

Learning Disability Wales Annual Review

April 2022 to March 2023



We want Wales
to be the best
country in the world
for people with a
learning disability to
live, learn, love
and work

Inside: 21st Century People, Engage to Change, Easy Read Wales, Gig Buddies Cymru, influencing policy, training and events, Welsh Youth Parliament, supporting parents with a learning disability, annual health checks, and lots more



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Keep in touch

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Welcome message

from our Chair, Jon Day

Highlights

- We are looking at ways to make sure we have money in the future to do our work.
- We have a brilliant staff team who work hard to improve things for people with a learning disability.

The purpose of a chair's report is twofold – to look back at the previous year and to also look forward. The pages that follow showcase the fantastic work achieved in the last year so I will focus on the future.

The next few years will again bring many changes (as if the last couple of years have not changed us and society enough). However, with next year's expected general election, followed by Senedd elections in 2026, the picture will look very different, with different leaders and different policies. What will be common will be the financial pressures the country will be under.

The impact on Learning Disability Wales, as with other organisations, is unknown, but we are already having conversations on how we can be more creative and innovative in the funding that we bring in - and how this allows us to carry on the exceptional work that the team does every day.



Learning Disability Wales has recruited well in recent times and as an employer offers strong values and attractive terms and conditions. This puts us in a good place to complement our amazingly talented and innovative team who give their all to improve the lives of people with a learning disability.

We must add to this with another strong year of recruitment to our board of trustees so we can support the team with robust and appropriate governance.

The future may be unknown but I feel the future is bright.



Welcome message

from our Chief Executive, Zoe Richards

Highlights

- We have worked with partners and stakeholders to improve the lives of people with a learning disability.
- We have taken steps to make sure Learning Disability Wales is a good place to work.

This year we have spent more time than ever before working with partners to achieve better outcomes in the work that we do. We have cemented long standing relationships and made new connections to share our work more widely and increase our reach. We are particularly good at connecting people to share the great work happening across Wales and produce solutions to some of the things that hold us back and create barriers for people with a learning disability. None of this would be possible without our members and stakeholders and I would like to thank you all for your continued contributions.

Looking after our team is important to us and over the last year we have taken steps to make sure that Learning Disability Wales continues to be a good place to work:

- We embraced our new hybrid model of working where our team can split their time working from the office and from home.
- We adapted our premises in Cardiff into a modern, well-equipped office where

the team can hold meetings in person, digitally or a mix of the 2. Our meeting room was revamped and is now available for hire ldw.org.uk/meeting-room-hire/.

We want to be a fair employer and have a well-supported, diverse staff team. To continue this work, we:

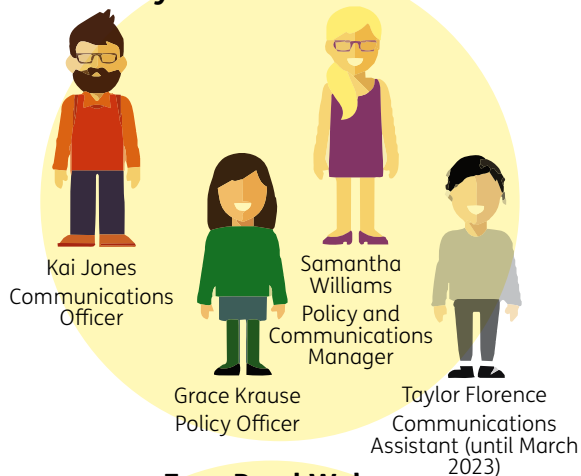
- Carried out a pay review to make sure our salaries are competitive with similar third sector organisations in Wales.
- Trained our team on cultural awareness, adapted our work practices, and are working towards achieving Diverse Cymru's Cultural Competence Certificate.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual review and we look forward to continuing to work with you all in the future.

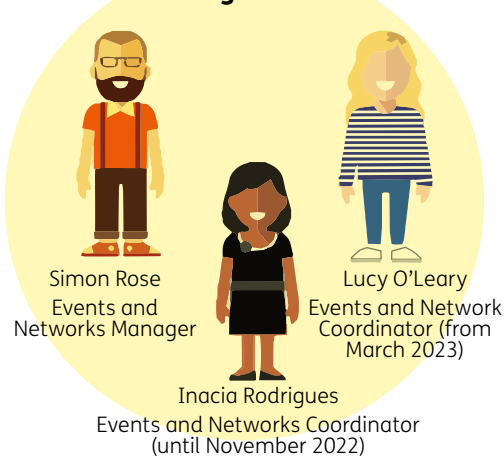


Our staff

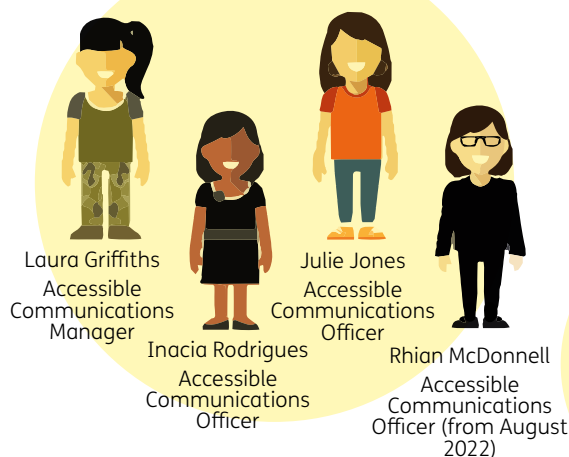
Policy and Communications



Training and Events



Easy Read Wales



Engage to Change

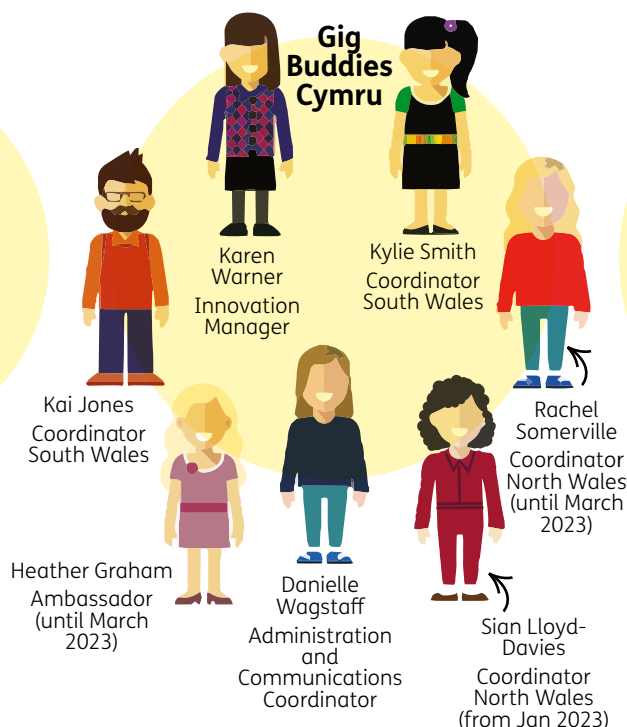


Zoe Richards
Chief Executive
Officer

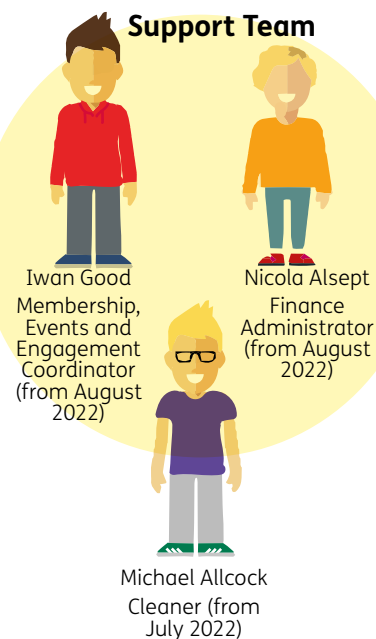
HR and Finance



Gig Buddies Cymru



Support Team



Highlights

- We made over 140 easy read documents for more than 40 organisations.
- We are making new easy read resources about vaccination for Public Health Wales.
- We are updating our new guidelines for making Welsh easy read.
- We will be making free easy read resources about menopause, and relationships.

We expanded our team to meet high demand and welcomed Rhian, a designer with a special interest in digital accessibility. Rhian has helped us to ensure the easy read information we produce is accessible for people who use screen readers.

We held a focus group with Caerphilly People First to check the quality of our easy read work. We are updating the way we do things based on what people told us.

We continued to work with lots of public organisations, including Welsh Government, Fire and Rescue Services, health boards, and the Arts Council of Wales. We have also worked with councils, universities, and are doing more work for organisations in England.

We are very open to feedback. We now have a link on all the documents we produce so people can tell us what they think about our easy read work. Contact us at easyreadwales.org.uk.



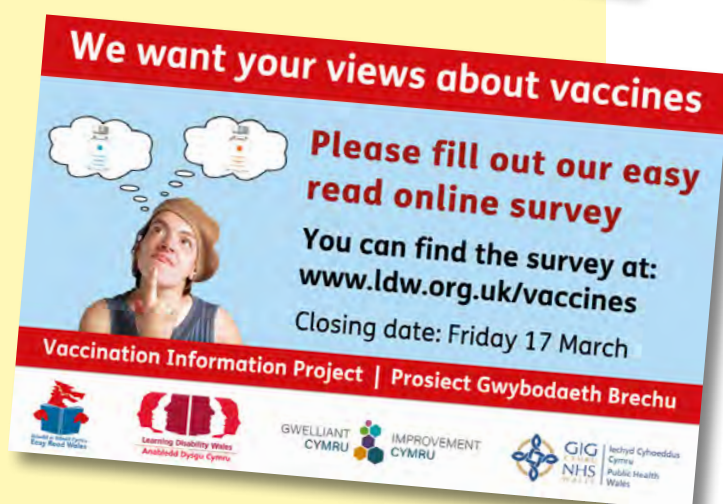
Welsh easy read

We started a new group to help us update our Easy Read Welsh Guidelines and improve how we work in the Welsh language. The group is supported by Welsh speaking people with a learning disability, the Welsh Language Commissioner, Iaith, Welsh easy read translators and Learning Disability Wales trustees.



Vaccine project

We started work on a large project with Public Health Wales and Improvement Cymru to make accessible resources about vaccination. We asked people what they thought about vaccination through working with People First groups, an online focus group and an easy read survey. The outcome will be an easy read guide and video.



Free easy read resources

We have started to make free easy read resources about subjects people need but can't find good quality information about. After asking people what they want, we will be making 2 free resources: Menopause, and How to find a relationship.

We are working with the Sex Education Company, Innovate Trust, The Menopause Charity and Fair Treatment of Women in Wales to make these resources.



Training and events

Highlights

- We held our first in-person annual conference for 3 years.
- At the conference we shared stories about what we learned from the pandemic.
- 240 people came to the conference in Newport and Llandudno Junction.
- We held online events to talk about how we can make the arts more inclusive for people who experience racism.
- We held 2 events with RNIB that explored how sight loss can affect people's behaviour.

Annual conference – ‘Where do we go from here?’

Our annual conference brought people together to talk about what we learned from the pandemic, and how we can make things better in the future.

We were joined by 240 people for the events in Newport and Llandudno Junction, our first in-person conference for 3 years.

We heard some stories that were deeply troubling, about how people's rights were affected due to restrictive practices. Other stories reflected on the positive impacts, such as how people learned new digital skills and made new friends thanks to technology.

Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS, addressed the conference. She acknowledged how people with a learning



The poster is for the 'Learning Disability Wales annual conference 2022'. It features a teal background on the left and a white background on the right. A circular inset photo shows three people smiling. At the bottom, there is a colorful illustration of a diverse group of stylized human figures. The text on the poster includes: 'Learning Disability Wales annual conference 2022', 'Health Champions from Conwy Connect will be speaking about Annual Health Checks at our conference in Llandudno Junction', 'Book your place now for our annual conference in North Wales:', 'www.ldw.org.uk/FromHere', 'Where do we go from here?', 'Learning from the pandemic to make a better future', and the dates '16 November, Newport' and '24 November, Llandudno Junction'. The Learning Disability Wales logo is in the top right corner.

Learning Disability Wales annual conference 2022

Health Champions from Conwy Connect will be speaking about Annual Health Checks at our conference in Llandudno Junction

Book your place now for our annual conference in North Wales:

www.ldw.org.uk/FromHere

Where do we go from here?

Learning from the pandemic to make a better future

16 November, Newport
24 November, Llandudno Junction



disability have been affected more than most by the pandemic and talked about the Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan and Delivery Plan – Welsh Government policies that aim to make Wales better for people with a learning disability.

We also had speakers and workshops on a range of subjects including:

- Shared Lives
- Challenging the UK Bill of Rights
- Health checks
- Employment
- A family's experience of their child in an Assessment and Treatment Unit.

You can find videos and resources from the conference on our website at www.ldw.org.uk/fromhere.

Making information easy to read and understand

We delivered our popular course 8 times this year.

Understanding sight loss and its impact on behaviour

In partnership with RNIB we ran 2 sessions to increase awareness of common eye conditions, their impact, and their links to potential behaviours.

Inclusion and accessibility in the arts

We are working with Hijinx and Disability Arts Cymru to improve access to the arts for people with a learning disability and neurodivergent people who are from communities that experience racism. We held 3 online consultations.

Liberty Protection Safeguards consultation

With both the UK and Welsh Governments consulting on new regulations that will replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and change parts of the Mental Capacity Act, we brought people together to share their views.

Influencing policy

Highlights

- We responded to over 20 consultations.
- Issues we worked on included re-opening day services after the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the new Learning Disability Action Plan.
- We spoke about issues at the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, the Learning Disability Policy Group, and the Learning Disability Consortium.
- We met often with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.
- We helped people to share their pandemic stories with the UK Covid Study.



Consultations

We responded to over 20 consultations, making sure the rights of people with a learning disability, their families and supporters are reflected in new policies, guidance and practice. We returned to more in-person meetings and events this year, including conferences and giving evidence to Senedd Committees.



Learning Disability Policy Group

We continued to host the Learning Disability Policy Group, facilitating 4 meetings, covering issues such as re-opening of day services, the cost of living crisis and the Learning Disability Action Plan.

Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group

As members of the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, we attended quarterly meetings to discuss specific issues, including how to take forward Welsh Government's new Learning Disability Action Plan.



Learning Disability Consortium

We coordinated catch up meetings with the Learning Disability Consortium, Public Health Wales and Welsh Government to raise issues affecting the lives of people with a learning disability, and their families and supporters in Wales.

Covid-19 research project

Additional UK funding was secured for a further round of research. No new participants were recruited but we encouraged existing participants in Wales to take part and promoted the study. This led to Wales contributing a significant amount of data to the final research.

We continued to meet with project partners and are planning an event in the autumn of 2023 to share the results of the study and how the research can help shape future care and support.

Keeping you informed

We increased our communications and engagement through our website and shared up-to-date news and resources on social media. We returned to in-person events to promote our work, gather and share information, and find out what life is like for people with a learning disability since the pandemic.

Topics covered on our website and social media included:

- Joint statement on proposed changes to UK Government's plans to ban conversion therapy.
- Welsh Government's new Learning Disability Action Plan.
- Health inequalities
- Welsh Youth Parliament.

Engage to Change



engagetochange.org.uk

[engagetochangewales](https://www.facebook.com/engagetochangewales)

[@Engage_2_Change](https://twitter.com/Engage_2_Change)

Highlights

- 41% of people we supported have found jobs (as of August 2023).
- We held events in north and south Wales to celebrate what Engage to Change has achieved.
- We have helped to make sure that more people will now get job coach support.
- We have now stopped taking referrals.
- The National Lottery Community Fund has provided funding to continue with our policy and legacy work until November 2024.

The phased closure of Engage to Change began during this 7th year of the project with referrals and outcomes gradually reducing.

Young people continued to be supported to increase their employability skills and to get a paid job. As we write this report in the summer of 2023, the number who have gained employment is 429 - 41% of people supported by the project.

Our Lead Ambassador, Gerraint Jones-Griffiths, together with other project participants, started working with National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) and our freelance Communications Officer to produce accessible videos of the research reports.

We received several nominations for our employer awards. The awards will be presented once the project Evaluation Forum has selected a winner for each category.

Our Lead Ambassador published monthly blogs and top tips for employment on the Engage to Change website and social media.





We held successful celebration events in north and south Wales. Each event was attended by around 100 young people, family members and staff. Awards were presented to project ambassadors and champions, followed by a party.

Our evaluation team at the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) at Cardiff University published the first of 6 evaluation reports due in the final year. All reports can be found at engagetochange.org.uk/news/research

Tom Oakes' journey with Engage to Change

Tom is 25 and loves drawing, performing arts and cooking. After leaving college, Tom wanted paid employment that met his interests and abilities and would bring him independence, financial stability and personal growth.

After contacting Engage to Change, Tom was visited by Employment Officer Bethan who discussed the project and the support it offered. With Bethan's guidance, Tom applied for a job at Bronglais Hospital, where he began working in the kitchen in 2018.

Tom quickly adapted to his new role and learnt new skills. Bethan's weekly visits provided valuable support and reassurance during this period.

After 6 months, Tom decided he wanted a new challenge. With Bethan's support, he successfully interviewed for a kitchen

assistant role at Wetherspoons in Aberystwyth, which brought new responsibilities.

During the pandemic Tom was placed on furlough. Despite the disruption, he used this time to focus on self-improvement and embraced new safety measures when he returned to work.

Tom has now been with Wetherspoons for over 3 years and continues to enjoy his work. He appreciates the supportive work environment and remains in touch with Bethan for any needed support. Tom says that employment through Engage to Change has been life-changing.



Engage to Change

Employment policy work

We received visits from Hefin David MS and Jayne Bryant MS who met with interns and former interns now employed at Cardiff University. We also discussed the project and transition to employment. Our Project Manager, Angela Kenvyn, was also interviewed by Hefin David for a Welsh Government report he was writing about transition to employment.

We had meetings with Welsh Government civil servants about job coach support. On behalf of the project, Hefin David raised the issue in the Senedd about job coach support for people with a learning disability aged over 25. Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for the Economy, responded by saying job coach support was included in the Employability and Skills Plan after meeting with Learning Disability Wales.

We participated in Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Working Group, the Wales Access to Work Forum, and continued working with the North Wales Together Transformation Team to co-produce a 5-year employment strategy for people with a learning disability. Lead Ambassador Gerraint attended the Learning Disability Cross Party Group and the National Autism Team Advisory Steering Group.

Our policy work was influential in:

- Job coach support becoming available for Jobs Growth Wales Plus and the age range being increased to 19 years.
- Welsh Government funding job coach support for supported and supported shared apprenticeships.
- Expanding supported internships in Wales, with all Further Education colleges now delivering 1 or more programmes. Our Project Manager worked with Colegau Cymru and FE colleges to develop quality standards and guidance. Our Evaluation Forum gave feedback on the draft document.

In March 2023, Learning Disability Wales and NCMH successfully submitted a proposal for additional funding to continue our influencing and informing work until end of November 2024.



www.gigbuddies.cymru

We are so proud of all that Gig Buddies Cymru has achieved this year, especially how we are helping people to make new friends, enjoy active social lives, and increase their independence.

Gig Buddies Cymru is in great demand. This year we had to pause applications from new participants, so we can focus on finding Gig Buddies for people who are waiting.



Highlights

- Celebrated our 5th birthday. Watch our fun celebration [video: https://bit.ly/GB5thBirthday](https://bit.ly/GB5thBirthday)
- Re-designed our volunteer training so it can be delivered in person more locally and online. 29 new volunteers were trained 😊.
- Had fantastic media coverage on BBC Wales: bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-62969877
- Had 12 runners run the Cardiff Half Marathon, raising an amazing £8,500!
- Met with arts organisations and local venues across Wales to help increase accessibility to the arts for people with a learning disability.
- Met monthly with Stay Up Late and other Gig Buddy projects around the UK and Australia, to share ideas and solve issues. In October we met up in person in Bristol.



Gig Buddies Cymru

South Wales

(Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT, Vale of Glamorgan)

To help find natural matches we held several 'speed mates socials' where participants and volunteers met and socialised.

We held socials in Cardiff, Barry and Porthcawl, including an indiepop festival, a musicals sing-along, Drag Syndrome, Pride Cymru, and hosted a special screening of the film 'Heavy Load' (that tells the story of how Stay Up Late and Gig Buddies was created).

We worked hard to find new volunteers through county voluntary council fayres, college freshers' fayres, stalls at music events (including Diana Ross and Florence and the Machine), Pride Cymru, leafleting in communities and the Volunteering Wales website.



**Volunteer
as a Gig Buddy**
gigbuddies.cymru



North Wales

(Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham)

We held lots of socials across north Wales, including FOCUS Wales festival, a screening of Rocky Horror Picture Show, the Philfest music festival on Ynys Môn, and meet-ups in cafes and pubs.

We worked hard to recruit volunteers through meeting social prescribers, social services, attending county voluntary council fayres, stalls at Bangor and Wrexham University freshers' fayres, Volunteering Wales website, leafleting and networking.

We were helped by our volunteer Mark Jones on transport issues and started recruitment for a Volunteer Coordinator.

At the end of the year we said goodbye to Rachel and Heather, and hello to Sian

Lloyd-Hughes, our new north Wales Project Coordinator. We want to say “diolch yn fawr iawn” to Rachel and Heather for their amazing and passionate hard work since we started Gig Buddies in north Wales.



Jane and Emma, Gig Buddies (Wrexham)

Jane: I love having my Gig Buddy Emma. I love going out. I am enjoying myself, having fun and feel more relaxed. I am getting more confident to try things out in places further away. Emma and I have been to Chester, played crazy golf, have been walking. We want to go out more in the evening, such as a concert.

Emma: I was new to the area and wanted to make new friends. Being a Gig Buddy doesn't feel like volunteering, it feels like I am with my mate. Jane has showed me around the area and what's on in Wrexham. I like being part of the community and meeting other people in Gig Buddies too.



Highlights

- We helped parents with a learning disability to speak with Members of the Senedd about their lives.
- We supported 2 disabled members of the Welsh Youth Parliament to speak up for other young disabled people.
- We helped to create a new group that brings Members of the Senedd together to help improve things for people with a learning disability.
- The easy read resource pack that we made for doctors was finally launched.
- We helped to deliver workshops to help people to understand what restrictive practices are and how to reduce it.

Funded by Welsh Government and now in its third year, 21st Century People celebrates people with a learning disability as creators, contributors and citizens of Wales, while challenging existing stereotypes. We are pleased that funding has been extended until March 2025.



21st Century Families

Parents with a learning disability

We support Vale People First's parents group to meet regularly and share knowledge and experience. We met with Welsh Government and Prof Ruth Northway from the University of South Wales to discuss new guidance on supporting parents with a learning disability. We invited parents from the group to speak at a Cross Party Group meeting about the guidance, and we

wrote to Welsh Government to ask them to publish the guidance as soon as possible.

Training for family carers in partnership with Cerebra

We delivered an online seminar with free resources for parents and carers, helping them to access public services for their loved ones.

21st Century Voices

Welsh Youth Parliament

We supported 2 disabled young people in their second year as Welsh Youth Parliament Members. Georgia and Tegan were part of the 'Our mental health and well-being' committee and contributed to the 'Young minds matter' report, which highlighted the lack of progress in improving mental health services in Wales and gave recommendations to improve access, awareness and understanding.

Easy read training

We continued to offer our popular easy read taster sessions, with 10 free sessions for around 150 professionals from the charity and public sectors.

Policy and people - Cross Party Group on Learning Disability

Following discussions with the other members of the Learning Disability Consortium, we established a new Cross Party Group on Learning Disability that includes 3 Members of the Senedd. We were appointed as joint co-Secretaries, alongside Sara Pickard from Mencap Cymru. We delivered 4 meetings, exploring topics such as annual health checks, the cost of living crisis, and parents with a learning disability. We produced easy read minutes of each meeting and wrote to Ministers and local health boards about issues raised.



21st Century People

Healthy 21st Century People

Annual health checks

We continued to work with Public Health Wales to promote annual health checks. The GP resources pack that we produced some years ago was finally launched for primary care staff online, but we are still campaigning for it to be made available in the Easy Read section of the NHS 111 Wales website.

We organised a meeting of the Cross Party Group on Learning Disability that focussed on annual health checks. We wrote to local health boards and the Minister for Health about the importance of employing health check champions across Wales.



Reducing restrictive practice

We worked with Improvement Cymru and Social Care Wales to deliver 5 workshops across Wales to raise awareness of restrictive practices among people with a learning disability and families/carers. Our Policy and Communications Manager co-delivered a session at the Reducing Restraint Network conference in Birmingham about the workshops. In autumn 2023 we will hold an all-Wales event for professionals, to share learning from the workshops.

We continued to attend Challenging Behaviour Community of Practice meetings online. Our CEO co-Chaired 4 meetings of the early intervention and crisis sub-group, agreeing the terms of reference and putting together a workplan.



Living in the 21st Century

Connections Cymru

Our network of 180 members brings people together to explore how we can reduce social isolation and loneliness. In July, Stay Up Late ambassadors talked about how they campaign for the right to lead active lives, and how their work fits in with the Gig Buddies movement. This led to more interest for our Gig Buddies Cymru project, and more localised work. In March we brought people together to explore opportunities for social prescribing.

Personalised technology

Our network of over 100 members explores how we can increase people with a learning disability's access to technology, in a world where it is hard to function without it. In May, we explored using technology to access healthcare, including the new NHS app. We also participated in the Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Inclusive education

We have continued to meet with young people's groups and other stakeholders to help make education more inclusive. In 2024 we will host an event that explores what is meant by inclusive education.



Our trustees and members

Trustees

Community of Interest Full Member reps	Number of seats	Trustees	Representing	Term of Office
Adult Providers	2	Steve Cox Mandy Evans Rhian Jones Claire Higgins	Perthyn mirus Drive Anheddau Cyf	Until Jan 2023 Until Jan 2023 From Jan 2023 From Jan 2023
Self Advocacy	2	Joe Powell Dawn Gullis Angharad Williams	All Wales People First Cardiff People First Your Voice Advocacy	Until May 2022 From Jan 2023
Family Carers	2	Jacqui Caldwell Vacant	Conwy Connect	
Family Support Providers	2	Alison Thomas Wayne Crocker	The Pobl Group Mencap Cymru	
Supported Employment	1	Vacant		

Open Seats	Number of seats	Trustees
Interested individuals	5 (flexible)	Jon Day, Sian Owen, Laura White, Ian Benbow James Donaldson, Al Lewis, Lily Beyer

Advisors:

Steve Beyer and Kathryn Whitfield

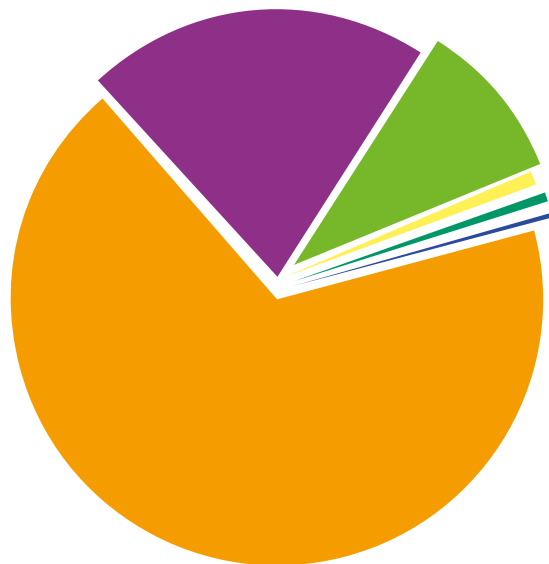
Our members

Type of membership	Number of members
Full	88
Associate	208

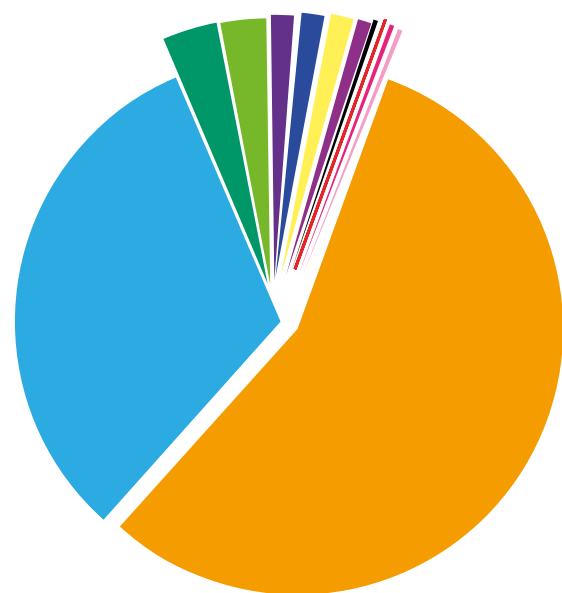


How we spent our money

Money we received this year



Source of money	Amount
UK Projects	£1,281,825 (67.57%)
Welsh Government Grant	£400,000 (21.08%)
Consultancy, networks and hosted services	£186,218 (9.82%)
Training & Events	£15,797 (0.83%)
Donations	£9,499 (0.50%)
Bank interest	£3,826 (0.20%)
Total	£1,897,165 (100.00%)



Money we spent this year

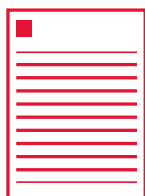
Category	Amount
Grants to UK Project Partners	£1,011,337 (56.30%)
Staff and travel	£574,200 (31.97%)
Project events	£56,252 (3.13%)
Looking after our building	£52,533 (2.92%)
Running the office	£26,425 (1.47%)
Courses and conferences	£22,662 (1.26%)
Translation	£21,725 (1.21%)
Freelance costs	£17,724 (0.99%)
Irrecoverable VAT	£7,072 (0.39%)
Audit fees	£4,530 (0.25%)
Depreciation	£1,438 (0.08%)
Trustees meetings	£407 (0.02%)
Total	£1,796,305 (100.00%)

End of year result:

The surplus of £100,860 consists of an unrestricted surplus of £124,314 and a restricted deficit of £23,454 before transfers.

Our year in numbers

Influencing policy



25 consultation responses



4 meetings of the new Cross Party Group on Learning Disability



1 online consultation event about the new Liberty Protection Safeguards

Easy Read Wales



140 documents



40 clients



10 free taster sessions

Keeping you informed



29,768 website visitors



68,293 website pages visited



8,204 Twitter followers



5,637 Facebook followers

Training and events



240 people attended our annual conference in Newport and Llandudno Junction



2 online sessions with RNIB about sight loss and behaviour



3 consultation events about inclusion in the arts

Engage to Change



90 young people had work placements



67 young people started employment



60 young people sustained employment



73 young people gained accreditation

Gig Buddies Cymru



25 Gig Buddy pairs matched



26 volunteers recruited



54 participants waiting for a buddy



25 socials

Our year in pictures

