

Cross Party Group on Vision

Notes of the meeting 27 January 2016

Conference Room 21, Ty Hywel, 7.30am

In attendance

Sandy Mewies AM (Chair),
Aled Roberts AM,
Mike Hedges AM,
Matt Harris (Sandy Mewies' support staff)
Paul Mewies (Sandy Mewies' support staff)
Ceri Jackson (RNIB Cymru),
John Ramm, (Chair, RNIB Cymru)
Nicola Crews (RNIB Cymru)
Gareth Davies, (Volunteer, RNIB Cymru)
Peter Jones (Guide Dogs Cymru),
Andrea Gordon (Guide Dogs),
Jonathan Mudd (Guide Dogs),
Owen Williams (Wales Council for the Blind),
Richard Bowers (Wales Council for the Blind)
Catrin Edwards (Sense Cymru)
Emma Sands (RNIB Cymru)

Apologies

Eluned Parrott AM
Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Marcela Votruba (School of Ophthalmology)

1. Chair presents key achievements report

Sandy Mewies presented the key achievements report and summarised the work of the Cross Party Group on Vision in the 4th Assembly. Active since 2008, the members of the group have worked towards the delivery of the Wales Vision Strategy Implementation Plan and worked closely with the sector.

Key issues such as transport have been presented to the Welsh Government and there have been successes in accessible healthcare and rehabilitation. However problems still occur such as patients not receiving health information in a format they can

access or patients who are newly diagnosed waiting over six months for a rehab assessment.

Whilst we are celebrating the work and the progress made today, it is important to work towards the opportunities presented in the next Assembly. The Future Generations Act, further powers and continuing with the Eye Care Delivery Plan will be vital to securing further change.

The Cross Party Group is integral to ensuring the voices of blind and partially sighted people are heard. The Chair called upon the groups present to submit their calls for what streams of work need to be carried on through a Legacy Paper which can be circulated now and when the new Assembly is in place.

The Chair went on to talk about the rest of the key achievements paper (attached).

Mike Hedges thanked Sandy Mewies for chairing and Ceri Jackson echoed this.

2. Ceri Jackson, Director of RNIB Cymru

Ceri shared her reflections on the Cross Party Group which included the need to bring the right issues to the group, and how important it is in ensuring the needs of blind and partially sighted people are heard. One of the important issues affecting the right support for visually impaired children was able to be taken to the Minister within two months of being tabled at the group.

The changes in Welfare Reform and the number of people who are driven into poverty and even to suicide is on the increase. Eyecare issues still need to remain a high priority. CJ thanked members and the third sector that have helped to make a difference and emphasised the group is critical to improving services for blind and partially sighted people.

3. Key asks pitches

RNIB presented their key asks for the Assembly Elections around

- Referral to Treatment Time Targets,
- ECLOs (Eye Clinical Liaison Officer Service)

- QTVI provision (qualified teachers for visually impaired children) and
- independent living especially around transport.

Catrin Edwards from Sense outlined their key priorities which include:

- Increase awareness and identification of deafblindness, including by raising awareness for those who are not identified as having a dual sensory impairment and are therefore not registered for support.
- Additional Learning Needs reform – to be brought forward early in the new Assembly
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act – the right investment to implement it and a real commitment to preventative support.

Owen from Wales Council of the Blind presented their key asks:

- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act a priority and services not lost because of the changes
- Accessible information and signage
- Technology – the choice should be there if you want it
- Disability Hate Crime

Guide Dogs:

- Rehabilitation and habilitation – focus on prevention
- Built environment and shared spaces – get the guidance on this right
- Public transport
- Education, health and social services talk to each other better