

Disability Equality Forum

9 am Tuesday 28 February 2023 via Video Link

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice (Chair)
Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Forum Members

Andrea Gordon	Wales Vision Forum / Guide Dogs Cymru
Allen Bewley	The FDF
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Debbie Shaffer	FTWW Fair Treatment of Women of Wales
Rhian Davies	Disability Wales
Owen Williams	Wales Council for the Blind
Liz Williams	RNIB
Calum Shakespeare	Whizzkidz
Jan Thomas	The FDF
Ross Thomas	Tai Pawb

BSL Interpreter

Cerys Sayers

Captioner

Laura Hughes

Presenters

Debbie Thomas	Crisis
David Rowlands	Tai Pawb

Welsh Government Officials

Jon Luxton	Specialist Policy Adviser
Stuart Evans	Deputy Director, Equality and Human Rights
Nina James	Disability Rights Taskforce Secretariat Lead
Suzanne Pomeroy	Transport Policy
Rae Cornish	Head of Disability & Gender Policy, and Finance

Graham Hughes
Robert Kent-Smith
Hannah Fisher

Disability Policy Team
Transport Strategy and Policy
Head of Homeslessness Prevention
Legislation

Apologies

Sara Pickard
Joanna Fashan

Mencap Cymru
Whizzkidz

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.0. The Minister for Social Justice welcomed members to the Disability Equality Forum and welcomed Lee Waters, Deputy Minister for Climate Change. Agenda item 4 from the previous DEF meeting was brought forward to this meeting for discussion. It was a discussion on the Transport Equality Pathway. The Minister invited Suzanne Pomeroy from Transport Policy to give an update.
- 1.1 Suzanne gave an update on the infrastructure and various initiatives Transport would be focusing on in the summer term. She invited the DEF members to work with a special group set up to work with the Disability Rights Taskforce 'DRT' workstream.
- 1.2 Andrea Gordon raised concern as the Chair of the Workstream Travel Group. She asked how the work of her workstream would transfer across to the Transport Equality Pathway and any other innovation strategy. She was concerned about the language used as it did not reflect the language used in the social model of disability.
- 1.3 Jon Luxton voiced concerns in relation to the Transport Strategy, asking what actions had occurred since the last meeting and that the Access part of the Transport Strategy was a 5 year commitment. He asked what had been achieved to date and what the road map was, eg. in relation to bus drivers, train drivers and the transport infrastructure. He reiterated that there needed to be a clear plan of action and it needed to be visible to the public.
- 1.4 Andrea Gordon concurred that there needed to be a commitment to measurable actions.
- 1.5 Lee Waters, Deputy Minister for Climate Change mentioned public transport must work for everyone. He noted that funding across all

Ministerial portfolios including Transport is very stretched. Passenger numbers had not returned to pre-Covid levels. Passenger patterns had changed due to more people continuing to work from home or in a hybrid way. He reiterated that action needs to take place. There needs to be clarity about what needs to be done, by who and when. The DEF, DRT and Transport Panel need their roles defined, so that work is not being replicated by those groups, and experts and those with lived experience are discussing all the issues, ideas and initiatives together.

- 1.6 Rhian Davies urged attendees to view the BBC Programme Xray: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001jhc4>. The programme showed disabled people trying to access public transport to get to Cardiff. All of them experienced serious issues trying to travel. She mentioned many disabled people prefer to use their own vehicles, or have no option, because of the issues they experience with public transport.

Action: All DEF members were encouraged to watch the BBC Programme Xray scheduled on 27 February 2023.

- 1.7 Debbie Shaffer wished to get involved. She highlighted that not all issues with public transport are related to wheelchair users. She mentioned there were issues with public announcements, public toilets, luggage storage, ticketing and seating.
- 1.8 Jan Thomas mentioned that there also needs to be recognition that disabled people may need or want to go out during the evening or weekends. Not all disabled people have their own vehicles.
- 1.9 Lee Waters confirmed a clear timeline is necessary to achieve the goal of removing all barriers for all users and a need to design people friendly electric buses and train fleets across Wales.
- 1.10 He highlighted a government white paper on taxi reform to the group and urged the DEF to help identify where there are concerns.
- 1.11 The Minister for Social Justice closed this item by confirming the DRT was formed to respond to the issues disabled people experienced during the pandemic, but this role is wider. She

confirmed the role and Terms of Reference of the DEF and DRT need to be reviewed so it is clear what their distinct roles are.

1. **Action:** All to view the BBC programme Xray scheduled on 27 February 2023
2. **Action:** All to be involved in the DRT
3. **Action:** Minister and Jon Luxton to review the Terms of Ref of DEF

2. Reforming Homelessness Legislation

- 2.1 Debbie Thomas (Crisis) referred the DEF to actions the Expert Panel were to report to the Minister responsible for Housing following the publication of the Ending Homelessness Action Plan. The first was to consider how legislative change could help end homelessness in Wales and to produce a Welsh Government White paper in relation to those changes.
- 2.2 Areas investigated were the Housing Wales Act, Social housing allocations, evictions and eligibility, suitability, temporary accommodation and regulation/enforcement.
- 2.3 Other issues highlighted were in reference to refugees, those with no recourse to public funds, Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, wider public sector duties, youth homelessness, health and social service roles, prison leavers and protected characteristics.
- 2.4 David Thomas (Tai Pawb) spoke of Tai Pawb being commissioned to consult with experts who have protected characteristics who have lived experience. This was by doing qualitative research. There were 6 participant groups. Tai Pawb used semi structured interviews. People's stories were used as case studies.
- 2.5 Tai Pawb discovered there were nuanced causes of homelessness. For example, homelessness was caused by disabled people not being listened to, or not being understood; also by a lack of appropriate housing stock, and lack of knowledge about what appropriate housing stock was available. Generic forms did not capture the requirements of the disabled person because of the way the questions were asked. Tai pawb reported

disabled people felt disability was not a priority factor. They indicated the Social Services Wellbeing Act seemed to be no longer relevant, and to not reflect the Social Model of disability.

- 2.6 David and Debbie wanted DEF to be involved in future discussions to eliminate the barriers to disabled people having access to housing and to help change the law if it was no longer relevant.
- 2.7 Debbie wanted everyone to be involved in the discussions taking place on 20 March and with Tai Pawb on 17 March.

Action: DEF Secretariat to send an email to DEF with the invitations from Debbie Thomas (Crisis) and David Rowlands (Tai Pawb).

4. Close

The Minister closed the meeting. The next meeting of the DEF would be on 28 September 10am-11am.

Actions:

Action 1	All DEF members encouraged to watch the BBC Programme Xray scheduled on 27 February 2023. The programme showed disabled people being unable to access public transport in Wales.
Action 2	All Members are encouraged to be involved in the work of the DRT
Action 3	Minister and Jon Luxton to review the Terms of Ref of DEF in reference to the DRT and its functions.
Action 4	DEF Secretariat to send an email to DEF to encourage them to attend the Crisis events with invitations from Debbie Thomas (Crisis) and David Rowlands (Tai Pawb).