

Disability Equality Forum
Wednesday 19 July 2017, 9.00 – 10.30am
Committee Room A, Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Attendees

Paul Dear (Chair)	Welsh Government (Equality team)
Wayne Crocker	Mencap Cymru
Jackie Davies	Welsh Government (Equality team)
Tracey Good	NHS Centre for Equality & Human Rights
Rhodri Griffiths	Welsh Government (Transport)
Natasha Hirst	Disability Wales
Julia Jacobie	Palantypist
Martyn Jones	Tai Pawb
Jody Mellor	Disability Wales
Stephanie Williams	Learning Disability Wales

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1 Paul Dear welcomed everyone and explained that Carl Sargeant AM, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children was unable to attend the meeting so Paul would be chairing on his behalf. There was a round table introduction.
- 1.2 Apologies had been received from:

Dan Biddle	Access Consultant
Andrea Gordon	Guide Dogs Cymru
Catherine Lewis	Children in Wales
Alan Meudell	Mental Health Service User
Owen Williams	Wales Council of Blind People
Jim Crowe	Learning Disability Wales

2. Minutes and action points from previous meeting
Paul Dear, Welsh Government

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 08 December 2016 were agreed as a true record.

There were seven action points from the previous meeting:

1. *Welsh Government (Equality team) to circulate the Communities First questionnaire to Forum members.*

2. *Welsh Government (Equality team) to provide contact details of Julie James AM, Minister for Skills and Science to Jim Crowe in order that Learning Disability Wales can explore work being completed on apprenticeships.*
3. *Welsh Government to send a link to the Oral Statement on Employability which the Minister for Skills and Science made in Plenary on 15 November 2016.*
4. *Welsh Government to circulate a link to the DWP Green Paper, the engagement events and the 'Ahead of the Arc' report to Forum members*
5. *Welsh Government to circulate DWP contact details to the group along with a link to the DWP leaflet on Access to Work and the Disability Rights UK leaflet.*

All above actions were completed within a week of the meeting

6. *Welsh Government to provide briefing to the Cabinet Secretary on the Access to Work scheme, with specific reference to the differences of application between the scheme in England and Wales, such as internships.*
7. *Welsh Government and DWP to provide the Cabinet Secretary with further information about the specific case raised during the Forum of an individual encountering difficulties following changes to the renewal process.*

Both these actions were completed. The Cabinet Secretary had received advice on both items, and there had been positive movement on both.

**3. Review of Framework for Action on Independent Living
*Jackie Davies, Welsh Government***

- 3.1 Jackie updated the group on the engagement that had taken place in recent months. Five round table events had been held by Welsh Government (WG), one in Cardiff, one in Llandudno Junction (LLJ) and 3 events had been run by video-conference between South (Cardiff or Merthyr) and North Wales (LLJ). In addition there had been five visits to Disability Groups, two in Newport, and one each in Pembroke, Ceredigion and LLJ (with people from across N Wales).
- 3.2 Wales Council of Blind People had also held 2 Regional events, one in West Wales and one in South East Wales, and had fed back to Welsh Government.
- 3.3 A survey had been published on the WG website from April to June, and the link had been circulated to disability groups for wider distribution.
- 3.4 A wide number of issues had been raised in the engagement events and Jackie ran through some under the following headings:
 - Advice and information
 - Transport
 - Housing

- Education / Employment
- DWP / Benefits
- Access to Buildings and Places
- Social Services
- Health

3.5 Many of the issues were the same as identified in the original framework although there had also been recognition of progress in some areas. Some people also said that they were more aware of their rights under the Equality Act 2010 and the UNCRDP and that they were more willing to act as advocates for others.

3.6 The headline results from the survey showed that:

- There was low awareness of the Independent Living Framework
- Only one of the seven priority areas (person centred technology) was seen to have improved over the last 3 years
- Transport was the biggest issue in terms of both lack of improvement and continuing barriers
- Other areas identified as issues included health, education, driving, DWP benefits and perceptions of / attitudes towards disabled people.

3.7 A general discussion followed. Main points were:

- It was important to get data on intersectionality where possible. Not many respondents had completed the equality monitoring sheet attached to the survey and this was disappointing. This information could be really valuable for recognising particular barriers and designing services. It was agreed that the Third Sector had a role in encouraging people to supply this data and explaining why it is collected and how it is used.
- There is a need to keep people informed of what has happened as a result of their engagement in the review of the Framework.
- It is a shame that many respondents could not see where progress had been made, and it was suggested that maybe their perception was coloured by the wider economic picture of UK Government spending cuts and welfare reform.
- The recent EHRC report, setting out the lack of progress across the UK on disability equality over the last 10 years, had not provided a helpful backdrop.
- There had been investment by WG in improving services over the last 3 years but maybe that wasn't enough time for the investment to have a wide enough impact.

3.8 Turning to the structure of the revised Framework, Paul Dear explained the current context of the overarching Programme for Government "Prosperity for All" with the 4 themes under which work would be taken forward. The First Minister had made it clear that he did not want to see large numbers of other strategies being produced to cover specific priorities. In that context Paul explained that the Equality team currently had 6 or so action plans in production and there was a need to take a joined-up approach in presenting these plans to stakeholders. With this in mind it was likely that the Equality Team would produce an overarching narrative on the WG web-site, under which all equality and inclusion action plans would sit.

4. **Transport** *Rhodri Griffiths, Welsh Government*

4.1 Rhodri Griffiths provided an update on developments with public transport in Wales. The main points were:

Trains – Welsh Government would be taking over control of the Wales and Borders rail franchise from October 2018, and this would provide opportunities to specify services and to make changes to rolling stock.

The **South East Wales Metro** would be about all modes of transport linking to each other in a planned way. Similarly the new City Deals were about regions coming together to plan transport infrastructure. This would be reinforced by Local Government reform which would put in place statutory requirements for local authorities to work together on transport planning.

Buses – Deregulation had prevented governments from interfering with the bus industry. The WG was now consulting on public service principles to be applied

There was also a consultation going on about the future of **taxis and private hire vehicles**, where powers would be transferring to WG in 2018. Currently, taxis are regulated in terms of fares and driver training, but private hire vehicles are less regulated. The proposal is that there should be one structure for both types of vehicle, with national standards for fares, training etc.

On **Blue Badges**, it is local authorities which have the responsibility to issue badges. The WG was aiming to drive consistency amongst local authorities in terms of the application of the scheme. Misuse of spaces is an issue and the WG was looking at good practice in other areas with the aim of ensuring Blue Badge regulations are enforced better.

4.2 Rhodri emphasised the importance of leadership. He said that the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure had stated that transport is an “accessibility for all” issue and had agreed to the setting up of an ‘Accessible Transport’ panel to advise WG and to quality assure some proposed actions e.g. changing the requirement for 24 hours notice for assistance on a train journey. Bidders for the Wales & Borders franchise had been invited to propose ideas for improvements in accessibility.

4.3 The following points were raised by the group:

- Accessibility was one factor, but poverty also has an impact on access to transport:
- Unemployed disabled people who rely on public transport can find themselves in a situation where public transport is not available at the times they need it to get to and from work – creating a cycle of poverty;
- Could people who qualify for free or concessionary fares club together and use those concessions towards taxi fares, when buses were not available (e.g. evenings and weekends)?

4.4 On the last point, Rhodri explained that in the legislation governing this area, concessionary fares could only be used on buses. WG has no levers to make bus companies put on more services and could only increase the availability of bus services by funding them. The WG was providing support for Community Transport for rural areas

5. Disability Hate Crime Paul Dear, Welsh Government

5.1 Paul explained that there used to be a Disability Hate Crime Action Group (DHCAG) which met regularly but, mostly due to people leaving the various organisations involved, had not met for some time. The WG's Hate Crime Action Plan was currently being renewed and stakeholders had queried whether the DHCAG might be reconvened.

5.2 The main Hate Crime Criminal Justice Board (HCCJB) included representatives from Victim Support, the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Home Office and others and had been focussing on different aspects of hate crime (race, faith LGBT etc.) at each meeting, The Board had not recently had a substantive discussion on disability hate crime (although the issues are frequently referred to in the Board's wider discussions).

5.3 Paul asked for views on two options, i.e.

- put disability hate crime on the agenda for the next meeting of the HCCJB and invite those with a particular interest to attend, or
- add disability hate crime as an agenda item for the next meeting of this Forum, and feed that back to the HCCJB.

5.4 Attendees agreed that it should be discussed at the next meeting of the Forum, with attendance from Victim Support Cymru to give some background and statistics on the prevalence of disability hate crime.

5.5 Samantha Williams mentioned that many disabled people just accept harassment and hate crime as part of their life and would not consider reporting it. There is a need to promote awareness that witnesses can report hate crime, not just the victim, and to encourage reporting generally.

Actions: Welsh Government to add disability hate crime to the agenda for the next meeting.

Welsh Government to invite representatives from Victim Support Cymru to attend the next meeting and give a presentation on disability hate crime.

6. Disability Wales Projects, DRILL & Embolden Dr Jody Mellor & Dr Natasha Hirst, Disability Wales

DRILL

6.1 Dr Jody Mellor gave a presentation on the Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (DRILL) project (copy attached). In 2015, Big Lottery awarded £5

million funding over 5 years to a partnership of national disability organisations including Disability Wales, Disability Action Northern Ireland, Inclusion Scotland and Disability Rights UK. Disability Wales is managing the DRILL programme in Wales.

- 6.2 DRILL is a research programme aiming to gather evidence on the social barriers to independent living and learning faced by disabled people. Research findings will be used to develop pilot projects and inform policy development and practice to bring about real improvements to the lives of disabled people.
- 6.3 As well as the project outcomes themselves, the DRILL programme was being led by disabled people which had positive outcomes in terms of them learning about research methodology, dissemination skills, and how to push for policy changes. Academics were also learning how to work alongside disabled people in equal partnership.
- 6.4 There is currently an open call for applications, with a closing date of 8 August. A previous call had resulted in 200 applications across the UK, and 21 had received funding, three of them in Wales.
- 6.5 Paul Dear said that the WG would welcome presentations from any of the three projects in Wales at the next forum meeting.

Action: Jody Mellor to discuss the possibility of presentations with the project leaders and let Welsh Government know if any of them will be able to come to the next meeting.

Embolden

- 6.6 Dr Natasha Hirst told Forum members about a project which had been set up to celebrate the centenary of votes for women. Disability Wales (DW) is receiving grant funding and is calling for nominations of disabled women who have achieved success in their careers, their communities, educations, arts etc. DW wants to open up the call for nominations to wider communities who may not be connected through DW networks and Natasha asked Forum members to circulate a flyer and link (attached), the closing date for nominations was 28 August.

7. Any other business / date of next meeting

- 7.1 Paul asked if anyone wanted to suggest agenda items for the next meeting, which would be arranged for Nov./ Dec 2017.
- 7.2 The Impact of the roll-out of Universal Credit was suggested and accepted.

Action: Welsh Government to add Universal Credit to the agenda for the next meeting.