



Minutes / Cofnodion
Cross Party Autism Group / Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
Rhagfyr 04 December 2019
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

1 WELCOME / CROESO

Group Chair, Mark Isherwood AM, welcomed everyone to the last meeting of 2019, which was also attended by Group Officer Dai Lloyd AM, Huw Irlanca-Davies AM and staff representing Mike Hedges AM. Apologies were received from Llyr Gruffydd 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. Correspondence between Chair, Mark Isherwood AM, with the Welsh Government Minister for Education and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, was shared for comment.

Mark Isherwood also announced that this was the final meeting of Meleri Thomas, who has provided secretariat to the group for seven years. Nominations were sought for a new group secretary. Samuel Stone, on behalf of the National Autistic Society Cymru, was elected.

Mark Isherwood passed on apologies from Gareth Tarrant, from The Autism Directory, who was due to discuss their employment project, but was unable to attend.

3 GIG BUDDIES / FFRINDIAU GIG

Kai Jones, the project co-ordinator for the Gig Buddies project, delivered by Learning Disability Wales, introduced the scheme, aimed at supporting autistic people and those with learning disabilities to access events. Gig Buddies matches people with volunteers who share interests to help address some of the barriers people might face in doing things they otherwise enjoy, such as attending concerts, sporting events or the theatre. The project currently runs in Cardiff, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan. Kai discussed plans for expansion of the programme next year into Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff as well as developing a *Stay Up Late* network where disabled people are empowered to make their own decisions about how they spend their time.

4 UPDATE FROM SNAP CYMRU / DIWEDDARIAD GAN SNAP CYMRU

Denise Inger, Chief Executive of SNAP Cymru, provided an update on the work that the charity is doing across Wales. SNAP Cymru's main area of work is promoting inclusion and equality in education. SNAP Cymru supports all pupils in Wales where they experience any difficulties in accessing the support they need and many of the referrals they receive relate to autistic pupils. Despite referrals to SNAP Cymru doubling in recent years, their staffing has reduced by a third. Denise reminded attendees that whilst there is an ongoing period of transition to a new Additional Learning Needs system, the current SEN system remains in place.

Denise welcomed the pathways to assessment developed since the Autism Strategy, but outlined some of the ongoing issues that have been raised with them, including a lack of

support following diagnosis, exclusions due to disability discrimination and managed moves. Denise provided information about how to access support from SNAP Cymru, such as their helpline service and web enquiry form: <http://www.snapcymru.org/help-for-families/>

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS & CLOSING REMARKS / UNRHYW FATER ARALL A SYLWADAU CLOI

Attendees were informed of the open consultation on proposed changes to Disability Student Allowances, which is open until the 17th February 2020: <https://gov.wales/changes-disabled-students-allowances>

The next meeting of the Cross Party Autism Group will be held at the National Assembly for Wales on 26th February 2020.

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