



Minutes / Cofnodion
Cross Party Autism Group / Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Awtistiaeth
Tachwedd 19 November 2014
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol

1 WELCOME / CROESO

Chair of CPAG, Mark Isherwood welcomed everyone to the fourth and final meeting for 2014.

The meeting was attended by the following AMs: Aled Roberts; Alun Davies; Antoinette Sandbach; John Griffiths; Paul Davies; Peter Black; Dame Rosemary Butler; Rhodri Glyn Thomas; and William Powell.

Representatives from the offices of Keith Davies; Rebecca Evans and Simon Thomas were also in attendance.

2 PRESENTATIONS / CYFLWYNIADAU

2.1 Mark Isherwood noted the Welsh Government's budget was currently being scrutinized by the National Assembly. The budget includes a proposal to transfer the money that is currently ring-fenced for autism into the Revenue Support Grant.

2.2 Meleri Thomas, NAS Cymru outlined concerns raised with NAS by their members and others, about the delay in publishing the Welsh Government's refreshed autism strategy and the proposal to remove the protection around the autism money that local authorities receive for autism provision. In response to members' views, that autism is no longer a priority for Welsh Government and that the strategy isn't working, the NAS confirmed that it would support its members and supporters towards achieving an Autism Act for Wales.

2.3 Lisa Rapado, Ystradgynlais Branch Member said that while the strategy has had some success, on the whole, people are let down and angry that they have to fight so hard to get the support they need. She added that it's important that people with autism are no longer invisible to services and that she would wholeheartedly support an Autism Act.

2.3 Kerry Thomas, from Tydfil Autism Support Group read a statement to the CPAG. She outlined the lack of provision in Merthyr and said that autism shouldn't be a postcode lottery. The support group believes it is essential the Welsh Government measure any benefits of the autism strategy by canvassing the views of those it was specifically meant to help, and to respond by introducing legislation to ensure that autism services are delivered as intended.

2.4 Nicola Williams, Blaenau Gwent Branch Officer spoke in support of the other NAS branches. She said that autism services in the area are still very limited and adult services basically non-existent. As a member of the local ASD Stakeholder Group, adult services are an area of concern as was the fact that every local authority could be losing its 40k a year by not being ring-fenced specifically for ASD. Nicola added that this is a step backwards and people with autism don't seem to be a priority anymore. She concluded by saying that it's very frustrating as a parent to have to fight tooth and nail for your child to receive the services they so desperately need. I look to the future and see no hope, it's time to change this and make ASD a priority again.

2.5 David Malins, an adult representative spoke about the need for Wales to have a legal, statutory instrument to ensure consistency and support. have been made. He said that people with autism deserve equal care and we need an Autism Act in Wales.

2.6 Marie James, representing NAS Carmarthenshire and also spoke on behalf of NAS Pembrokeshire branch, who together help support 500 members. She said that the strategy promised to deliver so much but people are still dealing with issues of diagnosis, transition, education and adult care today. People are being pushed into further crisis. She said that people with autism deserve the opportunity to access appropriate provision to reach their potential. That's why, she concluded that our branches are calling for an Autism Act.

2.7 Rhiannon Thomas, parent of someone with autism going through transition said that we need to do whatever we can to improve the support for adults with autism.

2.8 Mark Isherwood pledged his support for an Autism Act, should the Cross Party Autism Group demand it. The CPAG vote was unanimous in favour of calling for an Act. Several AMs also backed Mark Isherwood's attempt to hold an Independent Members Debate on the issues.

3 ISSUES RAISED / MATERION A GODWYD

William Powell AM said that following an urgent meeting with Powys County Council they would consider voluntarily ring-fencing £40k

A member of the audience asked if there was any chance of changing the Welsh Government's mind on the ring-fencing. Mark Isherwood AM suggested that it is vital people make their voices heard before the final vote by contacting their AMs

Aled Roberts AM made clear that removal of ring-fences is due to agreement between WLGA and WG to limit hypothecated grants. Mark Isherwood agreed that the Government is operating on this basis but is choosing to preserve some grants at the expense of others.

4. ACIONS / PWYNTIAU GWEITHREDU

It appears that CSSIW or Care Council for Wales does not allow private care companies to register as exclusively autism service providers, forcing a choice between Learning Disability or Mental Health. This is leading to insufficient and inappropriate monitoring of training. CPAG to write to the Minister for clarification.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Date and location of the next CPAG meeting: National Assembly for Wales, 14 January 2015 12:15-13:15pm