



**Minutes / Cofnodion
Cross Party Autism Group / Grwp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
Medi 8 September 2017
Prifysgol Bangor University**

1 WELCOME / CROESO

CPAG Chair Mark Isherwood AM, welcomed everyone to the meeting and notified the group of apologies received from Hefin David AM, Mike Hedges AM, Jeremy Miles AM, Neil McEvoy AM, Simon Thomas AM, Llyr Gruffydd AM, Bethan Jenkins AM and Paul Davies AM.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING / COFNODION A MATERION YN CODI

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate account of the previous meeting.

3 WILLOW HOLLOWAY: UPDATE ON WORK OF AUTISTIC WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECT & AUTISTIC UK CYMRU.

Willow updated the group on the continued development of the peer to peer and self-advocacy network, the Autistic Women's Empowerment Project as well as her role in expanding the role of Autistic UK Cymru to be a strong voice for autistic people in Wales. Willow spoke about the opportunity the current consultation on a proposed Autism Bill offers autistic people to ensure that their voices are heard. Willow also promoted the upcoming North Wales Autism Conference, on 29th September as well as an event to mark International Women's Day on the 8th March 2018, looking at the unique challenges faced by autistic women.

4 DELYTH LLOYD WILLIAMS: 'SAVE OUR INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND'

Delyth informed the group about changes to the Independent Living Fund (ILF) in Wales. After initially being administered by the UK Government until 2015, responsibility for the fund was transferred to the Welsh Government, who replaced the ILF with the Welsh Independent Living Grant (WILG), with existing recipients receiving their payments from the Local Authority. The Welsh Government has since decided that full responsibility and funding will be transferred to Local Authorities from 2018-19. The WILG will continue in its current format in 2017-18. During this time local authorities will meet with recipients to agree a package of support to meet their needs.

Delyth was inspired by campaigner Nathan Davies whose 'Save Our Independent Living Fund' campaign seeks to maintain the current arrangement, where the fund is ring-fenced. It is feared that that councils could use the funds to make up for financial shortfalls in other areas.

The National Assembly will be discussing this issue in October and Delyth urged the group to take part in the campaign by signing the petition.

Mark Isherwood noted that this is an issue being looked at by the Cross Party Group on Disability and suggested liaising with the members of that group. Mark also noted

the wider context of the Independent Living Fund across the UK, suggesting that the disability sector in Wales was more in favour of the co-production models operating in Scotland and Northern Ireland and ring-fencing the funding. Further comments from the group included clarification that the fund has been closed to new claimants for two years and that many younger people are disadvantaged as a result of this.

5 THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY CYMRU'S AUTISM HOUR

Samuel Stone from The National Autistic Society Cymru informed the group about the charity's Autism Hour, a campaign aimed at engaging local shops and businesses and encouraging them to be more accessible to autistic people. Sam said that The Autism Hour will take place on the 2nd October at 10am with shops encouraged to take part any time that week. It's hoped that once businesses realise how such small steps can make a big difference, they will look at adopting some of these changes permanently. The group discussed how this would be beneficial not only for autistic people but for the shops themselves. Members also raised concerns about the accessibility of other places, such as hospitals.

6 DISCUSSION ON THE AUTISM BILL CONSULTATION

Mark Isherwood updated the group on the progress of the proposed Autism Bill, introduced by Paul Davies AM, and informed the group that a public consultation on what should be included in the Bill began on August 30th. Meleri Thomas of The National Autistic Society Cymru presented an overview of the key themes that the consultation addresses, including diagnosis, service provision, training and costs, and encouraged people to participate in the consultation. The group raised a number of further ideas that it was felt the Bill should cover, including access to health care, lifelong learning and Welsh language provision. The consultation closes on 20th November.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The group were informed about a yoga-based autism group that is looking to start in the area.

7 ACTIONS / CAMAU GWEITHREDU

The group will liaise with the Cross Party Group on Disability to find out more about their work on changes to the Independent Living Fund.

The next meeting of the Cross Party Autism Group will be at the National Assembly for Wales on 6 December 2017 from 12:15pm-1:15pm with the exact location yet to be confirmed.