

Cross Party Group on Learning Disability



Notes from the 12th meeting on 26 March 2025. The meeting was on Zoom.



People who came to the meeting

- **Sioned Williams MS** – Member of the Senedd, Chair
- **Sam Williams** – Learning Disability Wales, co-Secretary
- **Mark Isherwood MS** – Member of the Senedd
- **Simon Rose** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Michael Allcock** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Emma Burton** – IMPACT: Improving Adult Care Together
- **Beth Rees** – Learning Disability Wales
- **Rhian Jones** – Drive
- **Gwen Anslow** – All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers
- **Rachel Stinchcombe** – Mirus
- **Sian Williams** – Gwynedd Council
- **Wayne Crocker** – Mencap Cymru
- **Sion Jones** – Mencap Cymru
- **Antony Leeson** – Cardiff Council
- **Gerraint Jones-Griffiths** – Influencing and Informing Engage to Change

- **Michael Fullerton** – Achieve Together
- **Kath Morgan** – IMPACT: Improving Adult Care Together
- **Jayne Tilley** – Careers Wales
- **Petra Kennedy** – MTIB
- **Nick Davies** – Parent carer
- **Nicola Rogers** – Pembrokeshire Council
- **Angela Kenvyn** – Influencing and Informing Engage to Change
- **Andrea Meek** – Influencing and Informing Engage to Change



People who said they could not come to the meeting

- Steve Dimmick – Awen

About this document



This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. They have been explained in a box below the word. You can see what all the words in **blue** mean on **page 15**.

1. Welcome and introductions



Sioned Williams is a Member of the Senedd and **Chair** of the Cross Party Group.

The **Chair** of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

Sioned welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Presentation about employment and the Engage to Change project



Gerraint Jones-Griffiths and Andrea Meek gave a presentation about the Engage to Change project.



The project helped people with a learning disability get jobs. They said it is a hard time for people with a learning disability.



Not everyone wants or can work, but those who do should get support.



The Engage to Change project is ending on 31 March 2025. Gerraint and Andrea talked about what they learnt from the project.



There are lots of barriers to employment for people with a learning disability like:

- Not enough support.
- Not enough chances to work.
- People not thinking they can work.



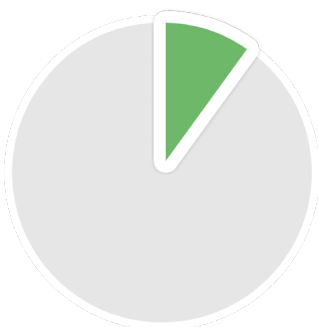
To change this, we need to:

- Work with schools, families, and services.
- Raise expectations.
- Give people more choice.



Paid work can help people with a learning disability in many ways:

- More money.
- Better health and well-being.
- Learning new skills.
- Making friends.
- More control over your own life.



In Wales we think about 5 out of every 100 adults with a learning disability are in work.



Engage to Change was a 7 year partnership project run by Learning Disability Wales.

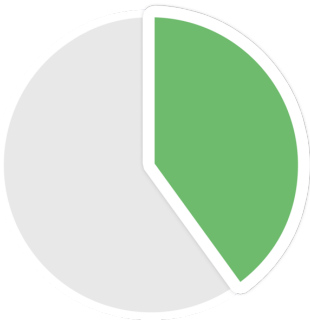


It had 2 parts:

- Supported employment and job coaching.
- Supported internships. This was the first time these were offered in Wales.



The project was for young autistic people or young people with a learning disability not in education, employment or training.



The project worked with over 1300 young people. It helped 41 out of every 100 of those young people to get into work. This is much better than 5 out of 100.

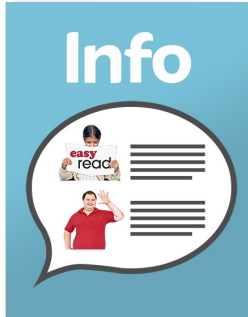


Job coaches:

- Help people prepare for work.
- Support people to find and learn a job.
- Help people keep their jobs.
- Help employers make changes to support people.



People need help to learn about job choices and what suits them. This support should start earlier in schools.

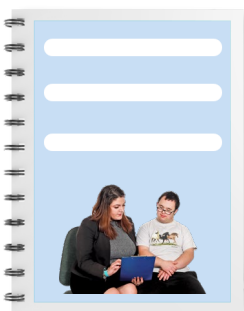


Andrea and Gerraint worked to make research accessible. They created Easy Read reports and short videos.



The research showed:

- People were more likely to get a job after longer work placements.
- Job coaches need to give the right support for each person to help them learn the skills they need.
- Young people need work experience while at school or college. This helps them think about jobs for the future.
- If placements are paid for and organised, more young people get jobs.



The Engage to Change project helped create a national job coaching strategy for Wales. This strategy helps people with a learning disability get and keep jobs. The strategy includes advice on improving job coaching and support.



The First Minister for Wales said that things they learned from the Engage to Change project will help shape future policies.



From 2027 the Welsh Government will provide job coaching as part of a new employment support programme.



Gerraint and Andrea said the project is ending but there is still a lot of work to do to make sure people with a learning disability get the right support to have paid jobs.

3. Questions and ideas



After the presentation some people asked questions and shared their ideas.

Employment and supported living



Nick Davies, a parent, said his son has been volunteering and now wants paid work.

He asked if anyone was working with supported living providers to help people with a learning disability get paid work.



Rachel Stinchcombe from Mirus explained that Mirus have employed 2 **ambassadors** for nearly a year.



An **ambassador** is someone who promotes something. This could be telling people about a service or organisation.



The **ambassadors** are paid monthly for their work. The work has lots of different parts and matches their skills.



Rachel talked about the challenge of balancing benefits with paid work. It took a lot of work to arrange hours and pay for the **ambassadors**.

Access to Work



Mirus also used Access to Work money from the UK Department of Work and Pensions to cover transport costs.



Wayne Crocker from Mencap Cymru talked about the problems with Access to Work. Access to Work helps pay for a supporter, but it does not cover the cost when the person being supported is sick or on holiday.



Employment and day services

Wayne also said that not everyone with a learning disability can or wants to do paid work. He is worried about the future of day services in Wales and the focus on employment.



He said some people think employment should be the first option for **all** people with a learning disability. Especially with some day services closing. He said this is a worry for people with complex needs or older adults who may not want or be able to work.



Wayne asked if the group could write to the Welsh Government to find out their plans for day services across Wales.



Andrea and Gerraint agreed that employment should be an option but not everyone with a learning disability wants to work or can work.



Many young people who are ready for work are still being told they need more time. Some families do not think their children are ready for work.



The group agreed it is important to offer both employment and other choices, like volunteering.



Sioned is worried that some support services are being lost because of the focus on employment. Sioned will write to the Minister to find out what is happening with day services and supported employment.



Supported living, employment and benefits

Petra Kennedy from MTIB talked about supported living and how it links to benefits.



She said people who work while in supported living should not lose their benefits or housing.



Support should be available to everyone who needs help with living, if they are able to work or not.

4. Annual General Meeting



Sam Williams from Learning Disability Wales is **co-Secretary** of the Cross Party Group with Sara Pickard from Mencap Cymru.



Secretary or **co-Secretary**

The Secretary is the person or organisation in charge of organising the group. For example, booking meetings and sending out agendas.

A co-Secretary is when more than 1 person shares the job of Secretary.



Sara could not come to the meeting as she has had an operation.



Sam explained that the group must vote for the **co-Secretaries** and **Chair** for the next 12 months. The group voted for Sam and Sarah to continue as **co-Secretaries**.



The group then voted for Sioned Williams to continue as **Chair** of the group for the next 12 months.



Sam will write the group's annual report and send it to the Senedd.



The report will list the 4 meetings the group had in the last 12 months, who went to the meetings and what they talked about.

5. Any other business



Sioned said she is going to speak to Minister Jane Hutt about digital inclusion again.



She also said that she is still waiting for replies from Ministers to the letters she wrote after the last meeting.

Dosette boxes



Sion Jones talked about medication **dosette boxes** or bubble packs.

A **dosette box** helps people take the right medication on the right day at the right time.



They help people know what medicines to take and when. They can also help people who have difficulty using their hands.



Some people must now pay to have their medication in these boxes. Even if they did not have to pay before.



Sioned will write to the Welsh Government to find out why people are now having to pay for these boxes.

6. Next meeting



The next meeting will take place on **18 June 2025** at 12.15-1.15pm.

The meeting will celebrate Learning Disability Week.

Anyone with ideas for the meeting should email Sam Williams: samantha.williams@ldw.org.uk.



Sioned thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and sharing their ideas.

Sam thanked Andrea and Gerraint for their presentation.



You can find all the easy read agendas and notes of the Cross Party Group here: www.ldw.org.uk/project/cross-party-group-on-learning-disability/

Hard words

Chair

The Chair of the group is the person in charge of the meetings.

Ambassador

An ambassador is someone who promotes something. This could be telling people about a service or organisation.

Secretary or co-Secretary

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