

Disability Equality Forum

Wednesday 24 June 2015, 10.00 – 11.30am

Conference Room 24, Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Attendees

Lesley Griffiths, AM (Chair)	Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty
Julie Annetts	Social Services, Welsh Government
Sara Beer	Disability Arts Cymru
Wayne Crocker	Mencap Cymru
Jim Crowe	Learning Disability Wales
Jackie Davies	Fairer Futures Division, Welsh Government
Rhian Davies	Disability Wales
Emma Evans	Creu Cymru
Andrea Gordon	Guide Dogs Cymru
Amelia John	Head of Fairer Futures Division, Welsh Government
Deborah Keyser	Creu Cymru
Catherine Lewis	Children in Wales
Sian Lewis	Fairer Futures Division, Welsh Government
Hannah Mason	Diverse Cymru
Megan Merrett	Creu Cymru
Rhian Stangroom-Teel	Leonard Cheshire Disability
Janet Thompson	Housing, Welsh Government
Sarah Watkins	Senior Medical Officer, Welsh Government
Sharon West	Head of Equality, Fairer Futures, Welsh Government
Owen Williams	Wales Council for Blind People
James Woodbine	Economy, Science & Transport, Welsh Government

1. Introduction and apologies

- 1.1 The Minister welcomed everyone and there was a round table introduction.
- 1.2 Apologies had been received from:

Maggie Hampton	Disability Arts Cymru
Martyn Jones	Diverse Cymru
Sarah Melkevic	Welsh Government
Richard Williams	Action on Hearing Loss Cymru

2. Minutes and action points from previous meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on 10 December 2014 were agreed as a true record.
- 2.2 Action points from the last meeting are listed at Annex 1.

3. Hynt – Improving access to theatres and arts venues ***Emma Evans and Megan Merrett – Creu Cymru***

- 3.1 Hynt was commissioned by the Arts Council of Wales in March 2014 and is managed by Creu Cymru in partnership with Diverse Cymru. It is a new national access scheme which works with theatres and arts centres in Wales to make sure there is a consistent offer available for visitors with an impairment or specific access requirement, and their Carers or Personal Assistants.
- 3.2 All theatres and arts centres which are part of Hynt are committed to improving accessibility to arts and culture. Hynt is working with venues to remove barriers to access and engagement and both Hynt and all venues are committed to a set of values: fairness, understanding, openness, clarity and consistency.
- 3.3 The scheme is peer led and Hynt works closely with disabled people and the Third Sector to ensure collaboration and partnership remains at the core of everything they do.
- 3.4 Hynt cardholders are entitled to a ticket, free of charge, for a personal assistant or carer at all the theatres and arts centres participating in the scheme. Over 30 venues across Wales are currently signed up with work being undertaken to increase this number.
- 3.5 The card is free to customers and is valid in any Hynt venue. Consequently, only a single application to the scheme is required which removes the need to navigate a variety of schemes, processes and criteria operated in other areas or by individual theatres. There is no age restriction for cardholders or carers and the card enables other customer preferences to be captured to facilitate a better user experience eg. accessible parking, assistance dog. This information is available to box office staff when tickets are booked so allowing staff to tailor the information they provide to the individual's needs when planning a visit. Each card also has a unique reference number designed to allow for online booking.
- 3.6 The automatic eligibility criteria were developed with disabled people, third sector organisations and theatres and art centres. Criteria were needed which did not involve Hynt having to assess the care needs of individuals as neither the expertise nor resources were available for this, so the criteria utilise existing frameworks.
- 3.7 Hynt recognise this is an imperfect method of determining eligibility so have developed an arbitration process which can be used if an individual is not automatically eligible to join the scheme, if the original application was rejected or if an individual requires more than one carer to attend with them. The arbitration process is managed by Diverse Cymru and uses the social model of disability.
- 3.8 The Hynt website acts as a resource for cardholders and a wider audience, providing access guides for all participating venues and listings for all accessible performances. The site is also part of an audience development toolkit to show the range of work being done, so encouraging people to attend. It allows people to sign up to email bulletins and register access needs which will help Hynt understand potential future developments and training needs.

3.9 Megan Merrett confirmed there are over 2000 records on the Hynt portal with approximately 1500 Hynt cards already issued. Just under 100 applications are currently in arbitration.

3.10 Forum members raised the following points:

- Information on how the free ticket for the carer is paid for. Emma confirmed the venue is responsible for covering the cost of the ticket. Some external producers are willing to make the necessary adjustment to cover the cost while others are not.
- The website contained lots of information about venues but it was asked if the Changing Places icons could be utilised on the website. Emma explained the online access guides to venues were narrative in nature but they were happy to look into adding icons, such as those used in the Changing Places scheme.
- It was asked whether Hynt could link with the children accessible venues which already exist across Wales. Emma explained they are already working closely with Contact a Family, a national charity for families with disabled children.
- The experience of a forum member's colleague was shared with the group. The individual was attending the theatre but the venue would not pay for a BSL interpreter and, ultimately, the individual had no choice but to pay for the interpreter themselves. Emma explained quality of experience was central to Hynt's purpose and it was not good enough to simply invite an interpreter along to a performance as they should not just translate the words – they should also interpret the meaning of the performance and add 'colour' in order to provide a similar experience to that of a non-disabled person. Emma went on to explain they are looking at training a pool of interpreters to do this. Emma also recognised venues do not keep records of how many deaf or hard of hearing people attend performances.
- The work of UCAN Productions, a performance and creative arts co-operative for blind and partially sighted children, young people and their friends was highlighted to the group. Emma confirmed they are working with UCAN Productions. She explained the UCAN App was primarily designed for blind and partially sighted people but could also be used pan impairment.
- What is being done to promote the scheme within care homes? Emma explained the scheme has only been operational for approximately two months and it has been important to ensure all systems were working well at this early stage. Consequently, the initial marketing has been relatively low key. However, they are now moving to the next stage and will be working with partners, including Forum members, to share the scheme information with their service users. Megan Merrett confirmed Hynt is working with venues in order that they offer groups, including care homes, the same arrangements as those offered to individuals.
- The scheme does not have a cap on the number of places available but are venues likely to impose their own restrictions? Emma explained some places, such as wheelchair accessible places, could be limited due to the physical set-up of the venue. However, the scheme is clear there should not be caps on numbers imposed and, if venues were found to be imposing caps on numbers, they would likely be removed from the scheme as well as opening themselves up to complaints.

Going forward, Emma explained the scheme would be funded solely by the venues themselves. Venues pay a fee to be a part of the scheme and are also responsible for covering the cost of the seats for carers.

4. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People *Sharon West (Welsh Government) and Rhian Davies (Disability Wales)*

- 4.1 Sharon provided some background to the Convention, which was ratified in 2009, explaining it marked a shift in thinking about disability from a social welfare concern to a human rights issue, acknowledging social barriers and prejudices are themselves disabling. This is consistent with the Social Model of Disability adopted by the Welsh Government in 2002. The Convention is considered by many in the UK to be an opportunity to help change the perception of people towards disability and ensures society recognises all people must be provided with the opportunities to live life to their fullest potential.
- 4.2 Linked to the Convention, the Optional Protocol established two procedures aimed at strengthening the international monitoring of the Convention: a procedure to allow individuals or groups of individuals, who claim to be victims of breaches of the Convention, to bring petitions to the UN Committee and the second gives the Committee the authority to undertake inquiries into alleged grave or systematic violations of the Convention without an individual complaint.
- 4.3 The UNCRPD includes 33 Articles relating to a wide range of issues including equality and non-discrimination, awareness raising, accessibility, freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse, education, health, employment, independent living, respect for privacy, participation in political and public life and participation in cultural life.
- 4.4 Welsh Government contributes to the UK Government report to the UN. Reporting is a key part of the process as it assesses conformity with the Convention.
- 4.5 The first UK report was submitted to the UN in 2011 but is yet to be examined. Due to a backlog, the hearing is not now expected to take place until Spring 2016, even though the second report is due to be submitted this year.
- 4.6 Consequently, the 2011 report is out of date and does not reflect subsequent developments. By the time it is examined, this issue will be exacerbated. The delay has also affected the reporting cycle. The UK Government leads on communications with the Committee and will provide advice as to the way forward.
- 4.7 Sharon also identified the current threats to Independent Living and the rights of disabled people. The Welfare Reform agenda of the UK Government had led to cuts to a number of disability benefits along with the imminent closure of the Independent Living Fund on 30 June 2015.
- 4.8 Welfare reform, coupled with cuts to public services, is having a disproportionate effect on disabled people and, because Wales has a higher proportion of people who are disabled, it is having a disproportionate effect on Wales.

- 4.9 She explained the Welsh Government has done what it can to protect the Public and Third Sectors from cuts but it is inevitable that budget cuts all round will impact on their income and the support which can be provided.
- 4.10 Rhian Davies continued the presentation by explaining the Convention was the first of the 21st century and was a very powerful tool in setting out the rights of disabled people.
- 4.11 Rhian reiterated there was a large backlog of reports awaiting examination, including the UK's report from 2011. She informed the group that, within the UK, a systematic inquiry had been instigated under the optional protocol and this must be dealt with confidentially and before the committee can undertake the examination of the UK report.
- 4.12 She also informed the group an individual inquiry had been raised due to the closure of the Independent Living Fund (ILF).
- 4.13 Rhian welcomed the recognition of the Convention within the Welsh Government, identifying it underpins the Framework for Action on Independent Living, but she called for it to be recognised across all departments.
- 4.14 She identified that, despite lobbying, the Convention was not included within the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 although it has subsequently been included in the associated Codes of Practice.
- 4.15 Rhian informed the group Disability Wales has been working with disabled people and organisations across Wales to produce a Disabled People's Manifesto. The Manifesto is due to be published in the near future and will call for due regard for the UNCRDP from both Welsh Ministers and Welsh Government.
- 4.16 Rhian also highlighted the Disability Wales workshops being held in Llanrwst (16th July) and Carmarthen (9th September) to inform people about the Social Service and Well-Being (Wales) Act, the UNCRPD and the Disabled People's Manifesto for Wales. She explained the workshops are a part of the Disability Wales strategy to raise awareness and understanding of core pieces of Welsh Government legislation along with raising awareness of people's rights.
- 4.17 Rhian informed the group of the Know your Rights, Use your Rights, Live your Rights document available on the Disability Wales website. The resource aims to equip individuals with knowledge and information about disabled people's rights, how to use the rights to promote equality and eliminate discrimination and harassment in their community and to support and empower disabled people at a challenging time when many are likely to face a reduction in financial support and services.
- 4.18 Rhian concluded by calling for the UNCRPD to have the same recognition as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Amelia John (Welsh Government)

- 5.1 Amelia explained the Act has received recognition at UN level as it is the first of its kind in the world. It was informed by 'The Wales We Want', a national conversation and opportunity for people across Wales to have their say on the issues which mattered to them.
- 5.2 Amelia explained there are seven well-being goals within the Act which set out the Wales we want, now and in the future. Together they provide a shared vision for the public bodies covered in the Act to work towards. The goals are an integrated suite and each must be addressed.
- 5.3 Ministers must set national indicators which can be reviewed and amended to ensure they remain relevant. At the start of each financial year, Ministers must publish an annual report setting out the progress made over the previous year.
- 5.4 The Act establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. The PSB must work towards achieving the well-being goals. It must also prepare and publish a Local Well-Being Plan in which it sets out its objectives and the steps it will take to meet them. When determining the objectives, the PSB must consult and engage widely with local communities. Each PSB will carry out an annual review of their plan showing their progress.
- 5.5 Amelia also explained within twelve months after an Assembly election, Ministers must produce a Future Trends Report giving predictions of likely future trends in social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.
- 5.6 The Auditor General for Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner will help to ensure the public bodies are held to account for their performance in relation to the Act's requirements.
- 5.7 The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales will be in post by next year. Their role will include providing advice to public bodies and PSBs to meet their well-being objectives, carrying out relevant research, conducting reviews into how public bodies are taking account of the long-term impact of their decisions, making recommendations to a public body about the steps it has taken or proposes to take and publishing a Future Generations Report. The Commissioner will be supported by an Advisory Panel which will include the other Wales Commissioners, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, a representative of Natural Resources Wales, Wales TUC and Welsh business.
- 5.8 Forum members raised the following points:
- There were different definitions of well-being used within the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act. Amelia explained the Social Services Act focussed on individuals and was a person-centred approach whereas the Future Generations Act operates at a national level. She identified the focus of each was very different but considered each would complement the other.

- The Act was well-meaning but still felt top-down and used terms such as collaboration and involvement but was there any mention of co-production? Amelia explained the key to the Act was working together and a bottom-up approach, assuring the group this would become clearer in the guidance supporting the Act. Amelia explained consultation and involvement were central to the process of determining the objectives and in the design of services and policy. There was a clear expectation co-production would be a key component.
- Was there sign-up from non-devolved organisations? Amelia explained there has been much involvement with police forces and probation services. She also confirmed the court services are also communicating with the Welsh Government about the Act, even though they do not form a part of a PSB.
- How will the Wales Audit Office monitor and challenge the indicators? Amelia confirmed this will be a part of the Commissioner's role. When the Commissioner has made recommendations to a public body they must publish their response.

6. Any other business / date of next meeting

- 6.1 The Minister informed the group of a report being launched by Action on Hearing Loss and asked if this was something the group would like to know more about. Owen Williams confirmed he was happy to work with Richard Williams on presenting to the group on employment for people with sensory loss.
- 6.2 Sarah Watkins informed the group of the Welsh Government's recent announcement regarding funding for mental health amounting to £14.6 million. £7.6 million would be allocated to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The funding package includes £2 million to develop services for young people with neuro-developmental needs. These new services will help to reduce waiting times in specialist CAMHS so those children and young people with the most complex conditions and the highest level of clinical need are seen quickly.
- 6.3 Forum members raised the following points:
- The additional funding was welcomed and a copy of the written statement or press notice was requested. Sarah confirmed she would provide written information to the group.
 - Was the additional funding recurrent? Sarah confirmed it was.
 - Part of the issue with specialist CAMHS was help will be provided to those children with an appropriate level of clinical need and so not all children and families who were experiencing problems and requiring help can receive it from CAMHS but it was important that support should be available elsewhere rather than people just waiting and being told not eligible for specialist input. Sarah explained CAMHS was undertaking a service change and development programme to ensure the right support at the appropriate level was in place for children.
- 6.4 Members of the forum suggested CAMHS could be an agenda item for a future meeting.

- 6.5 Sharon West informed the group of the consultation on the Strategic Equality Plan's Equality Objectives 2016-2020. The consultation closes on 20th July. Sharon also informed the group of the workshops currently taking place with the final one in Cardiff on 29th June.
- 6.6 In conjunction with the consultation, Sharon highlighted the engagement and focus groups being undertaken by groups including Disability Wales, Pembrokeshire People First, Wales Council of Blind People and Action on Hearing Loss. The analysis and report will be available in the autumn. The SEP will be published after the Assembly elections in 2016 but a draft copy will be provided to forum members.
- 6.7 The next meeting is to be arranged in November/December 2015, date to be confirmed.

Action: Employment for people with sensory loss to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Sarah Watkins to provide written information on the recent funding for mental health.

Action: Fairer Futures to add CAMHS to the agenda for the next meeting.

Annex 1

Disability Equality Forum, 24 June 2015

There were 7 action points from the last meeting on 10 December 2014:]

1. **Welsh Government to provide figures relating to the outcomes and targets of the Business Start-Up Service to forum members.**

Information on survival rates for new businesses was circulated to Forum Members in January.

2. **The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty will provide a written response to the Environment report from Guide Dogs Cymru.**

Completed. Response sent in January 2015.

3. **The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty will write to the Minister for Public Services to highlight the lack of engagement with disabled people's groups and the unacceptable time it took the Local Authority in Wrexham to arrange a meeting.**

Completed. The Minister wrote to the Minister for Public Services in January, who in turn wrote to all Local Authorities encouraging them to work with disabled people to "make the most of opportunities to improve access to places, services and facilities".

4. **Welsh Government to provide the Minister for Natural Resources with a copy of the report.**

Completed.

5. **Wayne Crocker (Mencap) to arrange a meeting with Colin Blick (Welsh Government) to determine how to improve the reliability and relevance of the Changing Places data.**

Wayne Crocker had been in touch with Colin Blick to discuss this issue.

6. **Owen Williams (Wales Council of Blind People) to email Jackie Davies about the potential of placing markers on individual files (Social Services) to indicate specific communication requirements.**

Placing markers on individuals' files was one of the proposals included in the consultation on the Code of Practice on Assessment (related to the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014). This information was relayed to Owen Williams who had since responded to the consultation.

7. **Fairer Futures to add the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People to the agenda for the next meeting.**

Completed – at Agenda item 4