



Minutes / Cofnodion
Cross Party Autism Group / Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
Mehefin 26 June 2019
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

1 WELCOME / CROESO

Group Chair, Mark Isherwood AM, welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the current Assembly term, which was also attended by Group Officer Hefin David AM. Apologies were received from Llyr Gruffydd AM, Helen Mary Jones AM and Adam Price 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 AUTISM AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE / YMWYBYDDIAETH O AWTISTIAETH YN Y GWEITHLE

Joe Allen discussed the Wales Trades Union Congress' 'Autism Awareness in the Workplace' guide to attendees. The guide, which was requested by trades union (TU) reps, has three main aims: to educate TU reps to help them better support autistic colleagues; to provide general information on some of the relevant legal aspects of employment; and to provide practical guidance to employers so they can better support autistic staff.

The guide includes examples of where a good understanding of autism from employers and colleagues have had positive outcomes for autistic employees. It also explores the impact that a lack of understanding can have on the employment prospects of carers.

The Wales TUC aim to promote this document further and provide training to TU reps. Sara Harvey of the National Autism Team offered to host the guide on the ASDinfoWales website. Joe welcomes comments or suggestions on how the guide could be improved, with one attendee seeking assurances that the guide was inclusive of wider neurodevelopmental conditions.

Joe distributed copies of the guides at the meeting copies of these can be obtained [online](#).

4 ALCOHOL USE AND AUTISM / DEFNYDD O ALCOHOL AC AWTISTIAETH

Andrew Misell, of Alcohol Change UK Cymru, and Mark Brosnan, of Bath University discussed their ongoing work exploring the links between alcohol use and autism, with a particular focus on ensuring that services supporting dependent drinkers are autism-friendly. Some studies have suggested that autistic people are at a higher risk of alcohol harm. Research also indicates that autistic people have negative experiences of accessing support in this area due to a lack of awareness and understanding of autism. Andrew and Mark summarised that reasonable adaptations to how support is provided to autistic people can lead to much better outcomes. Their aim is to now focus on working with alcohol support services to share their knowledge and provide training.

This programme of work will be discussed in more detail at the upcoming Alcohol Change UK Cymru conference in Wrexham in September.

Some attendees discussed personal experiences and suggested that this issue may be exacerbated if autistic adults have not received a diagnosis. Mark Isherwood AM raised the Drink Wise Age Well campaign. While this campaign is focussed primarily at tackling increasing alcohol consumption by older people, some possible causes for this rise, such as social isolation and anxiety, may also relate to autistic people.

5 AUTISM AND THE CHINESE MINORITY / AWTISTIAETH A'R LLEIAFRIF TSIEINIAIDD

Hazel Lim, of the Chinese Autism Support Group, began by sharing her personal experiences as a parent of an autistic child seeking help from the Chinese community. Hazel told of the stigma attached to autism within the Chinese community, and shared an account of being told to leave the room after asking a Chinese group if any of their children were autistic.

Hazel suggested that culture is particularly difficult to change and that, in some instances, negative value is ingrained even within language itself – autism can be interpreted to literally translate as 'self-closed disease'. This makes the perceived taboo difficult to overcome.

Hazel had secured funding to produce a fully bilingual Chinese-English autism guide. She hopes to increase awareness of this issue and improve understanding of autism in the Chinese community. Hazel distributed copies of the guides at the meeting copies of these can be obtained [online](#).

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS / UNRHYW FATER ARALL

Mark Isherwood AM informed the group of open Welsh Government consultations on NHS continuing healthcare guidance and continuing care for Children or Young People. The annual review of the Welsh Government's autism strategy is also expected in June.

Sara Harvey informed the group that the National Autism Team will also be publishing a report this week and asked for it to be circulated.

An attendee raised concerns over the guidance exam boards provide to exam invigilators in relation to providing support to autistic pupils. Sara Harvey said that the National Autism Team will look into this and take it forward.

Denise Inger of Snap Cymru raised the issue of how changes to the additional learning needs system could impact upon early recognition and diagnosis of autism.

The next meeting of the Cross Party Autism Group is in Prestatyn on 18th October

