



Cardiff & the Vale Parents' Federation

Accommodation Event

On Thursday 2nd October 2014 we held an event to 'showcase' a range of accommodation options that are or could be available to people with a learning disability.

A variety of speakers explained different aspects of housing and accommodation along with examples of several different models that are currently available

Over 50 parents attended and we had 9 presentations.

The following report gives a taste of what was discussed along with links to websites and other information .

The Parents' Federation wishes to thank all those who gave their time freely to ensure the event was a success.

We also appreciate the generous support of Cardiff Yacht Club in making the venue available and providing catering.

Presentations

The day commenced with our chair, Phil Harding explaining how as a father of three boys, two of whom have autism, choosing the right housing option is essential. You can never have too much information on what is possible and it is never too early to start planning for the transition.

The Local Authority Perspective

Phil was followed by Denise Moriarty from Cardiff Council who explained how the local authority was committed to developing and supporting a wide range of various options suited to the individual and unique needs of each person. New commissioning criteria is based on Person Centred Planning and recognises that peoples' needs and preferences change over time.

Having parents express their views and preferences along with the individual having their say ensures that new housing provision is more likely to meet changing needs.

It is important to ensure that families play a role in this process and have their views feed into the strategic planning process.

Across Cardiff over 250 adults with a learning disability are supported to live independently and this number is growing. As an individual's needs change the authority is keen to ensure that their accommodation and support reflect those changes. People with widely varying disabilities are supported by a number of provider agencies to play an active and visible role in their own communities, pursuing interests and activities of their own choice.

The current budget for these services is around £15,000,000 per year and the council remains committed to supporting people to live independent lives while managing to keep within very tight budgets and is constantly working with support providers to find ways to increase efficiency without impairing quality.

Landlords, Tenancies and Housing Providers

The next speaker was from First Choice housing, an organisation that provides a range of social housing for people with wide ranging needs. In addition to providing existing housing stock, First Choice work with local government, Welsh government and families to develop bespoke housing solutions that fit around the person when nothing suitable already exists.

This can avoid costly and difficult out of county placements that may result in individuals living a great distance from their local networks, friends and family.

The presentation also outlined the issues around tenancies and the rights and responsibilities of tenants. Housing associations also support individual tenants in a variety of ways and encourage them to play an active role in issues around their tenancy and neighbourhood.

There are many housing solutions currently available but the organisation welcomes the views of families and others on what else could be developed that would suit people's changing needs.



First Choice Housing Association

Key To Your Home

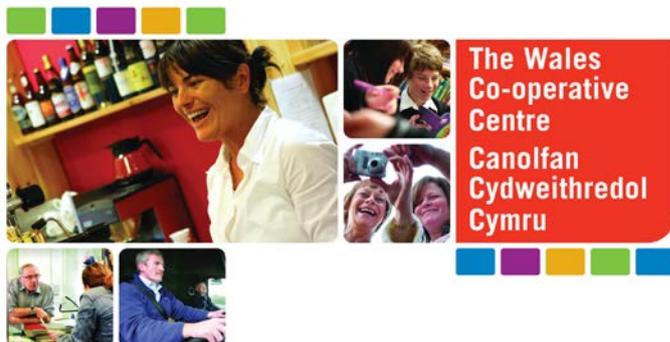


Co-Operative Housing possibilities

David Palmer of the Wales Co-operative centre explained a brief history of the Co-operative movement and the roles it has played in helping citizens to gain home ownership.

By working together, like minded people can develop housing solutions that fit their needs and resources and the co-operative centre can offer support and guidance in many aspects of setting up and developing such initiatives, David demonstrated how a range of co-operative housing projects have been developed that provide mixed ability and cohesive communities to be built from scratch.

These initiatives involve the residents from the outset and neighbourhood networks can grow naturally where residents can aid and support each other informally. The movement is supported by many government departments, especially in Welsh Government and has potential to match the aspirations of many families with a disabled relative.



How services have developed

Next we had several speakers currently involved in supporting people with a learning disability to live independent lives.

Nick French of Innovate Trust gave a potted history of how residential services had developed from early days in the mid sixties to a plethora of opportunities and how Cardiff was at the forefront of this movement.

Nick was followed by a film show that demonstrated a range of support services that encourage people to be actively involved in their own communities. The film included examples of people being supported to take an active role in daily routines and household duties as well as several examples of community based activities and leisure pastimes.

It was clear that people with wide ranging abilities and needs can be supported to lead a life based around their needs and wishes as opposed to having to fit into a pre-determined routine.



Changing needs and encouraging independence

Neil and Zena from Mirus explained how supported housing is person centred and constantly responding to the changing needs and wishes of those people supported. This includes adapting existing homes, helping people to move on or using technology to enable less reliance upon staff.

Staff support people to be as independent as possible using a variety of tried and tested approaches and as an individuals' personal circumstances change, staff teams receive training and guidance in ways to modify their approach to reflect changing needs.

In some cases this may involve physical adaptations to a home or even moving on while in others it might involve the use of a variety of technological resources that assist a person to live safely yet retain a high degree of independence.

At all times the individuals' needs and choices are the driver for change.



Personalised services

- Zena Winstone
- Neil Yates



Residential Homes and bespoke needs

Consensus explained how for some people a residential home might be a preferred option. Some people appreciate having the pressures and complications of managing their own tenancies handed to the support provider and demonstrated a selection of bespoke and purpose built homes that support individuals with high levels of support needs.



Some members of the audience supported this approach, stating that holding tenancies and taking responsibility for maintaining a household placed too much pressure upon their relatives

Others felt that being actively involved in such matters was important to maintain a sense of independence. As with all options, no one size fits all!

A wide variety of accommodation settings are possible that allow for an individual to choose a venue that best suits their needs and preferences. This has proven popular especially for those individuals with higher support needs and difficulties in expressing themselves.

Technology and Independent Living

Not all people require staff support 24/7 and might even resent having intrusive staff constantly interfering in their lives. For some people living alone is a preferred option. This may be within a small complex of flats with a staff member on and or could involve living within a community but kept in close touch by the use of technology that would automatically trigger a response and staff call out where certain conditions to be met



Telecare Information



The Importance of Families

Paul Bevan of Reach, a national organisation that supports many disabled or vulnerable individuals across Wales explained how important it was to involve the family in any changes or developments that might affect their son or daughter.



Organisations that offer accommodation support to people value the involvement and contribution that families make. This may extend to having parents on a managing board oot executive level, or keeping in touch through frequent social get meetings where ideas, concerns and opportunities can be shared and discussed.

This not only benefits the organisation but ensures that parental concerns can be ameliorated or acted upon promptly. It is a mutually beneficial process that ensures that the supported individual enjoys the best outcome possible.

Shared Lives

Craig and Lisa from Ategi explained how their Shared Lives scheme worked. For some people, living with another family is a viable and desirable option. This may be as a form of respite or could be a long term arrangement.

Shared Lives involves having a 'host' family provide a home environment where a person lives alongside the family and participates in much of the typical daily life. Depending upon circumstances this might include joining activities and pastimes a family enjoy away from the home and offers the individual a means to be part of an established network of friends and family.



The host family is able to take several weeks respite themselves if they wish, during which time the individual can have a break in another setting (sometimes with another host family) or possibly within their home. In some cases an individual will participate in short breaks a family has, as part of the family.

This approach is popular with some individuals and reflects the sort of life they have enjoyed in the past.

Parents were interested to hear about real life examples of how individuals had successfully moved from one family Shared Lives setting to another as part of a managed transition.

Summary

The event was a great success with over 50 parents attending and finding out about a wide range of accommodation options. Feedback from carers was that they would like to repeat the event and have more information on how to access the many schemes and several families were interested in how they might be able to work with organisations to help design or develop housing options that would suit their child's needs.

People were impressed by the high quality of current provision and support staff and concerned that this commitment is maintained

There is a tremendous amount of information on the many housing options available to people with a learning disability that we could not include in the day but we have included several links below that might be of interest.

The importance of making oneself aware of the possibilities and potential options as early as possible was highlighted. If a family does not plan and discuss the options at a suitably early stage the ideal option may not be available but early planning and discussions with the local authority and other partners can help all involved to invest in and promote the sort of options that we would all want.

Further information can be found at:

<http://whereyoustand.org/index.php/adults/accommodation>