

Disability Equality Forum

10.00 am Wednesday 16 March 2022 via Video Link

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice (Chair)

Forum Members

Alex Osborne	Disability Wales (on behalf of Rhian Davies)
Jan Thomas	The FDF Flintshire Disability Forum Centre for Independent Living
Daniel Hurford	WLGA
Fiona Reid	Disability Sport Wales
Helen Green	Public Health Wales
Thomas Pinder	Leonard Cheshire
Brett Bignall	Dewis Cil

Welsh Government Officials

Jon Luxton	Specialist Policy Adviser
Rebecca Sarasin	Equality Disparity Unit
Matthew Xerri	Continuing Healthcare (CHC) & Direct Payments
Daniel Jones	PAGS Paym
Ceri Thomas	Cadw
Andrew Charles	Equalities Branch
Rosemary Iles	Disability Team
Zoe Sutton	Disability Team
Graham Hughes	Disability Team
Shukura Babirye	Disability Team
Sarah Kanyeihamba	Disability Team
Peter Kellam	Cabinet Secretariat
Hannah Johnson	Observer

Apologies

Emma Bennett	Head of Equalities and Inclusion
Rhian Davies	Disability Wales
Jo Fashan	Whizz Kidz
Geraint Rees	EHRC
Kate Young	All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers
Ross Thomas	Tai Pawb
Owen Williams	Wales Council for the Blind
Karen Robson	Action on Hearing Loss
Rhian Stangroom-Teel	Leonard Cheshire
Nathan Owen	RNIB
Fiona MacDonald	MS Society
A Bewley	
Danni Richards	

Ruth Fabby	Disability Arts Cymru
Andrea Gordon	Wales Vision Forum / Guide Dogs Cymru
Joe Powell	All Wales People First
Sara Pickard	Mencap
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Emma Burke	Leonard Cheshire
Paul Hunt	Mencap

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 The Minister for Justice welcomed members to the first meeting of the Disability Equality Forum in 2022. She expressed condolences for Simon Green and acknowledged his dedication to his work and campaigns. She commented on his contribution to the Disability Equality Forum, and in other areas of his life.
- 1.2 The Minister made an Oral Statement to the Senedd on the **United Nations International Day of Disabled People**. She highlighted the inequalities disabled people face and Welsh Government's commitment to advancing the rights of disabled people in Wales. She was invited to the **Disability Arts Cymru Manifesto Launch Programme meeting**. **At the meeting she** launched the United Nations Charter for the Rights of Disabled People and acknowledged Disability Arts Cymru's contributions to culture and creativity in Wales.
- 1.3 In January there was a **Short debate on Deaf People in Wales - hidden inequality** tabled by Mark Isherwood MS. He is a well-respected advocate for the rights of Deaf and disabled people. Her response highlighted the effects of COVID on deaf people and Welsh Government's commitment to promote British Sign Language in Wales. The Welsh Government formally recognised BSL as a language in its own right in January 2004. She was pleased the UK BSL Bill aligned with Welsh Government policies. Work was underway to promote and embed BSL in Wales. The Taskforce and working groups would be vital for taking this forward.
- 1.4 The Minister had a meeting with **Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, recently appointed Chair of Sports Wales**. **The meeting was** to discuss the impact of the COVID pandemic on disabled people in Wales. This was a productive meeting where the Minister welcomed Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson's offer of help and contribution towards improving the rights of disabled people in Wales and highlighting the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce.
- 1.5 On 17 February the Minister held a roundtable discussion about the cost of living crisis with the Minister for Climate Change, the Minister for Finance and Local Government and other key stakeholders and ministerial colleagues. It was to identify what more could be done by Welsh Government and partners

to help and support households across Wales struggling with the unprecedented cost of living **increases**.

- 1.6 The Minister mentioned the creation of the Disability Rights Taskforce as a result of the *Locked Out* report commissioned by the First Minister and its recommendations, welcomed by the Welsh Government.
- 1.7 Two meetings had already taken place. The First Minister launched the inaugural meeting. The Minister and Professor Debbie Foster have co-chaired meetings. Professor Foster co-produced the *Locked Out* report with the DEF Steering Group.
- 1.8 The Taskforce was creating working groups to look at specific areas of concern eg Access to Services. Co-production and the Social Model of Disability would be embedded in the work. Training in the Social Model of Disability had already taken place and there would be workshops on co-production.
- 1.9 An aspect of this work would allow Welsh Government to align the recommendations of the BSL Audit report to the work of the Taskforce. This sub group would be established in the coming weeks.

Action 1: Secretariat to share Terms of Reference of Disability Rights Taskforce

- 1.10 The Minister mentioned at the last meeting that Covid-19 had changed disabled peoples lives negatively. A new Equality Disparity Unit had been created as a result of this.

2. Agenda Item 2: Equality Evidence Unit and Disability Disparity Unit – Rebecca Sarasin

2.1 There had been a review of the issues raised in the *Locked Out* report in relation to data and evidence. Three evidence Units had been established, Equality Disparity Evidence Unit, Disability Disparity Evidence Unit and the Race Disparity Evidence Unit. The Teams were focused on recruiting people with lived experience and people with technical skills to work in the Unit.

2.3 The overarching purpose of the Unit was to examine protected groups, drive forward better outcomes, work should be cross-cutting which could mean statistics may overlap. The Unit was working with a number of working groups including the Disability Rights Taskforce to support them with evidence.

2.4 The team were assessing available equalities evidence for Welsh Government and the public sector. This work would be focused and not generic. The team were looking at ways of working collaboratively. They valued lived experience as of equal value as evidence. They wished to maximise existing data. Build trust in the data being collected. Ensure outputs and publications would be accessible.

2.5 Rebecca explained the current priorities were to build an overall/overarching plan, and create synergy. The aim for the Summer was to create a strategic plan; to audit current data sources, and review how these could be improved.

2.6 Rebecca's team were having discussions with ONS and the National Survey of Wales and were examining their use of the Medical Model of Disability.

3. Agenda Item 3: Continuing Healthcare(CHC) and Direct Payments

3.1 Matthew Xerri outlined the work of his team in relation to CHC and Direct payments. Their interface relating to Direct Payments and linked to the Programme of Government provided guidance to local health boards. The content was focused on short to medium term options. The objective was to maintain independence for the individual.

3.2 The feedback from lived experience was individuals' experienced a loss of control of their care, because of direct payments. This was an issue for the CHC framework. It was for health boards to build independent user trust for interested parties. Health board managers a person's care package, were still using the medical model of disability.

3.3 He explained there was a system under current legislation and there would be additional guidance in relation to this. His team were reviewing this. It was due to be implemented in April.

3.4 Matthew explained further about direct payments and how staff originally employed through direct payments would now be employed by health boards. He mentioned governance of people employed, skilled workers. Had been developing colleagues, Disabled Person's Organisations, lived experience, working with lawyers to see how mechanisms can be improved for individuals, improve voice and individual control, working with parties wider stakeholder meeting in December, Welsh Government colleagues. Disability Rights Taskforce want to work in co-production with Matthew's team about the content of the CHC guidance.

3.5 England had made their legislative changes. There was a need for a change to associated guidance, work co-productively and with lived experience. Improve voice and control, and equality for seriously ill people.

Action 2: The Minister stated there would be a further one off meeting for the DEF to discuss this topic further with Matthew Xerri's team

4. Agenda Item 4: Physical Adaptations Grant (PAGS) Framework - Update

4.1 Daniel Jones explained his team were responsible for independent living in relation Physical Adaptations Grant Framework. The PAGS Framework was to ensure Independent Living standards were maintained and reduce any delays in the process.

4.2 Daniel's team was also responsible for ensuring any investment their team made was die sustainable and permanently accessible homes. He explained the

funding into PAGS on the slides. Welsh Government had taken steps to reduce the use of means testing by local authorities for the most common types of adaptations. Given the population was getting older, and the cost of construction and equipment was rising. The overall adaptations budget had risen from £17.66m to £19.5m for 2022-23.

4.3 The priorities for the Senedd in this policy area was about improving joint working with health and social care and improving information in relation to access to services. The aim was also to improve access to communication, eg to simplify complex information for service users.

4.4 The team had responsibility for the private housing sector. Housing associations would be given responsibility for the private rented sector, not councils 14% of housing stock was in the private sector. EHRC highlighted that 5% of this was PAGS spend. Housing Associations would be given total control of their housing stock.

4.5 The Minister discussed the Cost of Living Crisis. She mentioned the Disability Rights Taskforce would be interested in the discussions taking place at the DEF meeting.

Action 3: The powerpoint slides would be shared with the DEF.

Action 4: The DEF notes would be shared with the Disability Rights Taskforce

5. Agenda Item 5: Cadw – Disabled Persons Membership

5.1 Cadw offers free entry to disabled people and their companions. Cadw wished to introduce membership cards for disabled people as proof of their disability, and that they are entitled to free admission, including 1-2 companions.

5.2 Ceri asked the members if this was a better way, as the current system puts the onus on the custodian to verify their right to entry for free, eg visible and non visible impairments. Cards would remove awkward and inappropriate conversations.

5.3 Cadw wanted Disabled People to feel Cadw sites were for them as anyone else, and know what was on offer.

Membership card can be scanned, to know where the Disabled Person visited and to remove physical and perceived barriers. This had been discussed with Focus groups and end users, the process, service use and communication/

Action 5: A draft document would be shared with the Members

Action 6: Jon Luxton to have a separate meeting with Ceri Thomas

Additional Comments captured on Chat Facility

We're always happy to share role opportunities or participant chances with our members. If you send to alex.osborne@disabilitywales.org i'm happy to do what we can

Sarasin, Rebecca (KAS)

This is the link to some of the Equality, Race and Disability evidence Units posts. If anyone could share that would be great. Equality, Race and Disability Units: Research Officer and Senior Research Officer - Welsh Government

Vacancy Id: 7442. Title: Equality, Race and Disability Units: Research Officer and Senior Research. Location: Pan Wales. Salary: SEO - £40,100 - £47,470. Closing Date: 24/03/2022, 16:00

Jan TheFDF (Guest)

Do all Cadw sites have Changing Place facilities which is very often a barrier to disabled people using sites across the country.

Date of next meeting 14 July 2022 – 10-11am.

A full note of this meeting would be made available to Members.

Actions:

Action 1	Secretariat to share Terms of Reference of Disability Rights Taskforce
Action 2	A further one off meeting would be held with Members to discuss this topic further with Matthew Xerri's team
Action 3	The PAGS team powerpoint slides would be shared with Members
Action 4	DEF notes to be shared with the Disability Rights Taskforce
Action 5	Cadw would share a draft document with Members
Action 6	Jon Luxton to have a separate meeting with Ceri Thomas
Action 7	A full note of this meeting would be made available to Members