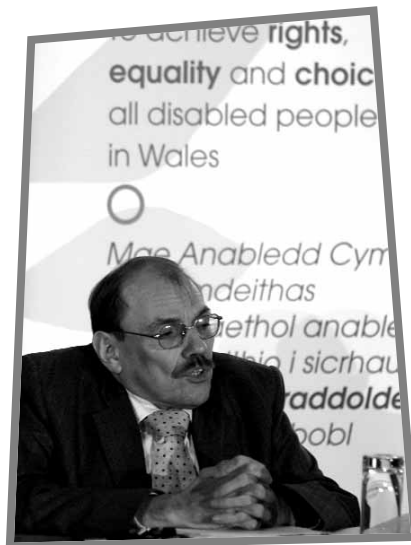




Disability Wales news

Issue 71, December/January 2006/7

Disability Wales is the national association of disability organisations in Wales



Conference and AGM report

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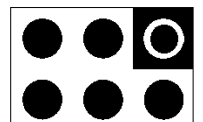
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Photos: Andrew Jeffery



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Editorial

Penni Bestic

We've just had what was probably the largest conference ever. Over two hundred people got together at the end of October to look at how the new Commission for Equalities and Human Rights would affect disabled people. Someone remarked that they thought it could be largest gathering of disabled people in the UK. Of course, it was more than a numbers game: it sent a strong signal that a) the disability movement in Wales is alive and kicking and b) our united voices should be listened to by all levels of government.

The conference was indebted to the support of the Disability Rights Commission in Wales, not only financially but also in the time that DRC staff put in over the previous eighteen months. This didn't just help to make the conference successful but also shows just how important the DRC is to disabled people. Coming together in this way is an opportunity to share ideas, debate and meet new disabled people. Whether there will be the same support from the CEHR remains to be seen.

One of the discussions on the Friday was about our Regional Development Plan. Some groups were worried that it might attract funding and support away from them. That is not the intention: in fact, it is the opposite. *Gorwelion* – inspiring wide horizons – is designed to work with groups to help develop their potential. DW will agree a 'protocol' with its members that sets out the function of its regional staff emphasising that they are there to co-ordinate, enable and equip groups and not take over their role. It has no intention of replacing those groups or becoming the dominant organisation in the area.

Minority Report

The importance of working with 'grassroots' organisations can be seen in the way mental health groups have worked to together to oppose the current mental health bill. The Amendment Bill, published 17 November, included controversial clauses that would allow people with "untreatable personality disorders" to be detained even if they have not committed an offence. However, it proposed no amendments awarding patients' rights to treatment.

A report, published at the end of November, said that 249 people have

been killed by people with mental health impairments. A tragedy undoubtedly, but since January 2006 there has been 3,155 road traffic deaths (source: UK Road Safety Ltd). By that count should all drivers be detained *in case* they kill. What is needed is for government to listen to the Mental Health Alliance (see page 28). When Hafal – the Wales mental health organisation – held its annual Recovery Convention in Llandrindod Wells, 150 service users, carers and

health professionals took part in a demonstration calling for reciprocal rights in the Mental Health Amendment Bill.

And then there has been the press coverage. People with mental health issues are already stigmatised yet the listening to the news one comes away with the impression that all of us should be locked up. Yet at the same time, three day centres have been closed in Flintshire.



ACCESS DIARY UPDATE ...



By Graham Findlay

Developing the Capacity of Access Groups project

Following our update in the last edition of *DW News*, the project is on target and access groups will have received questionnaires about training needs from our consultant Andy Lewis. Training needs for groups will be discussed in depth at the January Access Group Network events (see page 8).

We are also developing a web-based networking resource for access groups across England and Wales with web consultants Sequence, and a portfolio of useful resources for groups all of which will be piloted in 2007.

Access statements and the planning process

This major consultation was issued by WAG/NAW over the summer period and has now closed. DW supported our members to respond by issuing a briefing paper and attending a key meeting in North Wales of access groups and professionals.

“Access statements are documents that explain the design thinking

behind a planning application. For example, they should show that the person applying for permission (the applicant) has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people, and very young children, will be able to use the places they build.” (CABE, 2006)

Disability Wales and other interested organisations have been calling for the comprehensive use of access statements for some time, and they have started to be used in England from August. At present, access to buildings can only be enforced at the end of the design process, when the building is almost completed and inspected by Building Control. We expect that access statements will impose a duty on developers to make sure that all developments are inclusive and accessible for disabled people and other users at the very beginning of the design process. Although this is a quite technical issue, it is important because it will affect the accessibility of current and future buildings in Wales.

WAG had responses from several groups in Wales, ourselves and the

Disability Rights Commission giving the same message – access statements are vital to deliver an inclusive environment and need to be properly drawn up and enforced.

We have heard from the Assembly that the likely date for this new duty covering local authorities to be brought in is June 2007. The Assembly will be issuing guidance, which we understand will also be consulted upon.

If you would like a copy of our consultation response, please get in touch.

Countryside access scrutinised by Wales Audit Office

Disability Wales, and its member access groups, were involved with the Wales Audit Office to undertake a review of Public access to the countryside, which was published in November. The input of access groups helped shape the report's recommendations on Inclusion:

“Disabled people, members of black and minority ethnic communities and residents of Communities First areas make disproportionately low use of the countryside. There is some good practice in promoting countryside access among these groups, but it is limited. To encourage increased use of the countryside among these groups, we recommend that:

- the Assembly Government and CCW should identify and disseminate good practice that

results in increased countryside access among these groups;

- and local access authorities should: apply this good practice in their localities; consult organisations representing disadvantaged groups about, and involve them in, countryside access;
- consider disabled access as a factor in all maintenance and improvement work on rights of way and other countryside access facilities;”

The report says that access to the countryside has increased, but good practice, including projects that have increased access for disabled people, should be rolled out across Wales.

The report was presented to the NAW Audit committee in November. The new WAG initiative to improve access to the coast will be informed by this report – DW is represented on the Coastal Access Working Group by DW Board member Henry Langen.



Free copies are available from the Wales Audit Office:

www.wao.gov.uk/

Other WAG Consultations

As always, consultation documents roll in thick and fast - access-related documents which we responded to in the past month or so included:

WAG Technical Advice Note on Tourism

- WAG Technical Advice Note on Transport
- WAG Technical Advice Note on Sport and Leisure
- WAG Wales Transport Strategy



All the above responses are available from DW on request.

Access Group network meetings

The next meeting date for the **North Wales** Access Group network is on Thursday 11 January – the venue is likely to be in Flintshire and will be confirmed nearer the time.

The next meeting date for the **South Wales** Access Group network is on Wednesday 17 January – venue in the Taff Ely area.

The meetings will start at 11.00 and finish around 3pm. The morning session will be earmarked for the Access Group capacity building project (see above) and will include a training needs evaluation of access groups, which will be facilitated by Lewis Consultancy.



Further details will be sent out to access groups in mid December.

Look forward to seeing you in January.

Graham Findlay, DW Access Officer



By Karen Jones
Disability Network Co-ordinator

North Wales in November

After the success of our visit to West Wales in the summer, I was keen as Network Co-ordinator to make a similar visit to North Wales. Although in this technological age it is easy to contact people quickly by email and telephone there is no substitute for personal face to face contact to 'break the ice' and help establish good relationships. So what happened this time...

Dear Diary

Sunday 5 November

I drove up to my North Wales Hotel on 5 November and expected this to be quite eventful with fireworks going off in all directions. However, I was surprised to find I had a very peaceful drive!

Monday 6 November

After meeting my colleague Janet Prytherch (Enter Project, Mold) first thing, we set off to visit the Denbighshire Disability Forum. This was very enjoyable and gave us many opportunities for interesting discussions. In the afternoon, we visited Police HQ at St Asaph where we met some of the Police Diversity



Dear Diary

Officers. We had a good discussion about police attitudes and awareness of equality and access issues for disabled people and Deaf people.

Following this, Janet and I, plus the two BSL interpreters I travelling with me, made our way to the Ramada Plaza Hotel where April Harper had organised a lovely relaxed meeting over coffee. It was good to meet people there and chat about things.

The day was rounded off by Janet and I having a long talk about work issues in a nice local pub.

Tuesday 7 November

During the morning Janet and I visited AVOW (Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham) and attended their meetings on Direct Payments. It was good to make personal contact with AVOW.

In the afternoon, I met with Sue Middleton and Julie Barber of the Flintshire Disability Forum. This was a good positive meeting and we discussed future involvement with Regional Network Events.

We spent the evening enjoying a meal at the Quay Hotel with Gareth Foulkes (from the DRC), Paul Swan (Commissioning and Planning Officer,

Wrexham County Borough Council) and Karen Beatty (Access Officer Denbighshire County Council). The hotel proved to be very accessible with good food. We all enjoyed a positive discussion.

Wednesday 7 November

In the morning, I visited David Baker at Children in Wales, based in Caernarfon. This was very valuable and we discussed the hope that in the future disabled young people would become involved with Disability Wales groups and events. Not only would this engage young disabled people but would also give them positive role models.

Conclusion

I really enjoyed my trip to north Wales and felt it was very valuable; it was great to meet both people I hadn't met before and catch up with contacts in the area that I know. I now know people will have more of an idea of who I am. It has been lovely for me to see people 'on their own ground' and have opportunities to talk face to face. Through our trips to both north and west Wales, I feel Disability Wales has a stronger and better connection with our members.

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took time to meet with me, and organise meetings, rooms etc. It was great to be able to spend some time with you. Once again, we have to thank the weather department for wonderful weather. It was cold but beautiful blue skies meant I was able to appreciate the beauty of north Wales as I drove around.

Regional Network Events

Three network events took place in September at Wrexham, Haverfordwest and Caerphilly. The theme of these meetings was Independent Living.

Michelle Herbert, DW Development Manager, who talked about Direct Payments and Graham Findlay, DW Access Officer, on independent living, made the morning presentations at all three events.

The afternoon sessions were led at all three events by invited guests.

North Wales - Wrexham

After lunch, Tracy Yankowska and Marion Harrison, both members of the DW Board, shared their personal experiences of Independent Living.

The presentations were interesting and informative and our particular thanks go to Tracy and Marion for their very valuable and interesting contributions. The feedback received from people attending was positive with people having enjoyed the mix of speakers and more interactive presentations.

The meeting was held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, which although generally accessible had some problems with access to toilets. These issues reported to the Hotel. There

were also some issues around food labeling. Again, these will be passed back to the Hotel in order that things can be improved in the future.

Overall, the meeting was very positive and well received by people attending.

West Wales - Haverfordwest

In the afternoon, Julia Marshall (DW Board member) and Jill Edge presented their own personal experiences of Independent Living and we would like to thank them for their very valuable contribution. Again, we had very enthusiastic feedback with people finding the information useful and the personal experiences valuable. The meeting was held at the Picton Centre and was a very positive day with good numbers of people there.

South Wales - Caerphilly

The meeting was held at the QED centre. We enjoyed the contributions from Paul Lindoewood and Steve Harris on their personal experiences of Independent Living. Our thanks go to them for their valuable contribution. The meeting was positive with good feedback. People enjoyed the mix of speakers and workshop sessions.

Summary

The Regional Network Events once again proved to be a good way to meet, learn, and share information, thank you to all who took part.

Disabled people go public

Morning - Session 1

'How to get your message across to your local media'

A workshop and information session exploring how to organise press releases through different mediums and how to advertise your group effectively.

Afternoon - Session 2

The new Disability Equality Duty for the public sector.

An opportunity to learn and share information and experiences about this. In addition, a chance to learn about the Disability Rights Commission enforcement strategy and the role of disabled people in the run up to the creation of a single equalities commission.

Session 3 - To finish, a short interactive review of the Regional Network Events to gather information about what people would like to see in the future.

- South Wales – Wed 28 February
YMCA Newport
- West Wales – Mon 5 March
Bro Myrddin Indoor Bowls Centre
Carmarthen
- North Wales – Tues 13 March
Talardy Hotel – St Asaph

All meetings will begin at 10.30 and will finish around 3.30 pm. A buffet lunch will be provided at each meeting.



For further information or to book a place at the meeting in your area, contact Kelly Stuart on 029 2088 7325 or email kelly.stuart@disabilitywales.org.uk and karen.jones@disabilitywales.org

STOP PRESS . . .

CEHR Commissioner for Wales

The Department of Communities and Local Government has announced Dr Neil Wooding as the Commissioner for Wales for the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

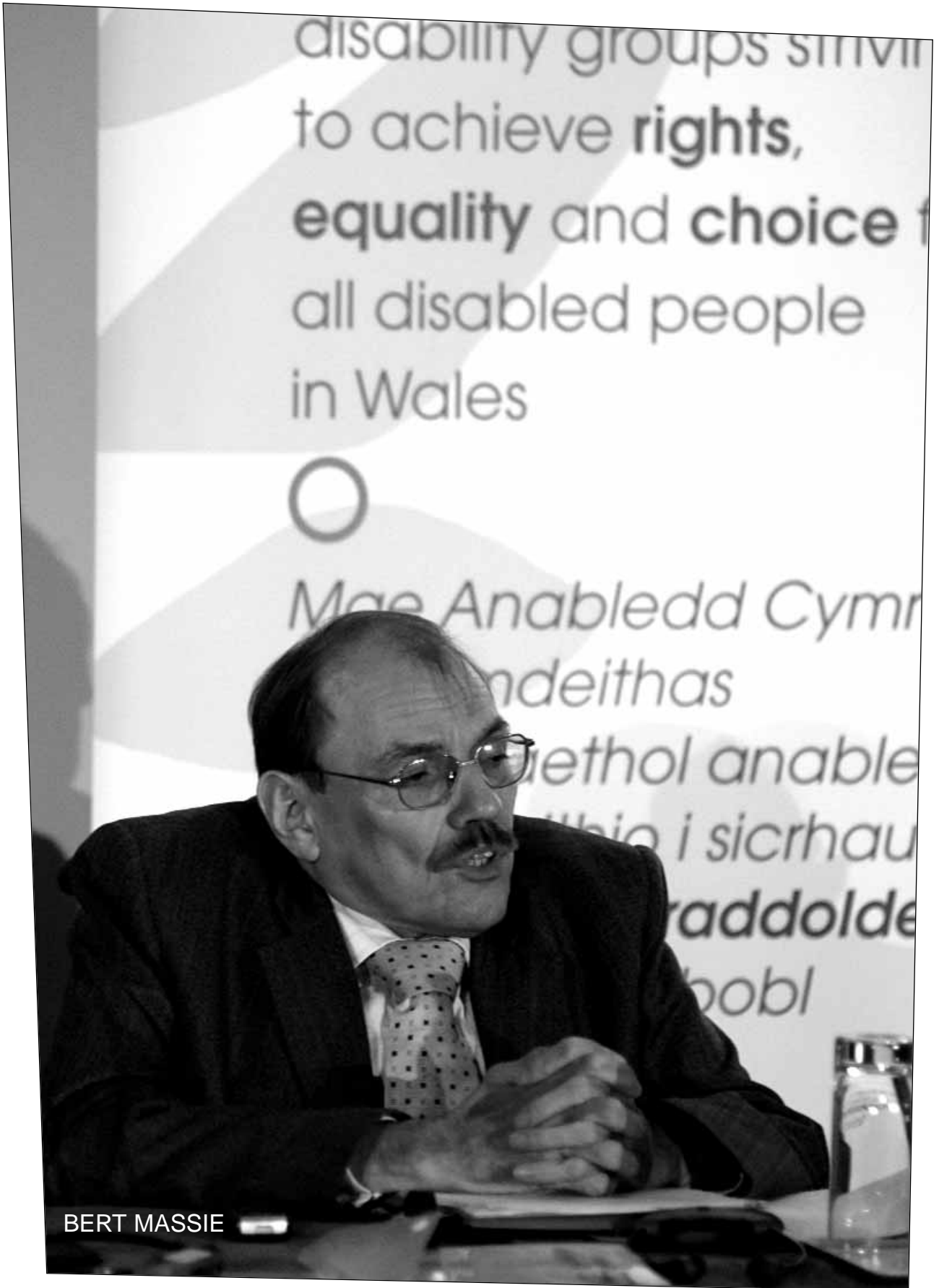
Neil Wooding is currently Wales Commissioner for the Equal Opportunities Commission. He is also Co-Chair of Stonewall Cymru. He is currently the Director of Public Service Management Wales.

It was also announced that Disability Rights Commissioner Dame Jane Campbell was also appointed as a Commissioner.

Disability Wales On-line
www.disabilitywales.org



...from all corners of



Photographs by Andrew Jeffery

BERT MASSIE

Wales and beyond...

Report back from the DW Conference and AGM

Disability Wales will have been going, in one form or another, for thirty years, so I guess it makes this year's Conference and AGM around about our 28 or 29th. It was certainly our biggest: with slightly over 200 people we filled the St David's Hotel in Cardiff Bay. The Conference and AGM was supported financially by the DRC. (A full conference report will be available in the new year.)

The day was fine as the first delegates began arriving: DW staff together with Disability Rights Commission staff greeted them as they arrived from all corners of Wales and beyond. The numbers quickly built up as old friends greeted each other and new friends were introduced.

The stallholders had started arriving at about eight that morning and every available space was filled with a plethora of information, books and CDs. You could book yourself a free fire safety test, or buy a book or pick up a free mouse mat. The normally sedate and stylish room was filled with chattering, laughing and excited people.

The Conference

The Conference was opened reasonably promptly by the DW Chair, Keith Roberts who introduced Councillor Rodney Berman, Leader of Cardiff

Council. Councillor Berman underlined the Council's commitment to the Social Model of Disability. However, he acknowledged that the City had a long way to go:

"We know that our performance in delivering equality of opportunity could be better. Like many partners,



RHIAN DAVIES



we are on a journey of discovery and have a lot to learn. We face challenges based on our capacity as individuals and organisations, challenges on the complexities of managing public services and the challenges of deep rooted attitudes which institutionalise discrimination.”

Following Councillor Berman was Rhian Davies, DW’s Chief Executive. Rhian took us back to the theme of the conference Equality, Human Rights and Multiple Discrimination.

“The danger of the CEHR is that it could take a one size fits all approach to all equality issues. So we get in effect something of an ‘equality smoothy’. I like smoothys, they are refreshing, but you know what they do, they blend all the ingredients together. You are aware of the colour and the texture, what the

dominant fruit was that goes into it. You don’t get the pips and the bits and things like that. I think the danger of something like the CEHR is it blends everything together and, ok, you get the celebrating of multiculturalism; celebrating diversity. These are complex issues. Each different equality strand has its own complexities, cannot be reduced to a one size fits all model.”

“*The danger of the CEHR is that it could take a one size fits all approach to all equality issues.*”

Rhian Davies was followed by Will Bee, Director of the DRC in Wales. Mr Bee talked about the history of the relationship between DW and the DRC. He said that early on “We recognise(d) that Disability Wales is an authentic voice of the experiences of disabled people throughout Wales, drawing on the experiences fed through its member organisations and other channels.”

Keith Roberts then handed over the proceeding to the guest chair, broadcaster and journalist, Peter White. He took the opportunity to put disability into context with the other equality strands, particular race and gender, He pointed out a major problem for us to consider: “I would claim that disability is an even

tougher nut to crack than race and gender.”

“Frankly, people don’t get disability. They don’t understand it as a whole. Not all disabled people get disability. Ten years after the start of the legislation people still don’t get it. Things are better, people at least now know that there are things they have to do by law but they don’t always get the reasons for that and they don’t always believe them. People in important positions don’t get it; influential positions.”

Mr White introduced the keynote speaker, Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission



PETER WHITE AND RHIAN DAVIES



for Northern Ireland. The Commission was established in XX as a single equalities body in 1999. At the time of the conference the Northern Ireland Assembly hung in the balance: this, would have repercussions for the CENI. (Since the Conference the parties in Northern Ireland have moved closer to agreement)

“I think the unique challenge for a corporate body like us and CEHR will be to work in an integrated way where it’s appropriate and relevant and going to be effective and also

work on a single strand where it’s going to be appropriate and relevant and effective and that’s one of the measures we bring to our planning process is that we decide on what the priorities are.”

Ms Collins talked in depth about the issues involved in single equalities commission:

“I think the unique challenge for a corporate body like us and CEHR will be to work in an integrated way, where it’s appropriate and relevant



EVELYN COLLINS CHIEF EXECUTIVE, COMMISSION AND EQUALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The AGM

The AGM took place on the 20 October: it was chaired by Keith Roberts. The keynote speaker was DRC Chair, Bert Massie. He was joined by three Assembly Members, Jonathan Morgan, Leanne Woods and Lorraine Barrett, who took part in a panel discussion.

Bert Massie looked at the forthcoming CEHR as the main theme of his speech. He expressed caution and question where the river for it came from:

“While the existing commissions have worked hard to win grassroots support and political commitment, the CEHR project is notable for being devoid of both. I challenge anyone to find a grassroots movement clamouring for a CEHR. Instead, grassroots groups have largely been conscripts to the entire process. At various stages they have threatened to strangle it at conception or at birth.”

Speaking on the need to bridge the gulf between the CEHR and

and going to be effective and also work on a single strand where it's going to be appropriate and relevant and effective and that's one of the measures we bring to our planning process is that we decide on what the priorities are.”

The full text of Evelyn Collin's speech, together with the question and answer session will be available in the Conference report in the New Year. Workshop reports will also be available.

grassroots groups, Mr Massie said its achievement would be critical to the success of the new body:

“The CEHR must be for those whose ability to achieve their potential is most strikingly limited by prejudice or discrimination, whose dignity and worth are least respected and whose opportunities to participate in society are most seriously curtailed.”

Suspicion of the new commission amongst grassroots groups could be tackled in the approach the Government took to appointing new commissioners, Mr Massie said:

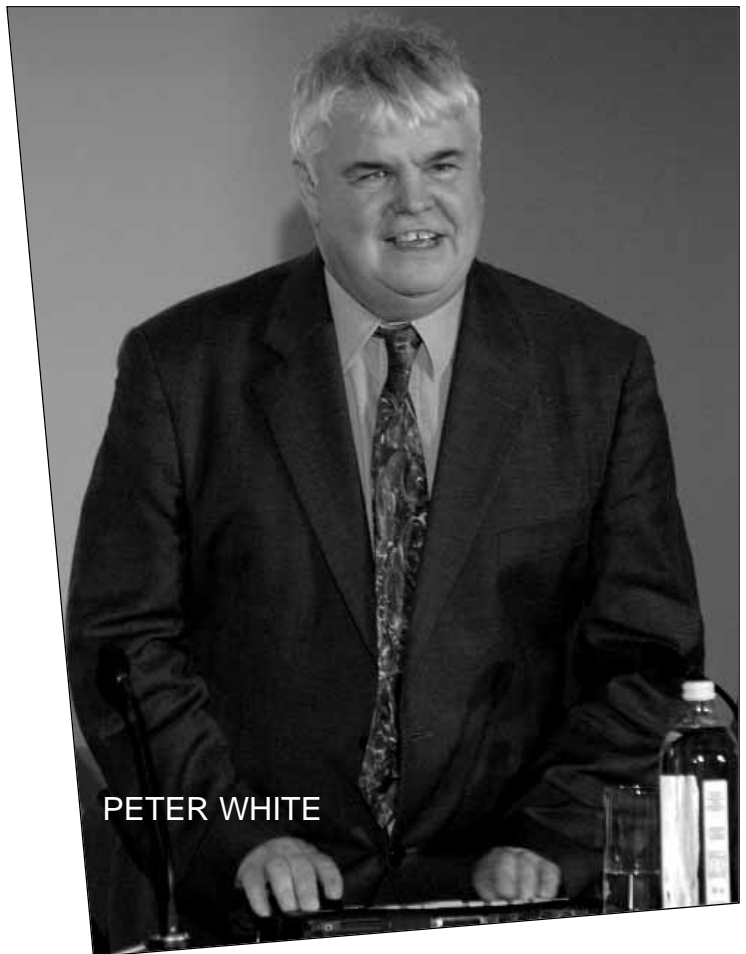
“New commissioners should not just be representatives of special interest groups, but insiders that can claim with legitimacy to be real representatives of the marginalised. The CEHR needs commissioners who understand the nuances of grassroots movements and have the ability to translate this into authoritative action. Without them the salience of the CEHR will soon be lost and with it comes the risk that all its deeds will be viewed as acts of betrayal.”

Mr Massie and the three AMs to part in a question and answer session which will appear in the Conference

JULIA MARSHALL AND DONNA REEVE



ANDY LEWIS
AND CHARLES WILLIE



PETER WHITE



report. The formal part of the AGM followed.

Rhian Davies answered several questions on the DW lottery bid and took the opportunity to reassure groups of DW's intentions:

“One of the things we've been working on over the last year, and we'll continue to work on, is our regional development strategy, which is to establish regional basis in North Wales, mid and West Wales and South Wales, with staff who can work with our member organisations on the ground, work with existing member organisations to help develop them and help them with funding and build their relationship with the local authorities...”

She also spoke of the relationship between DW and its members:

“We've had a lot of very positive comments about DW, and it is a strong national organisation, but without strong local organisations we will never achieve the disability equality agenda.”

John Fitzpatrick, Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts which were accepted by delegates. The then went on to thank retiring members of the Board of Directors: Bryan Harrison, Graham Parry.

The meeting closed at 12.30



LORRAINE BARRETT AM

Conference first

For the first time the Conference and AGM was available on-line as a live webcast. One of Wales's leading producers of digital communication, Sequence, developed new and exciting software to add subtitles to the webcast. You can see the webcast by going to www.disabilitywales.org/webcast .

Since 1995 Sequence have been delivering exciting and engaging digital communications services to hundreds of the UK's most demanding.



Board of Directors 2006-2007

Chair: Keith Roberts

Vice-Chair Wendy Ashton
Henry Langen

Treasurer John Fitzpatrick



Directors

Nationally Elected (3)

Andrew Hubbard *2004-2007*
 Jacqui Christy James *2004-2007*
 Tracy Yankowska *2004-2007*

Organisations of Disabled People (3)

Henry Langen *2004-2007*
 Dawn Gullis *2005-2008*
 Keith Roberts *2006-2009*

North East (2) Marion Harrison *2006-2006*
 Vacancy

North West (2) Judith Pennington *2006-2009*
 Vacancy

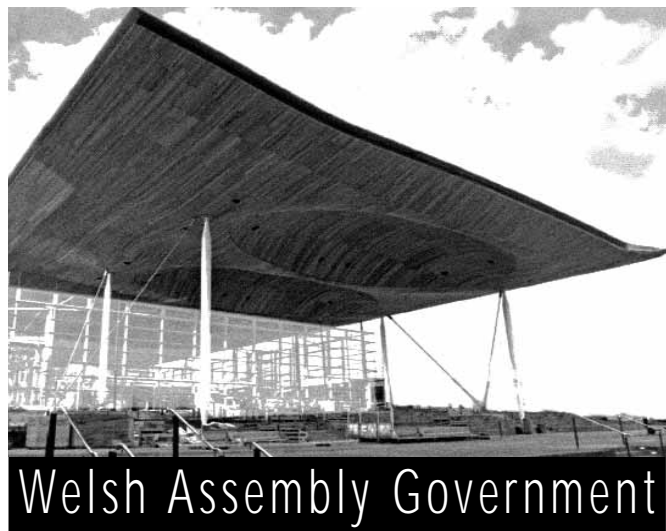
Mid (1) John Fitzpatrick *2006-2009*

South East (2) Steve Sweetman *2005-2008*
 Wendy Ashton *2006-2009*

South West (2) Julia Marshall *2004-2007*
 Vacancy

Appointed Directors (5)

Nich Pearson
 Nerissa Williams
 3 Vacancies



Assembly consultations

For more information on all Assembly consultations go to <http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/?lang=en> and follow the links

Towards e-Wales - a consultation on exploiting the power of ICT in Wales

The key aim of the consultation is to get views on how to get the best out of information and communication technology (ICT) to achieve a better Wales.

The consultation is the first significant step in reviewing and refreshing the Assembly's approach to ICT in Wales since the launch of the ICT strategic framework for Wales, Cymru Ar-lein, in 2001.

Mental Health Promotion Action Plan for Wales

This is the consultation document for the Mental Health Promotion Action Plan for Wales. This Action Plan recognises the wide ranging positive action

already underway at Assembly Government level. It identifies what more needs to be done, and provides a stimulus for local action.

Suzanne McKeown
Public Health Improvement Division
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
or e-mail:
CMO.Webmaster@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Responses by 10 February 2007
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/currentconsultation/healandsoccarecurcons/851364/?lang=en>

Education and Inspections Act 2006: Consultation on School Organisation and Governance Regulations and Guidance

The package of draft Regulations and Guidance in this consultation largely carry forward the existing school organisation and governance regime, but with some updated and new provisions following on from the policy changes in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 . For example, the Act establishes the processes and safeguards for schools wishing to become Trust schools; extends the circumstances in which a local authority must invite proposals in a competition for a new school; controls the circumstances under which proposals for a new community school may be published in a competition; and enhances the role of local authorities as strategic

commissioners promoting high standards for all and greater choice and diversity.

They are aimed at governing bodies, local authorities, parents, organisations interested in promoting a new school and other stakeholders with an interest in becoming involved in the provision and running of schools. They are also seeking your views on draft regulations which will allow FE institutions to collaborate with each other and with schools; two new consolidated sets of regulations to deal with mainstream and special schools together; and three new consolidated sets of regulations relating to governing body constitution, school federation and new schools.

Responses by: 04 Feb 2007

www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/



International Women's Day 2007

Around the world, International Women's Day (IWD) - 8th March 2007 - marks a celebration of the economic, social, cultural and political achievements of women. The growing international women's movement has helped make IWD a special day for promoting women's rights and participation in political and economic processes.

Increasingly, IWD is a time to reflect on the progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

To help celebrate IWD 2007 the Welsh Assembly Government has established a grant to help fund a number of events. The theme for IWD 2007 will be 'Promoting the participation of women in physical activity for fun and improved health'

To access the form to submit an application for funding for International Women's Day 2007 celebrations, please click on the following and follow the links:

To advertise in
Disability Wales News
 contact Kelly Stuart on
 029 2088 7325 (use announcer
 for minicom)
 email: kelly@disabilitywales.org

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/rightsequality/GenderEquality/IWD2007/?lang=en>

Consultation on £200 million European development programmes for East Wales launched

The First Minister has launched a consultation on proposed plans for a £200 million investment into the regeneration of East Wales.

The plans form part of the European Union’s Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes which have been allocated £97 million of European funding. The total value of the investment package is estimated to reach £200 million with the additional match funding expected.

The publication of the consultation document for the East Wales programmes marks the start of a formal 8 week consultation with stakeholders across East Wales, which will close on 26th January 2007.

During the consultation the Welsh Assembly Government will invite comments on the proposed strategy and priorities for the economic, social and environmental regeneration of East Wales over the period 2007-2013.

First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, said, “We want East Wales to develop a region at the cutting edge of the EU’s ambition for competitive, sustainable

economic development in a global economy. We are working closely with our partners in the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire, Powys, Wrexham and Flintshire and across the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify priority areas and the consultation will enable us to further this process. “

The funds will be used to build on the successes of the current Objective 2 and Objective 3 Programmes which are already on track to create 5,500 new jobs and 500 new businesses. They are also helping 11,500 unemployed people in the area into work and further training. The new programme will focus on getting more people into jobs and stimulating growth outlined in the Lisbon Agenda.

64,000 households lifted out of fuel poverty trap by warm homes scheme


A Welsh Assembly Government scheme to solve fuel poverty is an outstanding success, with more than 64,000 households assisted so far. As part of the Warm Homes Campaign 2006, it has been assisted by the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme.

Social Justice Minister, Mrs Hart said: “The Warm Homes Campaign aims to tell people about the benefits that increased investment in energy efficiency can bring. It also ensures that the least well off in society know of the grant aid and wide ranging

practical assistance that's available to them."

The scheme has been split into two: HEES provides a grant of up to £2,000 and is aimed at families with children under 16. HEES Plus is aimed at people who are over 60, disabled, or a single parent with a child under 16 and who receive a disability or income related benefit. They may be able to claim a grant of up to £3,600 - or £5,000 for oil central heating - which could pay for a range of energy efficiency measures. This may include gas or electric central heating systems.

Households will also receive tailored energy efficiency advice, provided by Eaga Partnership's Home Visits team.

 Further information about the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme in Wales can be obtained by telephoning 0800 316 2815 during normal weekday office hours, or by emailing enquiries.wales@eaga.co.uk.

The Strategy for Older people in Wales – the next five years

Deputy Minister for Older People in Wales, John Griffiths AM is to chair a Task and Finish group to set the direction for the second five years 2008-2013 of the Strategy for Older People in Wales. Stakeholders were asked to submit papers for consideration and NIACE Dysgu Cymru held a focus group of older learners to inform a paper on the contribution of lifelong learning to the



strategy, which was submitted in September.

The focus group members underlined some key points for consideration. Getting started on learning in later life can be daunting but once started learners "can't get enough of it", however focus group members recognised that those who could benefit most are the least likely to get involved. "You can do it too" was their suggested strap line for a peer-led campaign to encourage older people to take up learning. There was also a recognition that classes are getting more expensive which is difficult for people to manage on a fixed pension. One focus group member said she adopted the "Use it or loose it principle" and kept up her physical activity by making use of the free swimming that is available to older people in Wales and wished she could have more financial support to allow her to do more learning.





Petition the PM using a new service

Everyone now has the chance to address, sign and deliver a petition directly to the Prime Minister with our new online service.

Citizens, charities and campaign groups can use e-petitions to set up, host and sign petitions about the issues that matter to them most - and have them automatically delivered to the PM's office.

E-petitions are essentially no different to the traditional paper versions that have been delivered by post or hand to 10 Downing Street for many years.

But petitioners will now be able to reach greater numbers than ever before by connecting people across the web and allowing them to sign up.

It means that individuals and campaign groups who couldn't afford their own website can now petition effectively - although they can still submit traditional paper petitions if they prefer.

Visit the new e-petitions section at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/>

Benefits system 'failing'

The complexity of government bureaucracy is preventing the public from claiming the benefits they are entitled to, says a new report.

A study by the Child Poverty Action Group said that 39 per cent of parents of disabled children had been put off making welfare claims because of complex forms.

And 46 per cent thinking they have missed out on benefits and tax credits because they have not been told they could apply.

While 43 per cent had not claimed Disability Living Allowance or took more than two years to find out their child could be entitled.

Some 30 per cent have not had advice about benefits entitlement in over a year.

CPAG chief executive Kate Green said: "The system for delivering disabled children's benefits is failing.

"Many of the most vulnerable children are waiting months, or years, to find out they might be entitled to this crucial support.

"It can then take further months of filling in forms, appeals and tribunals until any benefit is paid.

"Many more disabled children could be lifted out of poverty if the benefits they are entitled to reach them.

"But the government must urgently develop a strategy to increase take-up, including targeted provision of specialised benefits advice and a simpler application process.

"Otherwise it will fail to meet its target of halving child poverty by 2010."

From E-Politix

Welfare reform

The Commons Committee stage of the Welfare Reform Bill has concluded, and so the amended version of the Bill is now available on the Parliament website and can be accessed through the following link: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pa/bills/200607/welfare_reform.htm

Mental Health Bill still not fit for the twenty-first century, says Alliance

The Government today has missed an historic opportunity to bring forward modern mental health legislation, the 78-strong Mental Health Alliance said.

Responding to the publication of the amended Mental Health Bill, Andy Bell, chair of the Mental Health Alliance, said:

“People who use services, their families and the people who work in them have for eight years campaigned for a better Mental Health Act. They will be profoundly disappointed with the flawed Bill being presented to Parliament today.

“The Alliance recognises that the Government has listened to some of its members’ concerns. But the Bill Act does not address the shortcomings in mental health law that were identified as long ago as

1999 by the Government’s own expert committee. The legislation falls far short of what is needed and does not truly reflect the needs of those who have to live and work with it. It introduces new powers for services without the necessary safeguards for patients.”

“The Government argues that requiring a person to be ‘treatable’ before they are detained is a major loophole in the Act, but there is no evidence that this is the case. Health legislation should not be used to impose treatment that has no benefit on a patient under compulsion. What matters most is that people with mental health problems have access to decent services that work well.”

The Alliance announced it would continue in its campaign for a modern Mental Health Act that:

- Ensures all treatment provided under compulsion gives a health benefit to the patient;
- Limits community treatment orders to a small number of people who really need them and does not impose unnecessary conditions on them;
- Gives everyone sectioned under the Act an advocate and the right to choose who speaks up for them; and

- Gives patients and carers the right to an assessment when they ask for it, before crisis point is reached.

Members of the Mental Health Alliance today expressed their concerns about the Bill:

Fiona Woolf, President of the Law Society, said: "This Bill merely tinkers with the law when what is needed is radical revision of the Mental Health Act 1983. It is disappointing that after so many years and extensive discussion and consultation, and particularly following the report of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Committee, the Government has decided to ignore widely held views and concerns about key issues. Our main concerns are that the legislation fails to uphold the human rights of patients, and provide access for care for people with mental illness, with compulsory treatment used only as a last resort."

Andrew McCulloch, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, said: "I am concerned that vulnerable people who lack capacity do not have access to advocacy under this proposed legislation. The bill must provide people with mental health problems the statutory right to access advocacy services. It is hard to understand why government has dropped this basis principle."

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, said: "It's quality health services that will protect people, not this legislation, opposed by mental health

experts across the board. We hope that the widespread concern in Parliament will lead to the essential changes that must be made to give any chance of providing an effective mental healthcare system. It is vital that health legislation is focused on benefiting and treating health problems. Treatment that cannot improve or treat a person's health, should not be forcibly given to them."

Paul Corry, Director of Public Affairs at Rethink, said: "Rethink deeply opposes the Government's plans which are unfair, unnecessary and unfit for purpose. We have been working to counter plans for the mental health bill, in coalition with the Mental Health Alliance for 8 years and have called for a workable and ethical solution to providing the proper care and treatment that people with severe mental illness deserve in the 21st Century. High profile inquiries that have looked into cases such as John Barrett and Michael Stone haven't recommended a change in legislation; but rather have highlighted the lack of resources, beds and appropriate treatment."

Alison Kitson, Executive Director of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "The Royal College of Nursing welcomes many of the proposals in the Bill. However, we remain concerned about patients being required to have compulsory treatment after discharge from hospital. This could have a serious impact on levels of trust between mental health nurses and their

patients. There is a real potential that the most vulnerable patients will be discouraged from staying in the system and not get the full benefit of treatment that they need and deserve. We do recognise, however, a small number of people may require supervised community treatment. This group needs to be clearly defined in any legislation.”

Professor Sheila Hollins, President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: “We will work with Parliament on the Mental Health Bill to ensure a modernised framework to deliver a safe and effective service for people with mental health problems. The College is particularly concerned that any compulsory treatment should have a clear clinical purpose, and be of benefit to the patient.”

Marjorie Wallace, Chief Executive of SANE, said: “Our concern, like that of many others, is that the new proposals have been driven by public safety without giving positive rights to care and treatment both for people with mental illness and their families. While a few people may be protected by supervised community treatment in the right circumstances, the majority of those needing help will still be failed when beds, units, day centres, community and therapy services are being closed or reduced. We need care and compassion, not coercion.”

Advertise your event in Disability Wales News
free for disability groups
call 029 2088 7325 or email us at info@disabilitywales.org

DRC ROUND-UP

New legislation to transform public services for disabled people

Disability Equality Duty

Approximately 45,000 public bodies will be affected by new legislation introduced on 4 December that is set to transform the lives of one in five Britons.

The new Disability Equality Duty (the DED) will affect the way public authorities run and plan their services for the 10 million people who have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act. The DED is similar to the race equality duty introduced by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) had been urging the government to introduce the new duty since 2000.

The DRC’s Chairman Bert Massie said:



*Disability
Equality Duty
applies to
all local
Authorities*

“The Disability Equality Duty will have a major impact on the lives of disabled people and will radically shift the way public authorities deliver their services.

“Public bodies – from the local library to the NHS – will have to consider what disabled people need when planning their services. This is a step-change away from individual disabled people having to complain about discrimination after an incident has taken place.”

The new duty has been introduced to tackle the endemic discrimination faced by disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. For example, disabled people are less likely to receive a full education, less likely to get a job, more likely to be discriminated against in the health service and to be a victim of crime than non-disabled people.

DRC Chairman Bert Massie continued:

“The DED will help public bodies become more efficient and save money because it involves providing services that disabled people need. Those who fail to meet their new legal duties risk facing us in court.

“Ensuring that disabled people’s needs are thought of at the beginning of policy and service development will help enhance the service that many disabled people receive. Next February, the DRC is unveiling a new agenda aimed at breaking the cycle of persistent exclusion and discrimination that still blights many disabled people’s lives.”

Publicly funded organisations with specific duties under the DED need to publish a Disability Equality Scheme that shows how they intend to fulfil the new duty. The scheme – which

has to be published by 4 December – needs to show how a public body intends to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The DRC will be scrutinising these schemes from 5 December 2006.

Employers ill-equipped to take on staff with mental health problems

Government efforts to move people off benefit and into work risk failure unless employers get more support to recruit and retain staff with mental health problems, according to the results of a new survey for the DRC.

The DRC poll, by GfK NOP, of small and medium businesses found that two thirds have no procedures in place for managing staff with mental health problems. The survey also indicates that managers are more reluctant to make changes in the workplace for new staff with a mental health condition than for existing employees.

These findings are a wake-up call for the government, which is aiming to get 1 million incapacity benefit claimants back to work - 40 per cent of whom have a mental health condition.

The DRC has issued a five-point-plan which calls on the government to provide more support for employers and workers.

'Care gap' leaving millions without support, new report reveals

Britain's social care system is creating a 'care gap' that is leaving millions of people with no control over their lives, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) said today. The situation is set to worsen, the DRC cautions, as the gap between those needing support and those actually receiving it widens.

In its new report, 'Independence Day', the DRC says the failings of the current system mean that:

- Many disabled people and people with long-term health conditions are without support enabling them to get out of bed, use the toilet or eat. Many cannot leave their homes to visit friends or family;
- More than a million disabled people and people with long-term health conditions are living in unsuitable housing;
- 320,000 people are living in residential care homes, many against their wishes, with no right or power to fight local authority decisions placing them there;
- A further 9,000 young adults are inappropriately housed.

The report also raises concerns that formal social care support could become an increasing scarcity in the future to many who will need it. Seven out of 10 local authorities admit to only offering services to people whose needs are judged to be “critical” or “substantial,” with eight in 10 of the same authorities expecting to further tighten their eligibility criteria next year. This will place additional demands on voluntary carers to meet the care gap. But a recent DRC/Ipsos MORI survey revealed that younger generations are less likely to give up work and assume unpaid caring roles.

The survey’s findings are in stark contrast to the public’s own expectations about the type and quality of support they expect to receive from social care services. The survey also found that the overwhelming majority expected to be able to make decisions affecting them if they developed a disability or long-term health condition. Nearly 90 per cent said that they expected to be able to choose whether or not to live in residential care.

‘Independence Day’ details the lives of real people, demonstrating the shortcomings of the current social care system and how their lives could be transformed if a Private Member’s Bill introduced by Lord Ashley to reform social care became law.

Commenting on the need for changes to the current system, Bert Massie, DRC Chairman, said:

“Our social care system is tilted in the wrong direction, keeping many people in a state of suspended animation and allocating scarce resources in the wrong way. It needs to be transformed so that its endgame is to provide real opportunities for people to live independently and to be active, visible citizens rather than the passive recipients of what others deem best.

“Lord Ashley’s Private Member’s Bill seeks to bring into effect the recommendations of the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit announced more than 18 months ago and create a social care system to meet the needs of disabled people and reflect what they and the rest of the public clearly want.”



For more information, or to obtain a copy of Independence Day, contact the DRC Press Office on 0207 543 7099.

New rights to fair treatment on Britain’s public transport system

A major loophole in the law was plugged on Monday 4 December when, for the first time, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions have the right to be treated fairly on public transport.

The new duties, which extend the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

(DDA), mean that disabled people have the right to be treated fairly and the right to reasonable adjustments on buses, coaches, trains and taxis.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) will be responsible for enforcing the amended legislation, ensuring transport operators meet their new duties and disabled people know about their new rights.

At present, a disabled person has no right to fair treatment on transport vehicles. For example, a man who is a wheelchair-user reported that, despite the availability of accessible buses, drivers refused to lower the wheelchair ramp for him. Even if the bus stopped, drivers were often abusive and wouldn't let him get on the bus. However, he had no protection under the Disability Discrimination Act.

A woman with a visual impairment booked assistance for a train journey between Sheffield and Hereford which involved two changes. Her train arrived late at one of the stations where she was due to change trains

but there was no one to assist her to the next train. She consequently got on the wrong train but had no right to complain under current legislation.

The new duties will also apply to vehicle rental firms and car breakdown services but will not apply to aviation or shipping. The DRC is calling for aviation and shipping to be included in the Disability Discrimination Act or incorporated into a promised Single Equality Act.

In 2007, the DRC will launch a campaign encouraging disabled people onto Britain's buses and trains and engaging transport companies to ensure their services are open to all.

Transport operators and disabled people gave advice to the DRC on a Code of Practice that supports the new legislation. The Code is available from www.drc.org.uk/the_law/legislation_codes_regulation/codes_of_practice.aspx

Disability Wales On-line
www.disabilitywales.org



New housing project in Swansea

ADAPT is a partnership project operating in Swansea which aims to:

- significantly improve and streamline processes for applying to and accessing adapted and accessible social housing in Swansea
- significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of adapted and accessible social housing in the area
- contribute to the more effective and efficient use of public monies such as Disabled Facilities Grants

The partners involved in the project are Swansea Housing Association (host), Family Housing Association, Tai Cymdogaeth and the City and County of Swansea. ADAPT is funded by the City and County of Swansea Supporting People team.

So what is different about ADAPT?

- unlike other accessible housing register projects, ADAPT does not exist as a distinct organisation or

team. Instead, the functions have been absorbed into the partner organisations forming a virtual team. Staff within the partner organisations provide a service-user focused assessment of housing, care and support needs to all physically disabled applicants as well as ensuring a best match short list to housing providers when a property becomes available

- the approach used to link applicants with properties has done away with traditional points systems. Instead, it focuses on the best possible match between the household and the property, thereby minimising the need for re-adaptation of properties
- the processes were designed from the bottom up, drawing on the experience of everyone in the partner organisations involved in allocating adapted and accessible housing
- it involves a unique way of raising awareness amongst professionals. A giant floor-sized game of snakes and ladders has been developed which shows practitioners the pitfalls and weaknesses in traditional systems and the benefits of the ADAPT system
- ADAPT links directly into Swansea Housing Association's development

programme, ensuring that the association is building adapted accommodation based on clear identification of need. In some cases, applicants are linked to accommodation before a development starts so that they can be directly involved in the production of truly bespoke housing

In its first six months of operation, ADAPT made best match accommodation allocations to 19 disabled people and there are another 56 disabled people on the ADAPT waiting list.

Swansea Housing Association can be contacted on 01792 479200 or info@swanseaha.co.uk

The Commissioner for Older People in Wales

The long path to creating the first ever Commissioner for Older in People in Wales is expected to be complete in 2007. The final consultation process on the secondary legislation that needs to be passed by the National Assembly for Wales is underway. This covers regulations concerning the administrative and wider functions of the Commissioner and the appointment and term of office of the Commissioner.

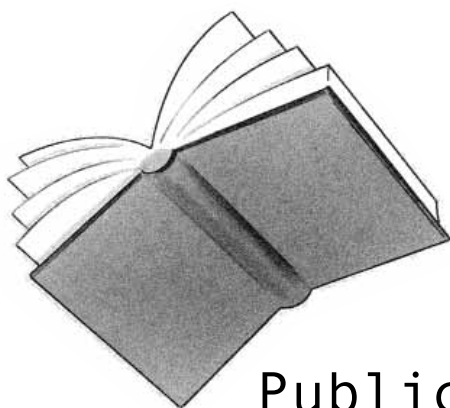
The Commissioner will be an independent office holder, who will work to ensure that the interests of older people in Wales are safeguarded and promoted. The Commissioner will be able to act as a source of information, advocacy and support for older people and encourage best practice in their treatment. The Commissioner will also be able to review the effect on older people in Wales on the way public bodies discharge their functions. These will include the Assembly, local authorities, local health boards, NHS trusts and further and higher education organisations in Wales.

The Million Memories Website

The million memories website was launched on World Alzheimer's Day (Thursday 21 September 2006) to celebrate the power of memory and how it binds friends and family.

The project is run by the Alzheimer's Society and aims to raise £3 million for sufferers and their families and carers. The site asks people to chose or upload a photo and to write about a particular memory associated with it. Celebrities who have contributed their memories to the site include Richard Briers, Jo Brand and Graham Norton.

www.millionmemories.org.uk



Publications

Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life: A first report of the UK Inquiry into Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life

This report presents the findings and recommendations from Stage 1 of the Inquiry's work, which has focused on mental health promotion in later life. It draws on the views of nearly 900 older people and carers.

www.mhilli.org/index.aspx?page=stage2promotion.htm#Inquiryreport

British Film institute and Disability Equality in Education Collaboration. Now live on the web.

This website provides a wealth of information on how disability has been represented in moving image from the earliest days. The approach is from a disability equality and human rights perspective, which draws on the collective thinking of the Disabled People's Movement.

Therefore, whether you are experienced in Media Studies/English teaching and/or have some understanding of disability issues, it's important to read the Introduction and Ways of thinking about disability before moving on to look at the film and teaching sections.

Author of the pack, Richard Rieser of DEE said:

Disabling Imagery will be a great resource for all teachers, across all curriculum areas, wishing to develop their pupils/ students thinking about disability, as an equality issue. The pack will help all young people develop a more critical approach to the representation of disabled people in the media."

It has been published by BFI Education in collaboration with Disability Equality in Education, with financial support from the Department for Work and Pensions for the European Year of Disabled People.

Growing inclusion in schools means that disabled children/ students are expected to take part in the curriculum and social life of mainstream schools. Teachers in the UK all have a duty to challenge negative stereotypes of gender, race, ability and disability in the curriculum materials they use.

The resource aims to:

- Examine critically how commercial, Western - mostly Hollywood – cinema, has portrayed disabled people.

- Develop some ways of thinking about disabled people from a human rights based approach as part of school's wider approach to equality
- Looks at ways disabled film-makers and their allies have represented disability in non commercial films.

Available as a book and DVD from DEE £20 including p&p



For further information
telephone :0207 359 2855 or
email: info@diseed.org.uk

Check it Out

www.bfi.org.uk/disablingimagery

Funding

Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

The Foundation makes awards to projects that fall within one of its three priority areas: healthcare and disability, community support and education and the arts. The Foundation operates a small and large grants programme. Small grants are for amounts of up to £10,000 and large grants are for amounts of up to £50,000. Small grants can be used to cover revenues costs whilst large grants can be used for revenue or capital costs. Further details are available from:
www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk/app.html

e-ffective Connection Award

BT Community Connections is a nationwide award scheme that connects local community and voluntary groups to the internet. Since 2000, the scheme has awarded more than 4,600 internet-ready PCs to community and voluntary organisations. In 2006/7 over 1,300 awards will be made to groups who can demonstrate how a PC and internet connection will benefit their work and the local community.

Every application will be assessed and a regional panel in England or national panel in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will judge those short-listed.

- Closing Date (postal applications) 12 February 2007
- (online applications) 15 February 2007
- Award Delivery from 7 May – 15 June 2007

Leonardo

Leonardo da Vinci is the European Community's vocational training programme. It encourages collaboration between organisations involved in vocational training, aiming to improve the quality of training provision, develop the skills and mobility of the workforce, stimulate innovation and enhance the competitiveness of European industry. Leonardo currently spans thirty-one European countries.

Who can apply?

Any public, semi-public or private organisation can apply for Leonardo funding - individuals do not apply directly. All applications must be supported by a partnership of European organisations.

The application process (and the minimum number of partners required) varies according to the type of project.



Further info:

www.leonardo.org.uk/

The Lifespan Trust Grants

This Trust supports and encourages projects, which benefit people of the third age, which for many are the years following retirement.

Applications from both organisations and individuals are accepted (there are two different application forms) with the criteria that the project requiring funding must add life to years and benefit people over fifty. For further details email lifespan@arp.org.uk or visit www.phf.org.uk

The Rayne Foundation

Applications for these grants must fall within the four sectors that the Foundation funds, these are: arts, education, health/medicine, social welfare development. The foundation will make grants to organisations with

a charitable purpose which are registered and working in the UK. National organisations may also be supported.

Further details are available from www.raynefoundation.org.uk

Strokestown International Poetry Competition

The Strokestown International Poetry Competition offers prizes of £4,000 (approx. £2,500), £2000 (approx. £1,337) and £1000 (approx. £670) for an unpublished poem in English not exceeding 70 lines.

In addition there will be up to seven commended poets who will be invited to read at the festival for a reading fee and travelling expenses totalling £450 (approx. £300). The entry fee is £5 (or £4) per poem.



For further information, guidelines or to download an application form visit www.strokestownpoetry.org, or contact:

Contact Info:

Strokestown Poetry Festival Office,
Strokestown, County Roscommon,
Ireland (+ 353) (0) 71 9633759
petersirr@eircom.net

Deadline Date - 31 January 2007

Disability Wales On-line
www.disabilitywales.org



One Act Playwriting Competition 2007

Organised by the Drama Association of Wales, the One-Act Playwright Competition aims to encourage writing for amateur plays in English and Welsh.

Plays are being sought in three categories:

- An open section
- Plays suitable for a cast of 16-25 year olds
- Welsh language plays

The winning plays in each category will receive £200 and the Best Play by a Wales Based Writer will receive a bursary to a Tŷ Newydd theatre writing course.

Eligible plays should be intended to last for 20 - 50 minutes, written for the amateur theatre in English or Welsh, and have a minimum cast of two actors. Plays must be unpublished and unperformed, but may have been entered in other competitions. There is an entry of £10 per play.



For further details or an entry form:

Drama Association of Wales, The Old Library, Singleton Road, Splott, Cardiff, CF24 2ET

Phone: 029 2045 2200

Deadline Date - 31 January 2007

International Human rights



Recently, the situation of disabled people was highlighted in a report by Vitit Muntarbhorn, U.N. Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea. Muntarbhorn reports that the North Korean government routinely gathers up disabled citizens and sends them away to special camps where they are sorted by the type of their disability and subjected to "subhuman conditions." The report also details other rights violations against women, the elderly and children. Five news articles and a U.N. Press Release on the subject of these human rights abuses in North Korea have been posted to Disabled People's International website. We encourage you to read up on these atrocities and lend your voice to those that are protesting North Korea's inhuman treatment of disabled people.

The disability community in Guatemala is currently fighting for accessible public transportation in Guatemala City. They would like to request the support of different groups from the international community in their efforts. For details, please contact Reyna Chavarria, DPI Representative in Guatemala, at reyna_chavarria_p@hotmail.com.

A press release on the subject of their fight has been posted to DPI's website (available in Spanish only).

www.dpi.org

Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People lose contract

Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People have lost the contract to provide Direct Payment services to disabled people in Cardiff to a company based in England.

The contract to organize care packages has been awarded by Cardiff Council to Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (of disabled people).

Charles Willie, the Coalition's chief executive, has accused the council of breaking its own procedures in making the decision. The Coalition's tender lost out on price, but beat the Somerset body on quality and presentation.

This comes at time of a planned £3m cut in the budget in services for vulnerable adults with learning difficulties in Cardiff.

BCODP

From 30 October 2006, the British Council of Disabled People has changed its name to The United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (UKDPC).

Press for change - website

Press for Change is a political lobbying and educational organisation, which campaigns to achieve equal

civil rights and liberties for all trans people in the United Kingdom, through legislation and social change.

This site is here to explain their work, and to support all those who campaign with them to achieve full equality and rights for gender diverse people in modern society.

Nowhere else in the world will you find such a comprehensive collection of information about the trans rights campaign, and details about the legal, medical, political and social issues surrounding the people it represents. If you're a trans person, we aim to raise your consciousness. If you're a researcher or a journalist we want you to have everything you could possibly want to report us accurately and fairly. If you're a campaigner already, we want to provide you with the very best resources. And if you're not, they'd like to show you what an astonishing challenge we continue to face even though many fundamental forms of protection are now in place through UK law.

www.pfc.org.uk/



For information on Transgender issues in Wales:

Helpline

Transgender Wales helpline -
07967 426558 (Mobile)

P.O. Box 304,
Cardiff,
CF11 9XA

New website to make life easier for older and disabled people

As we get older, it can become increasingly difficult to take a bath or shower. With so many products on the market, it is not always easy to work out the best solution. Now for the first time older and disabled people and their carers and families are able to make informed choices about walk-in baths, showers and grab rails thanks to 'Bathing made easy', a new free service from leading charity the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF).

Containing detailed, impartial information on over 1,400 personal care items, this online search and comparison website aims to include all products available in the UK. All information has been checked by the DLF's team of therapists and includes a description, a price guide, dimensions, images and a list of national suppliers.

Suitable products can be easily identified by browsing through the categories or searching free text. They can be displayed in various different ways, for example, the user can choose to only view those items which can be ordered over the internet.

One of the unique features of this website is that up to four pieces of equipment can be viewed simultaneously in a table format, making comparison easy. Products can then be added to a 'personal product list' so that information on the



users' favorite items will be stored while they continue their search. Products can also be given 'star ratings' which helps others to identify the most (and least) popular items.

The launch of 'Bathing made easy' is the first step in the DLF's ambition to make their entire database of 14,000 products freely available on the internet for public use. Further product categories will be released in due course.

Anyone wishing to try out 'Bathing made easy' should visit the following website www.dlf.org.uk/bathing Advice about these and other products can also be obtained by contacting the DLF Helpline on 0845 130 9177, Monday - Friday, 10am - 4pm (textphone 020 7432 8009) or email advice@dlf.org.uk

New Chief for RADAR

RADAR has announced the appointment of Liz Sayce as its new Chief Executive. Liz who is currently the Director of Policy and Communications at the Disability

Rights Commission (DRC) will take up her post on 1 February 2007.

New drug and alcohol advice helpline goes live

The Welsh Assembly government in partnership with Cais Ltd, a north Wales based substance misuse provider has launched a confidential All Wales Drug and Alcohol helpline, 'DAN24/7'.

As the name implies, the service is available day and night, and will provide a support structure and an accessible specialist service to anyone in Wales wanting further information and or help relating to drugs or alcohol.

All calls to the helpline will be free (some mobile networks may charge) and run by bilingual trained advisers. The helpline will have a major impact on accessing substance misuse treatment and advice and lead to more wide ranging benefits for the individuals concerned as well as their families, communities and all organisations. The helpline can be contacted on : 0800 6 33 55 88

Taken from Network Wales – 4th October 2006

Tax Credit changes

A number of changes to the rules regarding tax credits come into force on 11 November.

Overpayments will be deducted from awards at a rate of either 10 per cent or 25 per cent regardless of whether they are in a year or end of year overpayments, and only one overpayment will be recovered at a time.

This will require a change to COP26 and we understand that HMRC intend to issue a revised version in November.

From Welfare rights bulletin 194

The Cinema Exhibitors Association card

This card entitles the holder to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema.

To apply, a person will need to meet one of the following criteria:

- Be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance at any rate
- Be a registered blind person
- Be a holder of a disabled person's railcard (national scheme not a travel permit)

Cards are valid for three years and a £5 processing fee applies, 90% of UK cinemas are supporting, from large chains like Odeon, Vue, Showcase, UCI, UGC, Cineworld and independents also.

Application forms may be collected from cinemas or printed off from the website- www.ceacard.co.uk

There is no age restriction on the cardholder, and cards are valid for all screenings.

The CEA card does not remove a cinema's responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for its guests, but aims to offer consistency across the industry. It is not intended to replace any existing arrangements a customer has made with a specific cinema, which remain at the discretion of cinema managers.

If you have any queries concerning this card please contact:

Card Network Team – 0845 123 1295

An ageing library

Age Concern Cymru houses a specialist reference library of books, reports, magazines and journals relating to ageing. So if you are working or studying in an age-related field and would like to use this resource please contact:

Gareth Franklin/Age Concern on
029 20 431550

From Age Concern Cymru Issue 13

Living without insurance

Have you ever experienced difficulties in obtaining travel insurance or home contents insurance? Have you had to deal with a particular problem while abroad without travel insurance cover?

If so, the Welsh Consumer Council would like to hear from you. They are currently looking for people to share their experiences with them as part of

a major project they are undertaking on the barriers some people face when taking out travel or home contents insurance. If you have a story to tell and would like to hear more, please contact Lindsey Kerton email: lindsey@wales-consumer.org.uk <<mailto:lindsey@wales-consumer.org.uk>>
Tel: 029 2025 5454 Ext: 225
by 15 January 2007

Benefits

Help the Aged have compiled information on claiming benefits for the over 60's, including rules, rates and guidance. This information is available online at –
www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb

Lack access to top Web sites

Many Web sites around the world are beyond the reach of disabled people but could easily be improved to meet international accessibility standards, a survey commissioned by the United Nations found. The study looked at 100 popular sites in 20 countries and found the vast majority failed to meet international standards of accessibility. It found that three of the 100 sites evaluated met the basic accessibility criteria -- those of the German chancellor (www.bundeskanzlerin.de), the Spanish government (www.la-moncloa.es/default.htm) and the prime minister (www.primeminister.gov.uk).

From Reuters

Planning Aid Wales

Are public services located within easy reach of where you live? And are they accessible with a wheelchair? Is housing available in the community for your young people? Or are you determined to stop that tip being opened near your village? Each of these examples has something to do with land use planning.

If your community group wants to influence planning decisions in your area, **Planning Aid Wales (PAW)** is here to help you. PAW is a registered charity which provides free, professional and independent advice and support on all aspects of land use planning in Wales. It does this by using a Wales-wide network of volunteers who are all qualified planners.

PAW provides a telephone Helpline service that gives advice on individual planning cases. This service is available to anybody, individuals and groups, who cannot afford a planning consultant.

PAW's main aim however is to enable community groups to participate effectively in the planning system. If you want to learn how to get your voice heard in decisions about your local area, PAW development workers can help organise talks and seminars for your group.


Here are some of the groups and individuals PAW has helped in the past:

- **Mr A., wheelchair user, Torfaen:** Mr A. had been refused planning permission for making a disabled parking space at his home. A Planning Aid Wales volunteer gave him advice on how to appeal against this decision.
- **Bryngwran Community Council:** Residents and the community council worked hard to stop a biogas plant being developed on the outskirts of the village of Gwalchmai on Anglesey. With the help of Planning Aid Wales, they were able to focus their objections to the planning application on the key planning issues. In March 2006, planning permission for the biogas plant was refused.
- **Wrexham FC Supporters Trust:** The Trust feared that the club's owner might sell the Racecourse football ground for a housing or commercial development. PAW advised them to approach their council to see if the site could be identified as a football ground in the plan for the area, which is being prepared. If they are successful in

having the site 'allocated' for sports use, it will make it very difficult to develop the land for another use.

- **Communities First Support Network:** PAW has recently run seminars for Communities First board members and co-ordinators across Wales. The seminars, called 'Making your Voice Heard', explained how Communities First groups can influence forward planning in their areas, as well as having a real influence on decisions about individual developments.

If you think you might need help or advice from Planning Aid Wales, or just want to know more about what they do, please call 02920 485 765 or e-mail: ccc paw@btconnect.com.

 Further information is also available on www.planning-aid-wales.org.



Disabled?

Want to start your own business
call Enter DW

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or email enter@disabilitywales.org

Shared surfaces

A new concept in town planning, Shared Surface street design, creates 'no-go' areas for blind and partially-sighted people.

Carol Thomas,
Access and Inclusion Manager, Guide Dogs, looks at some of the problems.



For blind and partially-sighted people, finding their way around town centres safely and confidently depends on ‘cues’ that let them know where they are – like kerbs, audible pedestrian crossings and tactile paving.

If these cues are removed, visually-impaired people can easily become disorientated, and find themselves in potentially perilous situations.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is concerned that this is happening across the UK as a popular new street design concept called ‘Shared Space’ is being rolled out without proper consideration for all users’ needs. To this end, we are campaigning to raise awareness of

Lowestoft town centre shared surface area. A blind person and her guide dog are in an open space without kerbs and other orientation cues. Traffic passes close by.

the potential problems that shared space schemes may pose, and to ensure that local authorities, town planners and urban design architects consult blind and partially-sighted and other disabled people when planning and re-designing town centres.

The idea behind Shared Space is a sound one – to re-design town centres and high streets in a way that makes them more attractive and ‘people-friendly’.



Guide Dogs supports these aims, but is concerned that many local authorities and urban design architects are trying to fulfil these aims through the implementation of a shared surface area for use by pedestrians, vehicles and cyclists.

Shared surfaces generally have no kerbs, or any clear tactile demarcation between the footway and carriageway. Kerbs are a crucial orientation cue for visually-impaired people, whether they use a guide dog, cane or their remaining vision.

According to a draft 'Manual for Streets' (Department for Transport and Department for Communities and

Shared surface in Newbury Town Centre. The picture shows a guide dog owner with a bus and cyclist close by.

Local Government, summer 2006), users of a shared surface should negotiate movement by making "eye contact" – posing an obvious problem for blind and partially-sighted people.

Hazards

Another potential problem is design features that are meant to be attractive, but which can actually be disorientating for visually-impaired

people – for example, patterned or textured paving.

Guide Dogs – along with other organisations represented on the Joint Committee of Blind and Partially Sighted People – has concerns that town centres implementing shared space schemes by imposing shared surfaces will at best become frightening and dangerous places and at worst simply “no –go” areas for people with reduced vision, and other disabled and older people.

Concern about shared surfaces has also been raised by disability organisations such as the British Council of Disabled People, Arthritis Care, the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People.

Guide Dogs has started raising awareness among local councillors, urban design architects and town planners of the potential impact of particular features of shared space schemes on vulnerable users, encouraging them to take their views into account when drawing up future plans.

This involves demonstrating that not doing so goes against government legislation and guidelines on disability equality, inclusive design, social inclusion and meaningful community involvement.

Focus groups

A literature review of the shared space concept and shared surface streetscapes revealed that advocates of the concept cited the success of

shared surfaces in the Netherlands. With the support of the Netherlands Federation of Blind People we held a focus group of local blind and partially sighted people who were familiar with shared surfaces in the towns of Haren and Drachten. While welcoming the aim of encouraging slower traffic speed and improved civility, participants confirmed that they experienced significant difficulties in shared surface areas and were concerned that their views had not been listened to.

As one participant commented:

“9 out of 10 cars would stop for me. My difficulty is recognising the 10th”

In the UK we held focus groups in nine locations (Ashford, Coventry, Dundee, Hull, Leamington, London, Lowestoft, Newbury, and Newport) where there are already shared surfaces in place, to find out the first hand experiences of blind and partially-sighted people and other disabled people. Some of these areas had new street designs described by the designers and Local Authorities as following the Shared Space concept, others had areas of shared surface which had been in place for several years, usually where pedestrian priority zones had introduced some vehicle use.

The overwhelming majority of focus group participants were opposed to the implementation of shared surfaces.

Most participants felt unsafe using these areas, reporting a series of instances when they had experienced



'near misses' or felt in danger – including nearly stepping out in front of a bus, getting knocked over by cyclists, being intimidated by traffic passing close by and finding it difficult to cross carriageways safely.

"I had to be pulled back because I was standing in the road, thinking it was part of the kerb." Guide dog owner, Dundee.

"A cyclist ran into me and knocked me flying. I fell down, and he said 'next time you'll get out of the way, won't you'." Guide dog owner, Hull

Many of the blind and partially-sighted people in our focus groups said they felt less confident and more anxious in town centres with shared surface areas, and often tended to

Coventry shared surface area. A blind person with her guide dog approached the shared surface. There is minimal visual or tactile contrast. Buses pass through this area at frequent intervals

avoid them – to the detriment of their independence, freedom and quality of life.

Others still attempted to navigate their way through but emerged exhausted and afraid.

"Towns will become no-go areas for us, won't they?" Guide dog owner, Coventry.

"Although I have some sight, I go home absolutely exhausted due to the sheer concentration and tension." Woman who uses a symbol cane, Dundee.

Lack of consultation

Lack of effective consultation is a key concern. Some of the participants had been involved in local consultations on proposals for the re-design of their town centre, but most felt their needs and opinions had been ignored, and that local authority officers simply were not sufficiently aware of visual impairment issues.

The avoidance of shared surface areas is a particularly important consideration for Local Authority monitoring and safety audits which focus on the people still using the area.

“Delivered with thought, proper consultation and sensitivity, Shared Spaces can only be a benefit to visually-impaired pedestrians, as to all others – but unless their needs are incorporated into schemes, we’ll soon be reading about fatalities,” warns Tom Pey, Guide Dogs’ Director of Public Policy and Development.

“Designers, engineers and planners involved in the street environment need to be aware of our very serious concerns, and join the search for safe and workable solutions that meet the needs of the whole population and not just those with sharp eyes and nimble feet!”

The proponents of the Shared Space philosophy have not as yet given any advice on detailed design which is disappointing if not irresponsible.

Research

Guide Dogs is leading the way here, with a research programme developing and testing potential street designs that meet the needs of people with visual impairments and

other disabilities, as well as embracing the aims of the Shared Space concept.

Guide Dogs is working with international urban designers Bjarne Winterberg and Lars Gemzoe of the Jan Gehl Design Practice and the Public Space Research Centre Copenhagen to develop a series of streetscape designs for the United Kingdom that will be tested by blind and partially-sighted people and people with other disabilities over the coming months.

At the same time Guide Dogs is undertaking “before and after” monitoring and evaluation of ‘shared space’ schemes currently under development to gauge the impact of these schemes on the safety and independence of blind and partially-sighted people and other disabled people.

Guide Dogs is also issuing a briefing pack for local disability groups to enable them to be effectively involved in local streetscape proposals.

The Guide Dogs report is available to download from the Guide Dogs website at:

www.guidedogs.org.uk/sharedsurfaces



For a hard copy of Guide Dogs’ shared surface focus groups report, available in Braille, large print and on audio tape, contact Gill Kenyon at Guide Dogs’ Head Office on 01189 838359

or email sharedsurfaces@guidedogs.org.uk.

Carol Thomas is the Access and Inclusion Manager, Guide Dogs.

- Are you a disabled person?
- Ever thought of starting your own business but don't know how?



No matter what it is, we will work with you to turn your idea into reality.

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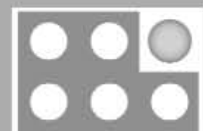


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