

Report on Cardiff & the Vale Parents' Federation 2015 AGM

Direct Payments and the Social care & Wellbeing Act (Wales) – what it means to us!

On Tuesday 27th October 2015 Cardiff & the Vale Parents' Federation held their AGM at Sbectrwm Community Centre. The event was well attended with 39 members present.

Phil Harding, Chair of the Federation, gave a summary of the previous years activities. Our membership continues to grow at pace and we now have over 1000 families as members of the Parents Federation. All members benefit from our information signposting services and a wide range of other support services. Phil highlighted some of the years' achievements and activities. These included:

Understanding Disability Awards

The Understanding Disability Awards event continues to be a high profile and popular event that highlights the positive efforts of the community and Hasina Kaderbhai must be commended for her efforts in ensuring its ongoing success. Over 100 people attended the 2014 event and enjoyed an uplifting and rewarding morning.

More details along with a list of award recipients can be found [here](#).



During the year, the Parents Federation liaised with the Local Authority (LA) in the retendering process for supported living and this included ensuring a parent presence on interview panels. We also raised concerns at council scrutiny meetings that the council decision to 'weigh' costs over quality was not wise and that we felt as a bare minimum quality of services should account for at least 50% of any scoring. While our views were not acted upon, the process seemed fair and transparent.

In addition to giving evidence on behalf of family carers at scrutiny committees during the year regarding various issues that will affect vulnerable people, the Federation also participates in the Learning Disability Partnership Group (LDPG). We advise the Local Authorities on what is a fair deal for carers and our loved ones. We have helped develop a strategy for respite for the coming years and are involved in a similar project looking at how we can promote more opportunities for employment, both voluntary or paid work.

We shall continue to press for more and better opportunities in employment, leisure and accommodation for people with a learning disability in the years to come. We shall also keep working toward a sustainable Respite Strategy across both counties that is affordable, encourages innovation and choice and above all is trusted and safe.



The Federation does a lot to help carers overcome social isolation. We hold social gatherings where families meet one another, share information and ideas and make new friends.

We also use these events to share information with parents and carers. In addition we provide support directly via 'phone. email or face to face and we supported 217 families directly this year.

The Federation have helped support Elaine Gee (EG) with her work with the Changing Places Campaign. PH also explained to the audience what the Changing Places Campaign does. The campaign promotes the installation of disability accessible WC's in a variety of venues and this has been a tremendous success.



The Federation organised an accommodation event held at the Cardiff Yacht Club. This was a successful event, which included presentations on a range of accommodation options that are currently offered to people with a learning disability plus some that might be worth considering. The event was well attended with some excellent feedback.

Finances

PH stated that we are struggling with funds and that we had a small deficit for the year to March 2015. The staff and Parents Committee members have been looking at ways to generate more funds and will be contacting members for their views and seeking their support. It was re-stated that the organisation needs to build a reserve to ensure more stability.

Many suggestions were raised and discussed with regard to potential funding opportunities and it was agreed that we should invite members to make a voluntary contribution to our overheads as 'Friends of the Federation', it was stressed that our services will remain free and people would not be asked to contribute, only offered an opportunity to do so. More information can be found [here](#).

Some cost saving measures have been implemented and more will be in the current year but after debate we agreed that printed newsletters would be sent to all members unless they chose to opt out and receive them via electronic means alone.

Two new trustees were elected during the formal AGM proceedings, Elaine Gee and Sue McFarland. Both have been active volunteers with the organisation for many years.

PRESENTATIONS

Direct Payments and the Social care & Wellbeing Act (Wales) – what it means to us! – Pauline Young MBE

Person Centred Planning (PCP) and the Social Services & Well-Being (Wales) Act

Pauline Young MBE presented information regarding the Social Services & Well-Being (Wales) Act stating that this is the first and most important act that Wales have created. It became law in May 2014 and we await a clear idea of how far the aspiration of the act will be put into practice. She started by playing a short film about the Act and it's aims. While the goal of the Act is to encourage individuals to have more say in how they are supported, in practice it is less clear how this will be put into practice. People of all abilities can express their views and it is essential that those that know or support them should also assist in this process, the Act could facilitate this. The legislation also highlights the role that using Direct payments could play in helping an individual develop a support package that suits their unique needs. The act also highlights the need for the development of co-operatives, close partnership working, co-production and Person Centred approaches.

As the Act replaces previous much carer and disability focussed legislation it is unclear whether families may lose legal rights they currently enjoy. On the other hand some people previously struggling to get support may find they enjoy a more equitable access to assistance.

Diverse Cymru: Direct payments and taking more control

Kirsty Russell briefly explained about what Diverse Cymru does. Diverse Cymru has several different departments within their organisation including help with benefits claims, equality issues and advocacy. The organisation also educates professionals.

Diverse Cymru have a Direct Payments Team that provides a free service to support people in Cardiff that use Direct Payments.

Kirsty explained the process of engaging a personal assistant (PA) and the support that is offered with DP's. DP's allow people to have more of a choice.

Diverse identify a named 'support worker' for each client.

People using the Diverse services can have assistance in recruiting a personal assistant, help with any HR issues and assistance with all the financial and administrative aspects of employing someone. People can choose all or part of these services, depending upon their personal wishes.

Direct Payments must be used for the purpose that they are intended and records must be kept to ensure a clear audit trail. A great deal of discussion ensued over the merits pros and con's of using Direct payments. Some parents were very supportive of their use while others were opposed to them

Questions were invited and the process was expanded on

Question – Can you engage an organisation or do you have to have a PA?

Answer -Yes you can have a mix.

n.b. Some parents have been told this is NOT the case. This has been confirmed by Vale of Glamorgan Council.

- N.b. Costs might make this unfeasible.
- Advertising for a PA – In the Vale of Glamorgan the cost of an advert cannot come out of DP's. Cardiff allows the cost of an advert to come out of DP's.
- Who pays the cost of a PA to attend a venue?
- Diverse Cymru offer a 'match making' service to find PA's that are suitable for an individual.
- Diverse Cymru offer FREE training for PA's or identify where else it can be accessed. SCDWP offer training.
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- Diverse Cymru offer support and advice on legal aspects of tax and employment.
- Diverse Cymru arrange FREE Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Checks.
- Managed banking – almost 80% of people opt for this. For the purpose of audit a distinct and separate account must be held.
- Peer support groups – to identify issues, clarify them or feed key problems into appropriate services.

Question – Can you employ a family member?

Answer - Yes, as long as they don't live together.

Disability Wales – How new Co-operatives will make managing Direct Payments easier

Rebecca Newsome explained about the Direct Payment Co-operative. It was stated that in Wales Direct Payments take up is very low at 5% of those eligible to use them while in England take-up was far higher. Many people had expressed reluctance to use Direct payments as they were put off by the paperwork and having to become an employer of their personal assistants. Disability Wales are currently developing a model that helps to overcome many of these problems that currently put people off from using Direct Payments.

They are helping to set up a co-operative that will act as the employer of PA staff and offer administrative and HR resources for individuals wishing to use Direct Payments to pay for their personal support. The co-operative will take much of the pressure off people and be self-funding. It would still allow as much flexibility as was required e.g. a person could use their Direct payments to pay for a mix of services currently accessed and/or personal support from an assistant chosen by them or simply co-ordinate an entire package themselves but without the challenge of being an 'employer'.

Benefits of the Co-operative model:

- The Co-operative is an employer.
- The Co-operative links and brings families together.
- People consequently become familiar with other people's PA's (who may be called upon.)
- Pooling of DP's has successfully been used to jointly fund classes and other opportunities that would not be economically viable.
- Co-operative is run by members for the members (who use support).
- It is NOT an alternative to existing DP schemes such as Diverse Cymru.
- Co-operative is funded by a percentage of the hours DP charge. Co-operative provides admin, training and any legal / Human Resources (HR) costs. * Surpluses are shared according to member's wishes.
- Members can spend some or all of their DP's within the project.
- The principle is that DP recipients should not be out of pocket as a result of their involvement.

Useful links

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/getting-care-and-support/direct-payments>