane Hutt AC/AM

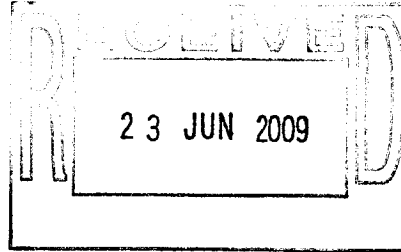
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-170
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/00824/09

Val Lloyd AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



19th June 2009

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 22 May regarding employment opportunities for people with a learning disability.

The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy and action plan for skills and employment, *Skills that Work for Wales* outlines a model of support which cuts across all client groups that require appropriate advice and guidance in securing employment and is therefore not specifically geared towards those with learning disabilities. However, *Careers Ladders* is a holistic approach which essentially maps an individual's journey through initial engagement, needs assessment and tailored support through to finding and securing sustainable employment.

As you may be aware, in partnership with Jobcentre Plus in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has been operating a programme aimed at economically inactive customers in the most deprived areas across Wales. The key aim of *Want2Work* is to identify and plug gaps in mainstream employment programmes, creating additional labour market support opportunities in community locations to a greater number of individuals than that provided by core labour market programmes. The key objective of the project is around community engagement with those people who traditionally do not volunteer to participate in the standard employment programmes, extending this support to those people who are ineligible to participate in traditional programmes because they are non-benefit recipients.

The Statement on Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability states that 'The Welsh Assembly Government believes it is important that authorities seek to maximise an individual's potential to be gainfully employed. Prior to retirement age, people with a learning disability should have equal access to government or other training schemes and other educational or lifelong learning opportunities where such schemes could help their personal development or career prospects and in particular help them secure employment'

A Sub Group of the Learning Disability Advisory Group called 'Meaningful Lives' has been established to look at Day Activities, Employment and Supported Living with a view to issuing guidance in each of these areas. Mencap is represented on the Learning Disability Advisory Group.

The Department for Work and Pensions is currently drafting an employment strategy for people with learning Disabilities called 'Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities'. My officials are working with the Department for Work and Pensions officials to understand how this strategy will impact on Wales.

Within the Welsh Assembly Government, a supported employment scheme is in place to enable candidates with learning disabilities to access and maintain paid employment after learning the job. Support workers are provided to learn the role alongside the candidate and provide support and assistance throughout the placement. The supported employment scheme has been a success since it began in April 2008 and 12 people have taken placements through the supported employment route, of which 6 have progressed to paid placements. Candidates have been placed in departments across Wales including Newtown, Aberystwyth, Swansea and Cardiff. All candidates have come via the Workstep initiative and it is envisaged that the Welsh Assembly Government will work to support the candidates into permanent positions.

I hope this information is useful.

Best wishes,

Jane

Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

7th September 2009

Dear Ms Lloyd,

Mencap Cymru is pleased to be able to continue our work with the Petitions Committee and the National Assembly for Wales as part of our campaign for better employment opportunities for people with a learning disability.

This letter is written in response to the letter received by the committee from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt AM, dated 19th June 2009. We appreciate the Minister taking time to look at the concerns raised in our campaign about Welsh Assembly Government policies designed to support people into employment or to take advantage of employment opportunities. We do unfortunately feel that her response does not answer our concerns and still have some real issues of contention with the Minister's response and would like to address these in this letter.

Skills that Work for Wales

While we recognise that Skills that Work for Wales (STFW) is a pro-active strategy that makes some excellent strides to support people to gain employment, Jane Hutt's statement that it "cuts across all client groups" looking to access employment opportunities is true in theory. The experience of people with a learning disability and their families that we speak to, suggests that in practice this is not happening.

Skills that Work for Wales outlines a personal approach to supporting people to gain relevant skills and help them find and keep paid employment. This approach should be ideal for people with a learning disability. Unfortunately the key commitments: to basic skills, to apprenticeships linked to qualifications and to high level skills are not relevant to many people with a learning disability.

Again in our experience, and in line with the academic research, the most effective way of supporting people with a learning disability into work is through work based learning whereby the ability to carry out the job should determine the success or otherwise of the learning. Literacy, numeracy and qualification based outcomes whilst desirable for people with a learning disability for whom this is an effective and meaningful intervention, are not relevant for the majority of people with a learning disability in Wales.

Reasonable adjustment of qualification based learning programmes is required to prevent discriminating against people with a learning disability. This principle was discussed several years ago with the then Minister Jane Davidson who was supportive of this approach but we have not seen this explicitly stated in policy nor widely implemented in practice within WAG funded programmes. Skills that Work

for Wales does not work for people with a learning disability and will continue to fail them until this specific issue is addressed. (The focus on qualification based approaches is widespread and likely to increase in the future and we can see the logic of this for the majority of the Welsh population. This makes the need for a new approach around learning disability more critical.)

A review of policies and practice is required to agree what the approach to qualification based programmes, especially work based learning programmes, will be and to ensure it is embedded within future policies and implementations.

We welcome the introduction of learning coaches and learning plans that are mentioned in the strategy. We would however question how numerous these have been in their uptake amongst people with a learning disability. Through our contacts within Mencap's supported employment services and other Supported Employment Agencies (SEAs) with whom we work, we have yet to come across a school or pupil with a learning disability who has benefited from this type of support. This is not to say that the strategy is necessarily poor, rather that the implementation is flawed. A review is required to understand why these initiatives are not reaching people with a learning disability and how this could be better provided.

In her response the Minister also highlights "Career Ladders" as a holistic approach to mapping an individual's journey to working life through various channels. Again, we have yet to come across an example of a person with a learning disability accessing *Careers Ladders*, this would lead us to suggest a review of how this scheme is marketed, and whether this process is fully inclusive and far-reaching so as to attract all of its intended targets, is much needed.

There has been a focus on people who are "NEET" in recent policy guidance. In Skills that Work for Wales, the definition of whether someone is NEET is given as "a young person aged 16 – 19 who is not in employment, education or training". The majority of people with a learning disability wanting to work are not in this age range. It is also questionable whether a significant number of people with a learning disability (of all ages) would be considered as "not in employment, education or training". It is unclear whether this definition encompasses people who are being provided with support through day services. Many adults with a learning disability will be attending day services and therefore we believe are excluded from targeted work aimed at those who are not in employment, education or training. Furthermore, others will be attending college courses for many years, often repeating the same courses several times and not gaining places on the courses they actually want to do. Again, this would exclude people from the NEET definition, but they are not actually gaining skills that will increase their employability and increase the chances of attaining their goal of paid work.

WAG Placements

The placements that the Minister draws attention to within the Assembly Government are very encouraging and set a good example of how employers can demonstrate that employment opportunities are open to people who could otherwise be excluded. The majority, but not all participants, on this programme have a learning disability. The types of permanent paid positions also vary in the hours offered with some working full time hours and some as little as six per week.

This provides valuable flexibility. We wholeheartedly support the Wales wide nature of the scheme and the ability of candidates to apply for internal vacancies.

The scheme is relatively new and as we have supported individuals working through the process we are finding that there is some confusion about what happens at the end of the year. In particular the transfer of funding responsibilities for the roles needs to be more transparent and should a role not continue support needs to be provided to individuals to apply for and learn any new role.

Valuing Employment Now

Mencap, both at a UK and Wales-wide level, welcome the initiative behind the Cross Governmental Department scheme *Valuing Employment Now* in its objective of increasing the number of people with a learning disability in paid employment by statutory bodies (including the DWP itself). This demonstrates the public sector taking the lead in promoting equality in the workplace for people with a learning disability.

At a recent LDIAG meeting, a representative from DWP presented on the strategy, and it was clear the commitment to employing people with a learning disability in the DWP itself is applicable only to England at present. We believe a Wales specific strategy is required. The principles and approach of Valuing Employment Now are very welcome and mirror the work we have done in Wales with all members of the Association of Supported Employment Agencies in Wales, (previously presented to the committee as the Employment Model). We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Welsh Government in both the formulation and implementation of such a strategy.

Statement on Policy and Practice

Mencap Cymru agrees with the vision of the Statement on Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability that authorities seek to “maximise an individual’s potential to be gainfully employed.” We would like to see this being implemented effectively. The current trend appears to be less support available to people with a learning disability.

We are aware of several local authorities who have withdrawn funding from employment services for people with a learning disability either cutting completely their support of employment initiatives or cutting learning disability specific services and combining them into a generic service. Consequently we have seen a reduction in the support provided to people with a learning disability to find employment contrary to the Policy and Practice Statement direction.

LDIAG is currently working on developing guidance on employment services and we understand that this guidance will focus on standards for employment services in Wales. This is very different from a comprehensive strategy. For example, it is likely to look only at adult provision. In our employment model sent to you when we presented in May, we demonstrated the case for interventions from the age of 11 (this is outside the LDIAG remit) and an integrated approach across public sector workforce planning, education services for 11 – 25 year olds, benefits advice as well as good quality supported employment. Only the latter will be covered by the LDIAG work.

Data Collection

From Mencap Cymru's research into current employment levels of people with a learning disability with local authorities, the majority responded that they do not monitor specific disabilities of employees. While all employees certainly have a right to privacy and equality in the workplace, we believe that without this information it will be difficult to ascertain if people with a learning disability are being given an opportunity to contribute to civil society in Wales through finding and keeping paid employment. A simple adjustment that allowed for the number of employees with a learning disability to be recorded would allow local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government to be able to monitor success in this area.

Whilst it is difficult to determine how many people with a learning disability are in work, due to this lack of data, we are not seeing any change in the actual experience or opportunities of our members. Most say they want to work but do not have the chance to find paid work; day services or voluntary work substituting for this important aspect of life experience. This in itself demonstrates that Government policies and initiatives are not changing the experiences of people with a learning disability and employment.

Related policies with an impact on employment

You may be aware that over the summer holidays a group of people with a learning disability toured Wales on public transport to raise awareness of our employment campaign. It was interesting to discover that a Wales wide problem arose with the use of supporters on disabled bus passes which prevented people with a learning disability from using their bus passes for travel training. This is one small example of how other Welsh Assembly Government policies can create a barrier to people with a learning disability finding and keeping paid work.

Summary

We hope that our response shows that there are still significant gaps in the DCELLS initiatives highlighted in the response given to the Committee and additional policy barriers to supporting people with a learning disability to find and sustain paid work. We believe we have demonstrated there is a need for a comprehensive review of the policies that should be providing support to people with a learning disability to gain and keep employment. We want to see such a review take place urgently.

We believe that any review should include the development of key principles for a comprehensive strategy on how to increase the proportion of people with a learning disability in work in Wales, including how this will be monitored, targets for the public sector and agreed approaches to reasonable adaptation for qualification based approaches.

We know that you will agree with us that it is vital to ensure that the policies intended to support for people with a learning disability find work, are effective, unfortunately our discussions with professionals who work in the field of supported employment, have found very few people who have heard of or accessed the services set out in the policies/strategies referred to in Jane Hutt's response. We

believe that reviewing both the content of the policies/strategies and the way the services they offer are marketed, would truly show how many people who could experience significant benefit, actually are.

A Wales specific strategy that mirrors the initiative taken by *Valuing Employment Now*, is essential if people with a learning disability are to be supported to make a contribution to the Welsh economy. Mencap Cymru would also welcome the opportunity to be involved in any further work needed on developing such a strategy, to highlight some of the solutions as well as support understanding of the barriers and current shortfalls in existing policy.

Again we like you want policies that are not merely aspirational, but actually see more people with a learning disability find and keep paid employment. We therefore ask that you consider referring our petition to the Enterprise and Learning Committee and request that they undertake a full scale review of all policies created by the Welsh Assembly Government to help people with a learning disability find work. We believe that it is time to undertake such a critical review and would support the review of services for disabled young people carried out by the Equality of Opportunities Committee in 2006 and the recent review of further education provision for disabled students carried out by the ELC.

We would be happy to meet with you again to discuss our concerns.

With very best wishes

Liz Neal
Director, Mencap Cymru

Jane Hutt AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/06708/09

Val Lloyd
Chair Petitions Committee,
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1NA

20 October 2009

Dear Val,

PETITION - MENCAP CYMRU EMPLOYMENT

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd October 2009 regarding the Welsh Assembly Government's employment strategies and policies for people with learning disabilities.

The *Skills that Work for Wales* Strategy is, as you are aware, an inclusive approach and outlines a model of support which cuts across all client groups and all ages that require appropriate advice and guidance in securing employment.

Careers Ladder

On 14th October the Deputy Minister for Skills announced the implementation of a Careers Ladders Wales pilot project in Rhyl. The Pilot seeks to ensure everyone has skills essential to take up employment and maintain their employability within the labour market, delivered as part of a customer centred and integrated skills for employment service. We will work with Department for Work and Pensions and Local Partners to deliver this commitment. The project will follow the Careers Ladder Framework as set out in the Skills that Work for Wales strategy. This framework sets out an individual's journey from initial engagement with the labour market through a seamless offer of support from a range of key partners. The Rhyl Pilot will test the appropriateness of the Careers Ladders approach for all client group and report back on its effectiveness.

As we seek to improve learning and skills systems for Wales it is vital we set appropriate conditions related to our funding and the support we make available to different groups of learners. We are still progressing our plans on a publication that drives forward the commitments we made in our Skills That Work for Wales Strategy and Action Plan, namely a review of our funding policy.

NEETs Plan

In April 2009 the Assembly Government published the NEETs Plan to support and help reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training in Wales. The Plan outlines the need to improve our systems to ensure young people remain engaged and their

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progress is monitored, to enhance advice and guidance to young people and provide appropriate support and provision tailored to individual need. This is aimed at young people aged between 16-18 and cuts across all client groups, including young people with learning disabilities. The NEETs Plan provides a number of actions to prevent disengagement and re-engage where necessary and the Welsh Assembly Government are working with key partners from across Wales to deliver this.

Free Bus Pass for people with learning disabilities

With regard to the problems that were experienced during the summer with the free bus passes, officials from the Department for the Economy and Transport have advised that once a disabled person has been issued a free bus pass by their Local Authority they can ask their Local Authority to also allow the disabled passenger to be accompanied on the journey with an escort, in such circumstances the escort will also travel for free while they are accompanying the passenger.

Valuing Employment Now

The Department of Work and Pension's 'Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities' Strategy is a UK Strategy and my officials are meeting Department for Work and Pension officials on 21st October to discuss how this Strategy can be implemented in Wales.

JobCentre Plus Support

Jobcentre Plus have provided information on the range of support that is available through them to help people with learning disabilities get back into the labour market, some of these include:

- Disability Employment Advisers (DEA's) - work with disabled customers and deal with significant numbers of customers with a learning disability. These customers vary from those with low support needs to those whose needs are very significant. The DEA will work with the individual at a pace that suits them and complete an action plan that is agreed by the customer. The DEA will also liaise with specialist providers and referral agencies. They will also actively monitor customers with a learning disability after they have referred them to any additional provision.
- Work Preparation - Specialist providers use Job Coaches to work on a one to one basis with the customer. They use a process of 'systematic instruction'. In essence, the job coach learns the specific tasks first and then uses a step-by-step approach to train the customer. After a period of time, the job coach withdraws support and the customer is able to perform the full range of tasks un-aided. The Jobcentre Plus funds additional support for 'enhanced basic skills assessment' where this has been identified as beneficial for the individual to complete a programme effectively.
- Workstep - helps customers with more significant barriers obtain and keep work.
- Access to Work - There is a wide range of support available for this customer group from this programme. This could include assistance with 'travel to work' issues. It may take a considerable amount of time for a customer to learn the route into work – something we take for granted. A job coach will 'travel train' the customer but if the customer is not able to cope with this, they could apply for support with taxis to work.

As you are aware, moving forward from October 2010, a new programme called Work Choice will replace Work Preparation and Workstep. These programmes will be significantly enhanced and will benefit customers with a learning disability even more. For example:

- Module 1 of the new programme will be very focussed on obtaining a job and will last approximately six months. It could be extended to nine months if necessary. This will give a customer with a learning disability some real quality time to establish their strengths, job goals and aspirations. Additionally it will enable the identification of the on-going support the individual might need in a job before the person starts work and setting this up in advance of the person starting work.

- Module 2 will be a 'time-bound' period on 'supported employment'. The Jobcentre Plus contracted provider will support the individual over an eighteen month/two year period. Customers with a learning disability will benefit from this period and in many cases will be able to come off the 'supported element' and remain in the job unsupported.
- Module 3 will still be available for those customers who need longer term support beyond the two-year period. The emphasis will still be on developing the individual and providers will be using a meaningful measurement of the 'distance travelled' by the customer from the time they joined the programme.
- The above three modules will be underpinned by an Access to Work programme that will be robustly funded.

Skill Build

The Welsh Assembly Government's Skill Build Programme is accessible for people with Learning Disabilities. Skill Build is an all-age programme and is for learners who may require occupational skills learning, and/or who are vocationally uncertain – for this it offers work taster placements, as well as confidence building, motivational classes and help with Basic Skills. To support people on their training Work Based Learning Providers can claim 'Additional Learning Support' which is a fund specifically for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is similar to support provided in Further Education and is designed to enable learners to access programmes in the same way and with similar opportunities as non-disabled learners. Funding can be applied for - human support such as notetakers, learning support assistants and tutorial support and technical support such as dyslexia software, laptops, Brailers.

Projects

A 'Coastal Project' has been established, which is sponsored by the City and County of Swansea and has secured ESF Priority 2 funding, to promote vocational guidance, employment, skills training and lifelong learning opportunities for individuals who are currently economically inactive as a result of illness, disability, (Mental Illness, Learning Disability, Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment) substance misuse problems and/or the serious social disadvantage associated with the transition from long-term care into adulthood. This project has accessed ESF money of £27million.

The Wellbeing Through Work project is a joint NHS, Welsh Assembly Government and Remploy initiative that aims to support employed participants who are at risk of losing their job due to a work limiting health condition. This will include changing perceptions about health and work, improving work and the workplace. It also includes dedicated case management support for people with a work limiting health condition and/or disability to remain in work.

The principal focus of the Fit For Work Services Pilots (FFWS) will be to provide personalised back-to-work support to sickness absentees - people off sick from work on health grounds - to assist them in their recovery and support them to return to sustained work more quickly than they otherwise would. FFWS Pilots will be selected from across Great Britain, including but not limited to areas with high levels of deprivation. In Wales, the pilot will take place in Rhyl.

Best wishes,

Jane

Letter from Equality of Opportunity Committee

**Equality of Opportunity
Committee**

Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal

Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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25 November 2009

Dear Val

Petition: Mencap Cymru

Thank you for your letter dated 24 November 2009 regarding the petition submitted by Mencap Cymru which was recently considered by the Petitions Committee.

I note with interest the issues raised by the petition in relation to the employment of people with a learning disability. The Equality of Opportunity Committee scrutinises the Welsh Assembly Government's Single Equality Scheme and the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme on an annual basis. The Committee will be looking at these schemes again in the spring term and will focus part of the scrutiny on the issues raised in the petition.

I will write to you in due course with an update based on the evidence gained in these sessions.

Yours Sincerely

Ann Jones
Chair, Equality of Opportunity Committee



Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

28 April 2010

Dear Christine

Petition from Mencap Cymru – more employment opportunities for people with a learning disability (P-03-170)

On 29 January 2009 Lorraine Barrett AM, Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly, wrote to Val Lloyd AM, the previous Chair of the Petitions Committee, about the Committee's consideration of Mencap Cymru's petition to:

“urge the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in employing more people with a learning disability, and to encourage other public sector employers such as the NHS and local authorities to employ more people with a learning disability.”

Our Management Board recently considered proposals for a pilot work placement opportunity in the Assembly for a person with learning

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E-bost/Email: Claire.Clancy@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

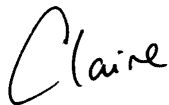
disabilities. I am pleased to say that the proposal was unanimously approved and we hope that the placement will begin this autumn.

The pilot placement is intended to enable an individual to gain valuable work experience in a paid, part-time post, the duties of which will be dependent on the service in which the individual is placed and the individual's ability and skill levels. Our HR and Equality Teams will work closely with Mencap and other partners to ensure that the person undertaking the placement is fully supported and empowered to realise their capabilities. If the pilot scheme is successful, our intention is to offer temporary work placements to other individuals in future.

We believe that the pilot scheme is a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the Assembly's petitions process and we are delighted that we are able to provide this opportunity to an under-represented group in partnership with Mencap Cymru.

If you would like any further information about the pilot placement scheme please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire Clancy

**Prif Weithredwr a Chlerc/Chief Executive and Clerk
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru/National Assembly for Wales**

cc Lorraine Barrett AM, Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly

18.05.2010

Dear Christine,

Apologies for the lateness of our response to the Petitions Committee's letter, dated 17.11.2009, concerning our petition. Since our last response from the then Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Jane Hutt, we have been conducting several pieces of research around employment opportunities and transition for young people with a learning disability. We have also in this period, attempted to meet with the new Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills, and Deputy Minister for Skills, Innovation & Science.

In our oral evidence session we stated that one of the major shortfalls in policy implementation was that young people with a learning disability were not getting access to work experience and careers advice. We have since carried out a small scale research project with service users of our *Cer Amdani!* project, that validates our initial assessment of work experience amongst young people with a learning disability.

The results show that of eighty two young people with a learning disability in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, only twelve had had access to work experience whilst at school. Of these twelve pupils, only five said the experience was positive and the same amount had just one full week of work experience. This clearly demonstrates that policies are not reaching the people who most need support to enter the workforce, in stark contrast to the Minister's assertions otherwise.

Mencap Cymru are still of the belief that the policies, which are strong in the majority of their subject matter, are failing to be implemented fully among the people who need them the most.

Following our meeting with the Deputy Minister for Skills, Innovation and Science, we feel we are no closer to bringing

our petition to a close, as many of the policy and implementation changes we are looking for are not in her brief.

We have also been told that the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Leighton Andrews, will be unable to meet us at this time to discuss our campaign. This will obviously prove a stumbling block in our attempts to get the review of policies, designed to support people with a learning disability to train for and get paid employment, at a Welsh Assembly Government level.

It is for this reason that we ask the Petitions Committee to carry out a small review of the policies we highlighted in our Policy Risk Matrix, which was submitted as part of the oral evidence we gave on May 19th of last year. We believe that even a small review would highlight what we know to be true. Many of the policies that are designed to support people with a learning disability to train for and get paid employment, are failing to reach and support them.

Mencap Cymru, as an organisation that works extensively in the field of employment for people with a learning disability, would be happy to support you in whatever way you deem appropriate in conducting this review.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Stranks
Campaigns Officer

Paper from Mencap Cymru Employment Model

Purpose

To develop a strategic vision of the role of supported employment in helping young people and adults with a learning Disability into employment. The model begins at an early age encouraging the concept that for people with a learning disability work is the normal route.

To form partnerships to apply for Convergence funding to ensure employment services for Adults with Learning Disabilities remain a reality.

To work in collaboration and collectively use the skills of organisations and providers and resources to make the connections across Wales and impact on the funding and development of support systems.

To drive up the proportion of people with learning disabilities in paid employment.

To embed a strand of welfare benefits support and advice within the supported employment model.

To ensure that people with Learning Disabilities maximise their opportunity to work and maximise their income opportunity.

To collectively campaign and maximise our voice to ensure we try and make important changes which allow people to raise aspirations, get access to good quality work experience, work based skills training, supported employment and welfare benefits advice.

This model is totally in line with the aims of the government to get people economically active. Reinforced by the draft Welsh Assembly government skills and employment strategy, "Skills that work for Wales "and "NEET"(not in work education or employment.)

To get investment in this model, to make a real step change.

Why is the model necessary?

“The right to employment for people with developmental disabilities is paramount in the current socio political climate, it is a fundamental right for all and as such must apply to marginalised groups, such as those with learning disabilities because it provides a means to ensure their full participation in all aspects of society.”

Walsh et al 1999

We believe that people that are better off when they are in work. Worklessness is strongly associated with deprivation and physical and mental ill health. Finding a job can help lift someone out of poverty and improve self esteem, health and well being. This is true for most people with or without learning disabilities.

“National and international data indicate that fewer than 1 in 10 people with intellectual disability are in paid employment and this contrasts with approximately 1 in 3 disabled people more generally.

Thus people with intellectual disability are at significant risk of economic inactivity and the associated risk of economic exclusion.”

Smith et al 2004

Funding routes are changing. Local Authorities are questioning as whether the supported employment model is delivering results. Employment services want to move to larger generic contracts. There is a concern that priority for Learning Disability only services is slipping. (Mental health commissioning proposal)

The policy review of additional educational needs part 3 transition report, described a number of respondents who gave evidence as citing problems with the benefits system acting as a disincentive to both working and training.

According to an evaluation recently completed by Dr. Steve Beyer, from the Welsh Centre for learning Disabilities , Cardiff

University, North Lanarkshire, Scotland have been highlighted in a number of policy documents as an exemplar, particularly in their success in obtaining paid employment for people with learning disabilities for over 16 hrs per week. This has been with relatively unfavourable unemployment levels locally. Providing expert welfare rights advice as an integral part of the supported employment process has been crucial. They have made people better off through a blend of earned income, non-means tested benefits and Working Tax Credits.

The report states that, replication would require:

Investment at a significant level to provide enough job coach and Welfare Rights Advice and management resources and effective training in the process.

Replication of the intensive Supported Employment process, and including expert Welfare rights advice.

Monitoring to ensure the process is delivered to an adequate level of intensity.

Process and outcome.

Mencap Cymru and Learning Disability Wales have been focusing on employment issues for people with a Learning Disability, particularly on how we make work a reality for more people with a Learning Disability.

Mencap Cymru has initiated this model with input from Steve Beyer and the model encompasses a welfare benefits advice and support service.

The aim is to use the model to make a step change in the way we promote supported employment and influence future funding. In addition we would like to explore a large partnership ESF bid across Wales.

The Model

The model provides a seamless journey into employment starting with young people with a learning disability, through to adulthood, focusing on ambitions and aspirations, work based skills and training, supported employment incorporating welfare benefits support and advice.

Age 11-16	Introducing the concept of work
Age 14-25	Supported work based training and work Experience placements and Welfare Benefits Advice
Age 16plus	Supported employment and Welfare Benefits advice

Age 11-16

The model would involve the introduction of the concept of work by encouraging the development of ambitions and aspirations of young people to work.

The model advocates the participation of young people in good quality supported work experience placements, work based skills training and in addition using the function of role models. This model will introduce families to the idea that for young people with a learning disability, work is a reality.

Age 14-25

The model advocates good quality, well supported work based skills training and quality supported work experience placements. There is evidence to suggest (transition report) that there is criticism of the lack of opportunities in school for supported work placements for pupils with additional needs, which lead to later difficulties in gaining employment. From the age of 14yrs and adulthood there specialist welfare benefits advice and support will be available.

Age 16 plus

Young people and Adults will have access to well funded, quality supported employment services. In addition there will be targeted welfare benefits support encouraging a greater percentage of people with a learning disability gaining employment for 16hrs or more, impacting on income levels.

Conclusion

Through government rhetoric about supporting people with a learning disability to gain employment and maximise their potential has been in existence for some time, the services provided have never been appropriate for achieving this.

Ken Smith, Chief Executive of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities States:

“There is a widening gap between the policy on people with a learning disability (which is good) and what is happening on the front line, particularly in terms of people not getting the support they need. We are selling people the dream, but then not delivering and that’s worse than if we had done nothing at all.”

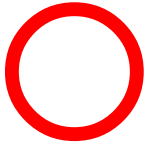
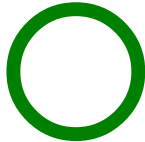
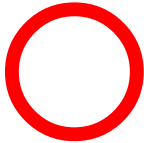
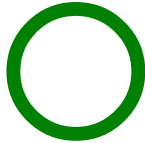
This model will be breaking new ground because it is based on the identification of these longstanding failures in service provision and will be promoting the action required to rectify them.

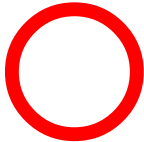
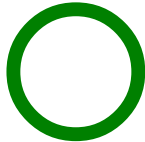

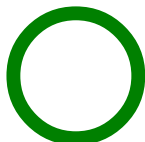
Mencap Cymru’s observations, experiences and consultations with people with a learning disability have revealed that people with a learning disability need a comprehensive seamless service throughout the younger formative years and into adulthood if they are to improve chances of gaining and sustaining real employment.

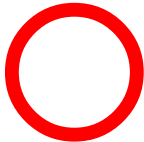
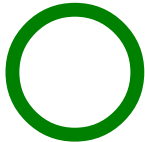
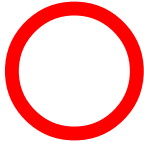
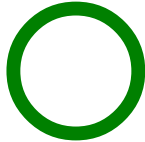
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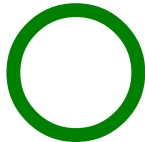
**Mencap Cymru POLICY RISK MATRIX : Petitions Committee May 19th 2009
(PRIVATE)**

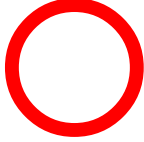
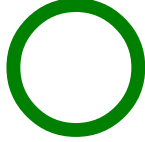

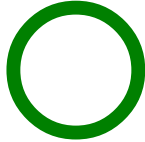
○ = takes us away from an Equal Wales ○ = has no impact on the existing situation
○ = takes us towards an Equal Wales

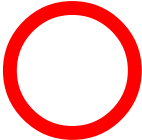
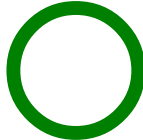
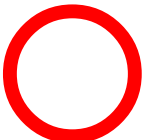
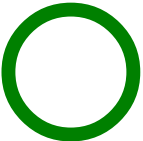
POLICY NAME	CURRENT STATUS	REASON FOR CURRENT STATUS	CHANGES NEEDED	RESULTING STATUS IF CHANGES IMPLEMENTED
Assembly Measure on Learning Pathways		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not include special schools • Emphasis is on Level 2 qualifications and above to demonstrate vocational success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Specific inclusion of special schools * Shift in emphasis towards “appropriate qualifications” or work-based training 	
14-19 Learning Pathways A commitment to transforming the learning provision for all young people in Wales.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mention of learning coaches requiring any special knowledge to help support people with learning disabilities • Personal support to people with a learning disability is time-intensive and will require a continuity of funding • Mainstream careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Learning coaches must have proven experience of supporting people with a learning disability. * Careers advice to people with a learning disability needs to be specifically targeted, both aspirational and realistic, with guarantees of support 	

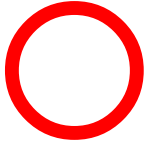
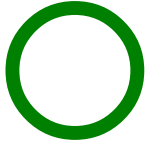
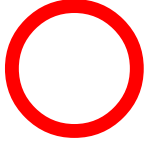
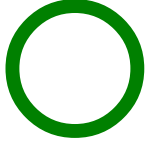
		advisors or not well equipped to serve people with a learning disability		
“Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales” – the NEET Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Does not mention special schools * Although it does mention that young people who are NEET are 8 times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs, there is nothing in the strategy that refers to their particular needs. * States that the pilot of the unfit for purpose Skillbuild programme, proposed to provide the level of intensive support required by some young people especially those who have significant basic skills problems, is extending training opportunities at Level 2 and above. 	Develop a clear, integrated strategy document setting out how the needs of young people with a learning disability will be met.	
Single Equality Scheme		Unable to identify the proportion of people with a learning disability because of generic “disability” approach to data collection	Learning disability specific indicators will demonstrate the levels of equality experienced by people with a	

			learning disability	
Words Talk, Numbers Count – the second basic skills strategy, 2005		<p>* The emphasis is on the mainstream. The only specific reference to people with a learning disability instructs providers of mainstream provision to ensure that people with a learning disability are not disadvantaged, and then highlights the availability of staff learning disability training and materials for teaching</p> <p>* Identifies a lack of available support for post 16 learners needing basic skills. Most people with a learning disability are “older learners”. Unless there is robust provision, they will not develop basic skills</p>	<p>* We would wish to see more specific mention to people with a learning disability within overarching National policies.</p> <p>There needs to be a commitment to the long-term funding of learning disability-experienced job coaches</p>	
WEFO 2007-2013 structural funding streams		<p>* The tendering process puts specialized voluntary supported employment agencies at a disadvantage. Huge resources are invested in preparation of a tender, even as a</p>	<p>* Support for voluntary agencies to compete on a more equal footing with large private providers in the tendering process</p> <p>* Assessment</p>	

		<p>partner agency, with no guarantees that the contract will be won</p> <p>* Unable to identify potential impact upon people with a learning disability because of generic “disability” approach within Disability Impact Assessments.</p>	<p>must measure impact on people with a learning disability specifically</p>	
<p>“We are on our Way”, 2008 - a policy agenda to transform the lives of disabled children and young people.</p> <p>Measure 2: Access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills by equipping all disabled children and young people with the skills they need to reach their full potential.</p>		<p>* The measure to provide access to comprehensive educational, learning and training opportunities is aspirational, but the funding pressures on Education departments give us cause for concern that special needs education will be marginalized.</p> <p>* The WAG allocated £5.1 million over 3 years to 2009 for Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools, “to support an inclusive education system in Wales”. It acted to promote the use of special schools as a community-focused resource base, and raised the profile of special school expertise in some areas, promoting the exchange of</p>	<p>Strengthen funding streams to special schools to ensure their expertise is available to mainstream staff and to decrease their sense of isolation</p>	

		skills between special schools and mainstream. But it was only £77,000 pa to each LA area. We do not know if funding will be extended.		
Data collection mechanisms		If "Disability" is listed as a generic category for data collection purposes within the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities, there can be no demonstration of the numbers of people with learning disabilities employed unless they self declare their learning disability.	Specific measure for collecting data on people with a learning disability	
Actions from the Enquiry into service for Disabled Children and Young People		Does not have a negative impact upon the outcomes of young people with a learning disability however evidence from visiting schools shows that young people are still not supported to see employment as a life goal.	Dedicated role model scheme to help foster aspirations of young disabled people. Better involvement of young people with a learning disability in PSE and citizenship training.	

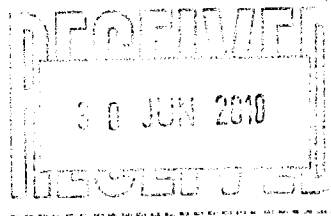
<p>Review of Careers Service in Wales – terms of reference</p>		<p>“Careers IAG has an important part to play in many areas of action related to strategies impacting on young people: The entitlement of young people to Learning Coaching, personal support networking and. specialist, individualised, impartial guidance services”.</p> <p>Careers Wales does not have the capacity or experience to provide the depth of service needed to support 14-19 year olds with a learning disability into work.</p>	<p>The review must take account of the lack of capacity within Careers Wales to provide sufficiently robust support for people with a learning disability</p>	
<p>Skills that Work for Wales - a highly-educated, highly-skilled and high-employment Wales.</p>		<p>Focuses on qualification achievement and higher level skills</p>	<p>No reference to people with a learning disability at all.</p> <p>Needs to emphasize opportunities which are not qualification outcomes. Eg: supported employment</p>	

<p>DWP Specialist Disability Programme - A reorganization of the contracting arrangements for supported employment services for disabled people.</p>		<p>* Becoming a prime contractor requires large financial reserves, which places voluntary organizations in a very vulnerable financial position and inequality in tendering.</p> <p>* Providing quality, specialist employment support to people with a learning disability is expensive because it is time intensive. We are concerned that private contractors top-slicing will have a detrimental effect on quality of provision.</p>	<p>Provision of bridging loans to 3rd Sector organizations to help them bid for contracts</p>	
<p>Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales, 2009.</p> <p>Designed to monitor learning providers' performance in a structured way</p>		<p>* Providers of Post-16 learning for people with a learning disability should, of course, be monitored. However, no mention is made of this type of training provision.</p> <p>* Learner outcome indicators are designed to measure overall success, defined as the proportion of all terminated learning activities or programmes which lead to an award. This may act as a barrier to people with a learning disability entering</p>	<p>There needs to be clarity about how the quality of post 16 provision for people with a learning disability will be monitored.</p> <p>What reasonable adjustments can be made to move away from simply monitoring the ability pass a qualification or award?</p>	

		mainstream courses		

Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal

Equality of Opportunity Committee



Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Christine Chapman AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

29 June 2010

Dear Chris

Thank you for your letter of 21 June regarding the Mencap petition on employment of people with a learning disability.

Although the Committee did not focus specifically on learning disabilities in our discussion with the Assembly Commission, we did discuss the recruitment of people with a disability more generally and whether there were any particular difficulties with the application process that was preventing people from meeting the minimum criteria.

The Committee will be scrutinising the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on the Welsh Assembly Government's Single Equality Scheme at its meeting on 21 September, and I will ensure that the issues raised in the petition are included in that session.

We plan to follow up previous Committee inquiries in the New Year to assess the extent to which recommendations have been taken forward. As part of this exercise we will also be reviewing the Second Assembly Committee's report on Service Provision for Disabled Young People and will consider the issue of employment of young people with a learning disability as part of this.

Yours sincerely

Ann Jones AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

Croesewir gonebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal / Equality of Opportunity Committee
Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgorau / Committee Service
Ffôn / Tel : 029 2089 8148
E-bost / E-mail : equality.com@m.wales.gsi.gov.uk

Briefing on the *Cer Amdani!* Project and its Outcomes

In Mencap Cymru's previous correspondence with the Petitions Committee, the experience of *Cer Amdani!* service users was highlighted as evidence that young people with a learning disability were getting unequal access and support to work experience and other work-based learning.

To provide a little context, the *Cer Amdani!* project was launched in August 2008 and made possible by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. The project operates in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouth, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Newport, working exclusively with 19-25 years olds with a learning disability.

The aim of the project is to increase the number of young people with a learning disability in paid employment in Wales by delivering opportunities to increase their readiness to enter the world of work, in the same way as their non-disabled peers. This is done by providing individual job coaches who work on a 1-to-1 basis to understand the service users specific requirements and understand their aspirations. Support was given in work experience, job coaching and finding paid employment. Other aims of the project are to increase confidence, CV writing skills, travel training, independence, interview techniques and greater access to employers.

The *Cer Amdani!* project has also given employers the opportunity to see what people with a learning disability can achieve, and taught parents to realise that work is an option for their children when they leave school. This has been facilitated through delivering workshops and seminars at high profile events, and working with the campaigns team on the Employment Campaign; "I Want to Work". This has dispelled many misconceptions that employers had historically held about the ability of people with a learning disability to work and achieve.

As highlighted in the previous correspondence, the number of people surveyed through the project in South West Wales, re-iterates Mencap Cymru's point about access to work experience (see Appendix 1). Looking at the results, they show that of the 82 young people surveyed, only 12 state that they had received work experience or undertook work based learning whilst at school.

Further to this, only 7 of those 12 that had undertaken work experience, had rated it as positive. Also worthy of note, is the fact that many of the young people surveyed that did have access to work experience did not complete full days of work. Below are examples of just some of the experiences of the *Cer Amdani!* service users' access to work experience. All quotes relate to their experiences of work before they were supported by the *Cer Amdani!* project:

"I was given work experience for one week, but I wasn't asked what I wanted to do, I was placed on my own in a shop with no

support, stacking shelves, even though I couldn't read the labels on any of the items or on the shelves, bit of a disaster really”
- JH, 21 Ceredigion

“At college I was on a mainstream course for computers, everyone in the group was given a work experience for one week, except for me. I was the only one in the group not given work experience; I was also the only person in the group with a learning disability.”
- AB, Pembrokeshire

“I was given work experience like most everyone else on my course in the college library, this was because we were told that there was not enough support to allow us out of college , so I never really knew what it was like to work in a proper office; still don't because I have since found out that my qualifications are not good enough to work in an office and college said that I was not good enough to go onto NVQ level 2 course, really what was the point”
Anon.

One of the reasons that the project has been such a success is the flexibility with which the model is adapted to provide aspirational motivation and support. In the second year of the project, demand for the service remained consistently high with the number of referrals to the project reaching 129 individuals. Of the 93 individuals that are actively engaged on the project, 62 have access to work placements. This number of young people having access to work-based learning/placements/work experience is substantially higher than the figure of those who received work experience through school. This clearly demonstrates that 1-to-1 approaches to developing young disabled people to think about work as a viable option work. Non-disabled young people are taught to aspire from the beginning of adolescence up until they leave compulsory education, young people with a learning disability should be no different.

Mencap Cymru's employment model outlines a journey in which young people with a learning disability can be taught to aspire at the same stage of their lives as their non disabled peers. (see Appendix 2). It is our belief that these could easily be embedded in the curriculum for special schools and SEN Units of mainstream schools to develop goals and ambition in all young people.

The second year has seen the project take on different challenges, and present the recipients with new opportunities to develop. In its second year *Cer Amdani!* worked closely with the Mencap Cymru campaigns team on its employment campaign. The group met with the team to find out more about the project and were given support to become „local campaigners”, actively taking action and having a stake in political activity in Wales. Local Assembly Members were invited to meet with the group to discuss their concerns and answer questions. One of the members was also invited to meet with the

Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation & Skills, Lesley Griffiths AM, to discuss the „I Want to Work” campaign and his experiences. This is something that the volunteer would previously not have had the confidence to do, and it is from his involvement in the project that this confidence has developed.

Lynn Preece, Development Manager for Mencap Cymru says of the project; “With the right support, individuals not only achieve in things they never thought they could, but also change the attitudes of the people with whom they are closest to, and all they come into contact with. The more that this type of support is provided to people with a learning disability, the closer they move to a culture of „can do” is established.”

The „Big Lottery” funding for the *Cer Amdani!* project comes to an end in June 2011. The discontinuation of this clearly successful project will be of detriment to future young disabled people when it comes to preparing for, and entering, the employment market. The approaches taken by *Cer Amdani!* in supporting young people with a learning disability to be better prepared for the world of work are not mirrored elsewhere in the public sector. It is for this reason that we believe that it should be adopted in some way by public funding.

Mencap Cymru believes that as the project has had undeniably positive outcomes for its beneficiaries, it is a scheme that could easily be rolled out across Wales, igniting the aspirations and ambitions of young people aged 14-19.

The successes of the project clearly demonstrate that the approaches needed to ensure better equality of access to the jobs market are not difficult, simply more person centred, and require a better knowledge of learning disability. Such a scheme being funded to operate within each Local Education Authority would support numerous young people, aged 14-19, with a learning disability to aim higher and achieve. It would also fit in with the political vision of people in Wales being less dependent on the welfare system, economically contributing to their society and being included in the „Skills Agenda”. Mencap Cymru would welcome the opportunity to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to discuss ways in which such a scheme could be developed, piloted and implemented fully across Wales.

Simon Stranks
Campaigns & Policy Officer
Mencap Cymru

APPENDIX 1 : *Cer Amdani!* South West Statistics to illustrate access to work experience

Total no. beneficiaries engaged on the project up to and inclusive of Feb. 2010	Total no. of Responses	Total number of beneficiaries who stated they did have work Experience whilst at school	Total no. of beneficiaries who stated they did not have work experience whilst at school	No. who thought work experience good	No. who believed work Experience not good	No. who had one weeks Work experience
Ceredigion 22	20	4	16	2	2	2
Carmarthen 45	40	6	34	3	3	3
Pembroke 23	22	2	20	0	2	0

Appendix 2. Mencap Cymru Employment Model

Purpose

To develop a strategic vision of the role of supported employment in helping young people and adults with a learning Disability into employment. The model begins at an early age encouraging the concept that for people with a learning disability work is the normal route.

To form partnerships to apply for Convergence funding to ensure employment services for Adults with Learning Disabilities remain a reality.

To work in collaboration and collectively use the skills of organisations and providers and resources to make the connections across Wales and impact on the funding and development of support systems.

To drive up the proportion of people with learning disabilities in paid employment.

To embed a strand of welfare benefits support and advice within the supported employment model.

To ensure that people with Learning Disabilities maximise their opportunity to work and maximise their income opportunity.

To collectively campaign and maximise our voice to ensure we try and make important changes which allow people to raise aspirations, get access to good quality work experience, work based skills training, supported employment and welfare benefits advice.

This model is totally in line with the aims of the government to get people economically active. Reinforced by the draft Welsh Assembly government skills and employment strategy, "Skills that work for Wales" and "NEET"(not in work education or employment.)

To get investment in this model, to make a real step change.

Why is the model necessary?

"The right to employment for people with developmental disabilities is paramount in the current socio political climate, it is a fundamental right for all and as such must apply to marginalised groups, such as those with learning disabilities because it provides a means to ensure their full participation in all aspects of society."

Walsh et al 1999

We believe that people that are better off when they are in work. Worklessness is strongly associated with deprivation and physical and mental ill health. Finding a job can help lift someone out of poverty and improve self esteem, health and well being. This is true for most people with or without learning disabilities.

“National and international data indicate that fewer than 1 in 10 people with intellectual disability are in paid employment and this contrasts with approximately 1 in 3 disabled people more generally. Thus people with intellectual disability are at significant risk of economic inactivity and the associated risk of economic exclusion.”

Smith et al 2004

Funding routes are changing. Local Authorities are questioning as whether the supported employment model is delivering results. Employment services want to move to larger generic contracts. There is a concern that priority for Learning Disability only services is slipping. (Mental health commissioning proposal)

The policy review of additional educational needs part 3 transition report, described a number of respondents who gave evidence as citing problems with the benefits system acting as a disincentive to both working and training.

According to an evaluation recently completed by Dr. Steve Beyer, from the Welsh Centre for learning Disabilities , Cardiff University, North Lanarkshire, Scotland have been highlighted in a number of policy documents as an exemplar, particularly in their success in obtaining paid employment for people with learning disabilities for over 16 hrs per week. This has been with relatively unfavourable unemployment levels locally. Providing expert welfare rights advice as an integral part of the supported employment process has been crucial. They have made people better off through a blend of earned income, non-means tested benefits and Working Tax Credits.

The report states that, replication would require:

Investment at a significant level to provide enough job coach and Welfare Rights Advice and management resources and effective training in the process.

Replication of the intensive Supported Employment process, and including expert Welfare rights advice.

Monitoring to ensure the process is delivered to an adequate level of intensity.

Process and outcome.

Mencap Cymru and Learning Disability Wales have been focusing on employment issues for people with a Learning Disability, particularly on how we make work a reality for more people with a Learning Disability.

Mencap Cymru has initiated this model with input from Steve Beyer and the model encompasses a welfare benefits advice and support service.

The aim is to use the model to make a step change in the way we promote supported employment and influence future funding
In addition we would like to explore a large partnership ESF bid across Wales.

The Model

The model provides a seamless journey into employment starting with young people with a learning disability, through to adulthood, focusing on ambitions and aspirations, work based skills and training, supported employment incorporating welfare benefits support and advice.

Age 11-16	Introducing the concept of work
Age 14-25	Supported work based training and work Experience placements and Welfare Benefits Advice
Age 16plus	Supported employment and Welfare Benefits advice

Age 11-16

The model would involve the introduction of the concept of work by encouraging the development of ambitions and aspirations of young people to work.

The model advocates the participation of young people in good quality supported work experience placements, work based skills training and in addition using the function of role models. This model will introduce families to the idea that for young people with a learning disability, work is a reality.

Age 14-25

The model advocates good quality, well supported work based skills training and quality supported work experience placements.

There is evidence to suggest (transition report) that there is criticism of the lack of opportunities in school for supported work placements for pupils with additional needs, which lead to later difficulties in gaining employment. From the age of 14yrs and adulthood there specialist welfare benefits advice and support will be available.

Age 16 plus

Young people and Adults will have access to well funded, quality supported employment services. In addition there will be targeted welfare benefits support encouraging a greater percentage of people with a learning disability gaining employment for 16hrs or more, impacting on income levels.

Campaigning

Mencap Cymru's campaign for the next 2 yrs is focusing on employment.

The aim of the campaign is to;

1. To increase the number of people with learning disabilities in employment particularly targeting Local Authority as some of the biggest employers in Wales.
- 2 To enable every child in Wales with a special educational need to have access to careers advice.
3. To lobby the Welsh assembly government to fund a dedicated benefits advice line for young people with a learning disability

By promoting the new employment model and employment campaign simultaneously it provides an opportunity for maximum marketing and promotion

Conclusion

Through government rhetoric about supporting people with a learning disability to gain employment and maximise their potential has been in existence for some time, the services provided have never been appropriate for achieving this.

Ken Smith, Chief Executive of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities States:

"There is a widening gap between the policy on people with a learning disability (which is good) and what is happening on the front line, particularly in terms of people not getting the support they need. We are selling people the dream, but then not delivering and that's worse than if we had done nothing at all."

This model will be breaking new ground because it is based on the identification of these longstanding failures in service provision and will be promoting the action required to rectify them.

Mencap Cymru's observations, experiences and consultations with people with a learning disability have revealed that people with a learning disability need a comprehensive seamless service throughout the younger formative years and into adulthood if they are to improve chances of gaining and sustaining real employment.

September 2008

AMM

Inquiry update from Equality of Opportunity Committee
Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales

Equality of Opportunity Committee



Christine Chapman AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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28 September 2010

Dear Chris

Further to my letter of 29 June regarding the Mencap petition on employment of people with a learning disability, I can confirm that during our scrutiny of the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on the Welsh Assembly Government's Single Equality Scheme on 21 September, the issue of helping people with learning disabilities to secure and maintain employment, particularly in the public sector, was raised.

I have enclosed the relevant sections of the meeting transcript so you can see the questions asked and the responses given by the Minister.

It is still our intention to follow up previous Committee inquiries in the New Year to assess the extent to which recommendations have been taken forward, and as part of this will review the Second Assembly Committee's report on Service Provision for Disabled Young People, including the issue of employment of young people with a learning disability.

Yours sincerely

Ann Jones AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal / Equality of Opportunity Committee
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[113] **Joyce Watson:** What is the Welsh Government doing to help people with learning disabilities to secure and maintain employment, particularly in the public sector? To what extent will public sector cuts impede attempts to assist people with a learning disability to get back into work?

[114] **Carl Sargeant:** Employment policy is not devolved to the Assembly, so it is an issue for the Department for Work and Pensions. Some of the recent announcements about supporting vulnerable people and people with disabilities have been concerning. It is not a devolved matter, but, nevertheless, with WAG strategies, we look holistically at the impact on individuals. The Assembly Government's employment and skills strategy, 'Skills That Work for Wales', is an all-age, all-ability approach, so it is hoped that no-one falls through the net. I am not sure whether that is the answer that you were looking for. It is a non-devolved policy, but we test that everyone fits into our decision-making process. However, the specifics of the employment element are non-devolved.

10.30 a.m.

[115] **Ann Jones:** On employment in the public sector, we are being told that there will be unprecedented cuts to budgets and therefore staff will be lost. How will that affect the vulnerable person, given that we have been told that people will have to go back onto the jobseeker's allowance or prove that they are actively looking for work? Where does that vulnerable person fit in, because I can see that there is a big net, but there are also holes in that net, which these vulnerable people will fall through. First, they will not understand that they may have to reapply to receive the jobseekers' allowance. Secondly, they will not understand that they must actively seek work, and some of them may not be able to seek work actively without that support. How can we in the Assembly help to stitch up the holes in that net?

[116] **Carl Sargeant:** That is really difficult, which I find extremely challenging. We are already seeing a displacement of people across Wales. In the past two weeks, I have visited a few citizens' advice bureaux that have had a higher level of vulnerable people directed to their service. However, that sector is also not immune from the cuts—Citizens Advice has received a 12 per cent cut in its budget recently, which is of concern. So, there is more demand for the service provided, but a reduced budget. That is not going to change; it is a fact that there is a difficult time ahead for budgets. I cannot fill the gap and WAG cannot fill the gap caused by changes in budgets at the Westminster end, and we cannot pick up the pieces at this end. That is not playing politics; it is just reality. You cannot take finances from one pot and suddenly drop them off in another, and we have explained that in relation to our portfolios.

[117] As Minister, with my broader remit to provide support via the benefits that we can deal with, such as council tax benefit, we are trying to ensure easy access for people, or at least ensure that people know the support is there. We have set up information lines in councils, for instance. So, we are trying to ensure that people know that there is something for them if they were to go down that route. This is not easy, however, and I accept that there will be some huge challenges for those who could fall through the net. We must try to build capacity in our system with the funding that we have, although I am not convinced that we can. There is a problem there that will potentially get bigger.

[118] **Ann Jones:** Is that in conflict with our single equality action plan? We are trying to make everyone equal, so could we be challenged legally if we publish the single equality action plan and yet we are unable to support those people?

[119] **Carl Sargeant:** That is not our intention or anyone else's. It is a capacity issue. It is not just about vulnerable people or people with disabilities but is much broader than that. It is about any person finding themselves in a vulnerable position because of their circumstances, whether financial or otherwise. So, have we got the capacity to support people, whoever they are, which I think was your question? It is under pressure and increasingly so. I am being honest with you, as I do not know whether we can fill the gap. That is not just a problem for me and my department, but also for other departments. As I said earlier, if you take something away from one end, you should not automatically think that someone has a fix at the other end, because they do not, particularly around finance. So, if there is a reduction in funding at one end of the M4, we cannot pick up the pieces at this end. That is not playing politics; that is just fact.

Petitions Committee Inquiry - Work Based Learning Provision (WBL) for Vulnerable Young People

What is the Minister doing to assist those with learning difficulties to enter employment?

Responsibility

- 1 The Welsh Ministers have functions exercisable concurrently with the Department for Work and Pensions, for making appropriate arrangements for the purpose of assisting persons to train for and obtain employment suitable for their ages and capacity. There are a number of programmes that operate in Wales through the Department for Work and Pensions and its delivery agent, Jobcentre Plus, for people seeking work and claiming benefit.

Commitment

- 2 The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all disabled people and those with learning difficulties are equipped with the skills they need to secure satisfying careers.
- 3 The 'Statement on Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability' issued in March 2007 states that 'The Welsh Assembly Government believes that it is important that authorities seek to maximise an individual's potential to be gainfully or constructively employed'.

Welsh Assembly Government Programmes

- 4 **Skills that Work for Wales** is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy and action plan for skills and employment for all groups. It presents a personal approach to supporting people to gain relevant skills and helps them find and keep paid employment. It is ideal for young people with learning difficulties as it cuts across all client groups and provides a personal approach and reasonable adjustment in all learning programmes.
- 5 Young learners with learning difficulties have access to careers advice and guidance. By providing young people with learning difficulties with specialist information and advice on the wide range of career and learning options available, they are able to make informed and realistic decisions as part of their ongoing career planning. Learning providers work with employers to identify suitable work experience placements.
- 6 The Welsh Assembly Government supports a range of regional programmes which focus on getting disadvantaged workless people of all ages into employment. As with the DWP/JCP programmes, the Assembly Government's programmes are not restricted to specific age group, health condition or learning abilities.

- 7 All those who meet the qualifying criteria can access the Assembly Government's programmes such as **Skill Build** which supports both unemployed adults and young people by providing the skills and experience needed to access employment and the foundation skills to remain in employment.
- 8 In response to the concerns expressed by some disabled organisations, the Welsh Assembly Government amended its programme under **Skill Build**, such as removing the maximum duration of time a learner can spend on the programme, and linking activities to experience in work rather than formal qualifications for disabled people and those with learning difficulties.
- 9 **Work Based Learning Providers in Skill Build and Apprenticeship** Programmes may claim 'Additional Learning Support' funding for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 10 **Want2Work** covers selective wards across Wales. The key aim of Want2Work is to identify and plug gaps in mainstream employment programmes, creating additional labour market support opportunities in community locations to a greater number of individuals than that provided by core labour market programmes.
- 11 **Job Match**, with a ESF budget of **£16.2m**, is the delivery arm in the Heads of the Valley Strategic Regeneration Area. It focuses on helping disadvantaged workless people of all ages to find and sustain work. The programme provides guidance, training and jobs for people who are economically inactive across the Heads of the Valleys area. It operates in Bridgend, RCT, Merthyr, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen.

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training

- 12 There have been 3 recent reviews into youth unemployment and young people not in education, employment or training. These reviews considered preventative measures that are currently taking place across WAG to help prevent young people with additional learning needs and learning difficulties from becoming NEET.
 - a. The Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) review which considered youth unemployment in Wales and Welsh Assembly Government's response to the issue.
 - b. The Youth Unemployment Task & Finish Group, established by the Minister for CELL and chaired by Martin Mansfield of the Wales TUC, which had an operational focus and aimed to build on the recommendations contained in the WESB report to inform the Welsh Assembly Government response to its recommendations.
 - c. The NEET Operational Review group, which was an internal group consisting of policy leads from across the Welsh Assembly Government, set up to undertake a review of the journey of children

and young people who may become inactive or disengaged from learning.

- 13 All of these reviews considered the impact of policy on young people, including those with special educational needs and additional learning needs, as part of their broad remit.
- 14 The groups recognised that young people with special educational needs and additional learning needs is a factor that could increase the likelihood of young people becoming NEET. The group recognised the work already being undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government to prevent this group becoming NEET, including **transition key workers** for disabled young people and preventative measures such as a series of pilots that will lead to the development of an innovative and improved system for ensuring that pupils with **additional learning needs** (ALN) are met and receive a high quality education.
- 15 The recommendations from the three review groups will be taken forward as one programme of work in the form of the Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan. The Action Plan was agreed by Cabinet on 27th September 2010.

Transition

- 16 The Assembly Government is committed to helping young people with learning difficulties find employment by supporting them through the transition from education to sustained employment and by equipping them with the necessary skills and confidence.

Transition Key Workers

- 17 Key workers are assigned to support young people and their family through transition through individual tailoring of services based on an assessment of need, inter-agency collaboration at strategic and practice levels.
- 18 The establishment of key workers was a key action in the Assembly Government's 'National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales' and was a recommendation in the former ELLS Committee's report on SEN transition.
- 19 In 2008 the Assembly Government made **£1.5m** available over three years **for five pilot projects** across Wales which were set up based on work already going on, to find out what works best. These pilot projects, which are managed by Care Co-ordination Network UK (CCNUK), have made excellent progress both in terms of direct support to a cross section of disabled young people and in delivering on the agreed key assessment criteria.

- 20 CCNUK is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to develop **revised key worker standards** to reflect transition (up to age 25) and to develop a **transition key worker framework** to provide guidance on developing and sustaining key working in Wales. Best practice examples from the pilot projects are being used to support this.
- 21 Feedback on the work of the pilots was disseminated at a conference in March this year, attended by the Deputy Minister for Children. **Another conference is planned for March 2011.** This year's conference was also the launch pad for new Welsh Assembly Government **transition guidance** for young people entitled '**My Life, My Way**' which was written for the Assembly by Learning Disability Wales in collaboration with disabled young people.
- 22 We are continuing our work with the **Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities** with a view to shaping guidance for professionals involved in the special educational needs transition process.
- 23 This year an **additional £1.5m of ESF funding** was allocated under '**Reaching the Heights**' over three years which will put transition workers in place over 15 convergence areas.
- 24 This work will complement similar ESF funding approved for the **Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative** (covering 10 convergence local authority areas and led by Caerphilly County Council out of Trinity Fields Special School). This project is based on a successful model which initially operated out of Trinity Fields Special School in Caerphilly, and aims to improve the educational outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving. ESF funding has enabled the development of dedicated transition teams (which include a transition key worker) working out of 'hubs' which are attached in the main to special schools.

Post-16 SEN Task and Finish Group

- 25 In March this year a Task and Finish Group was set up charged with making recommendations in the following areas:
- establishing an improved and unified system of transition to educational provision in school or FE for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) above the age of 16;
 - achieving better value for money in expenditure on post-16 education for young people with LDD, specifically against the context of financial challenge over the next 3 years;
 - sharing more widely expertise that is currently in special schools and FE colleges in providing for LDD post-16;
 - use of out of county and out of country placements; and
 - investment in post-16 school and FE provision for young people with LDD.
- 26 The group is finalising its written report.

Reform of the Statutory Special Educational Needs (SEN) Assessment and Statementing Process

- 27 The developments in support of improved transition are being taken forward in the context of a wider reform agenda aimed at developing an innovative and improved system for ensuring that all children and young people with additional learning needs have those needs met and receive a high quality education.
- 28 Four pilot projects are currently under way involving 8 authorities across Wales which will inform changes to the current SEN statutory assessment and statementing process. These four three-year pilots end in 2011 and cover:
- Quality assurance of ALN provision
 - An inter-disciplinary model for children and young people with severe and complex needs
 - A model for children and young people with less-complex needs
 - The role of the ALN Co-ordinator

Skill Wales

- 29 The Welsh Assembly Government has funded **Skill** (National Bureau for Students with Learning Disabilities) for three years from 2009-10 to develop its work in Wales. Skill works with learners, learning providers, statutory and other voluntary organisations to promote equality of opportunity in all post-16 education and training. Skill provides free advice to disabled students on a wide range of subjects, including transition to employment, via its helpline and website, identifying other sources of further information and advice as appropriate.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (“ASD”) Strategy – Employment Champion

- 30 In June this year Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services, provided the Assembly with an update on developments relating to the ASD Strategy. Among these were:
- 31 Awareness-raising packages for a wide range of professional groups that work with, or come into contact with, people who have autism and their families are being developed at a national level. These materials will be widely distributed in Wales to all GP surgeries, schools and colleges, Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus, to employers and agencies comprising the criminal justice system, and to many others. Gwenda Thomas AM will be launching these materials on **25 November 2010** in the Senedd.
- 32 In addition to awareness-raising materials, there are a number of funded actions designed to improve the employment prospects of people who have autism. These include the appointment of the **Wales Autism Employment Ambassador**, who will promote the positive aspects of

employing people who have autism with businesses throughout Wales. The Wales Autism Employment Ambassador will be formally launched on **25 November 2010**.

Additional Learning Support for Learners accessing mainstream vocational education and work based learning

33 Further education colleges and work based learning providers receive a funding contribution from the Welsh Assembly Government towards the additional costs involved in securing the human and/or technical support necessary to make their mainstream provision accessible to disabled learners. In 2009-10 over **£6m** was allocated for this purpose.

Careers Wales

34 **Careers Wales Online** (www.careerswales.com) is an innovative interactive service, which provides bilingual information, tools and resources to support all-age, lifelong learning and career planning. It uses progressive technologies to provide information in an accessible and supportive approach, winning a BAFTA for technical and social inclusion.

35 The site supports **14-19 learning pathways** through web option menus, learning plans and shortly will launch the national booking system for work experience for schools. The site also includes **differentiated information for users with learning difficulties**, addressing topics such as **independent living skills, decision making and transition planning**.

Work Placement Programmes within the Welsh Assembly Government

36 There are 3 work placement programmes in place to promote the employment of disabled people and these include people with learning disabilities or mental health issues.

Supported Employment Scheme

37 Supported Employment Scheme was launched in 2008 to enable candidates who have previously been considered by statutory services or employers as unemployable to gain experience of working in the Assembly Government. The scheme provides a one to one trainer to work with the candidate for a period of 30 days (unpaid) whilst learning the job, and following a review, a 6 month paid placement is offered with the possibility of an extension of up to 50 weeks.

38 To date the scheme has hosted 12 candidates, 8 of which successfully moved onto a paid placement and 3 of these have since secured permanent positions.

Remploy Scheme

- 39 The Remploy Scheme offers candidates with a range of disabilities paid work placements of up to 50 weeks. To date 3 people have benefited from a placement. At the outset, the placement and outreach team raise awareness across the organisation of the Scheme and work with managers to identify suitable opportunities that equip participants with a wide range of key skills that will enhance their future employment opportunities.
- 40 The placement and outreach team remain in close contact throughout the placements. Any additional support is provided as appropriate and reviews with the placement are completed at 3 and 6 month intervals.

Work Experience Placements

- 41 The Welsh Assembly Government has a 5-day work experience placement scheme for school age children which has been open to pupils of all abilities since April 2008. To date, two students with learning difficulties have successfully completed a placement. Careful consideration is given when accommodating students with learning difficulties to ensure that they are placed in their area of interest. Arrangements for their support worker to accompany them are also made. Depending on the level of support required, meetings are arranged prior to the placement at the pupil's school to ensure that all parties are aware of what is required. Feedback from managers and pupil placements has been positive. WAG continues to encourage take up of this placement scheme by children of all abilities.
- 42 An independent evaluation and analysis of this and all placement schemes was undertaken by a specialist equality and diversity consultancy earlier this year and showed that the experience of WAG staff and those placed with WAG was overwhelmingly positive. Further work to assess the future focus of work placement schemes in WAG is currently being undertaken as part of the WAG Equality Strategy.

Outreach Work

- 43 WAG staff continue to take part in a range of careers events with schools. One example is the links we have developed with Woodlands school in Ely, Cardiff. The school is attended by pupils with moderate to severe special educational needs including learning disabilities. Staff attended the School's annual industry day which has resulted in 2 of Woodlands students undertaking work experience with the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 44 WAG staff also recently promoted work being done to recruit Apprentices to WAG at the high profile SkillsCymru event held at the Millennium Stadium.

Welsh Assembly Government policies to support people with learning disability in work

- 45 The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people and achieving a workplace free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- 46 Staff who notify WAG of a learning disability can obtain support from the Occupational Health Team as part of an established process for considering what **reasonable adjustments** can be made for disabled staff to meet their individual needs. For example, we provided dictation software to support an employee with dyslexia.
- 47 WAG also supports a variety of internal staff networks for under-represented and minority groups which include a **Disability Awareness Staff Support Network** which is open to all staff wishing to share ideas, concerns and proactively work with the organisation to promote equality of opportunity for employees with a disability.

WAG staff data on people with learning disability

- 48 As of 30 September 2010, a total of 10¹ employees have chosen to declare a learning disability.

WAG workforce planning targeting disability

- 49 In April 2008, the WAG set targets for the number staff employed at Executive Management Band and in our Senior Civil Service by gender, race and disability. We decided to concentrate on Executive Management and Senior Civil Service bands because this is where our workforce recruitment and representation data tells us that under-represented groups are negatively represented.
- 50 Progress against the targets is published each year in our Employer Equality Report. The target was to employ 3% of disabled staff employed at Senior Civil Service level and 4% at Executive Management band. In March this year we met our target for employing 4% of staff with a declared disability at Executive Management band and achieved the same percentage of disabled staff employed at Senior Civil Service level. However, we recognise that the number of disabled staff employed at this level is low and so we will begin to develop an evidence base in late 2010-11 to inform new targets going forward.
- 51 The WAG annual staff survey is an opportunity for staff to give their views and opinions on working for the Welsh Assembly Government. In the 2008 survey, it was identified that disabled staff answered proportionately more negatively than other staff to many of the survey questions. In response, a member of the WAG Management Board (now known as the Strategic Delivery and Performance Board) undertook some work to

1

**Employee types excluded: Agency, Attachment, Locally Engaged Staff, Work Experience, Zero Hours, Consultants and Contractors*

further examine the views and experiences of disabled staff. This has helped inform work we are currently doing to develop a **pilot positive action programme** targeted at disabled staff to provide tailored development opportunities and training to facilitate career progression.

52 We are also participating in work being undertaken by the Civil Service Disability Task Group to understand why responses by disabled staff across the Civil Service are also answering proportionately more negative than other staff in the Civil Service wide staff survey, which WAG will also be adopting in 2010. We hope that the feedback will inform our work to advance equality and diversity in the workplace going forward and in particular show how we can better meet the individual needs of staff.

Equality Employment Duty

53 WAG currently evidence work to meet its equality employment duty (imposed by the Race Relations Act specific duties) through publication of an annual employer equality report. Work is underway to publish the 2009-10 report. The Single Equality Scheme also outlines how WAG promotes good employment equality practice.

54 The Equality Act 2010 introduces a new general public sector equality duty that will come into force in April 2011. The Act makes provision for the Welsh Ministers to be able to make regulations that impose specific public sector equality duties on relevant Welsh public authorities listed in Part 2 of Schedule 19 to the Act.

55 The purpose of these new specific equality duties is to improve performance of the general duty by the public sector. The general duty protects people with learning difficulties against being discriminated, harassed or victimised. Public bodies will need to promote equality of opportunity for and foster good relations with people with learning difficulties.

56 WAG started its consultation on the draft Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 on 21 September which will end on 17 December. Under the Equality Act 2010, any such duties would fall under the Welsh Public Sector Specific duties.

Mencap Cymru comment on the evidence given by the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning Leighton Andrews AM on 2nd November 2010

Mencap Cymru welcomes the opportunity to provide further comment on both the oral and written evidence from the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong-Learning. Many of the initiatives cited in both pieces of evidence are to be welcomed and Mencap Cymru does so. It is however still the belief of Mencap that there are failings in the implementation of many of these initiatives. It is these implementation shortcomings, not the actual policies themselves, that disadvantages young people with a learning disability.

The Welsh Assembly Government's continued commitment to the *2007 Statement on Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability*, and its recognition of the importance of employment for all is supported by Mencap Cymru.

With reference to the school effectiveness framework, it is to be endorsed that there is a commitment to recognise learning differences at schooling stage. That equality is one of the five themes of what makes education effective, is an encouraging sign of a recurrent theme of acknowledgement of its importance across WAG policy. What is not clear, is how this is to be implemented so that children and young people, with a learning disability, are to receive the additional support they would need to be on an equal basis as their non-disabled peers.

As with the concerns raised from *Skills that work for Wales* and *14-19 Learning Pathways*, there needs to be much clearer priorities, targets and measures of success outlined around the theme of equality. It is only through giving firm details on the implementation of a policy, not simply demonstrate a commitment to it, that it can work towards achieving equality.

Mencap Cymru feels it is important to reaffirm the stance taken on access to careers advice and work experience, specifically around the previously much cited case study from South West Wales. Our study (attached again as Annex. 1 for reference) clearly demonstrated that whilst policies may make specific commitment to including young people with a learning disability, the benefit was not being felt by the young people themselves. This discrepancy is not raised to level blame at the policies, more an opportunity to work together to improve the way in which it is delivered to a client group that often have very specific needs. The offer of working with the Welsh Assembly Government in this area is still very much open.

The innovative schemes and frameworks being introduced for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders are most encouraging. It is worthy of note however that ASD and Learning Disability, whilst not always mutually exclusive, are very different things. Many people with ASD are 'high-functioning' and would not require the same support to learn as someone with a learning disability. Autism Spectrum Disorders are very broad, in much the same way as learning disabilities, and may only affect a person's social functioning, not their ability to learn and develop, in the way a learning disability would.

Many people with a learning disability will be somewhere on the Autism Spectrum, and any ASD initiatives should take into consideration the additional support requirements of someone with a dual-diagnosis of learning disability and ASD. When

best practice examples are available, Mencap Cymru would welcome the opportunity to work with the Welsh Government to establish how such examples could be translated into wider initiatives and policies.

Mencap Cymru would wish to re-emphasise the differences between a statement of special educational need and a diagnosis of learning disability. Many of the measures announced by the Minister would either work to support, or monitor the outcomes for, people with a special educational need. People with a learning disability would constitute many people that had a statement of SEN, but would not be the entire group. Special educational need would include sensory impairments, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and those with emotional difficulties. Mencap Cymru recognises that all of these groups have been disadvantaged by previous guidelines and transition from education to employment. It is however important to recognise that a learning disability is a lifelong and permanent impairment that will never be something that will be recovered from, only managed with appropriate support. Often, difficulties in one's learning will not constitute a lifelong disadvantage.

Mencap Cymru would be keen to learn about the outcomes of both the Post-16 SEN Task and Finish Group, the Reaching the Heights project and others cited by the Minister in the written evidence to the committee. It is felt that this would be an excellent opportunity to work with the Welsh Government to look at how this work could be built upon, to develop sustainable schemes and policies

Mencap Cymru would be willing to stand by the offer of assistance to the Welsh Government to explore how the Employment Model could be embedded in the curriculum and policies of special schools and SEN units. Mencap Cymru firmly believes that by instilling a desire, and a belief in one's ability to work, the transition from education will lead to many more people with a learning disability gaining paid employment.

If the Welsh Assembly Government felt it appropriate to do so, Mencap Cymru would welcome the opportunity to contribute to a dialogue that sought to shape policies in such a way that they would truly cut across all client groups. Only by establishing a strategy, to compliment a desire to, include children and young people with a learning disability will they be fully included.

APPENDIX 1 : *Cer Amdani!* South West Statistics to illustrate access to work experience

Total no. beneficiaries engaged on the project up to and inclusive of Feb. 2010	Total no. of Responses	Total number of beneficiaries who stated they did have work Experience whilst at school	Total no. of beneficiaries who stated they did not have work experience whilst at school	No. who thought work experience good	No. who believed work Experience not good	No. who had one weeks Work experience
Ceredigion 22	20	4	16	2	2	2
Carmarthen 45	40	6	34	3	3	3
Pembroke 23	22	2	20	0	2	0

Leighton Andrews AC/AM

**Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-170
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/00259/11

Christine Chapman AM

committee.business@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

17 February 2011

Dear Chris,

MENCAP EMPLOYMENT

Thank you for your letter of 26 January highlighting Mencap's offer to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to explore how the Mencap employment model could be embedded as part of education for people with learning disabilities.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to mainstreaming equality across all its activities in order to maximise opportunity for everyone in Wales whatever their individual circumstances. Our work with expert stakeholders, like Mencap Cymru, is essential to the development and delivery of sustainable policies which improve people's lives. In the area of education, as evidenced to the Committee in November, there is a considerable amount of development work underway aimed at inclusion and improved provision for children and young people with additional learning needs.

Ensuring effective transition from school is an important part of this development work and I welcome Mencap's offer to work with us on this. The Post-16 SEN Task and Finish Group, which I set up to look into ways of improving the funding of transition for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from pre to post-school education and training, published its recommendations in November. The report and the Group's recommendations; all of which I have accepted, are available on the Welsh Assembly Government website. A Development and Implementation Group has recently been established to develop means of taking forward the Task and Finish Group recommendations. This group, which includes representatives of Social Services and Health, is likely to invite individuals or organisations to attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis, where they are able to assist with its remit and I have asked my officials to ensure that Mencap is given that opportunity.

We are working to ensure that our policies support inclusion, thereby ensuring that all learners whatever their ability/disability can benefit from change. The School Effectiveness Framework (SEF), for instance, is focused on learner need. Existing quality standards, developed for ASD only as part of the ASD Strategy, are being drawn into an inclusion toolkit for schools as part of SEF in order that all pupils benefit.

We are working with voluntary agencies as part of our work to reform the statutory framework for SEN and are regularly in dialogue with interested parties. I have asked Irene Allen, the Head of Additional Learning Support to contact Mencap to discuss the Employment Model and its fit with this agenda.

Yours ever



Leighton Andrews AM

Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

Response from the petitioner

Dear Christine

Thank you for forwarding the Minister's agreement to put us in touch with Irene Allen from Additional Learning Support. As of this writing we are yet to hear from her about the work of the Post-16 SEN Task and Finish Group.

Mencap Cymru would again wish to stress that involvement in implementation of the recommendations would be welcomed, and when we speak to Ms Allen, we will let her know of our wish to do so.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Petitions committee for the dedication they have shown to our petition, and to the staff of the committee for their support for the duration.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Stranks
Campaigns & Policy Officer

Leighton Andrews

Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-170
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/00876/11

Rhodri Wyn Jones

Rhodri.WynJones@Wales.gov.uk

13 April 2011

Thank you for your letter of 5 April regarding the commitment in my letter of 17 February to Christine Chapman for petitioners from Mencap Cymru to present to the Development and Implementation Group on Post-16 SEN and, prior to that, discuss with officials issues around their supported employment model.

The Development and Implementation Group had its first meeting on 28 March. I confirm that an invitation is to be sent to Mencap Cymru to present their employment model, and prior to that, to discuss it with officials.

Leighton Andrews

Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning