

# Learning Disability Wales Annual Review

April 2023 to March 2024



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, Influencing and Informing Engage to Change, Easy Read Wales, Gig Buddies Cymru, influencing policy, training and events, Welsh Youth Parliament, supporting parents with a learning disability, reducing restrictive practice and lots more.





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## Keep in touch

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# Welcome message

**from our Chair, Tracy Hammond**

## Highlights

- ⌘ **We work together to make a difference.**
- ⌘ **You can become a member or supporter for free and keep up to date with our work.**

**I have been Chair of Learning Disability Wales for just a few months and during this time I have been continually inspired by the culture of transparency and teamwork that forms part of everything we do.**

This annual report showcases what can be achieved when people collaborate. Please enjoy reading about this year's fantastic work, and the influence and impact it has had. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to making the last 12 months so successful.

In last year's report, our previous Chair Jon Day outlined the political changes we were expecting and the inevitable financial pressure that would accompany them. We are now living through these times and undoubtedly the year ahead will contain some challenging moments. However, our vision of making Wales the best country in the world for people with learning disabilities to live, learn, love and



work is ambitious and exciting. We will not shrink from future challenges; rather we will continue to serve, innovate, support and speak truth to power.

Core to everything we do is our membership so if you share our passion and vision but are not yet a member or supporter, do join us – it's free! If you are already part of the Learning Disability Wales 'family' and would like to get more involved, make sure you read our newsletter, follow us on social media and attend our events to keep up to date. You are also welcome to contact us with any questions.





# Welcome message

from our Chief Executive, Zoe Richards

## Highlights

- ⌘ We have worked together to make sure people with a learning disability are not worse off than they were before the pandemic.
- ⌘ We continue to hold decision makers to account.

As we look back on another remarkable year, I am filled with pride. Together, we have worked hard to achieve our mission to make Wales the best country in the world for people with a learning disability to live, learn, love and work. The support, commitment and hard work of our staff, volunteers, members and supporters has helped our achievements.

This year, we have supported each other to recover from living through a pandemic and to ensure that people with a learning disability are not worse off than they were before.

This has been made possible through grants and donations but also by our dedicated staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to make change. Your work is thorough, honest and respected.

It is a vital time to hold decision makers to account and we continue to join with other organisations and stakeholders to make this happen.

As we move forward, we remain committed

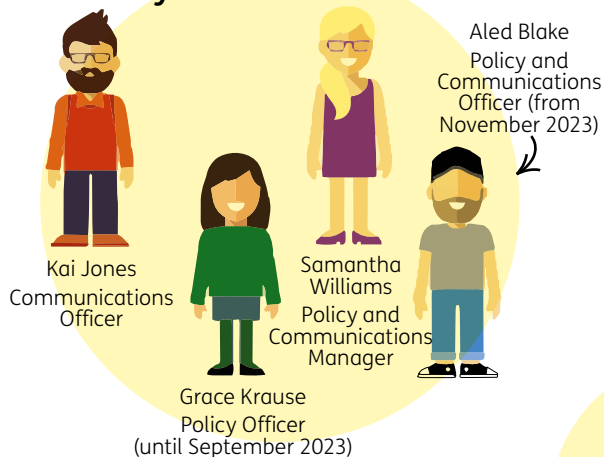
to transparency, partnership, and innovation. We will continue to work together to create lasting change in our communities in Wales and beyond.

Thank you for being an important part of our mission. I look forward to the work we will accomplish together in the year ahead.



# Our staff

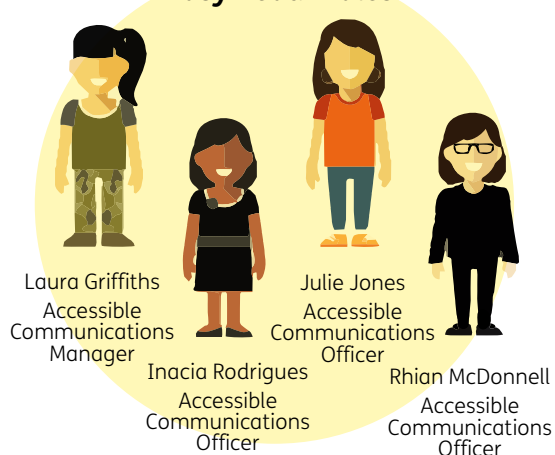
## Policy and Communications



## Training and Events



## Easy Read Wales

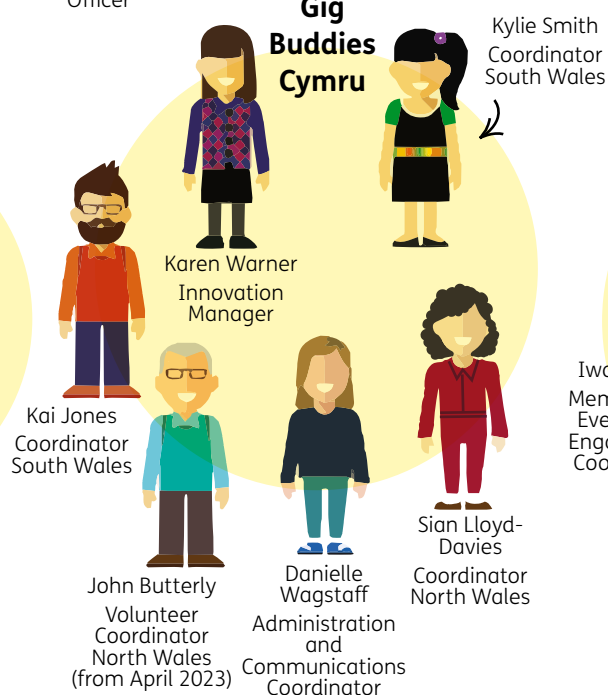


Zoe Richards  
Chief Executive Officer

## Influencing and Informing Engage to Change



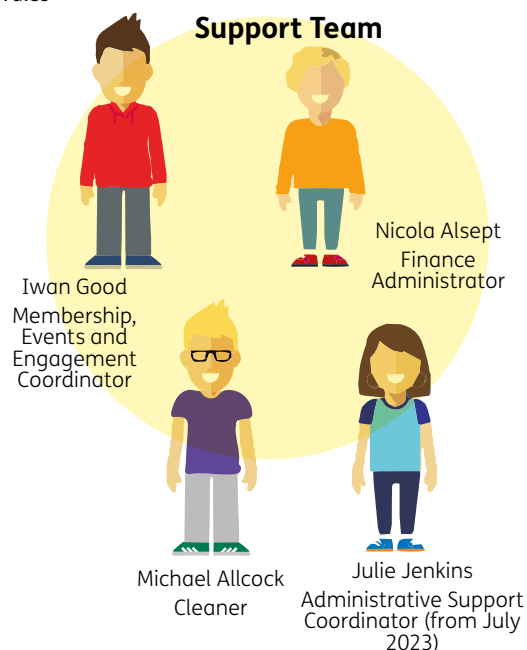
## Gig Buddies Cymru



## HR and Finance



## Support Team



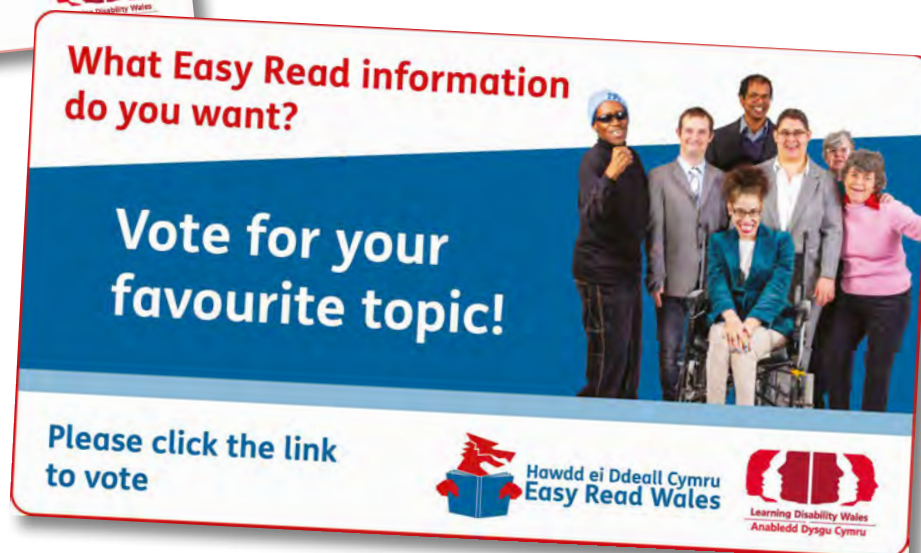
## Highlights

- ✂ We worked with 50 organisations on more than 140 pieces of easy read work.
- ✂ We launched free easy read resources about menopause.
- ✂ We produced an easy read guide and accessible video about vaccinations.
- ✂ We updated our guidelines on producing easy read in Welsh.

This was our first full year as a team of 4. Our workload was similar to last year so we were able to rely less on freelancers and focus more on developing our service and the quality of our work.

We produced our first large print project and we were also able to produce some free easy read resources. In April, we created a free easy read booklet about the UK's new Emergency Alert System. We promoted it across all our social media channels and it was widely shared and well received.

In February we launched an easy read newsletter. We offered people a discount on our easy read service, shared information about what we do, and provided tips to help people be more accessible. Sign-up by sending an email to [easyread@ldw.org.uk](mailto:easyread@ldw.org.uk).





## Free guides to menopause and perimenopause

We co-produced free bilingual easy read guides about menopause. The Menopause Charity helped to make sure the information was clinically correct. Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales helped us make sure we covered all the information people needed. Cwm Taf People First checked the guides to make sure they were easy to read and understand. We are looking forward to creating more free easy read resources next year.



## Vaccine Information Project

We worked with Public Health Wales and groups of people with a learning disability to make accessible information about vaccinations. The easy read booklets and accessible video were launched in November. We shared what we learned from the project at our annual conference.



## Guidelines to making Welsh easy to read

We updated our guidelines for making easy read information in Welsh. We worked with our easy read translators, people with a learning disability, the Welsh Language Commissioner and Iaith Cymru (the Welsh Centre for Language Planning) to make sure our guide helps people provide high quality, accessible information in Welsh.

We will share the updated guide soon so everyone – from people with a learning disability who speak Welsh, to translators and people who commission easy read work – can benefit from this work.



# Training and events

## Highlights

- ✂ 204 people came to our annual conference in Newport and Llandudno Junction.
- ✂ The conference talked about health and wellbeing.
- ✂ Most people who came to our annual conference said it was very good or good.
- ✂ We held 3 events with RNIB Cymru about how to support people with a learning disability who have sight loss.
- ✂ 56 people came on our training courses about making information accessible.

## Annual conference – Love your health

Our biggest event of the year was our annual conference, Love your health, in Llandudno Junction and Newport. 74 people attended in north Wales and 130 in south Wales.

The conference brought people together to talk about health and wellbeing of people with a learning disability, who tend to have poorer health and are at greater risk of developing various health conditions, compared to people who don't have a learning disability.

Most of the presentations, drama and workshops were delivered or co-delivered by people with a learning disability and covered topics such as Health Profiles, Annual Health Checks, menopause, sexual health, vaccines and reducing inappropriate psychotropic medication.

99% of our delegates rated the event as very good or good.

You can find videos and resources from the conference on our website at [www.ldw.org.uk/event/love-your-health-2023](http://www.ldw.org.uk/event/love-your-health-2023).







### **Making information easy to read and understand**

We delivered this popular online course 4 times. 56 people attended, including those working in local authorities, health services, further and higher education, and the third sector.



### **Vision Friends: Understanding sight loss**

In partnership with RNIB Cymru, we ran 3 learning sessions (2 online and 1 in person), to raise awareness of sight loss in people with a learning disability and how to support people effectively.



# Influencing policy

## Highlights

- ⌘ **We responded to 12 consultations.**
- ⌘ **We gave evidence to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee on inclusive education.**
- ⌘ **Issues we worked on included re-opening day services, bus passes, cashless society and education.**
- ⌘ **We spoke at the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, the Learning Disability Policy Group, and the Learning Disability Consortium.**
- ⌘ **We helped plan an event to share the findings of the Covid-19 research project.**

## Consultations

We responded to 12 consultations to ensure the rights of people with a learning disability are reflected in policies and legislation. We provided evidence on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in Wales. We also gave evidence to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee on inclusive education and the challenges disabled children face in the current system.

We represented the issues affecting people with a learning disability and their families through a wide range of networks including the Disability Rights Taskforce working groups, Public Services Ombudsman stakeholder group and Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance (TSANA).

## Learning Disability Policy Group

We continued to facilitate the Learning Disability Policy Group and organised 4 meetings covering a range of issues including day services, bus passes, cashless society, post-16 education and cuts to services.





## Learning Disability Consortium

We coordinated the Learning Disability Consortium with partners All Wales People First, All Wales Parents and Carers Forum, Cymorth Cymru, Down's Syndrome Association and Mencap Cymru. We campaigned on issues including annual health checks, mortality review and learning disability action plan progress.



## Covid-19 research project

We worked with project partners in Wales to organise an event in Cardiff highlighting the findings of the 4th wave of the study and celebrating 40 years since the All Wales Strategy.

## Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group

As members of this group, we attended quarterly meetings to discuss issues including health, better community support, and how people from global majorities can access services and get their voices heard.

## Keeping you informed

Our communications work runs through everything that we do, from publicising our events, projects and policy work, to keeping you informed of the latest learning disability news.

Topics covered on our website and social media included:




- ⌘ How the Welsh Government budget affects people with a learning disability
- ⌘ New regulations for residential special schools
- ⌘ Access to mental health services for disabled young people

- ⌘ Why we take part in Pride
- ⌘ Social prescribing.

In November we added an Easy Pages section to our website: [www.ldw.org.uk/easy-pages](http://www.ldw.org.uk/easy-pages)



# Influencing and Informing Engage to Change

 [engagetochange.org.uk](https://engagetochange.org.uk)  
 [/engagetochangewales](https://www.facebook.com/engagetochangewales)  
 [@Engage\\_2\\_Change](https://twitter.com/Engage_2_Change)



## Highlights

- ⌘ 41% of the 1,075 young people supported during the 7 years of the project got a paid job.
- ⌘ 16 employers were given awards for their work supporting and employing young people on the project.
- ⌘ Over 100 people came to our event in Cardiff Bay to share the outcomes of the project.
- ⌘ We produced 6 research and evaluation reports and 4 accessible videos about the research.
- ⌘ The project was highlighted as an example of good practice in Dr Hefin David MS's report Transition to Employment.

**The Engage to Change project finished at the end of May 2023. Final data showed the project successfully provided employment support through job coaching to 1,075 young people and delivered 244 supported internships - achieving an overall paid employment rate of 41%. This is compared to an estimated employment rate of 4.8% for people with learning disabilities in England (BASE, 2023).**

Funding was secured for Learning Disability Wales and the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) to continue working together until November 2024. 'Influencing and Informing Engage to Change' is taking forward the policy, research and legacy work of the project.

We are working closely with others, including Welsh Government, Members of the Senedd, local authorities, colleges, health boards, people with lived experience and their families.

This year we presented awards to 16 employers across Wales for their outstanding work supporting and employing project participants.





We finished our Pathway to Employment videos, featuring our lead ambassador Gerraint Jones-Griffiths, young people who got a job through the project and their employers. They can be found on Engage to Change's website and social media, and on Careers Wales' website.



In September, we brought people together to share the project's outcomes, including research findings and stories from participants. Sponsored by Vaughan Gething MS, the event was held at the Pierhead, Cardiff Bay. Over 100 people attended including Members of the Senedd and BBC Wales reporter Garry Owen, with a further 140 people watching the livestream.



In November, we were featured on BBC Wales Today, BBC Cymru Fyw TV and the BBC Wales News website. The coverage included interviews with project participants and employers, Dr Hefin David MS, and Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for the Economy at that time. Project Manager Angela Kenvyn was also interviewed live on BBC Radio Wales' breakfast show.

NCMH continued to produce research and evaluation reports, and we worked with young people and parents to produce accessible videos of the reports.

Lead ambassador Gerraint, together with NCMH, delivered presentations to parent/carer groups, Cardiff University School of Medicine and North Wales Together's employment strategy steering group. They also made a podcast with Cardiff University, while Gerraint produced top tips for employment, blogs and videos about his work.

# Influencing and Informing Engage to Change



## Employment policy work

We met regularly with Dr Hefin David MS and the interview our Project Manager Angela gave to the BBC influenced the content of his Transition to Employment report. The report features Engage to Change as good practice and makes recommendations about work experience and job coaching.

The report was debated in the Senedd and was well received. Angela, Gerraint and freelance Communications Officer Daniel attended to watch the debate and were introduced to members of the Senedd by Dr Hefin David MS, including a discussion with Jayne Bryant MS.

Information about the project and evaluation reports were shared with Eluned Morgan MS, who had attended our event.

Angela continued to meet with Welsh Government about provision of job coach support through all employability and skills programmes.

We participated in Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Working Group, the Wales Access to Work Forum, Colegau Cymru Pathway 4 Group and continued working with the North Wales Together Transformation Team to finish the 5-year employment strategy for people with learning disabilities.

Angela joined Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee Stakeholder Group and chaired a meeting about work experience. Gerraint participated in Welsh Government's Disability Rights Taskforce Employment and Income subgroup.



## Highlights

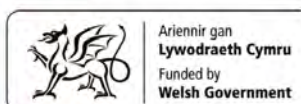
- ⌘ We recruited 27 new volunteers and matched 19 Gig Buddy pairs.
- ⌘ We now have 17 Gig Buddy pairs in north Wales and 46 pairs in south Wales.
- ⌘ Buddies have helped with stalls, leafleting, planning socials, and media interviews.

## Across the project

- ⌘ Set up Tempo Time Credits for volunteers, who receive 'rewards' such as free theatre and cinema tickets. Participants who volunteer with us also receive Time Credits.
- ⌘ Took over Minty's Gig Guide during Learning Disability Week, with Cardiff participant Richie reviewing and giving gig tips. Richie also gave a talk to 70 people from Social Care Wales.
- ⌘ Presented at a Hynt forum, the national access scheme for venues, where we also talked about the problem of cashless venues.
- ⌘ Made an easy read guide about 'doing things together cheaply' to help with the cost-of-living crisis.



- ⌘ Hosted a Christmas Global party with Buddies from Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Australia partying together online.
- ⌘ Victoria Waller continues to do wonderful work as our social media content volunteer. We have 2,700 followers on Facebook, 1,500 on Twitter and 900 on Instagram.



# Gig Buddies Cymru

## South Wales

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

**Socialising:** We took part in Pride Cymru. Organised late night karaoke at a nightclub for All Wales People First's conference. Attended the Welsh Music Prize, where buddies met celebrities and watched performances. Celebrated 'our' Kylie's 40th birthday at CultVR, with performances from Kylie's Kitsch n Sync theatre group. Natural matches emerged from our 3 'speed mates' evenings. Some participants now plan their own socials together.



**Raising awareness:** We had stalls at volunteering fayres, venues and First Choice Housing's AGM, where tenants could 'design their own t-shirts'. We attended a 'Black Lives Matter' event to attract more people from global majorities.

### Gig Buddies Band:

A new band was set up with Tŷ Cerdd, with professional musicians helping Buddies to learn to play instruments.



### Cardiff Half Marathon:

20 runners raised £8,000! Buddies cheered them on, and we socialised afterwards.



**Volunteer  
as a Gig Buddy**  
[www.gigbuddies.cymru](http://www.gigbuddies.cymru)





## North Wales

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

We welcomed John to the team in April, thanks to funding from WCVA's Volunteering Grant.

**Socialising:** Socials took place in pubs and restaurants in Flintshire, Bangor and Denbigh, and we supported 3 participants to plan their own socials. We helped Buddies develop friendships with each other by creating Gig Buddy peers. Mark Jones provided advice as our volunteer transport advisor.



**Raising awareness:** We attended Focus Wales Festival, Philfest in Anglesey, the Flint/Denbighshire Agricultural Show, a mental health nursing event, and Wrexham Wellbeing Hub. We worked closely with First Choice Housing, Outside Lives, Bangor University, PIWS (who help to improve accessibility) and participated in the Person Centred Planning Network.



## Max and Mei, Gig Buddies

Max and Mei have been buddies for a while. Mei knew of Max and remembered him being a soul music fan, avidly collecting vinyl and an expert on the release dates of his favourite songs. Conversations flow when the 2 are out at gigs. They were interviewed together on BBC Radio Cymru about their friendship, which has grown over the years, with Mei becoming a constant and supportive friend in Max's life.



## Highlights

- ⌘ We shared new Welsh Government guidance for social workers on how to support parents with a learning disability.
- ⌘ We supported 2 disabled Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament to speak up on issues affecting young disabled people in Wales.
- ⌘ We organised 4 meetings of the Cross Party Group on Learning Disability to talk about issues such as day services, accessible voting and bus passes.
- ⌘ We gave evidence to the Senedd about the barriers children and young people with a learning disability face in schools and colleges.
- ⌘ Over 70 people joined our Connections Cymru event about day services.

Funded by Welsh Government, 21st Century People celebrates people with a learning disability as creators, contributors, and citizens of Wales, while challenging existing stereotypes.



## 21st Century Families

### Parents with a learning disability

We advised Welsh Government on promoting the new guidance for social workers for families where a parent has a learning disability, and monitoring its impact. We shared the guidance on our website and social media and invited a researcher who developed the guidance to speak at a Cross Party Group meeting. We also published an article on our website about the difference the right support can

make to families where a parent has a learning disability.

We continued to support the Vale People First parents' group to meet, share their experiences and provide peer support to one another. We joined the Children in Wales Parents Connect Wales project to share the views of parents with a learning disability.



# 21st Century Voices

## Welsh Youth Parliament



We continued to support 2 disabled young people as Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament. This included Georgia giving evidence in the Senedd on inclusive education and Tegan asking the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Well-being at the Senedd about access to mental health support for disabled young people. We assisted Tegan to draft her question and supported her to write a news article for our website.



We helped Georgia to prepare a statement for the final Welsh Youth Parliament meeting in the Senedd on 40 years since the All Wales Strategy and why people with a learning disability should not be locked away in hospitals. Our Policy and Communications Manager spoke at the launch of the Welsh Youth Parliament exhibition about our experience as a partner organisation.

## Easy read training

We provided 9 free easy read taster sessions to a total of 170 people across Wales. People attending came from local authorities, universities, NHS and third sector organisations.



## Policy and people - Cross Party Group on Learning Disability

In our role as co-Secretaries we organised 4 meetings. Topics covered included: bus passes, guidance on supporting parents with a learning disability, reopening of day services since the pandemic, specialist post-16 education and accessible voting.

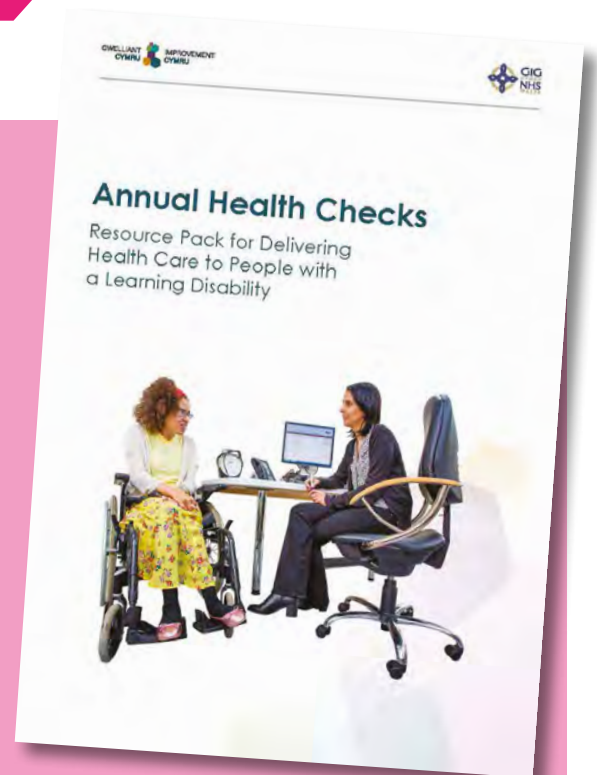
Following the meetings, we produced easy read minutes and drafted letters from the Chair, Sioned Williams MS, to various public bodies asking for changes to be put in place.

# 21st Century People

## Healthy 21st Century People

### Annual health checks

We continued to campaign for the easy read GP resources pack to be made available on the NHS 111 Wales website. We included presentations about the importance of annual health checks at Love your health, our annual conference.



### Reducing restrictive practice

Our Policy and Communications Manager attended the Restraint Reduction Network annual conference to learn about latest developments in reducing restrictive practice from around the world.

We helped to organise a pilot webinar for professionals on reducing restrictive practice alongside Improvement Cymru and Social Care Wales.

We attended 2 meetings of the Protecting Rights, Eliminating Restraint group to share expertise and best practice across the 4 UK nations. We continued to attend the All-Wales Challenging Behaviour Community of Practice meetings.



We advised Public Health Wales on making accessible resources on positive behaviour support for parents with a learning disability. We met with Swansea Bay Health Board to discuss the production of videos and e-learning on positive behaviour support and reducing restrictive practice.



# Living in the 21st Century

## Connections Cymru

This network explores how we can tackle loneliness and isolation. Following last year's event, we published an article on our website about social prescribing. This year's topic was day services with an online event attended by over 70 people. A variety of organisations and people with a learning disability talked about day services, good and bad experiences, choice and inclusion and what the future holds.

## Inclusive education

We gave evidence to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education committee on the challenges disabled children face in the education system in Wales. We also supported Georgia, Welsh Youth Parliament Member, to give evidence to the Committee.



# Our trustees and members

## Trustees

Our trustees serve a 3 year term of office and new trustees are elected at our AGM each year. If you are interested in being a trustee, please email [joanne.moore@ldw.org.uk](mailto:joanne.moore@ldw.org.uk).

Community of Interest Full Member reps	Number of seats	Trustees	Representing
Adult providers	2	Rhian Jones Claire Higgins	Drive Anheddau Cyf
Self-advocacy	2	Joe Powell Angharad Williams	All Wales People First Your Voice Advocacy
Family carers	2	Jacqui Caldwell Richard Cox <b>Vacant</b>	Conwy Connect Ategi
Family support providers	2	Alison Thomas Wayne Crocker	The Pobl Group Mencap Cymru
Supported employment	1	Lily Beyer <b>Vacant</b>	BASE UK

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

## Advisors:

Steve Beyer and Kathryn Whitfield

## Our members

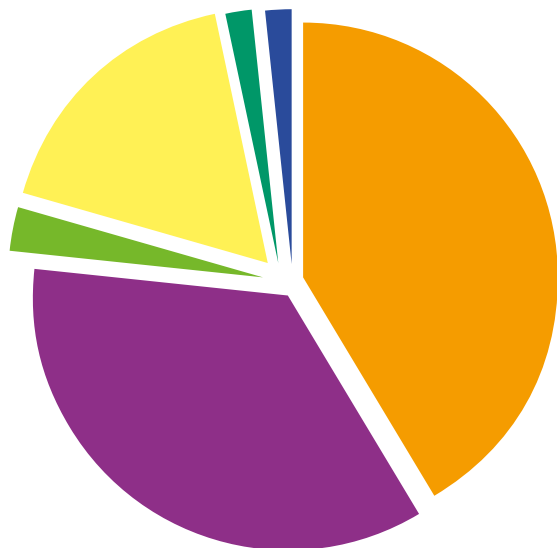
Type of membership	Number of members
<b>Full</b>	95
<b>Associate</b>	237



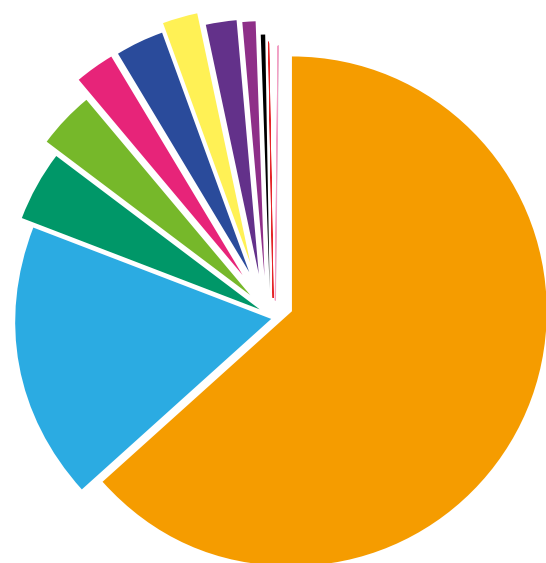


# How we spent our money

## Money we received this year



Source of money	Amount
Welsh Government Grant	£400,000 (41.62%)
UK Projects	£339,322 (35.30%)
Training and Events	£25,006 (2.60%)
Consultancy, networks and hosted services	£165,353 (17.20%)
Donations	£17,448 (1.82%)
Bank interest	£13,995 (1.46%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£961,124 (100.00%)</b>



## Money we spent this year

Category	Amount
Staff and travel	£633,261 (63.37%)
Grants to UK project partners	£177,060 (17.72%)
Courses and conferences	£43,066 (4.31%)
Looking after our building	£36,856 (3.69%)
Project events	£24,420 (2.44%)
Running the office	£31,882 (3.19%)
Freelance costs	£21,244 (2.13%)
Translation	£18,268 (1.83%)
Irrecoverable VAT	£8,373 (0.84%)
Audit fees	£3,960 (0.40%)
Depreciation	£642 (0.06%)
Trustees meetings	£262 (0.03%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£999,294 (100.00%)</b>

## End of year result:

The deficit of £38,170 consists of an unrestricted deficit after transfers of £32,288 and a restricted deficit of £5,882.

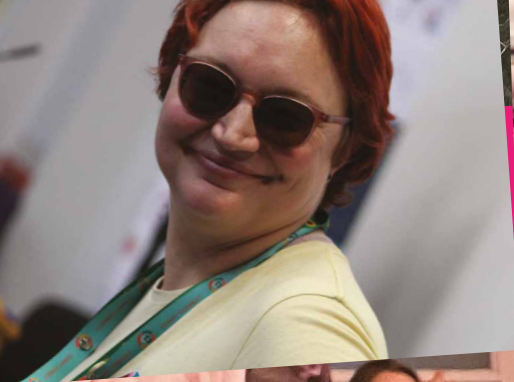


# Our year in pictures

## Ein blwyddyn mewn lluniau









# Our year in numbers



Learning Disability Wales  
Anabellid Dysgu Cymru

[www.ldw.org.uk](http://www.ldw.org.uk)

## Influencing policy



12 consultation responses



4 meetings of the Cross  
Party Group on Learning  
Disability



4 meetings of the Learning  
Disability Policy Group

## Training and events



204 people attended our  
annual conference in  
Newport and Llandudno  
Junction



3 online sessions with RNIB  
about supporting people  
with a learning disability and  
sight loss



226 people attended  
training on making  
information accessible

## Easy Read Wales



140 documents



50 clients



4 free easy read booklets  
about menopause

## Engage to Change



41% of the 1,075  
young people  
supported over the 7  
years got paid work



6 research and  
evaluation reports



4 accessible videos  
about our research



16 businesses  
awarded for their  
support to young  
people

## Keeping you informed



16,407 website  
visitors



45,773 website  
pages visited



1 new Instagram  
account sharing  
visual stories



6,049 followers on  
Facebook

## Gig Buddies Cymru



19 Gig Buddy pairs  
matched



27 volunteers  
recruited



20 Buddies partied  
at the Welsh Music  
Prize Awards



18 socials