

Disability Equality Forum

2 pm Thursday 28 September 2023 via Zoom

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip (Chair)

Forum Members	
Joe Powell	All Wales People First b
Andrea Gordon	Wales Vision Forum/Guide Dogs Cymru
Margaret Buchanan Geddes	Deafblind UK
Polly Winn	RNID
Geraint Rees	EHRC
Sion Jones	Mencap
Callum	Whizzkidz
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Cath Lewis	Guide Dogs Cymru
Fiona Reid	Disability Sports Wales
Jan Thomas	The FDF – Flintshire Disability Forum Centre for Independent Living
Dee Montague-Coast	Fair Treatment of Women of Wales
BSL/English Interpreter	
Cerys Myers	
Jo Gallagher	
Captioner	
Laura Harrison	
Presenters	
Wayne Crocker	Mencap
Rhian Davies	Disability Wales
Scott Clifford	Head of Disability Disparity Unit, Welsh Government
Welsh Government Officials	
Jon Luxton	Specialist Policy Adviser
Rae Cornish	Head of Disability and Gender Policy

Suki Wescott	Senior Sensory and Disability Policy Manager
Zoe Williams-Sutton	Senior Equality and Disability Policy Manager
Steve Thomas	Digital Inclusion Manager
Hannah Howell	Disability Rights Taskforce Manager
Lesley Paskin	Disability and Gender Policy Officer
Nina James	Disability Rights Taskforce Senior Manager
Amina Elmansouri	Disability Disparity Unit Policy and Engagement Officer
Apologies	
Natasha Hirst	Independent
Representatives from Tai Pawb	
Angharad Paget-Jones	Independent
Debbie Shaffer	Fair Treatment of Women of Wales
Ruth Bacigalupo	Welsh Government
Gill Huws-John	Welsh Government

1. Welcome

1.0 The Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip welcomed members to the Disability Equality Forum to the meeting.

2. Is cashless society another barrier to inclusion for disabled people?

2.0 Wayne Crocker delivered a presentation highlighting how disabled people are being excluded from society, by the introduction of cashless only payment systems. He highlighted some of the reasons for this to DEF members. Wayne offered several solutions to identify any further issues - one was to ask Care Inspectorate Wales to identify services registered with them, how they support people who only have access to cash, in a cashless society. Wayne asked DEF members to propose solutions. The Minister invited feedback from attendees.

2.1 Margaret Buchanan recounted she communicated with the RNIB who confirmed they had not condoned the use of braille on debit and credit cards with Mastercard or Visa. She raised concern over

banks having the power to make decisions about bank accounts without the customers knowledge, or approval. Margaret commented that Swansea University completed research of deafblind people in 2018. The results demonstrated deafblind adults were approximately 15 years behind, digitally, and we are likely to see an increase in poverty of deafblind people.

- 2.2 The Minister was concerned that a 15-year gap had created a digital divide, which may have led to complete exclusion for many disabled people and payment to GPs to reclaim monies paid for bus passes through digital means being inaccessible to many disabled people. The Minister assured the DEF that further discussions would be held by officials in relation to this issue.
- 2.3 Joe Powell commented that some of his organisation's members had to pay GPs via cashless payments and to sign a form to reclaim their bus passes and did not have the means to do it by themselves, as it was an online payment system.
- 2.4 Geraint Rees (EHRC) raised concern that the public sector is moving towards cashless methods of payment. He mentioned EHRC wanted to question local authorities on how they employ the Public Sector Equality Duty, to ensure access and inclusion for all when creating a cashless society. Geraint noted that EHRC wished to have a follow up conversation in relation to Artificial Intelligence and Equality Impact Assessments.
- 2.5 The Minister confirmed that the cashless society will be a follow-up item on the next agenda, to report back at the next meeting. The Minister thanked Wayne for speaking on this topic, and ensured there would be feedback on the ongoing work of her colleagues in the Cabinet and the Welsh Government and across Wales.

Action: Secretariat to add 'Cashless Society' on the agenda for the next DEF meeting

3. Update on statistics relating to disabled people in Wales - Scott Clifford (Welsh Government)

- 3.0 Scott delivered a presentation related to the findings in the

Wellbeing of Wales Report 2023, the chapter on 'A More Equal Wales', published earlier that day described data relating to employment, pay and living condition figures for disabled people; analysis in the Office of National Statistics report 'Impact of the Increased Cost of Living on Adults in Great Britain' July 2023 for the period February to May 2023 and asked DEF members to feedback to his team in relation to plans they have for publishing some Census 2021 data. Links to these documents will be shared with DEF members.

- 3.1 The Disability Disparity Unit are working on publishing data from the 2021 Census and are aiming to produce further data.
- 3.2 Scott asked DEF Members to give feedback for areas they felt should be represented in relation to these statistics.

ACTION: Secretariat to share with DEF links to the publications Scott was discussing when the minutes are circulated

- 3.3 The Minister commented on the value of the work of the Disability Disparity Unit and that the figures in these reports were concerning. She stated the work of the Units was vital for the DEF to access the information to understand the level and types of inequalities across Wales. The Minister invited DEF Members to comment. She noted that deafblind people were not included in any Office of National Statistics data. Scott remarked that his team were examining the details of the statistics as they were at a high level.

Action: Scott Clifford's team to contact the Office of National Statistics in relation to including deafblind people in their research

4 Rhian Davies (Disability Wales) – Findings from their 'Barely Surviving' report on the impacts of the Cost-Of-Living Crisis

- 4.0 The Minister invited Rhian Davies (Disability Wales) to present her findings from the 'Barely Surviving' report (shared with DEF Members prior to the meeting).

- 4.1 Disability Wales gathered information to form the data for the report in February 2023.
- 4.2 Joe Powell asked where the money would be coming from, morally and practically, e.g., from Welsh Government or would monies come from the UK Government. He also queried whether there was something else that could be done to help Welsh Government to influence UK Government.
- 4.3 Margaret Buchanan explained the UNCRPD may be detrimental to the deafblind community. The International Federation of Deafblind survey in 2018 involved 90 million people from 20 countries.

ACTION: Scott Clifford to examine the International Federation of Deafblind survey of 2018

- 4.4 The Minister informed DEF members that she made a Written Statement and an Oral Statement in the Senedd on 26 September on the Cost of Living Crisis. The statement mirrored some of the recommendations in the report Rhian was sharing in the meeting. The Minister referenced the input of the Technical Advisory Group in her statements. They had been advising the Welsh Government.

ACTION: Secretariat to share the Minister's Written Statement and Oral statement made in the Senedd with the DEF regarding the Technical Advisory Group, which was set up by the Welsh Government, in response to the cost-of-living crisis. (completed in the meeting).

Rhian gave permission for the Minister to share the report with the Cabinet Sub Committee.

ACTION: The *Barely Surviving Report* to be shared with the Cabinet.

- 4.5 The Minister mentioned the Tackling Child Poverty Strategy, which is out for consultation. She feels this report should be shared with local government to make improvements in Wales. The Minister will be meeting with Equality leads of Local Government next

week. The Minister also spoke about budget priorities and ensuring that we are aware of what impact any decision may have on the most vulnerable people in Wales.

4.6 The Minister felt that disabled people should be aware of what is available for them in relation to financial support. 72,000 people had claimed via the Discretionary Assistance Fund up to 5 October, and there would be a report of who was awarded funding, including geographically. The greatest take up for this fund was from families with children.

4.7 Rhian asked DEF members to share the report widely.

5 Close and AOB

5.0 The Minister advised that the Disability Equality Forum is essential, as it can cover wider things that can't be covered by the Disability Rights Taskforce. The Disability Equality Forum can also feed into the Disability Rights Taskforce. The Minister closed the meeting. The next meeting of the DEF would be on Thursday 7 March 2024 10am-11am.

Links to Scott Clifford's Presentations

Well Being of Wales Report 2023 - [Wellbeing of Wales: 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)

Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: February to May 2023 - [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Ethnic group differences in health, housing, education and economic status in Wales (Census 2021): [Ethnic group differences in health, housing, education and economic status in Wales \(Census 2021\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Actions:

Action 1	Secretariat to add 'Cashless Society' on the agenda for the next DEF Meeting
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Action 2	Scott Clifford's team to contact the Office of National Statistics in relation to including deafblind people in their research
Action 3	Secretariat to share with DEF links to the publications Scott was discussing when the minutes are circulated
Action 4	The Minister asked if the issue of the collection of deafblind statistics could be explored by Scott's team with the Office of National Statistics
Action 5	Scott Clifford to examine the International Federation of Deafblind survey of 2018
Action 6	Secretariat to share the Minister's Written Statement and Oral statement made in the Senedd with the DEF regarding the Technical Advisory Group, which was set up by the Welsh Government, in response to the cost-of-living crisis
Action 7	The <i>Barely Surviving Report</i> report to be shared with the Cabinet