



Cross Party Group on Disability

Minutes

Status: Approved by Chair

Date of meeting

3rd September 2014

Present

Mark Isherwood AM (Welsh Conservatives – Chair), Aled Roberts AM (Welsh Liberal Democrats), Janet Finch-Saunders AM (Welsh Conservatives), John Beasley (DWP Partnership Manager), John Bisby (DWP District Manager for North & Mid Wales), Sian Morgan (Director, Remploy Employment Services), Karen Beattie (DW Member), Jenny Lewis (Mother & Carer), Rhian Davies (Disability Wales), Owen Williams (Wales Council of the Blind), Rebecca Phillips (Wales Council of the Blind), Wayne Crocker (Mencap Cymru), Rob Wilson (Rowan Organisation), Anne Collis (Barod), Emma Reeves-McCall (Tai Pawb), Paul Warren (Diverse Cymru), Vin West (Arfon Access Group), Morgan Armstrong (WCVA), Ian Ellison (BASW), Clive Emery (Enterprising Employment), Grace Jackson (Remploy), Mike Gallagher (Mencap Cymru), Debra Jennings, Simona Merlusca (NWREN), John Roberts (Denbighshire CAB), Susan Shingler (Scope), Joy Smith (Vision Support), Jan Underwood, Andrea Wayman (ELITE), Victor Martin Hunt, Paul Swann (Disability Wales - Secretary).

1.

Welcome, introductions, apologies

Mark Isherwood (MI) welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Disability (CPGD). He reported that since Rebecca Evans AM's elevation to Deputy Minister, she has stepped down as Co-Chair. The group hopes to find a replacement but in the meantime, MI will continue to Chair the CPGD.

Apologies:

Jim Crowe (Learning Disability Wales), Ruth Coombs (Mind Cymru), Llyr Huws Gruffydd AM (Plaid Cymru), Bethan Jenkins AM (Plaid Cymru), Simon Thomas AM

	<p>(Plaid Cymru), Mohammed Asgar AM, Ruth Crowder (College of Occupational Therapists), Tracey Good (NHS Centre for Equality & Human Rights), Janine Gunstone, Robert Gunstyone, Lindsay Haveland (CTAUK), Maggie Hayes (NPT County Borough Council), Ele Hicks (Diverse Cymru), Peter Jones (Guide Dogs), Henry Langen (Pembrokeshire Access Group), Catherine Lewis (Children in Wales), Robin Moulster (BASW), Tom Raines (NDTI), Belinda Robertson, Cath Taffurelli (BASW), Mary van den Heuvel, Michelle Fowler-Powe (BDA).</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Minutes of the last meeting held on 4th June 2014 There was a correction to the date. The minutes stated that the meeting took place on the 14th of June, when in fact it was the 4th June. The minutes were otherwise agreed as a true record.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters arising from the minutes</p> <p>Research Findings from Anti-Bullying Poll RD expressed her concern over the high number of children and young people that had witnessed or experienced bullying on the grounds of disability.</p> <p>The group wrote to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty Jeff Cuthbert AM. Barnardos have since held meetings with the Minister and it was recommended that the Cross Party Group on Disability should write to the Education Minister, Huw Lewis AM to help raise awareness and to change attitudes to disability in schools. The Chair has sent a letter to the minister and they hope to have a response by the next meeting.</p> <p>PS highlighted the recent incident in the news relating to a young man with Asberger’s Syndrome from Pontypridd. PS suggested that the CPGD request a report on the incident from the police commissioner. He felt that it was important to ensure that it was being looked into fully and was keen to know what actions are being taken to ensure similar incidents are taken seriously. He suggested inviting the Police Commissioner to a future CPGD meeting. This was welcomed by the Group.</p>

MI also suggested writing to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty.

Action: Invite the Police Commissioner to a future CPGD meeting.

Action: CPGD write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty.

Social Services & Well-being Bill (Wales) Act – Advocacy Amendment

The CPGD has written to the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM, for timescales and membership details of the Technical Group on Advocacy.

In response to this, WG have confirmed that the next round of groups will begin next year. RD will keep the CPGD updated.

Action: RD to update the group on details of the Technical Group on Advocacy when received.

Independent Living Fund

PS confirmed that the closure date has been put back by three months, to 30 June next year. A further challenge is currently underway as a result of the UK Minister for Disabled People's failure to contact current recipients and gather their views.

A further Judicial review is due to commence in October. Within the next few weeks, Welsh Government will launch a consultation on the future of ILF in Wales and the Deputy Minister will make a decision based on responses at the end of the year. Disability Wales will publicise the consultation as widely as possible. A series of briefings have been proposed.

Action: Disability Wales to publicise details of consultation and briefings

	<p>UNCRDP RD reminded the group that the UN Committee on the Rights of Disabled People will be coming to UK next autumn. Disability Wales will be submitting a shadow report, in partnership with other national disability umbrella organisations. The report will include a list of questions they would like the Committee to put to the UK Government. RD agreed to update the group and circulate the questions.</p> <p>Action: RD to update the CPGD on the UNCRDP visit and circulate the questions.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>CPGD Membership MI informed the Group that since Rebecca Evans AM's departure, the CPGD are seeking membership of an Assembly Member to co-chair the Group. MI confirmed that the group is currently lacking representation from the Labour and Plaid Cymru parties.</p> <p>MI added that Rebecca Evans AM wishes the group well and will continue to follow the Group's progress.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Presentations: 5.1 Disability and Employment in Wales - DWP: John Beasley (Partnership Manager, Wales) and John Bisby (District Manager for North & Mid Wales)</p> <p>John firstly spoke about the role for the DEA within the job centre, which is to help disabled people find and retain employment and that Access to Work helps to enable this. He highlighted the recent changes one of which being the closure of sites. There are now 6 strategic sites instead of 77, none of which are located in Wales. He recognised that there are delays in the service because of the changes but assured the group that they are addressing them.</p> <p>He reported that the eligibility criteria for Access to Work now extends to people who are in work experience placements.</p> <p>There were several concerns raised from the floor such as some individuals were being refused assistance because the job role had been specifically designed for a disabled</p>

person. Others were experiencing difficulties contacting the Access to Work team, some reported a lack of consistency from one individual to another, and some felt that assessors lacked knowledge of specific impairments and health conditions.

JB recognised that there were some issues but that they were being dealt with. He noted that there were some performance issues amongst assessors but these are being addressed. He agreed to circulate the new Access to Work contact details to the group.

He added that an internal review is currently underway and a report will follow in November. In addition, he recommended that the group read the 'Disability Health and Employment Strategy'. He said the document is still in consultation but that the UK government are committed to supporting disabled people in employment.

The presentation was followed by some comments and questions from the floor. Barod reported unacceptable attitudes towards people with learning difficulties from some staff at Job Centres.

JB was disappointed to hear this and agreed to feed this issue back. He also suggested that Barod assist with a future training programme, which was welcomed.

JB was also asked what level of disability awareness training the new assessors are being given.

In response to this, JB agreed to look into this and report back. He believes that disability specific awareness training will be delivered once the new members of staff have received procedural training.

5.2 Remploy: Sian Morgan

SM reported that Remploy will be launching a new Remploy Cymru brand soon.

They are working closely with 3SC, the umbrella body for

3rd Sector organisations in Wales to assist with the coaching of individuals who have complex barriers.

They are also involved with the Wellbeing Through Work initiative to help disabled people maintain their roles in work and become healthy and fit.

In line with their digital inclusion agenda, Remploy have launched a new product called 'iRemploy', which is an online version of the provisions offered to clients within their branches. Since its launch over 2500 people registered.

SM was pleased to announce that following a successful bid to the Welsh European Funding Office, they are currently supporting 53 young people between the ages of 14-19 with the transition from school to employment. The project has now ended but they are currently working with other partners to establish a way of building on it and moving forward.

5.3 Karen Beattie: A personal perspective

KB spoke of her employment experiences as a disabled person. She currently works as an access officer for a local authority. She spoke about the challenges and successes during her employment. Some of the barriers included institutionalised discrimination and attitudes. She also reported that some organisations are using e-training, an online provision, to inform and train staff about disability issues, a model, in her opinion, that fails due of the lack of interaction.

Accessible buildings is the biggest barrier KB has to overcome on a daily basis. She added that progress is being made but that much more is required.

5.4 Jenny Lewis: Moving beyond sheltered employment

JL spoke about her daughter, Bethan' employment experience.

Bethan is 24 years old and has Down Syndrome. Bethan currently works in a restaurant in Bangor University and is enjoying her new role. However, prior to this she was working in a social enterprise café and only earning 50p an hour. JL was concerned that this is still happening and that there is still an assumption that people with learning disabilities will go into a day centre or a social enterprise café. She felt that one way to resolve this was to regulate learning disability day services.

5.5 Discussion and actions

RD informed members that the Department for Work and Pensions and Welsh Government are holding a consultation event next week around Access to Work.

Along with Carers Wales, Disability Wales have been invited to talk to the Ministerial Group on Welfare Reform about employment issues. RD agreed to feed in comments raised at today's meeting.

Action: RD to feed comments to the Ministerial Group on Welfare Reform.

In reference to the DWP's Disability, Health and Employment Strategy, RD reported that Disability Wales took part in the consultation meeting in June. Following the success of this meeting, DWP have agreed to facilitate two forum meetings per year.

Before closing the meeting, MI added that he had been in dialogue with Disability Wales over concerns about transport being removed from disabled students when they reach 18, denying them access to further and higher education. He felt that this topic should be addressed in the future.

6.	AOB There were no other business items.
7.	Next Meeting: 3 rd December 2014, details TBC