

Cross Party Group on Disability

28th January, 2021

Present: Mark Isherwood MS (Chair), Zoe Richards (Secretary), Rebecca Phillips (minutes), Rhys Bowler, Megan Thomas, Helga Uckermann, Vin West, William Fawcett, Marg McNiel, Petra Kennedy, Jan Thomas, Tony Crowhurst, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt MS, Charis Moon, Stephen Thomas, Alison Tarrant, Terry Mills, Colin, Claire Bates, Karen Warner, Peter Jones, Nicola Hollister, Anna Parry, Grace Krause, Kat Williams, Sam Stickland, Adele Rose-Morgan, Adele Battaglia, Emma Bennett, Sian Davies, Wayne Crocker, Samantha Stickland, Vin West, Irina Erchova, Mathew Xerri, Jon Luxton, Glyn Roberts, William Fawcett, White Rose, Becca, Jan Underwood.

Apologies: Rhian Davies (Disability Wales), Louise McGrath (Wales Council for deaf people)

1. Welcome and introductions.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2. Annual General Meeting.

Mark Isherwood MS was re-elected Chair of the Cross Party Group on Disability. Zoe Richards, on behalf of the Wales Disability Reference Group, was re-elected to provide the Group's secretariat.

Proposed: Petra Kennedy

Seconded: Helga Uckermann

The Annual Report and Financial Report were circulated prior to the meeting. They were approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Bill Fawcett

Seconded: Jan Thomas

3. Minutes of the previous and matters arising.

The minutes were approved as an accurate and true record. All actions were completed or agenda items.

Proposed: Helga Uckermann.

Seconded: Megan Thomas

4. Wearing Masks.

A submission was received from Cardiff and District Deaf People's Support Group, highlighting two points:

- Some pharmaceutical staff are refusing to lower masks to aid lipreading.
- Some national press outlets have limited access to subtitles during important announcements. For example, a recent TV broadcast from Dr. Frank Atherton was subtitled on ITV but not on BBC.

Cardiff and District Deaf People's Support Group asked the CPGD to write on their behalf to the relevant authorities.

Following some discussion and shared personal experiences, the group agreed that there continues to be a lack of understanding from the general public and retail assistants on the guidelines and how face masks effect various communities. It was concluded that further awareness and education was needed. The group agreed the following actions to support and encourage this.

Actions:

- Write to the Welsh Retail Consortium.
- Write to Leslie Griffiths MS asking her to raise these matters again with the supermarkets.
- Contact some of the larger media outlets in Wales to help spread the messages.
- Write to Chris Llewellyn, CEO of the Welsh Local Government Association to pursue the issues with the local authorities and supermarkets.
- Write to the National Association of Head Teachers, Teaching Unions and School Governors to seek their help in disseminating information.

The Chair encouraged members to share generic information with schools in their area.

Bill Fawcett - informed the group that full-face perspex masks are available free of charge from <https://tinyurl.com/yanplkq3>

5. Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt MS to respond to questions from previous meeting.

Before starting this item, Tony Crowhurst informed the group that, following a recent meeting, he was made aware that the original definition of shielding had flaws. He therefore questioned whether the data is up-to-date and those who are extremely vulnerable will be correctly identified for the vaccine.

Emma Bennett and shared a response via the chat box. Zoe agreed to circulate this to the group following the meeting.

Action:

- ZR to circulate the vaccination guidance to the group.

See Around Briton Map - Marg McNeil.

Marg circulated an open letter prior to the meeting listing SAB's efforts to date.

SAB are requesting that Welsh Government actively engage with and promote their website/app. The app offers a transformative contribution both during and after COVID-19 to all venues and citizens, particularly disabled citizens in Wales.

Marg referred to Jane Hutt's letter to the CPGD, which was received in December. The letter stated that a research consortium was awarded a contract by Welsh Government to undertake research into strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales. The research consortium stated that it researched disabled people's organisations but Marg reported that SAB were never contacted.

He felt that in order for change to happen Ministers should seize the opportunity and take positive action and a personal initiative to take it forward. That is what Marg was seeking on behalf of SAB.

In terms of the research, Jane Hutt MS stated that it wasn't too late to engage with Diverse Cymru and she will ensure it is followed up. She will also respond, in full, to the open letter. She added that the Disability Equality Forum's report on the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people is about to be published and will be a valuable piece of evidence, which Welsh Government has undertaken in Wales, led by disabled people.

Marg added that the Deputy Medical Advisor for England advised that disabled groups actively participate in press conferences. He therefore suggested that Jane Hutt MS advance this with Welsh Government and other Celtic nations.

Personalised Health Budgets - Rhys Bowler.

Rhys addressed the Minister to seek her support for his campaign to introduce a Personal Health Budget (PHB) to enable disabled people to have more choice and control over the care they receive. PHB already exists in England and Scotland and Rhys is campaigning for this in Wales. He feels the current system goes against the Social Model of Disability.

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. His current care is provided by agencies who often struggle to provide the individualized support he would like. He would like full control of the funds and care services he requires.

He added that 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. Jane Hutt MS thanked Rhys and agreed to share it with Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services. She added that the continuity of care is crucially important, particularly with complex health and social care needs. JH reassured Rhys that there is a Welsh Government commitment to look into this issue carefully and his evidence will contribute to it. She added that Wales has the legislation to get this right and implementing it is crucial.

Call for a Disabled People's Commissioner - Bryn.

At the previous meeting, Members of Self-Advocacy Prestatyn proposed the appointment of a Learning Disability Commissioner. Following some discussion and to avoid separating disabilities, the group agreed to support a call for a Disabled People's Commissioner and sought a response from Jane Hutt MS.

Jane Hutt MS referred to the current research being carried out which includes strengthening equality and advancing human rights. The research is looking into incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the role played by commissioners. She assured the group that work is currently being undertaken and discussed. She added that consultation has taken place with the Disability Equality Forum and disabled people's organisations and it is not too late to bring the views back from CPGD.

Helga Uckermann added that the call for a commissioner for learning disability was initiated because people with learning disabilities feel unheard and that people don't have to time to listen.

6. Structural barriers to intimate relationships.

Due to time constraints, Mencap offered to move this item to the next meeting.

7. Next meeting.

The next meeting will take place before the scheduled dissolution of the Senedd. MI suggested agreeing a brief legacy report for the next parliament and adding this to the agenda. He also invited agenda items from the group.

Date and time to be arranged.

Action:

- Add the production of a legacy report to the next agenda.