

Policy group – Disabled Children and Young people.

Thursday 3rd September 2009

Present

Catherine Lewis	Children in Wales
Kim Bevan	Lead Consultant Early Support
Debbie Green	National Deaf Children's Society
Miranda Evans	Disability Wales
Peter Hosking	Children's Commissioners Office
Viv Laing	Action for Children
Pippa Boss	Shared Care Network Cymru
Vikki Butler	Barnardos
Denise Inger	SNAP
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
David Williams	Cerebra
Lynn Plimley	Autism Cymru
Ian Ross	Scope

Apologies

Lynne Hill	Children in Wales
Nia Lloyd	NSPCC
Nicola Crews	RNIB Cymru
Mary van den Heuvel	RNIB Cymru
Rebecca Evans	National Autistic Society

1 Welcome and apologies

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

2 Minutes and matters arising

Minutes of last meeting were agreed as a true record.

ASD Action Plans

Lynn advised the meeting that all of the 22 Autism Action Plans had now been received by the Welsh Assembly Government. Also all the regional coordinators are in place A Stakeholder Group is also being formed to lead the implementation of the ASD Strategic Action Plan.

DCMW Update

An well attended open meeting was held on 23rd June at Children in Wales Attendees received an update of the successes of the Campaign so far - funding for Early Support, Changing Places, Transition Key Workers and inclusive play and an update of Campaign activity since December 2008. Campaign members including one young disabled person gave evidence to Children and Young People's Committee and the website was also updated to include the Ombudsman Ruling on transition planning in Torfaen and the High Court ruling on eligibility criteria.

The meeting also heard an impartial update of the Campaign from its inception in Autumn 2007, from Darren Hill, Managing Director and Principal Consultant of Positif Politics who is doing pro bono work for the Campaign. Darren said that the Campaign has been successful in devising a brand recognised at a political and policy level and has identified champions in the Assembly. AMs trust what the Campaign says and will speak to any briefing without question. However not everyone knows precisely what the Campaign is asking for. This needs to be looked at. A crucial time will be in 2011 when the next Comprehensive spending review will be launched and also the next Assembly elections.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing Tone and Tactics of Campaign and what "Key Asks" should the Campaign be asking for. Some attendees' felt that the Campaign should be very assertive and shame WAG in giving more money and support to disabled children's services, but others felt that this was not always helpful. As far as key asks, these included more access to transport and leisure opportunities for disabled young people and more emphasis on Safeguarding of disabled children.

Steering Group

A plea was made in the meeting for extra members to join the Steering Group that needs to be more lively and active. A clear campaign-working plan will then be devised and people asked to contribute and offer to take the lead in various areas. Organisations that expressed an interest in sitting on the Steering Group were:-

- Family Fund
- Action for Children
- Barnardos
- Scope
- NDCS
- Young Disabled People's Network
- Cardiff Young People First

Disabled Children Matter Wales event at the Senedd on Wednesday 8 July

Over 40 people including professionals, disabled children/young people and their parents attended to voice their concerns over the unacceptable delays in providing wheelchairs for disabled children and young people. The event was held to coincide with a Welsh Conservatives Debate being held in plenary that afternoon. Ministers were urged to ensure that no-one in Wales has to wait longer than a year for a wheelchair. The Conservatives criticised "unacceptable delays" in providing wheelchairs for children, while Liberal Democrats urged a "minimum standard" for adults. Health Minister Edwina Hart said she was concerned by the length of time some patients were waiting. She said a review currently underway might recommend standards for the service across Wales.

"A Week in my life" Diary

Vikki talked about her suggestion for the campaign to undertake a quick survey of disabled children and young people across Wales – asking them to

fill in "A week in my life diary". This could either be undertaken during half term, the week before or both. Data could be collected from both disabled and non disabled children to be able to make comparisons about what opportunities children have available to them. The aim would be to pull the findings together for a report to be launched in December.

Benefits Campaign

David from Cerebra was previously employed as a Disabled Children Benefits Advisor by Neath/ Port Talbot County Council. He highlighted his concerns that the scheme did not appear to have gone out to tender before it was awarded to CAB. Also although CAB is a well respected advice provider which has some specialist welfare rights advisors, they are not experienced in working with children. Also 5 months on from the funding allocation start date of April 2009, no awareness raising materials or information about the scheme appear to be available.

David added that he would be writing to Brain Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on behalf of the Disabled Children Wales Matter Campaign highlighting that although we are pleased that the Welsh assembly Government has responded to one of the campaign's key asks, it falls short of our stated ask of £700,000 over 3 years to provide a team of 6 specialist advisors and asking that assurances be given that the scheme will utilise advisors and organisations with the right combination of knowledge so that comprehensive, effective advice can be provided to families.

Short Breaks

The Welsh Assembly Government has made available £1.54 million as a special grant for the provision and development of short break services for 2009 / 2010. From April 2010, the grant will be subsumed into Revenue funding and will no longer be ring fenced. Clear outcomes will however be devised for how this money should be spent but they will need to be monitored. The Children Act 2008 contains an amendment to the Children Act 1989 which will put short breaks on a statutory footing. This will be implemented in England from 2010 and will coincide with the peak of the Aiming Higher for Disabled Children funding which included £ million of ring fenced funding for short breaks. We have not had the same level of funding in Wales and it is anticipated that statutory right to a short break will be introduced after a consultation period.

3 Presentation by Dr Kim Bevan – Lead Consultant Early Support Wales

Dr Bevan was previously the Director of Training for Early Support in England. She is now employed as the lead consultant in the Children in Wales led consortium to develop and deliver Early Support in Wales. The consortium is made up of a wide range of voluntary organisations in Wales plus other members of the Early Support implementation team from England. Early Support is the mechanism to improve the quality, consistency and coordination of services for disabled children under the age of five and their families and its role is to raise expectation about the way agencies and services work together to meet the needs of children and families; promote the development of key worker service; provide practical resources as well as

to support the training and development of a multi agency workforce and to encourage families and practitioners to work together in partnership.

A full copy of the presentation is available. Kim stressed that although a wide range of materials are available to support Early Support, including the M the materials themselves are not the intervention as Early Support is more about a way of working. The Multi agency planning and improvement tool is a useful tool for local authorities and partners to use when they are looking at the development of Early Support in an area. Many of the original Early Support materials have now been adapted for the Welsh Context and the website will be up and running from October. Three awareness raising events have already taken place across Wales and Early Support will be formally launched in a conference in the Millennium Stadium at the end of September.

4 Discussion of the Representation of Disabled Children and Young People on the Participation Consortium.

Children in Wales is a representative on the Participation Consortium which is a multi agency strategic body working at a national level to develop capacity and practice in terms of participation of children and young people in decision making in Wales. We have been asked to consider how disabled children are represented on the Consortium. This could be achieved by either developing a participation sub group to focus on disability or use the existing disabled children policy group to address participation issues and identify a representative to feedback to the consortium. Following discussion it was agreed to adopt the latter approach and to have participation as an agenda item in each Disabled Children Policy Group agenda and then feed the points discussed into the Consortium. It was also pointed out that Participation is a right and not a service and this is recognised by Core Aim 5 of the Welsh Assembly Government's Core Aims for Children and Young People and in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A member suggested that Anna Skeels from Save the Children who is the Participation Unit Manager be invited to a Disabled Children Policy Group meeting. This was agreed.

5. Information Exchange

Shared Care Network Cymru

Shared Care Networks Annual UK Conference will be in October and new work force standards are being developed in Wales.

Cerebra

David is running a series of workshops on benefits in conjunction with Contact a Family around Wales and the organisation's conference will be held in Cardiff on the 28th and 29th October.

Learning Disability Wales

Their annual conference will be held on 18th and 19th November in Newport. The title of the conference is "Feel Good – Stay Well" with the two days offer a varied programme on ideas and action for the health and well being of children and adults with learning disabilities.

National Deaf Children's Society

There is a belief that deaf children are underachieving in Wales. However there is no hard data to support this view and this needs to be addressed.

Autism Cymru

Autism Cymru had joined up with autism organisations across the UK AND Europe to highlight how autism is viewed and treated in different countries. All police authorities in Wales have now been trained in autism awareness and 800 autism alert cards have been given out across Wales.

Disability Wales

The Streets Ahead Campaign highlights disabled people's access barriers to high street shops and services throughout Wales. The focus of the campaign was Haverfordwest and involved local disabled people acting as mystery shoppers to identify the range of barriers they encounter when shopping in the town and considering what needs to be done to create an inclusive shopping experience for disabled people. The launch of the findings from the Campaign will be on 22nd September at the National Assembly for Wales. Additional events arranged include the "Right to Control" event in Wrexham on 21st September and the "Independent Living Now" seminar in the Liberty Stadium on 21st October.

SNAP

The organisation have been successful in obtaining funding from the Reaching the Heights project to focus on the 11 to 19 year old young people with an additional learning need or disability who form part of the group who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Wales.

Action for Children

A report has been launched entitled "Back to the Future" which highlights the need to invest in an early prevention service and the potential impact of reduced funding.