

**Policy group – Disabled Children and Young people.
Monday 15th March 2010**

Present

Catherine Lewis	Children in Wales . note taker
Debbie Green	National Deaf Children's Society
Ann Shercliff	Family Fund
Viv Laing	Action for Children
Lynn Plimley	Autism Cymru
Simon Jones	NSPCC
Andi Lyden	Crossroads
Paul Swann	Disability Wales

Apologies

Lynne Hill	Children in Wales
Pippa Boss	Shared Care Network Cymru
Nazia Akram	ABCD
Nicola Crews	RNIB Cymru
Peter Hosking	Children's commissioner's office
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Nia Lloyd	NSPCC
Miranda Evans	Disability Wales

1 Welcome and apologies

Cath Lewis welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions made and apologies noted.

2 Minutes and matters arising

It was requested that the following correct version of Autism Cymru's information exchange notes be added to the Minutes:-

Professor Sue Leekham of Cardiff University is conducting a piece of research on the higher incidence of anxiety in individuals with ASD. The ERDF funded Deis Cyfle Project will be a joint piece of work between Autism Cymru and the Irish Society for Autism over the next three years. It is focusing on post school opportunities for individuals with ASD including employment. A discussion followed on the fact that disability is not fully devolved to Wales. It was suggested that a Disability Legislative Competence Order (LCO) be applied for although it was acknowledged that the Assembly already had secured a LCO on additional needs which included disability. The Minister for Disabled People in Westminster is Jonathan Shaw MP but he and the Office for Disability Issues do not appear to link closely with Wales. Also Katherine Thomas, the Welsh representative for Equality 2025 has now finished and it is unclear whether she will be replaced by someone from Wales. Members also mourned the loss of the Disability Rights Commission in Wales and commented that there is now no disability champion in the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales although it was noted that the WCVA has an Equality and Human Rights Coalition.

The safeguarding of disabled children was also discussed. It was noted that the Welfare part of the Children Act 2004 is now devolved to Wales but the policy and practice of safeguarding disabled children in Wales is still poor.

NSPCC have completed their research review of safeguarding of disabled children in Wales and this will be shared when it is signed off.

3. Issues regarding participation of disabled children to feed into the Participation Consortium

The NDCS Deaf Awareness week this year is participation focused. Last year a youth consultation said they would like their school . including teachers and pupils to be more deaf aware. A series of publications are available to support this to happen including deaf awareness and deaf friendly teaching and schools. This year NDCS Cymru wants to create a new poster to tell teachers, school staff and pupils all about deafness - and they are asking children and young people to submit ideas for the poster. A selection of the entries will be used to create a new NDCS Cymru deaf awareness poster for schools, which will be launched during deaf awareness week this year (28 June and 4 July).

Some new Statutory Guidance on Pupil Participation has also been produced. The guidance is for governing bodies around developing pupil participation linked to school effectiveness. Also Section 176 of the 2002 Education Act relating to governing bodies will be retained in Wales when the Children and Families Measure comes into force, and this will be a temporary measure until WAG has the opportunity to replace it in a Bill or Measure in the future.

A discussion followed on the Participation Standards and Blast Off resources which will be re launched. It was noted that the resources do not specifically mention disabled children and young people. A member commented that it would be useful if they contained the following recommendation %o apply the standards to disabled children and young people, you need to recognise the followingõ ..+ eg it takes more time, an appropriate of communication may need to be adopted.

4. Update on Disabled Children Matter Wales Campaign

An initial meeting has taken place between representatives of the Campaign and Huw Lewis AM, the Deputy Minister for Children who wanted to look at what was and what wasn't working and why. He does not have much knowledge of disabled children but is keen to visit projects to find out more. The Deputy Minister did not know whether he was going to be holding a budget in his own right or just reporting back to Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Carl Sargeant, minister for Social Justice and Local government. An attendee commented that the new regime appeared to be very finance focused and moving away from the issue of Children's Rights.

A meeting of the Steering Group had taken place on Wednesday 3rd March. In this meeting the lack of funding for the Campaign had been discussed as well as the resultant reliance on members of the steering group to do work for the Campaign over and above their existing jobs. A long discussion had also taken place about the Steering Group Constitution. This had been drafted by Liz Walker (CCNUK) and Wayne Crocker (Mencap) and distributed on 17th February. This was eventually agreed. This had been followed by a discussion on the Key Asks for the Campaign and it was agreed to use the following criteria to decide which issues to adopt for DCMW campaigns:(1) those that matter most to disabled young people (2) those that WAG does not

seem to be working on already (3) those that can be measured for success (4) time / availability of Steering Group member(s) to work on the issue. It was also agreed that DCMW would prepare a manifesto for the Assembly Elections in 2011 on behalf of the Policy Officers group, highlighting what we as a Campaign want for disabled children and their families and focusing on priorities. Delyth Morgan from CAB also attended the meeting and spoke about the Benefit Take Up Campaign which is being organised by CAB. It appears that money disabled children and their families are now able to apply for benefits but it is not clear what will happen once the targets for take up are reached.

5. Discussion on Mental Health Support Available to Disabled Children and Young People

Debbie from NDCS said that research has shown that deaf children are 60% more likely to experience mental health problems than other children because of the difficulties they experience with communication. She added that she is not aware of a specialist CAMHS provision in Wales for deaf children. Debbie added that she was also aware of a deaf child who had been referred to a counselling service where the mother was told she had to act as an interpreter which wouldn't have been appropriate.

Debbie also said that the NDCS had met with Edwin Hart in 2008 and expressed their dissatisfaction with the support, including mental health support, offered to deaf children. The NDCS has a Healthy Minds Strategy and a course, which consists of six sessions intended to promote positive mental health and good emotional well being. The programme is aimed at deaf young people aged 11 and over and is designed to run over a period of six weeks. Photocopied resources are available plus a CD-ROM of slides for each session and a student file. Additionally the NDCS, RNID and other professional who work with deaf people are involved in a Steering Group that is looking at mental health support including referral pathways.

Andi Lyden from Crossroads said that he was aware that at the National Public Health Service Federation Conference in November 2009, it was said that unless mental health services offered within Trusts improve, then consideration will be given to the introduction of direct mental health services. There also appears to be a fundamental and systematic problem with the commissioning of CAMHS in Wales as well as varying thresholds for access to CAMHS support across Wales for children and young people with disabilities.

The Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has also developed a toolkit of standards and guidance for all involved in developing counselling within the school community. Sylvia Jones is the Co-ordinator for School-based Counselling in Wales: sylvia.jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk. The NDCS have highlighted access issues for deaf children to the school counselling service. Elspeth Webb consultant paediatrician in Cardiff is also known to have an interest in access to CAMHS for disabled children. Also it is known adolescents with autism have more mental health issues than other

adolescents. Nia Lloyd from NSPCC is putting together a briefing Paper on Access to CAMHS services for children and young people including disabled children and young people.

6. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Reporting

Paul Swann has received a letter from Natalie Price from the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Division, WAG advising that The Welsh Assembly Government will be contributing to the UK State report setting out how the Convention has been implemented across the UK. The report will be submitted to the UN Convention Monitoring Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for scrutiny in July 2011, who will in turn develop Concluding Observations for the UK to consider and act upon. WAG is inviting organisations to help inform the Welsh report and contributions are required by 16 April 2010. Further information about the Convention is available here. It is important that disabled children and young people's views are represented in the report.

Information Exchange

National Deaf Children Society

A conference is being organised to highlight the need for education professionals to become more aware of the needs of deaf children in mainstream schools.

Family Fund

The organisation are changing their policy on calculating the income of applicants to the Fund. The plan is to make the process more equitable and consider the families income and not the benefits they receive. The maximum age is also being raised to 18. many young people are now applying for funding to have driving lessons. Ann enquired whose responsibility it was to ensure that the young person, particularly those who had autism or ADHD were able to learn to drive?

Autism Cymru

The organisation have launched a new booklet called 'Communication! Communication!' which is an information booklet for those living and working with young children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Lynne also gave evidence on behalf of the Cross Party Autism Group to the Enterprise and Learning Committee Inquiry on schooling and post schools opportunities.

Action for Children

Research is underway which will look at the cost benefits of providing a short break to disabled children and their families. This will include the social and emotional benefits of a short break to the child and what is the economic value of short breaks.

NSPCC

Disabled children will be one of seven themes that the organisation will follow nationally. The disability lead David Miller is based in London. He will be

looking at the safeguarding of disabled children and it is planned that a DVD would be developed.

Disability Wales

The organisation has been busy with disability hate crime following media coverage in the wake of the Pilkington deaths. We are working with the four police forces to organise two conferences: one for the police forces themselves, the other on 12 May is a Tackling Disability Hate Crime Partnership Seminar at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea. Disability Wales is also launching an Independent Living NOW! Campaign on 28 April at Future Inns, Cardiff Bay. Main campaign aim is a National Strategy for Independent Living to provide a focus for existing policies and strategies. Keynote speakers are Mike Smith (EHRC Commissioner and Chair of the National Centre for Independent Living) and Mark Isherwood AM (Shadow Minister for Social Justice & Housing). Disability Wales is a member of the steering group for the Wales Alliance for Citizen Directed Support, which is currently planning a public launch in Newtown on 29 June. Work is also progressing on developing an evaluation framework for Citizen Directed Support in Wales.

Children in Wales

Two events will be held in the next few months. The first is a seminar entitled 'Things to Do and Places to Go!' which will take place in Glasidir, Llanrwst on 19th May and the second is a conference entitled 'Disabled Children Have Rights Too!' which will take place in Future Inn, Cardiff on 23rd June 2010.