



**Minutes Cross Party Autism Group / Cofnodion Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
12:00-1:15pm May 14 Mai, 2014
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**

1. WELCOME / CROESO

Chair of CPAG, Mark Isherwood welcomed everyone to the second meeting of 2014. The meeting was also attended by Aled Roberts AM/AC and a representative from the office of Simon Thomas AM/AC.

2. MATTERS ARISING / MATERION YN CODI

There were no matters arising and the minutes were agreed.

3. PRESENTATIONS / CYFLWYNIADAU

The CPAG first heard from Rhys Jenkins, a 22 year old law graduate from Neath but currently living in Cardiff. Rhys gave a personal account of his experience of having autism. Rhys highlighted the difficulties around communication and described how autism is an 'amplifier' for certain complexities that already exist within that person.

Louise Albert from NAS Cymru gave an overview of the services that it provides and the methods that services employ to support people with autism in Wales.

Louise described the value of providing a 'move through support' that looks at people's needs in the round so that they are given the right support, which allows them to progress and become more independent. She also outlined how assistive technology and the internal environment itself can play a part in preventing individuals from requiring acute provision.

Louise also outlined the methods that NAS Cymru uses and how positive behavioural support and person centred approaches underpins its work. Ongoing staff training and continued monitoring and assessment of the individuals they support also led to positive outcomes. These included better transition arrangements, reduction in hospital admissions and use of services, reduction in costs and people with autism being able to live independently in their communities.

Finally Lisa Rapado from HOOSUP [Hands off our specialist units Powys] gave an update on the ALN consultation in Powys. The council had received over 700 responses to its proposal to close specialist units in Powys. She explained that although the results of the consultation hadn't been assessed, Powys county council's cabinet had separately approved a new SEN strategy for the area.

4. ISSUES ARISING / MATERION YN CODI

Liz Darcy described how women and girls with Asperger syndrome in particular were suffering at an appalling level because they were deemed intelligent and the effect of their condition wasn't being recognised. She said that teachers were often unaware of autism as a condition and asked why NAS Cymru didn't currently intervene by going into schools to raise awareness. Louise Albert accepted that a lack of recognition of autism among women and girls was an issue, but that there was often no appetite from schools to receive awareness training, and no budget for it.

Phil Fennell from Cardiff University raised the possibility that there might be legal flaws in the way that Powys had consulted on its proposals to close the specialist units and suggested that Lisa Rapado contact a colleague of his for advice.

Questions were also raised about Powys adopting a new strategy when the Government is about to publish its White Paper on reforming ALN across Wales.

5. ACTIONS / PWYNTIAU GWEITHREDU

- CPAG / NAS Cymru to explore approaching schools and other stakeholders to see how it could provide awareness training for teaching staff
- CPAG to write to the Minister for Education bringing his attention to the Powys consultation process and outlining our concerns
- CPAG to write to the Deputy Minister for Social Services to ask for her to nominate a member of the Welsh Government's ASD team to talk through the Revised ASD Strategy

6. NEXT MEETING / CYFARFOD NESAF

The next meeting will be in Powis Hall, Bangor University from 10:30am-12:30pm on 10 September 2014. The meeting after that will be back at the National Assembly for Wales on 19 November 2014 from 12:00pm-1:15pm.