

Cross Party Group on Learning Disability



Notes from the fifth meeting on 27 June 2023.

The meeting was at Ty Hywel in Cardiff Bay and on Zoom.



People who came to the meeting

- **Sioned Williams MS** – Member of the Senedd, Chair
- **Sam Williams** – Learning Disability Wales, co-Secretary
- **Sara Pickard** – Mencap Cymru, co-Secretary
- **Gwen Anslow** – All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers
- **Julie Bennett Doy** – Powys County Council
- **Mariama Correia** – University of South Wales
- **Nick Davies** – Cardiff and Vale Parents Federation
- **Pat Dunmore** – Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot
- **William Fawcett**
- **Sarah Frost** – Department of Work and Pensions
- **Iwan Good** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Ishbel Hansen** – Swansea Parent Carer Forum
- **Kai Jones** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Mark Jones** – Gig Buddies Cymru
- **Nichola Jones** – Mirus Wales
- **Susan Kingman** – Hijinx

- **San Leonard** – Social Firms Wales
- **Deborah Lomas** – parent
- **Marg McNeil** – SEE Around Britain
- **Catherine Meredith** – Cardiff council
- **Nicki Morris** – All Wales Forum
- **Lucy O'Leary** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Sian Owen**
- **Anne Phillips** – Swansea Carers Centre
- **Joe Powell** – All Wales People First
- **Kathryn Price** – Cardiff University
- **Julie Reed** – Cardiff Council
- **Stacey Rees** – University of South Wales
- **Simon Richards** – All Wales People First
- **Vincent Scaife** – Hft
- **Darren Smith**
- **Kelly Stuart** – All Wales People First
- **Cath Thornton** – Conwy Connect for Learning Disabilities
- **Nadine Tilbury** – Working Together with Parents Network (University of Bristol)
- **Stuart Todd** – University of South Wales
- **Andy Ward** – Monmouthshire People First
- **Lynne Whistance** – Pobl group
- **Aled Williams** – Cardiff Council



People who said they could not come to the meeting

- **Wayne Crocker** – Mencap Cymru
- **Julian Hallett** – Down's Syndrome Association (Wales)
- **Humie Webb**

About this document



This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. They have been explained in a box below the word. You can see what all the words in **blue** mean on **page 19**.

1. Welcome and introductions



Sioned Williams, Member of the Senedd and **Chair** of the Cross Party Group, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The **Chair** of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

2. Sara's video



Sara Pickard from Mencap Cymru is **co-Secretary** of the group.

The **Secretary** is the person or organisation in charge of organising the group. For example, booking meetings and sending out agendas.

A **co-Secretary** is when more than 1 person shares the job of **Secretary**.



As part of Learning Disability Week, Sara filmed a video for ITV Wales about the history of people with a learning disability in Wales over the last 40 years.



Sara introduced the video and then everyone at the meeting watched it.



The video was also shown on the ITV Wales programme Sharp End on 19 June 2023. You can watch it here:

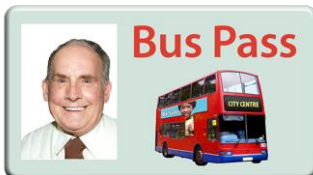
<https://www.itv.com/walesprogrammes/articles/sharp-end-june-19th>

3. Problems with getting new bus passes



Mark Jones is a volunteer Travel Coordinator with the Gig Buddies Cymru project in North Wales.

Mark told the group about the problems some disabled people are having when they try to **renew** their bus passes.



If you have to **renew** your bus pass this means you have to apply for it again. Most people have to **renew** their bus pass every few years.



It used to be quite easy to **renew** your bus pass with your local council. For example, you could send a letter from your doctor to say that you have a learning disability.



But now Transport for Wales is **renewing** people's bus passes instead of local councils.



Transport for Wales says that the rules for **renewing** bus passes have **not** changed.



But lots of people are finding it much harder to **renew** their bus passes now.



Transport for Wales is asking for a lot more information to **renew** people's bus passes.



They are saying that you have to have enough **Personal Independence Payment** or **PIP** points.

Personal Independence Payment or **PIP** is a benefit that some disabled people can get paid to help with their daily lives.



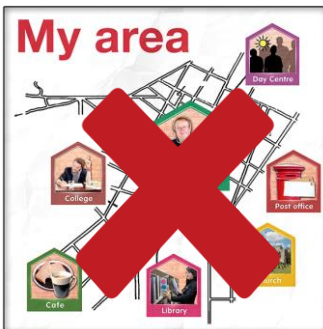
Some people who have had a bus pass for a long time are now being told that they cannot have a bus pass anymore.



This is making people very stressed, worried and upset.



Bus passes are very important to many people with a learning disability.



Without their bus pass, many people with a learning disability cannot go to places like:

- Work, college or school
- Doctor or hospital appointments
- Shopping
- Seeing friends and family.



This will take away their independence and it will be bad for their mental health.



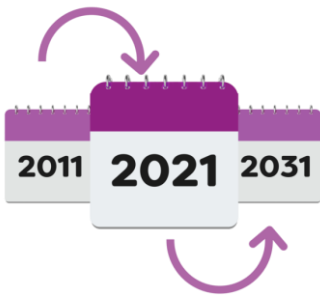
Mark had some ideas for how to make getting a new bus pass better for people with a learning disability:



1. Make the information about how to get a new bus pass easier to understand.



2. Make it easier for people with a learning disability to get a new bus pass and give them more time to do it. For example, let them use a letter from their doctor saying they have a learning disability.

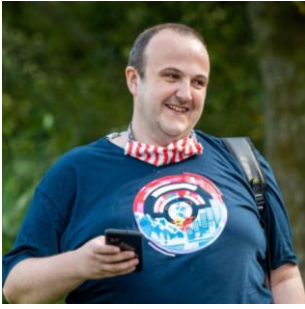


3. Make the bus passes last longer before they have to be **renewed**.

People with a learning disability should not have to keep proving that they still have a learning disability every few years.



4. Work with disabled people, advocates and disabled people's organisations to understand how to make it easier for people to get a bus pass.



Next **Simon Richards** from Cardiff People First told the group about the problems he has had trying to **renew** his bus pass.



Transport for Wales said he did not have enough **PIP** points to get a new bus pass.



Then they said he should get a letter from his GP.



Simon had to pay for the letter from his GP and it took a long time.



He told Transport for Wales that it was taking a long time to get the letter. They said he could still use his bus pass while he was waiting for the letter.



But then 1 day a bus driver would not let Simon get on the bus because his bus pass was not working anymore.



This made Simon very stressed, anxious and upset.



When Simon finally got the letter from his GP he sent to Transport for Wales. They said that his local council would then decide if he could have a new bus pass or not.



Each time Simon tried to phone his local council he only got through to an answer machine.



He then went to the library for help. They spoke to the council about his bus pass.



The council said Simon could not use the letter from his GP to get a new bus pass. He had to get a form signed and stamped by his GP instead.



Simon was worried because the form does not have any boxes to tick to say he has a learning disability or autism.



He took the form to his GP to get it signed and stamped. He still does not know if he will be able to get a new bus pass.



With help from his support staff, Simon has also done another **PIP** assessment.

He is hoping he will have enough points to get a new bus pass without needing a letter or form from his GP in future.



The **PIP** assessment took a long time and was quite stressful. Simon is waiting to hear how many **PIP** points he now has.



Simon still cannot use his bus pass. If he wants to go anywhere he has to pay to go on the bus.



This is not easy because on lots of buses you have to use a card or an app to pay.



On some buses you have to tap your card or app when you get on the bus and again when you get off. This is very difficult for people with a learning disability.



All of this means that Simon cannot travel as much as he used to because it costs too much and it is too stressful. This is very bad for Simon's well being.

4. Questions and ideas



After the presentation some people asked questions and shared their ideas.



Joe Powell from All Wales People First said that he has heard from lots of people with a learning disability who have had problems getting a new bus pass.



Joe said it is hard to know what is going wrong.

Some people think that it is local councils making it more difficult. But other people think it is Transport for Wales.



Transport for Wales say the rules have not changed. So why are so many people having problems now for the first time?



Joe said that we should ask the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group or LD MAG to look at this problem too.



Sioned will write to the Deputy Minister for Transport and the Minister for Social Justice about the problems people are having when they try to **renew** their bus passes.

5. Guidance on supporting parents with a learning disability



Stacey Rees from University of South Wales talked about the new Welsh Government guidance on supporting parents with a learning disability.



Stacey is a **researcher** who worked with other **researchers** from the University of South Wales to write the new guidance.

A **researcher** is someone who looks for new information about something to help people know more about it.



The guidance is for social workers who work with parents with a learning disability.



Too many parents with a learning disability in Wales have their children taken into care.



Welsh Government wants parents with a learning disability to have better support so that they can safely look after their children.



The **researchers** talked to:

- parents with a learning disability
- social workers
- social work managers.



The **researchers** asked them how they thought parents with a learning disability could be better supported to look after their children.

The **researchers** found that people talked about 4 important things:

- respect for people's rights
- focus on the family
- looking at what people can do – not just what they cannot do
- giving people help and support as soon as possible.





The **researchers** also found lots of ways that social workers can help support parents with a learning disability.

Some of the important things they found are:

- Making sure parents can understand all the information they need to know.
- Parents should have an advocate to support them, especially when they have to go to court.
- Children's social services and adult social services should work together to support the family.
- Social workers need training on working with parents with a learning disability.



The **researchers** put all the good ideas about how to support parents with a learning disability into the new guidance.

You can read the new guidance and easy read information for parents on the Welsh Government website here:

https://www.gov.wales/guidance-social-workers-families-where-parent-has-learning-disability?fbclid=IwAR1k0cDirFe4ZI13T-WTFQBkoKK6l-GKG9yRVuQ9oaHpxXf_Q0P0mXU6trU



6. Questions and ideas



After the presentation some people asked questions and shared their ideas.



Paul Hunt from Mencap Cymru said that there are also problems with the way that parents with a learning disability are **assessed**.

Assess means how social workers check what parents understand and what they can or cannot do.



Stacey said that this is something that needs to change. Social workers need training on different ways to **assess** parents with a learning disability.

7. Any other business and ideas for future meetings



Sioned thanked everyone who spoke at the meeting.



If anyone has any ideas about important things to talk about at future meetings, you can email Sam Williams: samantha.williams@ldw.org.uk or Sara Pickard: SaraE.Pickard@mencap.org.uk.



The next meeting will be in September. We will send the date to everyone soon.



You can find all the agendas and notes of the Cross Party Group here: <https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/cross-party-group-on-learning-disability/>

Hard words

Chair

The Chair of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

Secretary or co-Secretary

The Secretary is the person or organisation in charge of organising the group. For example, booking meetings and sending out agendas.

A co-Secretary is when more than 1 person shares the job of Secretary.

Renew

If you have to renew your bus pass this means you have to apply for it again. Most people have to renew their bus pass every few years.

Personal Independence Payment or PIP

Personal Independence Payment or PIP is a benefit that some disabled people can get paid to help with their daily lives.

Researcher

A researcher is someone who looks for new information about something to help people know more about it.

Assessed

Assess means how social workers check what parents understand and what they can or cannot do.