



Minutes / Cofnodion
Cross Party Autism Group / Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
March 14 Mawrth 2018
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

1 WELCOME / CROESO

Group Chair, Mark Isherwood AM, welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was also attended by Dai Lloyd AM, Hefin David AM, Paul Davies AM, Lee Waters AM, Mandy Jones AM, David Rees AM and David Rowlands AM. Staff representing Mike Hedges AM also attended.

2 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING / CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL

Mark Isherwood AM was re-elected Chair of the Cross Party Autism Group. Meleri Thomas, on behalf of the National Autistic Society Cymru, was re-elected to provide the Group's secretariat. Hefin David AM, Dai Lloyd AM and Jayne Bryant AM remain Group Officers with Mike Hedges AM, David Rees AM and Mandy Jones AM all confirming their membership.

3 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. Mark Isherwood AM raised the recent publication of a report on the progress of the Welsh Government's Autism Strategy and the Integrated Autism Service. It was agreed that the report would be circulated.

4 UPDATE ON THE DRAFT AUTISM [WALES] BILL / DIWEDDARIAD AR Y BIL AWTISTIAETH [CYMRU] DRAFFT

Paul thanked the group for the opportunity to update the group on his draft Autism Bill, which is currently out for consultation. The consultation ends on the 17th April 2018 and Paul urged all attendees to take part. Following the consultation, Paul will review the responses before finalising the draft Bill, which needs to be introduced by July 13th 2018. Paul also informed the group that in January he had met with Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, to discuss the Bill along with Welsh Government proposals to improve autism services in Wales. Paul is awaiting a further meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

5 CARERS RIGHTS IN WALES / HAWLIAU GOFALWYR YNG NGHYMRU

Claire Morgan, director of Carers Wales, informed the group about their work across Wales promoting the rights of unpaid carers. Claire outlined the rights of carers under the Social Services and Well-Being Act, including their statutory right to a carer's assessment. Claire went on to provide a number of statistics illustrating the contribution of carers throughout Wales. Carers Wales are working on their 'Track the Act' campaign which aims to ensure that the Social Services and Well-Being Act is being implemented as intended, as well as their annual 'State of Caring' report. Claire also welcomed the recent Welsh Government announcement of a Ministerial Advisory Group on carers which she hopes will lead to a specific carers strategy and action plan.

Garry Loynes then gave a personal account of caring for his two autistic sons. Garry spoke about how 'life became a series of meetings and appointments' which put a huge strain on family life. In the case of Garry's sons, he said the system really began to fail after their school years, with a

continuous fight to access support to help them gain employment or to live as independently as possible. Garry expressed his worries about who would fight for his sons when he was no longer able to. The support and understanding from other parents and carers has been invaluable and led Garry to set up a support group, Support Additional Needs Neath and District. Garry also recognised he was fortunate to have an advocate who has been a huge help in accessing support. Responding to comments from members Garry suggested that the challenges facing carers in recent years have got harder and not easier.

6 AART 2018 - AUTISM ART EXHIBITION

Raj Chand and Michael Charles informed the group about the upcoming event which aims to give autistic artists the opportunity to display their work at an exhibition to be held at the National Assembly for Wales. Raj spoke about how being an artist and designer who received an autism diagnosis in his 30s had inspired efforts to promote the skills and talents of autistic people instead of the 'limitations' and 'difficulties'. Raj said that these limitations are not inherent in autism and only reflect challenges and barriers imposed by others. The exhibition, running from the 9th-13th April, hopes to encourage people to think about the insight of the artists and how this influences their work. AART 2018 is being organised in association with the annual Welsh Autism Ball.

7 TIM RHYS- QUIET HANDS

Playwright Tim Rhys informed the group about his latest play, Quiet Hands, following on from the success of his previous production, Touch Blue, Touch Yellow. Quiet Hands focuses on the issue of 'mate crime' where vulnerable people, including those with autism, are befriended by people seeking to take advantage of them. Tim said that this is an under-reported crime and he wanted to bring attention to the issue. Tim will be putting on a special production of Quiet Hands at the National Assembly later in the year. It was agreed that the group would be provided with further information as it becomes available.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS / UNRHYW FATER ARALL

It was noted that, following correspondence from the group, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething AM, will be attending the next meeting. It was agreed that, ahead of this, the group will write to the Cabinet Secretary to raise some of the issues highlighted by the recent evaluation of the Welsh Government's Integrated Autism Service and Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan. In particular, the letter should address its findings regarding co-production given the concern expressed by a parent/carer who spoke at the meeting that unless co-production and early intervention is prioritised, higher costs of more acute interventions will result.

Ryland Doyle, representing Mike Hedges AM as well as being a Swansea County Councillor, referred to the contribution of Garry Loynes and suggested that both he and Mike would be happy to support constituents facing similar challenges in the Swansea area.

9 ACTIONS / CAMAU GWEITHREDU

To circulate the recently published evaluation of the Welsh Government's Autism Strategy and the Integrated Autism Service.

To write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, raising some of the issues contained in the report ahead of his contribution to the Cross Party Autism Group in June.

To circulate details of the Quiet Hands showing as they become available.

The next meeting of the Cross Party Autism Group is to be held on 20 June 2018 at the Pierhead building