

**Disability Equality Forum**  
**Wednesday 25 November 2015, 10.00 – 11.30am**  
**Conference Room 21, Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay**

**Attendees**

Lesley Griffiths, AM (Chair)	Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty
Wayne Crocker	Mencap Cymru
Michael Curties	Welsh Government
Jackie Davies	Fairer Futures Division, Welsh Government
Sarah Evans	Welsh Government
Andrea Gordon	Guide Dogs Cymru
Martyn Jones	Diverse Cymru
Sian Lewis	Fairer Futures Division, Welsh Government
Sara Mackay	Disability Arts Cymru
Jason Pollard	Welsh Government
Rhian Stangroom-Teel	Leonard Cheshire Disability
Janet Thompson	Housing, Welsh Government
Sharon West	Head of Equality, Fairer Futures, Welsh Government
Richard Williams	Action on Hearing Loss Cymru

**1. Introduction and apologies**

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

Rhian Davies	Disability Wales
Maggie Hampton	Disability Arts Cymru
Catherine Lewis	Children in Wales
Alan Meudell	Mental Health Service User
Paula Walters	NHS Centre for Equality & Human Rights
Owen Williams	Wales Council for Blind People
Sarah Melkevik	Welsh Government

**2. Minutes and action points from previous meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting on 24 June 2015 were agreed as a true record.
- 2.2 There were 3 action points from the previous meeting:

- 1. Employment for people with sensory loss to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.*

This had been included at Agenda item 3 of today's meeting.

2. *Sarah Watkins to provide written information on the recent funding for mental health.*

The Minister for Health's Written Statement had been circulated to the group.

3. *Fairer Futures to add Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Services to the agenda for the next meeting.*

This had been included at Agenda item 5 of today's meeting.

### **3. Able, ready to work.... and deaf**

#### ***Richard Williams – Action on Hearing Loss (AOHL) Cymru***

- 3.1 Richard presented the AOHL Cymru report 'Able, ready to work.... and deaf' to the Forum. The report was commissioned to get a clearer picture of the major obstacles faced by deaf people in finding and retaining work. It was published in March 2015.
- 3.2 Richard explained that there are a wealth of statistics available but it is important for research to get beneath the data to understand the real life experiences of individuals.
- 3.3 In Wales an estimated 4% of the working age population, 84,000 people, wear hearing aids or are profoundly deaf/have severe hearing loss and statistics released last week show that the number of deaf people is increasing.
- 3.4 The report showed that people who are deaf/hard of hearing are willing to work but they encounter difficulties arising from employers' attitudes, poor provision of support and information, discrimination and barriers from managers and colleagues at work and difficulties accessing support in Job Centres and from Access to Work.
- 3.5 The perception amongst employers seems to be that it will be expensive to employ a disabled person. Many do not know about the Access to Work programme which will cover the cost of providing reasonable adjustments. Employers also consider that disabled people will be more of a health and safety risk.
- 3.6 Since the report was published, the DWP has set up a specialist employment agency in Wales for deaf people, which currently supports 16 people.
- 3.7 Richard highlighted the need for all government work programmes to be accessible and available to disabled people; Job Centres to offer facilities to enable deaf people to access their services such as quiet rooms and British Sign Language interpreters; the need for increased awareness of specialist employment agencies; and increased awareness amongst employers of the Access to Work scheme.
- 3.8 Forum members raised the following points:
  - There was often confusion over the responsibilities of the UK Government, such as Access to Work, and those of the Welsh Government which include a number of work programmes.
  - The negative, media driven publicity which surrounds disabled people has led to an unhelpful 'skivers and strivers' scenario.

- Tackling the real/perceived prejudice of employers and work colleagues of disabled people needs to be addressed if real improvements are to happen – attitudes need to change. A survey revealed that 46% of people under 25 didn't want to work with a disabled person.
- Owen Williams of Wales Council for Blind People is doing some work related to the Access to Work programme and this was suggested as a possible agenda item for the next meeting.
- There should be better enforcement of the Equality legislation across the UK and within Wales in order to make employers aware of what is available and ensure they take appropriate action when employing a disabled person.
- When grants are given to businesses, there is an opportunity to include employment for disabled people within the stipulations.

**Action: Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport regarding the opportunities for highlighting the employment of disabled people in grants provided to businesses.**

**Action: Fairer Futures to talk to Owen Williams about Access to Work and add to the agenda for the next meeting**

#### **4. Communities for Work** ***Michael Curties, Welsh Government***

- 4.1 Michael Curties informed the group about the Communities for Work programme which was launched in June 2015.
- 4.2 The programme is delivered in partnership with Job Centre Plus and will operate within the 52 Community First clusters.
- 4.3 The programme will provide opportunities for the Job Centre Plus advisers to operate in the communities they serve, with two advisers in each Community First cluster. Alongside the advisers, there will be Mentors who will be employed through the Community First operator.
- 4.4 The programme will provide one-to-one tailored support to individuals through a triage system in which the Job Centre advisers, mentors and other relevant partners work together to develop the best and most appropriate solutions for the individual. This will allow the complex conditions of people to be addressed.
- 4.5 If an individual is not eligible for the Communities to Work programme, they will be passed onto other sources of support such as the Welsh Government's Lift programme.
- 4.6 The programme has been designed to be flexible to meet the needs of individuals so can, for example, allow for the provision of specific training in order to enable an individual to gain employment.

- 4.7 Other support will be available through an Innovation Fund which will support new ways of working along with a Barriers Fund which will provide support such as childcare to allow individuals to attend training courses and bus fares to get to interviews.
- 4.8 The programme will build upon the best practice from other programmes, such as Lift, and utilising local staff and knowledge.
- 4.9 Forum members raised the following points:
- There was a need for data and evaluation to measure how well the programme is delivering. Michael Curties informed the group that the partnership with Job Centre Plus allows for a great deal of data collection. Building on the Communities First clusters means that there is also a wealth of local knowledge to utilise. He recognised that difficulties in data collection could arise at a very local level due to confidentiality issues. However, he confirmed that evaluation of the programme would be undertaken.
  - The importance of linking with young people who are in transition between education and employment. Often support is required to get into and around the workplace. Would Communities for Work provide such assistance? Michael welcomed the opportunity to engage with members of the Forum further regarding such issues.
  - How would people know about the programme? Michael explained that the programme would be widely publicised at a local level through the Communities First engagement plans and through local Job Centres. Work is also being undertaken to link the programme to the Welsh Government Skills Gateway. Michael welcomed any further suggestions to publicise the programme.
  - Would the programme be fully accessible to disabled people? Michael said it would.
  - Could the programme link in with disability-led organisations to tackle the myths and barriers surrounding the employment of disabled people? Often disabled people don't identify as disabled so are employed without their employer realising they are disabled. Michael explained that this type of engagement was undertaken across Welsh Government departments, often at a local level, but he welcomed the opportunity to do more.

## **5. Welsh Government's Mental Health Strategy / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

***Jason Pollard, Welsh Government***

- 5.1 Jason explained that with mental health provision, people tend to think of specialist provision within the NHS. However, the range of services is actually much broader and the aim is to provide the right level of service at the appropriate time and in the right place.

- 5.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has seen an increase of over 100% in referrals during the last 4 years. However, it has been found that of those referred, one-third of individuals had no mental health issues and a further one-third had very low level mental health issues which did not require specialist CAMHS provision.
- 5.3 Jason highlighted the 'Together for Children and Young People' programme which was launched in February 2015. Led by the NHS in Wales, this multi-agency service improvement programme will consider ways to reshape, remodel and refocus the emotional and mental health services provided for children and young people in Wales, in line with the principles of prudent healthcare.
- 5.4 The programme has a number of workstreams focussed on the following: Early Years, Resilience and Wellbeing; Early Intervention and Enhanced Support; Neuro Developmental and Co-morbid Mental Health/Learning Disabilities; Specialist CAMHS; Workforce, Education and Training; Care Transitions; and Health Needs Assessment and Evidence Review (by Public Health Wales).
- 5.5 Earlier this year, the Minister for Health and Social Services announced extra recurrent funding of £15.6m for mental health services in Wales. Almost half – £7.6m – will be invested in CAMHS, representing an 18% increase in funding. It will be targeted at the following areas:
- £2m to develop neuro-developmental services, including ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders. A significant number of referrals to specialist CAMHS services relate to children with autism or ADHD even though they do not meet the criteria for treatment by CAMHS. This can delay access to the support they do need and access to specialist CAMHS for those who need this service;
  - £2.7m to improve out-of-hours and crisis CAMHS response;
  - £1.1m to expand access to psychological therapies for young people;
  - £800,000 to improve local primary mental health support services;
  - £250,000 to expand provision for children and young people in the criminal justice system;
  - £800,000 to address the needs of young people who have an early onset of a severe illness, such as a psychosis. This will mean the service can support young people aged 14 to 25.

## **6. Welsh Government's Equality Objectives** ***Sharon West, Welsh Government***

- 6.1 Sharon West provided an update to Forum members on the Welsh Government's revised Equality Objectives 2016-2020. We have a statutory duty to review our equality objectives every four years and publish our new equality objectives by 1 April 2016.
- 6.2 A twelve week public consultation exercise had taken place earlier in the year. The Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Board has been engaged throughout the development of the Equality Objectives.

- 6.3 The intention of the consultation was to gather views and evidence on what the priority areas of inequality are today for protected groups, which Welsh Government should be addressing in its refreshed Equality Objectives for 2016-2020. Welsh Government officials also held workshops and worked with independent equality stakeholders, representing specific sectors, to hold their own focus group sessions to supplement the consultation exercise.
- 6.4 A copy of the draft Revised Equality Objectives 2016-2020 was provided to Forum members. Sharon highlighted the Objectives had not yet been finalised but this would be required imminently as they would be sent for Ministerial approval in the New Year.
- 6.5 The aim has been to make the objectives as cross-cutting as possible and most likely to make the biggest difference to tackling inequality.
- 6.6 The Objectives have also been designed to reflect the findings of the 'Is Britain Fairer?' report, published in October 2015 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the upcoming 'Is Wales Fairer?' report.
- 6.7 The objectives dovetail with the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

## **7. Any other business / date of next meeting**

- 7.1 Wayne Crocker updated the group regarding the Changing Places project. In recent years, Mencap Cymru has worked in partnership with the Welsh Government to increase the number and awareness of Changing Places facilities across Wales. In 2009, the provision of Changing Places facilities was introduced into planning guidance in the Technical Advice note (TAN) 12 which covers aspects of design for new and public commercial buildings.
- 7.2 Mencap have recently obtained information through a Freedom of Information request to the Local Authorities in Wales which suggests that the inclusion of Changing Places in the TAN12 has done little to increase the number of facilities. Of the twenty-two Local Authorities, four were unable to supply the requested information and, of the remaining eighteen, not one had recommended the inclusion of Changing Places facilities to a planning application since 2013.
- 7.3 Following a meeting with Colin Blick (Planning, Welsh Government), Mencap will now be presenting at a forum for planning officers from across Wales to remind them of the requirement to consider Changing Places facilities in the plans for new and public commercial buildings.
- 7.4 The next Disability Equality Forum meeting is to be arranged in June/July 2016, date to be confirmed.