



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



ABCD Consultation on the Welsh Assembly Government's Single Equality Scheme

6 June 2008



Present: 16 family carers/parents of disabled children and young people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities; 2 ABCD staff – to facilitate and arrange the event; WAG Staff representative, as observer.

- We will look at each High Level Statement, and make comments, which will be collected by the WAG, and these statements may then be amended in the light of feedback they receive.
- These high level statements and outcomes are the WAG's equality priorities which the WAG wants to receive your views on.



Constitutional Affairs, Equality and Communications Department

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. To encourage evidence-based policy making.

Feedback: attendees felt that it was important that monitoring and evaluation of this evidence took place, to ensure that all vulnerable groups were actually included.

2. To achieve applications for public appointments and nominations for Honours which broadly reflect the diversity of the Welsh population.

Feedback: Those present had very little knowledge of this system. They felt that there needs to be wider, and targeted publicity – focus on BME organisations/communities, as well as universally relevant services. These roles are very rigid (Public appointments), the Assembly should work with employers to agree to release their staff for the days required. Training should also be offered, as well as shadowing opportunities. WAG need to put in more support.

3. Ensure that Welsh Assembly Government policies, commitments and values are consistently communicated in an open, honest and accessible way.

Feedback: Concerns were expressed here about the complexity of the language used by the Assembly. It was referred to by one participant (who is a highly qualified teacher and works in the Welsh public sector), as “opaque”. Participants also stated that it was hard to engage them because they could not see how the content of some of the policies would impact in practical terms on their lives. It was suggested that the Assembly **simplify** the **language** in all external documents (documents meant for anyone outside the Assembly), and they ensure it was available in different **languages** and **formats**.

Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. To promote the well-being of all children and young people.

Feedback: Concerns were expressed about the fact that it was very difficult for disabled children and young people and their carers to get information about what leisure activities or opportunities were available to them. There are some specialist services, but these are difficult to access. People felt that tokenistic gestures were made to hold women-only swimming sessions or swimming lessons for deaf children, as these were at times that people could not access them. They also felt that they were given impractical time slots that no other group wished to utilise.

Huge concerns were expressed about the needs and rights/entitlements of **refugee and asylum seeking children**, as well as the children **of foreign students**. They are not being allowed to access the same services, which leads to terrible hardship.

2. Drive up improved learner outcomes and well-being.

Feedback: People wished to know what the targets are. Is there any ethnic monitoring? Need more support for disabled children and young people, and flexible learning opportunities for carers.

3. Lead the contribution that the Welsh post-16 education and training system makes towards wider economic participation and fulfilled.

Feedback: After the age of 16/19, disabled children and young people have very few options. More money needs to be invested in this area. Need more support during the transition period. The system is very complicated, so families need support to navigate their way around this system to ensure they can assess all the options, and make informed choices. This is particularly difficult for those young people with complex support needs. Once they finish school, it can feel like falling off the edge. The services come to a sudden halt.

4. Promote inclusion, reduce disadvantage and tackle poverty of educational opportunity.

Feedback: Need to invest more, and to promote further, ESOL (English for Speakers of other languages) classes. Language barriers were identified as further disempowering BME families, as well as isolating them. It was believed that learning English helped break down barriers, and that it would empower individuals and families.

5. Deliver a truly accessible business support service across Wales that takes account of the needs of all equalities groups.

Feedback: No comments.

6. To provide an efficient and accessible transport system that assists in tackling causes of inequality.

Feedback: Attendees felt that it was not the public transport system that needed to be improved, but the attitudes and values of the providers, or employees of these services. Several people recited incidents where they experienced hostility from bus drivers because they had a child/young person in a wheelchair, or even a pushchair. They also complained of lack of information about what support the bus driver was meant to provide – e.g. help someone with a wheelchair by putting down a ramp. It should be compulsory to display this information (small sticker in the window or at bus stop), and drivers should have relevant disability awareness training.

7. Improve the integration of social, economic and environmental considerations into regeneration.

Feedback: No comments.

Department for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. Ensure that all households, in all communities and irrespective of their means, can afford a decent home.

Feedback: Several attendees spoke about the lack of dignity offered to them as asylum seekers in relation to accommodation and NASS landlords. (ABCD will raise this issue with the Chief Executive of the Welsh Refugee Council). They stated that these landlords had spare keys and would enter homes without prior notice or warning. Even if you had guests, they would walk in. They also stated that people had entered their homes when they were out, and they returned to find objects had been moved, and then discovered who had been there. The standard of accommodation offered to asylum seekers and refugees was also considered to be very low. This had huge impacts on the quality of life of disabled children and young people, as the accommodation often did not meet their needs, and no adaptations could be made. Need to provide better training for staff, and put this into a policy/agreement between landlord and tenant.

2. Land use planning provides the framework within which the physical development of land is undertaken and is important in shaping the built environment and communities.

Feedback: No comments made.

3. We recognise the importance of the local environment, the effect on communities, and will support its improvement to a high standard.

Feedback: No comments made.

**Department for Health & Social Services, Department
for Public Health and Health Professions and
CAFCASS**

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. Reduce inequalities in the planning and provision of health and social care services in Wales.

Feedback: Participants felt that not enough regard was given to the religion and culture of diverse families. Negative stereotypes were still common, which led to negative assumptions. Looked after children and social services – families felt that new arrivals from abroad needed a period of adjustment in terms of the difference in culture, legislation, and general norms and child rearing practices. It was unrealistic for social workers to accept people to adjust overnight. These families then needed support during this transition period. This tension leads to negative outcomes for the whole family. It was felt that diversity training should be compulsory, and not an optional add-on, as it played a vital part in assessing, and working with diverse community. They also felt that the family should be looked at as a unit by social services, and not in isolation. Partnership working with community based organisations was also identified as a way forward.

2. Improve the access and delivery of Health and Social Care services in Wales.

Feedback: Attendees stated that there is a need for more information for families on what services are available, at the point of diagnosis. Specialist services such as ABCD and Special Needs Health visitors were praised for the information that they were able to provide. Some felt that families needed help or sessions on how to identify if their child has additional/special needs or not. This would be helpful for those who had suspicions, but needed more help. It could lead to earlier diagnosis, therefore better outcomes for that child. These sessions could be held in school or community centres. Concerns were expressed about lack of appropriate levels of speech therapy, and occupational therapy. More information is needed by parents about SEN. During assessment, if a need is identified, then it should be addressed.

Department for Public Services and Performance

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. Develop and deliver a Citizen Model for Public Services Delivery which takes account of the needs of all citizens within Wales.

Feedback: No comments made.

Department for Rural Affairs and Heritage

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. To identify the issues facing migrant workers in rural Wales.

Feedback: No comments made.

2. Promote and protect a culture which celebrates the diversity of Wales and its many traditions.

Feedback: participants felt more needs to be done to celebrate the diversity of Wales. Some suggested a National Diversity Day, celebrating all cultures. Need to do more to promote community cohesion by showing positive images.

3. Provide opportunities for greater access to cultural activities for all groups in society.

Feedback: provide funding for such events. Work with community groups.

4. Encourage all groups to participate in and shaping the nature of contemporary Welsh culture.

Feedback: Need to improve capacity of these groups to take part. Ensure activities are relevant and culturally and religiously appropriate to them, by involving diverse groups in consultations at planning stages.

Department for Social Justice and Local Government

HIGH LEVEL STATEMENTS

1. Promoting Social Justice by reducing the effects of poverty on children in Wales.

Feedback: No comments made.

2. Support those marginalised from society by improving financial inclusion and ensuring everyone can be free from poverty.

Feedback: Some participants were concerned about the fact that all children did not appear to have the same rights. The issue of disabled children and young people from refugee/asylum seeking families, as well as those who had come to study from abroad not receiving the same services were of huge concerns to several of those present. They felt all children should receive same rights, irrespective of the immigration status of their parents.

3. Promote a more cohesive community, one with shared values and with equal opportunities in all areas of Welsh society.

Feedback: No comments made.

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Wahida Shah Kent, Director,
ABCD Cymru – improving access to services for Black and
Minority Ethnic Disabled Children and Young People
62 Charles Street, Cardiff, Cf10 2GG
Tel: 02920 250055
WWW.ABCDCymru.org.uk