

Cross Party Group on Disability held on 22nd October 2020, via Zoom.

Present: Mark Isherwood MS (Chair), Zoe Richards (Secretary), Rebecca Phillips (minutes), Cllr. Ryaland Doyle, Stephen Thomas, Alex Osborne, Rhys Bowler, Bryn Owe, James Lewis, Maureen Lee, Megan Thomas, Miranda Evans, Helga Uckermann, Karen Warner, Megan John, Adele Battaglia, Wayne Crocker, Sion Jones, Samantha Stickland, Vin West, Gwynfor Lewis, Owen Williams, William Fawcett, Marg McNiel, Rhian Davies, Sian Guest.

Apologies: Helen Mary Jones MS.

1. Welcome and Introductions.

The Chair welcomed the group and opened the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record. All actions were completed.

2. Presentations:

Campaign to Introduce Personal Health Budgets and Personalised Care in Wales - Rhys Bowler, Samantha Stickland.

Rhys is campaigning for Welsh Government to introduce a Personal Health Budget (PHB) to enable disabled people to have more choice and control over the care they receive. Rhys has duchenne muscular dystrophy, is confined to a wheelchair and fully dependent on a ventilator. He requires 24-hour care, which he is not yet receiving.

Welsh Government is proposing the implementation of an Independent Users Trust (IUT). An IUT requires trustees, appointed by the recipient, to manage an agreed sum of NHS money in a way that puts the individual at the centre of the decision-making. Rhys believes this will not provide him with complete choice and control and would rather receive the funds directly, where his independence is everything to him, and individuals who can do this for themselves should have a right to independence and a normal life like everybody else.

See Around Britain (SAB) - Marg MnNeil.

Marg spoke about the See Around Britain app, which was launched in 2016. The app is designed to inform the user if a venue is safe and accessible to their needs. This is achieved primarily in the form of photos, videos, and descriptions.

Contributions are welcome from everyone. No other app provides such information in one place.

SAB are now expanding the app to incorporate the new measures in place due to Covid. It will help people who are at risk of developing Covid by giving them confidence to visit venues by having access to information beforehand, enabling them to assess it for themselves.

The founders are seeking a commitment from Welsh Government of active engagement and promotion of the See Around Britain app.

The Chair suggested writing to Jane Hutt MS, copying in Ken Skates and Eluned Morgan with the aim of working cross-departmentally. MI also suggested inviting Jane Hutt MS back to a future meeting to discuss it and any other matters arising from today's meeting.

ZR agreed to produce and send the letter.

Call for Learning Disability Commissioner - Self-Advocacy Prestatyn.

Members of Self-Advocacy Prestatyn have agreed to a proposal put forward by Cardiff People First for the appointment of a Learning Disability Commissioner.

The proposal was put to the National Council of All Wales People First last year and in January 2020 they agreed to campaign for it. Members of Self-Advocacy Prestatyn believe that a commissioner for learning disability will speak up for people and protect their rights. However, they were keen to ensure that it will not be south centric and that decision makers will continue to listen to self advocates.

Self-Advocacy Prestatyn concluded:

- the commissioner needs to listen to self-advocates.
- there should be a shared position between a person with learning disabilities and another person.
- the commissioner needs to be independent.
- the commissioner should be interviewed by self advocates.
- the commissioner should be based in north wales.

Disabled People and Mask Wearing - Rhian Davies.

Rhian highlighted the confusion surrounding the wearing of masks in enclosed public places. People with certain health conditions are exempt from wearing facemasks but disabled people have reported harassment from members of the public for not wearing them. RD called for Welsh Government to better inform the public about this by clearly signposting to information explaining the face

covering exemptions. Disability Wales has produced a factsheet and poster which will be available on their website.

Questions and comments.

The Chair opened up the meeting for questions and comments.

- Badges and lanyards are available for people with hidden disabilities to wear whilst visiting venues.
- WC would endorse the support for PHB in Wales, as it would enable disabled people to receive a wide range of support that cannot be funded via health or social services, such as music therapy.
- WC asked whether the See Around Britain app will specifically identify venues fitted with Changing Places toilet facilities and cross-reference this with the Changing Places website.

MM responded: When venues can be visited again, Changing Places loos will be photographed, as will defibrillators. SAB hope to liaise with Changing Places and the British Heart Foundation. In the meantime, users can locate venues with Changing Places toilets using the search function.

- Reports of people who are exempt from wearing masks being refused entry into shops even when they have provided evidence.
- Responding to Rhys' presentation, VW agreed with the promotion of independent living and would suggest that the issue be pushed forward using the mechanisms currently in place. The Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act states that support plans need to be co-produced and agreed. When the support plan is written it legally entitles the person to fully activate that support.
- VW in favour of a pan disability commissioner, working together rather than separating disabilities.
- AB endorsed raising the awareness of mask exemptions.
- BO - people with a learning disability want a commissioner with a learning disability to speak up for them on their behalf.
- RD - there is a cultural resistance to direct payments with a low percentage of take up, around 6% of those who have social care packages.

- RD - Disability Equality Forum producing a report on the impact of covid on disabled people.
- RD - Disability Wales launching their manifesto on 3rd December - calling for the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCPRD) into Welsh law. The question of whether there should be a commissioner to enforce that law will be debated at DW's conference on 12th November.
- RE - the public sector and politicians need standards of management practice that can be independently assessed.

Any other business.

There were two items one from OW and one from BF. Due to time constraints, OW opted to share his issue after the meeting.

Personal Independent Payment Assessments (PIP).

BF would like the PIP criteria reviewed to allow aids and equipment such as a Sat Nav to be accounted for.

MI reported that there have been many concerns about how the assessments do not make reasonable adjustments around the individual's particular circumstances. UK government ministers are launching another review, which could provide an opportunity for the group to submit a response. MI suggested the group write to find out what further enquiries UK government are currently undertaking or planning and seek an input into them. Alternatively, invite Capita to a future meeting.

Actions:

1. Write to Jane Hutt MS to:
 - seek government support for the See Around Britain app.
 - obtain the government's view on a disability/learning disability commissioner.
 - invite to a future meeting to discuss these issues and other matters raised at today's meeting.
 - inform her of Rhys' presentation and seek a meeting with Rhys.
2. Wales Disability Reference Group to look at how the Act can support Rhys' case.
3. VW to send a copy of Albert Heaney's letter to Rhys.
4. Write to UK Government to find out what further enquiries are taking place or alternatively write to Capita and invite them to a future meeting.

Date of next meeting.

To be confirmed.