

# Framework for Action on Independent Living



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## Foreword

### Foreword by Welsh Government Ministers Jeff Cuthbert AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty and Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services

We are delighted to launch the Welsh Government's Framework for Action on Independent Living, and would like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation, as well as those who took part in the engagement events and workshops which contributed so much to the development of the Framework.

It was clear from the feedback we received that the Framework is seen as a genuinely cross-cutting approach to addressing the barriers to inclusion that many disabled people face on a day-to-day basis. There was widespread agreement with the priorities identified within the Framework, and a warm welcome for the co-productive approach taken in developing the document.

It is vital that we communicate the messages we have heard during this process and continue to set out a positive vision for disabled people in Wales. The key message is that it is not impairment that prevents people from achieving a reasonable lifestyle, but restrictive environments and disabling barriers.

We must strive to create an environment in which disabled people have access to the same opportunities as everybody else, and we look to our partners in delivery in the public, private and voluntary sectors to support us in this aim. We must also continue to emphasise the importance of applying the social model of disability and recognising the rights of disabled people to self-determine their lives.

While we acknowledge that some disabled people are reliant on specific support, many others just want to be able to participate in life in the same way as everyone else. Where support is needed, it should promote independent living and ensure voice and control in how services are provided. That is a guiding principle of our programme of reform of social services in Wales as we recognise that this will contribute to creating an inclusive and enabling society, and promote well-being for all.

The Framework sets out how we are fulfilling our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). It also contributes to the fulfilment of our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and supports our plans to tackle poverty. The Framework demonstrates that tackling barriers for disabled people will not only advance their rights, it will have wider benefits in terms of access and inclusion, and will promote more sustainable and responsive services for all.

We can only address matters that are within the Welsh Government's devolved powers so the Framework focuses on what the Welsh Government can do to move this agenda forward. It builds on the specific priorities identified by disabled people and sets out how we will address the barriers to equality. We know that economic recession, spending cuts, and welfare reform will affect many disabled people in Wales, and that, with rising living costs many will find it difficult to make ends meet. The Welsh Government does not have control of either the benefit system or the key economic levers, so there is a limit to what we can do to make life better for those individuals who will feel the impact of the cuts.

However, we believe that the current climate makes it more important than ever that we continue to drive forward this agenda. Supporting people to live their lives in the way that they choose is the right thing to do. We must all do our best to ensure that we develop person-centred policies and programmes, and adopt an outcomes-focused approach to service delivery, nationally and locally.



Jeff Cuthbert AM  
Minister for Communities  
and Tackling Poverty



Gwenda Thomas AM  
Deputy Minister for  
Social Services

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Purpose

The aims of the Framework for Action are:

- to set out a positive vision for disabled people in Wales in the challenging context of recession and the UK Government's programme of welfare reform, combined with public expenditure cuts;
- to challenge stereotypes and negative attitudes;
- to bring together for the first time a strategic approach to disability in Wales bringing together issues that have previously been dealt with separately;
- to set out what the Welsh Government is doing across portfolios to promote an inclusive and enabling society; and
- to highlight the key roles of local delivery partners and stakeholders.

### Definition of independent living

The Framework for Action gives practical effect to the social model of disability which the National Assembly for Wales adopted in 2002. This recognises that people are disabled by the barriers created by society, and that the guiding principles of policy should be:

- to remove these barriers and create an enabling society
- to promote the rights and full inclusion of disabled people.

Independent Living expresses the rights of disabled people to participate fully in all aspects of life. The Welsh Government supports the following definition<sup>1</sup> of independent living:

'Independent Living enables us as disabled people to achieve our own goals and live our own lives in the way that we choose for ourselves.'

In this document the term 'independent living' is used in two ways:

- to express the aspirations of disabled people as set out above
- to describe an approach to public service provision that supports and empowers this aspiration.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Framework sets out how the Welsh Government is taking forward the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which includes Article 19: the right to independent living, which says that

- disabled people have an equal right to live in and take part in the community;
- disabled people have the right to the same choice and control as non-disabled people; and
- Governments should do everything they can to ensure disabled people enjoy these rights.

<sup>1</sup> Definition adopted by Disability Wales and partner organisations during consultation on a Manifesto for Independent Living, 2011.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In January 2004, the Welsh Government agreed that the UNCRC would be used as the basis for all of its policy for children and young people. The convention contains a range of rights relating to children and places duties on others to help to protect them from harm and ensure their healthy development.

Welsh Ministers have a duty under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 to have due regard to the UNCRC:

- a) when making any decision relating to developing policy and legislation between 1 May 2012 – 30 April 2014, and
- b) when exercising their functions from 1 May 2014.

Given that the UNCRC underpins the Welsh Government's rights-based approach to policy for children and young people, it is important to understand how the Framework for Action on Independent Living helps to deliver upon its commitment to realising the rights within the UNCRC.

The Framework respects the rights of individuals to have freedom of choice in how they live their lives, and helps support the rights of disabled people. The proposals and actions in the Framework focus on citizen-centred services to meet the needs of people of all ages.

The primary focus of the Framework is on the social model of disability and the message that there are many disabled people who would be able to participate fully in society if the barriers to inclusion were removed. The aim of the Framework is to support disabled children and adults to live full and independent lives. The priority areas addressed in the Framework have been identified by disabled people themselves, including disabled children and young people, as the most important ones to achieve that aim.

Full and summary versions of the UNCRC are available at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

[http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/documents/UNCRC%20Leaflet%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/documents/UNCRC%20Leaflet%20(English).pdf)

## The social model of disability

The Welsh Government was one of the first governments in the world to adopt the social model of disability. If fully realised, the social model would mean that disabled people were able to participate fully in society, and the impact of their impairment would be substantially reduced. This approach has huge potential to empower people, to promote health and well-being, and prevent isolation and dependence.

The social model requires culture change and leadership across government, public services and the private sector in Wales. This Framework for Action does not try to capture all the dimensions of the change required. It does set out a practical programme of action that will ensure tangible progress in tackling some of the key barriers identified by disabled people during the development of this Framework and during the consultation period.

## The Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan

The Framework for Action supports the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives, first published in April 2012. That document sets out the Welsh Government's priorities for action to fulfil the general duty in the Equality Act 2010 and the Wales Specific Equality Duties. The Framework provides a more detailed programme of action in relation to Objective 5: *Tackle barriers and support disabled people so that they can live independently and exercise choice and control in their daily lives.*

The Framework for Action examines in more depth the barriers to equality and inclusion faced by disabled people, and the action needed to address them. It has a government-wide and cross-generational focus on barriers and actions for improvement.

## Messages from engagement events and workgroups

The key message from engagement, through the work groups and regional events held during the development of this Framework, relates to the importance of delivery i.e. implementation of policy on the ground. On most issues, people reported that the Welsh Government's rights and policy framework is strong, but delivery remained inconsistent.

## Messages from consultation responses

The main messages coming out of the consultation that took place from September to December 2012 were that:

- There should be a stronger focus on children and young people if we are to create a truly inclusive and enabling society.
- A more outcomes-focused Framework would enable local partners to see how they can contribute.
- Public authorities should be encouraged to take a long-term view and recognise the benefits of independent living in terms of well-being for individuals, which can lead to less reliance on public services.
- There should be leadership from the Welsh Government in communicating the importance of Centres for Independent Living to further disabled people's rights, equality and inclusion.

## The business case for independent living

There is clear evidence that tackling barriers to inclusion, and providing services that support independent living, are better for individuals, and no more expensive, or cheaper for the public purse, than conventional provision.

A survey of the evidence by the Office for Disability Issues<sup>2</sup> concluded that:

- at an individual level there is substantial qualitative evidence, from both the literature review and the case study research, suggesting that independent living provides significantly more benefits than conventional forms of service provision.

<sup>2</sup>The Costs and Benefits of Independent Living, Office for Disability Issues, 2007.

- at service delivery level, several published evaluations highlighted the reduced costs involved in the delivery of Independent Support mechanisms.

At the wider economic level, alongside a comparison of the costs and benefits of different options for supporting disabled people, there are other factors that need to be considered. These include the relationship between earnings and benefits; the implications for demand for health and social services; and the potential scope for reducing dependency on informal support.

The Independent Living Institute<sup>3</sup> points out that disabled people are customers, workers, students, parents, taxpayers and voters, and community members. The purpose of any form of support should therefore be to enable people to overcome the practical barriers they face to participating in all of these roles and activities. This is why expenditure on independent living needs to be seen as a form of positive investment. Increased participation not only benefits disabled people themselves but also produces economic benefits to governments, businesses and communities.

## Scope of the Framework

The Framework focuses on practical action in relation to the priorities identified by disabled people. The Framework does not aim to cover every aspect of independent living, but it does represent an important first step towards achieving a strategic approach to independent living in Wales.

The Framework acknowledges the diversity of disabled people. One in five people of working age in Wales have some form of disability or impairment. People can become disabled as a result of serving in the armed forces, of sporting accidents and other events, as well as from illness or congenital impairments. The majority of disabled people are not in receipt of social services<sup>4</sup>.

The Framework does not aim to address all the issues raised by particular impairments, the focus is on barriers in the wider society that exclude disabled people. Some disabled people face multiple barriers due to other personal characteristics, for example race, religion or sexual orientation. It is important that this is recognised and addressed, for example, in the Strategic Equality Plans of public authorities in Wales.

It is clear from our engagement and consultation with disabled people and their representative organisations that the risks to independent living arising from the UK Government's programme of welfare reform are recognised. It is also recognised that the Welsh Government can only act on those issues within its devolved powers.

## The Public Sector Equality Duties

Welsh Government Ministers will report on progress towards meeting the general equality duty across the public sector bi-annually. The regulator for the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) is the Equality and Human Rights Commission, whose role is to assess whether organisations comply with the Duties overall, and to work with other Regulators e.g. Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW), Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, the Wales Audit Office and Estyn, to ensure that they mainstream equality into existing inspection and improvement regimes.

For example, the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan Objective 6 includes a programme of commitments by HIW to strengthen the voice of, and engagement with, service users and carers in their work.

All seven Local Health Boards have published Strategic Equality Plans, which set out their equality objectives under the PSED. They are required to publish annual progress reports showing how they are making progress with their objectives and the specific areas of the PSED. The Boards and Trust can use this as a means of internal challenge and scrutiny.

The NHS in Wales is a key partner in the delivery of services to disabled people and can make an important contribution to the Framework. Local authorities and health boards are increasingly working at a local level to integrate services and shift the balance of resources to community-based provision, underpinned by clear principles of self determination, re-ablement and prevention. Using the social model of disability to frame service delivery can help influence attitudes and actions to enable and empower disabled people as recipients of health and social care.

## Role of local authorities' Strategic Equality Plans

The Strategic Equality Plans (SEPs) of local authorities will be crucial in drawing together action on independent living, across local government services and partnership action to create inclusive and accessible communities in each part of Wales. These plans will provide the basis for local scrutiny, which should address many of the issues tackled in this Framework. Where there are gaps in the SEPs, local disabled people's groups and organisations will be able to identify these, and provide constructive challenge on progress. Local engagement with SEPs is discussed further in Chapter 3.

## Sustainable Development

Since the ground-breaking duty in the Government of Wales Act put Sustainable Development at the heart of devolution, Wales has taken a distinctive path to development. The Welsh Government's Programme for Government reinforces the importance of sustainable development's place as the core principle in defining the best development path for Wales. In addition, it commits to ensuring that all the Government's policies and programmes reflect this central commitment to sustainable development.

This approach is demonstrated by the Government's focus on the long term, and can also be seen in the integrated approach to delivery within public service, characterised by collaboration between service providers and a focus on giving people and communities a voice in how their services are provided. This chimes well with the aims of the Framework for Action, which emphasises the importance of engagement and involvement of disabled people in designing and planning local services.

<sup>3</sup> Zarb, Gerry. 2003. "The Economics of Independent Living." [www.independentliving.org/docs6/zarb2003.html](http://www.independentliving.org/docs6/zarb2003.html)

<sup>4</sup> See figures in Chapter 4.3 below.

New legislation will place a Sustainable Development (SD) duty on some organisations in Wales and create a new independent SD body. Enshrining sustainable development as the central organising principle, not just of the Welsh Government, but of the wider public service in Wales, will further reinforce our commitment. The aim is to ensure that in pursuit of a better long-term future, the best possible decisions are made that achieve the maximum possible long term benefits to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Wales.



## Chapter 2: Vision and Values

## Chapter 2: Vision and Values

The Welsh Government's vision is of an inclusive and enabling society, which recognises the rights of disabled people to self-determine their lives. Talking to disabled people across Wales whilst developing this framework and during the consultation process has identified examples of progress and good practice, as well as continuing problems and barriers. Chapter 4 considers the detailed issues in relation to seven priority areas identified by disabled people.

The positive examples we have seen suggest that progress on independent living depends on four core values:

1. Confidence – empowered disabled people working constructively with public, voluntary and private organisations to achieve better outcomes;
2. Co-operation – effective coalitions and organisations of disabled people, sharing good practice, collecting evidence of problems and giving individuals a stronger voice;
3. Co-production – disabled people working in partnership with public services and the private sector to identify problems and solutions, tackle delivery issues, and maximise opportunities for improvement. This approach can be applied in relation to provision of services to children as well as adults;
4. Choice and control – individuals having the same choice and control as other people in the way they live their lives and receive support from others.

### Common themes

The individual priorities are addressed in Chapter 4. These are inter-connected: each is part of a jigsaw that needs to be complete in order to fulfil people's potential to live independently and contribute fully to society.

For example, many disabled people rely on public transport. If they are unable to use buses or trains, that is a major constraint on the employment options available to them. Similarly, the availability of suitable housing limits people's ability to move to find employment.

There are a number of common themes across the priorities – an example is the availability of information in accessible formats (see Chapter 4.1). Disabled people report regularly receiving information in forms they cannot use – for example, organisations sending paper letters to blind people who have asked for Braille or electronic versions. People with learning disabilities need information in formats they find easy to read and understand. For example, passenger transport information that is easy to find and to read, and available in a number of formats, helps people plan journeys and feel confident in using public transport (see Chapter 4.5).

### Better for everyone

On passenger information, as with many other issues addressed in this Framework, progress for disabled people will make things better for their families, friends and carers, and society more widely. Well-designed, inclusive buildings and environments are welcoming to everyone, are more sustainable and can be adapted for many uses in the future. Better understanding and positive attitudes by managers and front-line staff has wider benefits for everyone.

### Confidence and safety

Safety is another underlying theme – the EHRC report, *Hidden in Plain Sight* (EHRC 2011)<sup>5</sup> highlights that harassment and bullying of disabled people is commonplace and is a major barrier to disabled people participating confidently in society. *Tackling Hate Crimes and Incidents: A Framework for Action*, launched for consultation in the summer of 2013 demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to tackling hate crime towards disabled people and others, ensuring an effective response and addressing its causes. The long term solution must be to foster better understanding and good relations between the protected groups identified in the Equality Act and the wider public. This Framework for Action on Independent Living is designed to promote this by ensuring that disabled people are fully included in all aspects of Welsh society.

### Building on our strengths

The Framework aims to respond in a practical way to the barriers that continue to prevent disabled people's inclusion and participation. The following chapters identify a number of problems, but they also highlight many examples of positive action and problem-solving that we can build on. The way forward is to keep up the momentum on the specific priorities, but also to build the leadership and capacity of disabled people's organisations locally so that they can provide the driver for the joined up, person-centred approach that is needed.

<sup>5</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2011). *Hidden in Plain Sight*. Inquiry into disability-related harassment. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## Chapter 3: Outcomes, Actions and Delivery Partners

**Outcome: An enabling society in which disabled children and adults enjoy the right to independent living and social inclusion.**

Within the context of the Framework for Action on Independent Living, we would expect to see disabled children and adults being supported to live independently by:

1. Having access to good quality and accessible information and advice.
2. Improved access to independent advocacy services.
3. Improved access to adapted and accessible housing.
4. Having more control over their lives by being able to make choices in the care and support they receive
5. Having access to technology that supports independent living.
6. Better access to public transport.
7. Improved access to buildings, streets and public places.
8. Increased employment rates for disabled people.
9. An increase in the number of disabled people having access to a Centre for Independent Living<sup>6</sup> in Wales.

For each of these outcomes, we will work with the relevant officials and stakeholders, and with disabled people and their representative organisations, to identify or develop appropriate measures and indicators by which we can measure progress.

Existing national indicators that may also be used to measure progress in the longer term include:

- % of disabled people in households with internet access
- disabled people's level of satisfaction with the public transport system
- Take-up of Direct Payments
- Employment rates of disabled people
- Economic activity rates of disabled people
- % of disabled people with no formal qualifications
- % of Welsh students enrolled in universities in the UK who are disabled
- % of new public appointees who are disabled.

<sup>6</sup> A Centre for Independent Living is an organisation that meets the definition of a Disabled People's Organisation (see below) and which has established itself in premises from which a variety of key services are provided, usually including a mix of information, advice, independent advocacy and peer support, third party Direct Payments support, training, and support with engagement. A Disabled People's Organisation can be defined as an organisation whose constitution requires it to have a membership and management board with a majority of disabled people, and whose objectives are the rights and equality of disabled people.

## Chapter 3: Outcomes, Actions and Delivery Partners

## Key actions the Welsh Government is undertaking to deliver improvements:

### 1. Access to good quality and accessible information and advice.

- working with the not-for-profit advice sector in Wales to take forward the recommendations in the review of advice services undertaken in 2012/13. £1.8 million of additional Welsh Government funding has been made available in 2013/14 to help the sector adapt to the increased demand for services. The sector has agreed to work with the Welsh Government to ensure the people of Wales can access social welfare advice services and the recommendations within the review are implemented to help create a more sustainable advice sector in Wales.

The report on the review of advice services can be viewed here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/community/advice-services-review-final-research-report/?lang=en>

- ensuring our own publications are available in accessible formats;
- increasing the number of disabled people that are able to use the internet via our Communities 2.0 digital inclusion programme. Communities 2.0 is supporting a number of digital inclusion initiatives aimed at disabled people, in partnership with organisations including Disability Wales, RNIB, Leonard Cheshire and the Digital Accessibility Centre.
- Learning carefully from experience we will develop a national NHS free- to-call phone and web based service to provide a single source of health and wellbeing information and advice.
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill is currently being considered by the National Assembly for Wales. The Bill includes provision to:
  - introduce legislation to ensure that the local authorities, Local Health Boards (LHBs), third sector and other social care agencies provide relevant information on the support available for older people who are being discharged from hospital or receiving social care support, to help them return to a safe and secure home environment.
  - aim to ensure that all people are empowered to retain control of their situation and the outcomes that matter to them. The proposed Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service under the Bill, will help people to make the most effective use of the care and support they need, have greater knowledge of how the care and support system operates in their area, what services are available locally and how to access the services they may need, now and in the future. Self funders and those who receive state funding will be treated equally as the IAA service will be available to everyone in need of care and support.
  - introduce a collective responsibility for local authorities and LHBs towards their citizens' well-being to ensure there is quality accessible information about a range of services in the community. We see Local Service Boards taking a key role in advancing integration of local services including IAA.

- provide for a collaborative approach to developing and delivering IAA across authority boundaries. The new IAA service will ensure an integrated approach to accessing health and social care services in each local area. The IAA can be operated by local authorities and/or their LHB or third sector partners or contracted out to private operators.
- seek to promote better connectivity across all sectors for a given locality. Where individuals are in need of care and support themselves, or for a family member, or as a carer, they will have one easy point of access to gain quality information and advice, regardless of whether they are self funders.

### 2. Improved access to independent advocacy services.

- We will develop a national standards and outcomes framework for children and young people's advocacy services;
- To enable older adults to exercise choice and control to maximise their wellbeing we will:
  - ensure there is momentum in progressing a detailed business case. To provide us with options for a future incremental and affordable expansion of advocacy, the Commissioner for Older People has agreed to chair a task group on Advocacy. The Task Group will also work closely with our Expert Advisory Group on advocacy. The Expert Group has been asked to consider some of the issues around advocacy provision for children and young people, and their important work and that of the Task Group will need to be considered carefully together. Both Groups will have a key role in shaping the policy for future regulations to be made under the Advocacy Framework.
  - ensure that older people at risk have access to an independent advocate who can represent them, and be their voice to communicate their views and wishes freely and directly.
- The Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Bill includes provision to further extend the framework provisions for an individual's right to advocacy. In particular it will:
  - enable regulations to place duties on local authorities to make advocacy available in prescribed circumstances, for example people with complex needs who may not have the capability or wider family or community networks to advocate on their behalf in decisions about their care;
  - enable independent support to people when the local authority is investigating a concern of risk or abuse;
  - enable duties to require local authorities to promote and inform people of their right to advocacy, including self-funders;
  - enable duties to require registered care providers to inform people in their care about the availability of advocacy services by the local authority.

### 3. Improved access to adapted and accessible housing.

We will:

- encourage further action to improve and expand the use of Accessible Housing Registers by local authorities and partners;
- commission a review of aids and adaptations programmes during 2013-14 to inform the need for changes to existing programmes. The needs of people who require such services will be at the heart of this<sup>7</sup>;
- include proposals to modernise and improve conditions in the private rented sector and improve the practices of landlords and letting agents, in the Housing Bill to be introduced in November 2013;
- update and disseminate the social housing Hate Crime Toolkit during 2013-14 to help landlords in taking effective action where harassment and bullying take place;
- continue to work with the Welsh Local Government Association and local authorities to promote a more person-centred approach to the provision of housing adaptations as part of a wider service.
- propose, through the Renting Homes White Paper published on 20 May 2013, a simplified legal framework for renting based on two types of tenancy contract. The single framework will apply to social housing provided by local authorities and housing associations and to rentals from private landlords. We will publish model contracts written in simple language so it is easier for people with learning disabilities to understand their rights and responsibilities;
- clarify and strengthen the tenancy rights of people with learning disabilities by including provisions for supported housing in the Renting Homes Bill, scheduled for consideration by the National Assembly in 2015. For the first time, this will provide a dedicated legal framework to underpin supported housing tenancies. The proposals would also remove the ability to house individuals for more than four months on licences, which will significantly improve their security of tenure.

### 4. Disabled people having more control over their lives by being able to make choices in the care and support they receive.

We will:

- Work with Health Boards, Local Government, the Third Sector and other partners to deliver our Plan for providing as much service, care and support at or as close to home as possible. This will be tailored to meet the health and wellbeing needs of individuals and promote independent living.
- Strengthen the national leadership for social services reform through the National Partnership Forum, and the National Leadership Group.
- Strengthen user involvement at this strategic level by the establishment of independently supported user and carer panels, which will link into and have equal status with the Partnership Forum.

- Simplify the complex arrangements around access to care, assessment and eligibility. The new model underpinning the Social Services and Well-being Wales Bill will:
  - ensure that approaches to assessment and determining eligibility will be outcomes-focused. The voice and control of service-users, including children and young people, will be maximised as far as possible in the assessment and planning of care and support arrangements;
  - require that where a local authority has a duty to provide care and support the Care and Support Plans will be portable across Welsh local authority boundaries. Duties on the 'sending authority' will require them to notify the 'receiving authority' when an individual has informed them that they will be moving to the other area. The receiving authority must then put transitional arrangements in place for care and support to continue until it (the new) authority carries out a review / re-assessment of the person's care and support needs.
  - Develop a new model of citizen-directed support. The core elements of citizen-directed support – i.e. robust person-centred assessment; information and advice to support an individual's decisions on care planning and funding arrangements, and a range of choices in the deployment of the agreed funding to meet an individual's eligible needs -have been incorporated into the Bill and will be progressed through the implementation of the Bill and subsequent regulations and guidance.
  - Introduce new duties on local authorities in respect of maintaining and enhancing individuals' well-being.
  - Develop a comprehensive staff training programme to support implementation of the Bill. This will encompass the support that should be provided to disabled people to help them make their own decisions.
  - Promote and increase the uptake of Direct Payments in Wales, and make them easier for people to access and use. The Direct Payments Overview Group has helped to develop a set of principles which will underpin the Regulations and the Code of Practice which will implement the Bill's provisions on Direct Payments. The Overview Group consists of representatives from disability, carer and older people's organisations, local government, and user support schemes.
- The Care Council for Wales will provide a Guide for Direct Payments Employers. The guide, which will focus on key aspects of the relationships between the employer and their Personal Assistants, will highlight the importance of considering these during the recruitment process, and will be available from late summer 2013.
- Through the integrated planning framework for Local Health Boards (LHBs) and NHS Trusts in Wales, there will be a clear expectation, set by Welsh Government, that the plans are robust and impact assessed against the protected characteristics. This will help to ensure that the needs and outcomes for all service users have been considered by the LHBs and Trusts.

<sup>7</sup>The National Assembly for Wales Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's report following their Inquiry into Home Adaptations was published in July 2013.

## 5. Improving access to technology that supports independent living.

- Communities 2.0 will continue to facilitate an 'e-accessibility forum', led by Disability Wales. The Wales e-Accessibility Forum is a group of representatives from organisations that support disabled people, with the purpose of finding ways to support disabled people to take advantage of the benefits of digital technology and the internet.
- We will work with Health Boards, Local Government the Third Sector, Private Sector and other partners to optimise and exploit infrastructure such as next generation broadband connectivity for the deployment and use of modern technology, such as telemedicine, telehealth, telecare and mhealth solutions to meet individual needs at or as close to home as possible.
- We will encourage the private sector to be involved in developing digital solutions and in the development of new ehealth and mhealth solutions.
- We will work with providers of health care and assisted living provision to exploit collaborative digital tools in the management and delivery of services. i.e. Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA), cloud-based tools and shared information systems.
- We will support the Low Vision Service in Wales which consists of a team of dedicated staff who provide a direct link to the providers of visual aids/device for those diagnosed with low vision.
- We have provided Health Boards with £2.2million per annum from 2011/12 to improve the provision of wheelchair services by the Artificial Limb and Appliance Services in North and South Wales. Whilst the purpose of the service is principally to meet essential posture and mobility requirements, every effort is made to accommodate wider social needs.
- We will scrutinize the review of service provision for Communication Aids in Wales, which highlighted the needs of those who quite literally have no voice, and without that voice are not able to access information and advice services. The scrutiny is being undertaken by an expert panel drawn from Health, Education and Social Services both within Welsh Government and Local Health Boards and local authorities with a view to testing the proposed service model, together with options for funding. This review of communication equipment will be completed in 2013.
- We are funding Rhondda Cynon Taf to undertake a pilot project concerning the provision of complex equipment across South East Wales. The purpose of this project is to develop a shared approach to the provision of equipment to improve delivery times, quality of equipment and to make better use of resources. The lessons learned from this pilot will be applied to other areas as we roll out this approach to other parts of Wales.
- The Care Council for Wales has been leading on a UK-wide project to support employers with the workforce implications of Assistive Technology (AT). A draft knowledge and skills set and workforce learning strategy, informed by AT Champions, will be launched across the UK in September 2013. There will be an end of project evaluation by April 2014 to show how the work has had an impact.

## 6. Improving access to public transport.

- As well as abolishing charging for Blue Badges, we are introducing new measures that will help to tackle misuse, fraud and abuse of the scheme. In addition, the Welsh Government has made regulations to link receipt of the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to eligibility for a Blue Badge, and to enable people of working age with cognitive impairments to be issued with a badge. A further review of the Blue Badge scheme will be undertaken to ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose and meets the needs of all disabled people who face physical or cognitive barriers with respect to transport.
- We are investing £25 million in bus and community transport services in 2013-14 via the new Regional Transport Services Grant to help deliver the Welsh Government's strategic outcomes and priorities. This will create a new mechanism for promoting higher standards of driver training and vehicle accessibility in Wales.

We will:

- Increase support for community transport to a maximum of £2.5m in 2013-14 under the new Regional Transport Services Grant, with a focus on supporting routes that enable people to access key services.
- Increase the emphasis on integrating bus and community transport services with other modes of transport via the new Regional Transport Services Grant scheme.
- Use the new Regional Transport Services Grant to focus improvements on those outcomes – including improved accessibility – that we know passengers wish to see. Some of the quality outcomes to be considered as required in return for Welsh Government funding might include:
  - improved information, better and standardised information displays at bus stops, and
  - provision of audible and visual announcements on buses.
- Invite representatives of disabled people to serve on a Quality Outcomes group set up in 2013, which will agree the targets that bus operators will be required to deliver.
- Set up a sub-group to help us develop a Charter for Disabled Public Transport Passengers. In future, disabled passengers should be able to identify bus and train operators that are committed to the Charter by means of a CharterMark or similar accreditation.
- Continue the concessionary bus travel scheme for older or disabled people. This remains a flagship initiative and is more generous in the support it offers than similar schemes across the rest of the UK.
- Work closely with the UK Government on proposals for implementing the EU Regulations to improve bus and coach passenger rights. This is expected to include improved training standards and disability awareness and assistance.

- Encourage local authorities to make more use of provisions in the Local Transport Acts 2000 and 2008 where it is appropriate to do so. These Acts provide powers for local authorities to make Quality Contract Schemes and statutory Quality Bus Partnership Schemes. Such schemes allow local authorities and bus operators to work more closely together to bring forward measures that would address many of the barriers faced by disabled people.
- Work closely with the Law Commission and the UK Government on plans for a new regulatory regime on taxis and private hire vehicles. The aim is to provide for a more consistent approach to licensing and enforcement to help raise standards across the industry. The Law Commission recently published its report and we will continue to work with the UK Government to implement agreed outcomes.
- Continue to work with the train operators and Network Rail to ensure steady progress in improving access to stations and trains, through physical improvements and staff training.
- Continue to press the UK Government for faster progress on station improvement in Wales as part of the UK-wide investment programme. Welsh Government investment and European Regional Development Funding is enabling the delivery of a more substantial programme of improvements across Wales. This includes the completed award winning modernisation of Swansea High Street Station. Current projects include:
  - Aberystwyth
  - Llandudno
  - Port Talbot Parkway
  - Pontypridd
  - Rhyl
  - Ystrad Mynach.
- Working with Network Rail, build on our trialling “ of easier access installations” - platform humps - an innovative and low -cost solution to raising platforms in smaller rural stations to enable the use of on-train ramps for wheelchair access. Successful trials have been carried out at Aberdyfi and Valley stations, where the humps have been widely welcomed by users and the local communities. The programme is being rolled out across all small rural stations across Wales with a stepping height issue between the train step and the platform currently preventing the use of on-train ramps.
- Ensure there is appropriate reporting on satisfaction measures by disabled passengers as part of the future Wales and Borders franchise contractual obligations when the franchise is renewed from 2018.

## 7. Improved access to buildings, streets and public places.

The engagement and consultation process raised a number of issues about the implementation of policy on inclusive design, planning and building. To help address these issues we will:

- Consider the outcome of research into the effectiveness of Design and Access Statements (DAS). This research has been gathering evidence, including the use of case studies, on the key issues and barriers to the delivery of good design (including inclusive design) in the built environment. The research is continuing and a report is expected by the end of September 2013. The report will include recommendations for action and may encompass both planning and building regulation aspects.
- Consider what improvements may be required to planning legislation following a review of enforcement of planning regulations, which reported in May 2013. Local authorities are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of planning legislation and building regulations; in the case of planning, it is exercised by 22 unitary and 3 national park authorities, while for building regulations, 22 unitary authorities are responsible. Where planning permission is required and a breach occurs or an access improvement is required through a condition which is not complied with, proposed enhancements to the enforcement system should lead to a swifter resolution.
- Respond to the review of Design and Access Statements, and other evidence in relation to building regulations. The recent devolution of the Building Regulations to Wales will enable Ministers to respond directly to evidence of non-compliance or other issues, and, where necessary, review guidance. In 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government in England undertook a consultation on the role of Access Statements, with a view to:
  - clarifying the relationship between Approved Document M and the Equality Act 2010;
  - improving skills and understanding amongst design professionals in relation to inclusive design, and
  - improving guidance within Approved Document M.

This evidence and the UK Government’s conclusions will be reviewed by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee for Wales, which will advise the Minister on the way forward. The Building Regulations Advisory Committee will undertake a review of any changes introduced in England that are relevant to Wales, along with the outcome of the review of Design and Access Statements in Wales. If a consultation is necessary following this work then all interested parties will be fully involved in the consultation.
- Work with Constructing Excellence Wales (CEW) and the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW) to promote excellence in inclusive design, through a programme of training events aimed at the construction industry. There are potential opportunities through workshops, the annual awards and the exemplar programme to increase the awareness of inclusive design and upskill the construction industry in Wales.

- Share good practice on engagement. With our delivery partners and accessibility advisers we will arrange to produce feedback / best practice advice, based on our experience of engaging positively with user groups and people with protected characteristics on the design of projects seeking to provide exemplar easy access to buildings and places.
- Promote provision of information about accessibility to buildings and places. CyMAL (Museums Archives and Libraries Wales) has developed a template to encourage museums, archives and libraries across Wales to provide consistent and accurate information enabling disabled people to plan their visits. The template has been developed with the support of a steering group including disabled people, representatives from disability organisations and the museum, archive and library sector. The information will be provided on a searchable database and will be easy to update and for other organisations to register and use from September 2013.
- Work with partners through the Changing Places Charter to identify opportunities to increase the provision of these facilities across Wales. The purpose of the Charter is to provide a collaborative approach to increasing the provision of Changing Places facilities throughout Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the group is to raise awareness, explore opportunities where these arise and to act positively and creatively to expand Changing Places provision. Work is ongoing with the Changing Places Charter to raise awareness of current facilities available in Wales.
- Promote the Department for Economy, Science and Transport (DEST) Inclusive Design Note as good practice across Welsh Government Departments. The Note explains the principles of inclusive design and provides a practical illustration of how such principles can be embedded into design and management processes. Our Strategic Equality Plan includes commitments to:
  - ensure that the principles of inclusive design are taken into account where Welsh Government actions include direct development of buildings for businesses, or where grant aid is offered to third parties to build and refurbish buildings for businesses; and
  - share best practice arising from the application of inclusive design guidance with partners and stakeholders.
- The Active Travel (Wales) Bill is currently being considered by the National Assembly for Wales. A key feature of the Bill is that it makes provision for design guidance, which will inform the development of a new active travel infrastructure in Wales. Accessibility for disabled people will be an important consideration in the development of the guidance and a number of groups representing disabled people are helping to inform the development of the guidance.

## 8. Increased employment rates for disabled people.

Education and training are key to employability. To make an impact on employment rates for disabled people it is crucial that, as well as having programmes in place to support employment, we support disabled children and young people so that they have access to the same educational and training opportunities as their peers. We are therefore working to promote the employment of disabled people through:

- taking action to improve additional learning needs assessment and provision; improve accessibility of school buildings; develop learning pathways for disabled children and young people; support transition key working and strengthen links between special schools and FE colleges;
  - programmes to support employment and training;
  - supporting social enterprise;
  - entrepreneurship and business start-up initiatives.
- We are proposing to introduce the Individual Development Plan, which is a process of assessing the needs of an individual through a person-centred approach, to replace the current statutory assessment process for Special Educational Needs. We are working with key stakeholders in order to develop our proposals in more detail, prior to further consultation. One of the issues for consideration will be how other care plans can inform the Individual Development Plan process to ensure an integrated, multi agency approach to focus on all aspects of the child or young person's needs.

We will also:

- Remind local authorities by December 2013 of their responsibilities in relation to school buildings, as set out in the guidance documents Planning to Increase Access to Schools for Disabled Pupils published in 2004 and Promoting Disability Equality in Schools published in 2007. Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 continues the duty on local authorities to prepare, publish and implement an accessibility strategy in relation to the schools in their areas. We will encourage local authorities as part of their functions to improve accessibility to the school buildings which they maintain.
- Work with the voluntary sector and colleagues within health, education and social care, on the development of needs-led provision pathways tailored to the needs of people with particular impairments. Provision pathways will be developed as elements of good practice that will clearly define roles, responsibilities and minimum standards for service provision relating to each level of need. Designed to be flexible, case study examples illustrate how and why children might move from one tier to another, as well as highlighting the sort of support that might be required at each tier.
- Provide, as part of the Education (Wales) Bill, for local authorities to have responsibility for assessing need and securing specialist further education provision for learners aged 16 and over with learning difficulties or disabilities. This will encourage local authorities to plan and work with local Further Education (FE) Institutions and in turn improve transitional arrangements for these young people.

- Promote the sharing of expertise between local authorities, FE colleges, special schools and SEN resource bases to improve transition arrangements. Improved capacity in FE should increase local choice for learners aged 16-25 with complex learning difficulties or disabilities who might otherwise have to attend independent provision far from home.
- Work with Care Co-ordination Network (CCN) Cymru to develop a transition key worker framework to provide guidance on developing and sustaining transition key working in Wales. This will include delivery of training and support in 2013/14 to local authorities across Wales who wish to further develop their own transition key worker services with a focus on sustainable programmes.
- Evaluate the participation of disabled people in the Welsh Government's work-based learning programmes and basic skills provision, and take action to ensure that programmes are responsive and flexible enough to meet the needs of disabled people with an identified skills gap.
- Develop options for delivery of adult employment and skills support from 2014 that is accessible and meets the needs of all individuals. We will create a more streamlined system for both individuals and employers which will offer responsive and flexible support, driven by clearly identified need. The intention is that this will lead to disabled people receiving appropriate levels of support when accessing the employment and skills system. Strengthened regional and local delivery arrangements will enable more effective and concentrated targeting of delivery of employment and skills support at a local level. We will also work to ensure that current employment and skills support is accessible to all
- Continue the Welsh Government Placement Scheme for disabled people, which helps individuals with a range of impairments to undertake a paid placement within the Welsh Government of up to 50 weeks. CVs are received from relevant organisations, and the Welsh Government looks for opportunities for individuals who are then interviewed by the relevant department.
- Through the Welsh Government and Department for Work and Pensions Joint Employment Delivery Board, explore opportunities to further align programmes, and to raise awareness of specialist provision to maximise positive outcomes for disabled people and employers. This includes the Access to Work scheme, which is delivered by DWP. The programme can provide practical advice and support to disabled people and their employers to help overcome work related obstacles resulting from disability. Support is also available for self-employment.
- Through the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Employment Ambassador, continue to raise awareness of Autism with employers and provide information on the support that is available for people with Autism and their employers in the work place.
- Offer an Employer Support Grant for up to four years to encourage and support employers to offer employment in Wales to eligible disabled ex-Remploy workers. The scheme will contribute to the costs of wages and training, and also pay companies for other reasonable costs that may arise from employing a disabled person, e.g. workplace modification. It covers former disabled Remploy employees who lost their jobs in the wake of closures of Remploy factories in 2012/13. Those who have become self-employed or are planning to set up their own business may also be eligible for ESG support.
- Continue to provide core funding to three social enterprise business support organisations, to support both new and existing social enterprises to grow towards sustainability. We will review our support for social enterprise to consider how this sector can provide social services and cultural activities to actively boost the economy through improving the employment prospects of economically inactive and workless people.
- Use our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Framework, published in 2012, as the foundation of our ongoing programme to promote CSR to small and medium enterprises in Wales.
- Promote our Procurement policy guidance on engaging with supported businesses and social enterprises, which is available via an on-line Procurement Route Planner. Our Community Benefits approach, which also encourages public bodies to consider opportunities for engaging supported businesses and social enterprises, is a requirement of the Wales Procurement Policy Statement and is also a feature of the Local Government 'Compact for Change'. The Welsh Government, local government and NHS sectors, and a number of education institutions have committed to apply the community benefits approach to projects where such benefits can be realised. Supply-side guidance on this approach is available via [sell2wales](http://sell2wales.gov.uk).
- Highlight the opportunities for supported businesses and social enterprises to tender for contracts, either through full and open competition, or under Article 19 'reserved' contracting provisions in the European Procurement Directives. In 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills wrote to highlight the supply chain opportunities that current large and strategic suppliers may be able to offer.
- Aim to increase the number and survivability of start-ups in Wales via the Welsh Government's Business Start-Up service: this is an inclusive service, including taster sessions, workshops and mentoring. The SEP Objective 2 sets out planned action to explore the potential for these initiatives to encourage more take up from disabled people. As part of the delivery of this service, providers are required to obtain an externally verified equality award. This endorses the ability of providers to recognise and meet the needs of all individuals participating in business start up activities.
- Our Tackling Poverty Action Plan includes a range of actions that will impact on disabled people, including investing in support for disabled children, tackling barriers to employment and mitigating the impact of poverty on communities, families and individuals. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/socialjustice/publications/taking-forward-tack-pov-plan/?lang=en>

These include plans by the Department for Economy, Science and Transport (DEST) to introduce positive weightings to allow for the impact of bringing harder to reach groups back into work as part of its appraisal process for grant support to business.

### **9. An increase in the number of disabled people having access to a Centre for Independent Living<sup>8</sup> in Wales.**

Centres for Independent Living (CILs) are social enterprises which are run by and employ disabled people. They provide a wide range of services, compete for contracts and in some cases attract substantial Big Lottery and EC funding. Expanding CILs could make a big difference in creating more sustainable capacity to support independent living.

CILs have a key role in:

- creating sustainable employment for disabled people, as well as work experience and volunteering opportunities;
- creating governance and leadership roles for disabled people; and
- enabling disabled people to contract to deliver services to other disabled people.

CILs take time to develop and grow. They start small, often with support in kind from a local authority or other partner. As businesses, they identify income generation opportunities and try to fill gaps identified by their customers.

We will explore how we can support the development of more Centres for Independent Living so that the services and opportunities they provide are available to disabled people across Wales. The lead must come from disabled people themselves to create sustainable enterprises but pro-active support from local authorities and other public bodies, particularly by opening procurement opportunities to user-led organisations, will help make this a reality.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill will provide that local authorities must promote, in their areas, the development of social enterprises and co-operative organisations to provide care and support and preventative services in ways that involve service users in the design and running of services. The development of social care provision delivered through social enterprises and co-operative models could also support the establishment of more Centres for Independent Living.

<sup>8</sup> A Centre for Independent Living is an organisation that meets the definition of a Disabled People's Organisation (see below) and which has established itself in premises from which a variety of key services are provided, usually including a mix of information, advice, independent advocacy and peer support, third party Direct Payments support, training, and support with engagement. Disabled People's Organisation can be defined as an organisation whose constitution requires it to have a membership and management board with a majority of disabled people, and whose objectives are the rights and equality of disabled people.

### **How will we know that our actions are on track?**

We will work with relevant Welsh Government officials and stakeholders, and with disabled people and their representative organisations, to identify or develop appropriate measures and indicators by which we can monitor progress.

In addition to the monitoring arrangements in relation to individual portfolio commitments, the Welsh Government will keep up the momentum for change by:

- regular review and challenge through the National Disability Equality Forum, and
- reporting annually on progress as part of the reporting arrangements for our Strategic Equality Plan.

It is clear from our engagement and consultation with disabled people and their representative organisations that the risks to independent living arising from the UK Government's programme of welfare reform are recognised. It is also recognised that the Welsh Government can only act on those issues within its devolved powers.

### **Who are our key partners in delivery?**

We have set out above what the Welsh Government is doing in relation to the priorities identified by disabled people. These priorities are inter-connected and all need to be tackled, at both national and local level, in order to create a genuinely inclusive and enabling society.

Progress requires action that is both strategic, for example to change public and staff attitudes, and very local and specific, such as how local services are delivered, the design of shopping centres, pavements and bus-stops, access to banks and pubs, and ensuring that surgeries, schools and colleges are inclusive and welcoming to all.

The focus on creating enabling places and communities fits closely with the strategic role of Local Service Boards. Local Service Boards bring together public services to identify and act on priorities for each local authority area. Single Integrated Plans (SIPs) set out the long-term vision for the area, the priority outcomes for a 3-5 year period and a clear action plan for driving improvement, which describes partners' contributions and accountability. These provide the ideal forum to provide leadership for a partnership approach to independent living.

The role of local authorities as community leaders, as well as providers of essential services, is crucial in creating inclusive and enabling places and communities which are sustainable for future generations. As one local authority senior officer said in a local conference on disability: 'this is about what kind of county we want to live in'.

This community leadership role includes working with local disabled people's organisations to identify need, solve problems and identify opportunities for progress. These priorities should be adequately reflected in the SIPs, which are based on a comprehensive local strategic needs assessment. This should include any national indicators on disability where this information is available at the local level.

'Shared Purpose, Shared Delivery', the guidance on producing SIPs, promotes the consideration of equality as part of the development, planning and delivery process. It also provides guidance on the engagement and involvement of local citizens. This engagement will help provide evidence for local Strategic Equality Plans, and in turn inform policies and programmes that can support disabled people to lead independent lives.

Train, bus, taxi and community transport operators are key partners in improving access to public transport for disabled people, be it physical access through accessible vehicles, access to timetable and wider information in appropriate formats, or ensuring that drivers have had appropriate training. For rail, the measures taken by operators have to be complemented through Network Rail's and the UK Governments' Department for Transport's investment in station infrastructure. We are working with all these partners through a variety of channels to ensure that access issues are addressed as a priority.

Businesses working, for example, in the development of digital and medical technologies, contribute to the type of innovative development that can support the promotion of an inclusive and enabling society. By providing appropriate support to businesses in Wales we are working towards achieving our vision of an inclusive and enabling society. There is also a role for our business partners to work with us to identify and share good practice in the built environment, and in the promotion of wider skills development and the employment of disabled people.

In the context of the financial demand and demographic pressures facing public service delivery, providing effective, efficient and accessible public services is not simply a matter of single organisations delivering existing services well alone. Nationally the Partnership Council for Wales and the Public Service Leadership Group provide collective political and executive leadership and authorisation for a collective programme of improvement and reform of public services.

Our Regional Collaboration Fund aims to bring about real and significant change at a regional level, by acting as a catalyst and, if appropriate, removing barriers such as upfront costs for the implementation of collaboration projects. The Welsh Government intends to allocate up to £10 million in 2013-14 for projects which will improve services, strengthen their resilience and deliver savings. Some projects are aimed at moving the delivery models of services, where feasible, to a regional model; others at improving resilience of the services themselves. A number of projects are bringing together and improving services across regions, as well as realising savings, for example projects to integrate health and social services.

The Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, announced by the First Minister on 18 April 2013, will assess current arrangements for governance and delivery of public services against the needs and aspirations of people in Wales and propose arrangements for the future.

### Local delivery

The messages from our engagement and consultation events underline the importance of leadership, to:

- promote positive attitudes and understanding of independent living,
- remove barriers to inclusion, and
- make the most of the opportunities provided by development and review of Strategic Equality Plans and Single Integrated Plans.

Achieving a strategic shift from dependence and exclusion to independence and inclusion requires:

- Welsh Government to provide national leadership through the Strategic Equality Plan and the cross-government action identified above; and
- local action to remove barriers and create inclusive and enabling communities.

This includes local service providers adopting a co-productive approach and working in partnership with disabled people to identify problems and solutions and make the most of opportunities to improve services. Feedback from our consultation suggested that in some areas this will require a fundamental shift in culture, from one where service providers 'gift' things to disabled people to one where we develop the trust to work together to make things change.

Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and other local service providers can help deliver the outcomes of this Framework by, for example:

- including specific consideration of how they can support independent living in their Strategic Equality Plans and Single Integrated Plans, including possibly setting shared objectives;
- working collaboratively to achieve outcomes in relation to supporting independent living;
- considering how they can support and work with disabled people's organisations in their area. A relatively small amount of resource can unlock a huge amount of voluntary time and expertise, but many groups find it impossible to get this support;
- considering how they can involve local disabled people in delivering equality awareness training for staff;
- allowing access to training resources that may be under-subscribed to representatives from disabled people's organisations. The opportunities for networking and information sharing that this would provide might also lead to a better understanding of each other's concerns and help ease tensions.

### The role of disabled people's groups and organisations

Across Wales, there are a number of local disabled people's organisations which work to promote independent living. These include:

- Disabled People's Coalitions and Alliances – these have a campaigning and engagement focus, but also provide peer support, training and information and advice; they have the potential to make a major impact at local level, as discussed below.
- Access Groups – their core role is to engage on planning and building control issues, but some engage more widely on access and equality issues and provide consultancy to the private sector; in some parts of Wales, groups have recently folded due to lack of support.
- Centres for Independent Living (CILs) – as discussed on page 30 and below.

These groups and organisations work in partnership with County Voluntary Councils and Citizens' Advice Bureaux to support individuals and provide a strong collective voice to engage with public services and the private sector.

Taken together, these groups make up a network that supports disabled people to develop their skills, enables effective engagement with public services and the private sector, provides services and creates jobs.

The situation in each area is different. In a few parts of Wales, all elements of the network exist, are active and supported, and groups feel that they are able to make an impact in improving disabled people's lives. In most parts of Wales, only some elements are in place, and in some parts, none exist, so that disabled people are at greater risk of exclusion and dependence.

### **Leadership by disabled people**

To strengthen these organisations, make them more effective and create them where they do not exist, requires leadership from disabled people themselves. Disabled people and their organisations must develop stronger capacity to negotiate, influence and educate public services.

Local disability groups typically rely on a small number of people who have campaigned for many years. To create an enabling society, it is necessary to bring in more people and, in particular, build the skills and confidence of younger disabled people to become effective voices in their areas, and to contribute at national level.

### **Problem-solving engagement: the role of Disabled People's Coalitions**

These add value by bringing together people with different impairments to identify areas of common interest, develop an evidence base and create a collective voice in relation to specific issues in the local area. They can be extremely effective in promoting purposeful, problem-solving engagement, for example:

- Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People achieved UK press coverage for its conference on transport which created a direct dialogue between politicians, service managers and local disabled people. This builds on a series of campaigns which promote practical change and develop leadership skills.
- Young Voices for Choices is a Youth Forum that enables young disabled people to have a voice on issues that affect them. The Forum is involved in many different issues at a local, national and international level, and contributes to group events and consultations. They have been especially active on Hate Crime and were involved in the 'All Aboard' transport project which had members of Young Voices for Choices travelling around Wales for 4 days using public transport.
- Diverse Cymru, which grew out of the Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People, supports an Access Forum with a broad remit and works in partnership with the local authorities to resolve issues raised. For example, co-ordinating taxi complaints so that evidence can be taken to Cardiff Council's taxi licensing committee.
- Swansea Association for Independent Living (SAIL) provides a benefits helpline, provided by a member who is a retired benefits officer. SAIL is also working with Swansea Social Services Department on improving engagement and supporting cultural change.

These organisations have a key role in ensuring that local Strategic Equality Plans are effective, that they identify the key barriers at local level and how they will be addressed. In particular, local Coalitions can provide the evidence to ensure that local authority Scrutiny committees provide effective challenge on progress.

### **Centres for Independent Living (CILs)**

CILs are social enterprises, led and run by disabled people. Several already exist in Wales, and although they provide a different mix of services, they share a common ethos of promoting independent living. By forming organisations, generating income and attracting grant support, CILs demonstrate what is possible with the right leadership and capacity. For example,

Taran in Anglesey provides education and skills training for disabled people, working in partnership with the local authority and Coleg Menai. It focuses on the individual and what they can contribute, and helps people move from isolation to participation in society. Taran is a partner in the Taith i Waith / New Work Connections scheme.

DEWIS, based in Pontypridd, provides a range of services to enable disabled people to access direct payments, to arrange their own support and to manage their personal assistants. This includes support with recruitment, tax and other employment responsibilities. DEWIS has won contracts to provide services in RCT/Merthyr, the Vale of Glamorgan, and Newport.

Diverse Cymru also provides a direct payments support service, as well as information, advice and advocacy services, and supports the Access Forum.

## Chapter 4: The enablers of independent living

This chapter builds on the priorities identified by disabled people, building on the Disability Wales Manifesto for Independent Living which was produced through engagement in 2010-11. These priorities are:

1. Information, advice, advocacy and peer support
2. Accessible and supported housing
3. Personalised care and support
4. Person centred technology
5. A barrier-free transport system
6. Accessible and inclusive places
7. Employment including self employment

The priorities have been tackled by bringing together the experience and expertise of disabled people, public service and third sector organisations and Welsh Government officials, to identify the key issues and good practice, and suggest positive action which could be taken. The actions relating to each priority have been outlined in Chapter 3.

The following sections set out for each issue:

- Why it is important to independent living;
- The issues identified from consultation and other evidence; and
- Good practice, innovation and collaboration.

### 4.1 Information, advice, advocacy and peer support

#### Why this is important

Disabled people consistently identify the need for information, advice, advocacy and peer support as a high priority in enabling Independent Living.

The Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan Objective 1 is to strengthen advice, information and advocacy services to help people understand and exercise their rights and make informed choices.

These services can contribute to better outcomes by forming the first line of a preventative approach which helps people help themselves, and reduces the likelihood of more serious problems requiring expensive interventions later.

The current economic climate, and the UK Government's welfare reform programme, makes it more important than ever that people have access to impartial advice on benefits and other forms of support, and, if needed, are supported to challenge eligibility assessments which do not reflect their true needs.

Universal advice services are crucial to disabled people, so it is imperative that the design of these services make them fully accessible to everyone. This means working in partnership with disabled people's groups in the design of the new services; ensuring staff are trained to respond to the needs of disabled people; and that information is provided in accessible formats and facilities are accessible to all.

## Chapter 4: The enablers of independent living

## Case study 1:

### Julie's story (1)

The mail that comes through your door encompasses all aspects of your life: from hospital and doctor appointments; bank statements; energy bills; water bills; council tax as well as information about shopping; benefits or employment. Everywhere around you, everyday tasks and activities require information and much of this is presented visually.

Losing my sight just over four years ago has had a major impact on my life. I have found it increasingly difficult to access material in accessible formats. Assumptions are constantly made that because I am registered blind I either read Braille, or that someone can do it for me. Neither assumption is correct.

Although I can now access electronic documents through my phone and computer, mail through the door is still a major issue. Government departments continue to send me letters even though I am listed with them as requiring information via e-mail or audio CD. One even suggested that I take my letters to the CAB to be read to me, even though it is only open for two hours every morning. In addition to this, I would not know which letter was the one they had sent me and I would have to visit several times as I wouldn't know when the letter would be arriving. Another department sent me forms to complete and eventually chased me by phone call because I hadn't sent it back. They then took five months to send me an accessible version of the form by e-mail.

All I want is to be able to carry out the tasks I carried out before I lost my sight. I want to be able to fill in forms; complete the electoral register; listen to my Bank statements; order my shopping; attend appointments and check my energy bills. I want to know what is going on in my life. If I request something in a format that makes it accessible to me I would like to receive it in that format in a timely and accurate manner without a constant battle. Is that too much to ask or expect?

### Issues and evidence

Research evidence (Dunning, 2005)<sup>9</sup> underlines the connections between information, advice and advocacy - these need to be commissioned in a joined up way, while maintaining the independence that is crucial to citizen confidence, particularly in relation to advocacy. Peer support provides an additional dimension, which empowers people by learning from others in similar circumstances.

Discussion with stakeholders and in engagement events raised five key issues:

- the fragility and patchiness of advice and information services generally;
- the lack of independent advocacy services for some groups;
- the importance of disabled people's organisations in providing peer support and peer expertise;
- frustration that public services continue to provide information and advice in inaccessible formats; and
- the increasing reliance on the internet to disseminate information and advice excludes disabled people who don't have access to the internet.

Provision is often split between services for different kinds of advice, and relating to different impairments. It is not clear who is responsible for ensuring the overall quality and co-ordination of advice services in an area, including provision by local authorities, health services and the third sector.

Third sector services are fragmented and generally reliant on short term funding, so that it is difficult to maintain staff skills and expertise. Reductions in funding for Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABs) and Legal Aid, as well as pressures on local authorities, mean that these services are more fragile than ever.



Disabled people have a strong interest in ensuring that universal information and advice provision is sustained and improved, and fully reflects their needs. The impact of welfare reform will mean that many more people are likely to need these services in the near future.

In addition, action is needed to strengthen peer support – organisations and networks which enable disabled people themselves to share experience and knowledge and support each other.

On advocacy, while funding exists for advocacy for some groups such as children, young people and people with learning disabilities, there is little provision for other groups, including adults of working age with physical impairments or mental health issues.

<sup>9</sup>Dunning, A. (2005). Information, advice and advocacy for older people: Defining and developing services York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Recent reports by the Commissioner for Older People, Age Cymru- Advocacy Counts, and the Health and Social Care Committee report on Residential Care for Older People in Wales and in scrutiny of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Bill have set out the case that an independent advocate would make a significant contribution to assist an individual with complex needs in making decisions about their care.

### Good practice, innovation and collaboration

The Welsh Government supports a wide range of different helplines and advice services, and in 2012 provided a £2.2 million funding package per annum over three years to Citizens Advice Cymru to consolidate the existing Welsh Government benefit take up schemes. These are: Better Advice: Better Health, Council Tax and Housing Benefit Take-Up and Benefit Take-up for Disabled Children.

Further one-off funding of £1.8 million was announced in May 2013 for the not-for-profit advice sector to help it respond to the increased demand on their services as a result of the current economic climate and welfare reform, at the same time as they are experiencing sector-wide funding reductions. This new funding will be co-ordinated by the Welsh Government and the Independent Advice Provider Forum to develop innovative practice and improve collaboration to ensure access to high quality social welfare legal information and advice.

In 2010 the Welsh Government commissioned a consortium of learning disability organisations to develop a website to empower people with learning disabilities and their families to obtain their right to good healthcare and to highlight what they can do for themselves. To date, over 50 documents have been uploaded to the web site.

At local level, a number of local authorities are working with partners to take a more strategic approach to advice and information – bringing together a wide range of services in one central hub, with local satellites in libraries and leisure centres. The Newport Information Station is an example of this model.

The Swansea Association for Independent Living advice line is provided by a disabled volunteer with professional experience of the benefits system. With a small amount of in-kind support from the local authority, this provides a valued and expert service to local disabled people.

Peer support groups in Rhondda Cynon Taff have been of great benefit to members who have reported increased confidence. The local authority and Communities First have helped set up and facilitate the groups, and members have been signposted to additional services to assist with their mental health or with volunteering and employment.

In addition, advice, information, peer support and advocacy provided by disabled people's organisations offers an extra dimension of expertise and peer support. Disabled people report that these organisations have been crucial in building their confidence and skills, and putting them in touch with a wide range of resources which provide the building blocks for independent living. The problem is that these organisations do not exist or are thinly spread in many parts of Wales.

## 4.2 Housing

### Why this is important

Stakeholders identified the barriers faced by disabled people in finding suitable housing, in the context of the overall shortage of housing in Wales.

Where buildings are well and inclusively designed, most disabled people are able to maintain an independent lifestyle, in their own home, enjoying the same choices and control over their lives as everyone else (see also Section 4.6 below on accessible and inclusive places).

In Wales, the legacy of poor design and build quality increases the need for adaptations, assistive technology and other support.



Private sector new-build properties are not usually big enough to accommodate wheelchairs. Older properties can be bigger, cheaper and may be easier to adapt – the hurdle is the cost of adaptation.

Problems in finding suitable housing limits the geographical mobility and employment opportunities of many disabled people.

Families with disabled children, and disabled adults wanting to start a family face particular problems. A shortage of suitable housing means that people may have to delay starting a family, or have to live in overcrowded accommodation.

Article 19 of the UNCRPD says that Governments should ensure that disabled people have the right to choose where they live and who they live with – no disabled person should be unlawfully forced into a particular living arrangement.

### Issues

#### Making the best use of existing stock to meet people's needs

In some areas, local authorities and housing associations do not have up-to-date information on their stock, making it harder to match individual needs with properties when they become available. There are some examples of expensive adaptations being removed from a vacant property when they could benefit someone else on the waiting list.

Accessible Housing Registers are a means of matching people needing adapted properties to the vacancies available in their area. To work effectively, there needs to be an up to date common register that is shared between landlords and managed actively to meet people's needs. A Disability Wales study: <http://www.disabilitywales.org/accessible-housing> highlighted the benefits of these registers and called for the approach to be rolled out across Wales.

A summary of research evidence by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2009) found that the condition of the housing in which families with a disabled child lived were on average poorer than that of families with a non-disabled child on every criterion, except in respect of the presence of central heating. The JRF also noted that a large government survey of housing which asked about the suitability of the accommodation available to people who require specially adapted homes found that children (aged 0–15 years) were more likely to be living in unsuitable accommodation than any other age group.

The JRF (2009)<sup>10</sup> reported that families with disabled children were less likely than families with non-disabled children to own their own homes. Those families with severely disabled children were even more likely to be renting property. Families who rented from the local authority or private landlords reported more housing needs than owner-occupiers or those renting from housing associations.

### Grants for adaptations

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), Physical Adaptations Grant, and other schemes, can be vital in maintaining people's independence at home. The efficiency of the process is critical to meeting needs at an early stage. The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (Wales) Order 2008 extended the provision of DFGs to cover access to gardens and making gardens safe for disabled people.

### Tenancy rights of disabled people

In relation to supported living, people with learning disabilities report that their feelings in relation to their home situation e.g. whether they are happy to share, and who with, are sometimes not recognised. More fundamentally, their rights as tenants of their own home are sometimes not recognised. Plans are made to change their co-tenants, or the staff who provide their personal support, with little or no consultation with the people affected. They feel that providers sometimes think about housing as a placement, not a person's home. In addition, tenancy agreements are not always clear and easily understandable.

### Longer term trends

There is an increasing number of people with learning disabilities in the population, and they are living longer. Learning Disability Wales estimate that, of the 11,000 people with learning disabilities in Wales, around half live in the family home. As their relatives become older or die, they will need support to maintain their housing. This is in addition to the growing demand for adapted and supported housing more generally.

<sup>10</sup> JRF. (2009). Housing for disabled children and their families An information resource. York: JRF

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

### Good practice, innovation and collaboration

The review commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2009 from CEL Transform reported a steady improvement in the efficiency of the local authority processes for administering Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). This has included streamlining processes and making better links with Occupational Therapists and other expertise.

The Welsh Government's Independent Living Grant has enabled a streamlined, non means-tested process for smaller grants (between £1 -10,000). Many local authorities supplement this with their own small grant schemes.

Care & Repair services in Wales administer the Welsh Government's Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP) to support people by providing small but essential adaptations.

In 2010, the Welsh Government commissioned an independent review of the Supporting People Programme in Wales. The programme provides housing-related support for up to 70,000 people in Wales, some of whom also receive support funded through Community Care funding. The report made 25 recommendations covering the governance, finance and operation of the Supporting People Programme. Over the past 18 months, Welsh Government officials have worked with the voluntary sector, local government and the NHS to implement these recommendations, which include redistributing funding to provide housing-related support and the introduction of collaborative models of commissioning services.

### Community Lives Consortium

Community Lives is a not for profit organisation which provides a wide range of housing and support services to disabled tenants in the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas. Its focus is on enabling and empowering people to live as independently as possible. Community Lives uses new approaches to communication to facilitate people's involvement e.g. through pictures and film (see also Chapter 4.4 below).

### Cardiff Accessible Homes

Cardiff Accessible Homes is a collaborative project established to help people who wish to move from their current property into a property that suits their needs. The project is supported and funded by Cardiff County Council, Cadwyn, Cardiff Community, Hafod, Linc-Cymru, United Welsh, Taff Housing and Wales and West Housing Associations. The project is monitored by a steering group made up of representatives from the local authority, housing associations, disabled tenants, and organisations who work with disabled people within the Cardiff area.

<sup>12</sup> Review of progress in implementing recommendations on the provision of Adaptations Services in Wales, CEL Transform.

## North East Wales Single Access Route to Housing

The Welsh Government is supporting the North East Wales Single Access Route to Housing – a major collaborative project to simplify access to social housing, including adapted homes, across four local authorities, five social landlords and Glyndwr University. The aim is to develop a single access route to all non-market housing options, to include the private rented sector, social lettings agencies, intermediate rented housing and affordable home ownership. There is the potential to expand to include the remaining North Wales authorities, and to develop a best practice toolkit, enabling the model to be replicated across Wales.

## Person-centred approaches to housing adaptations

The CEL Transform review mentioned above highlighted good practice in a number of local authority areas:

- Caerphilly Council is proactive in encouraging people to consider a move where the current property is unsuitable for the adaptations needed. They offer a relocation grant for those in the private sector who are moving, and will visit and encourage them to think about options. They will consider all tenure options, and offer support to those moving within or into the owner-occupied sector, as well as assisting those who are renting privately to move to social housing. An occupational therapist is involved in decisions about relocation, registering properties and the best use of adapted property. This has resulted in reduced voids and improved use of adapted property.
- Merthyr Tydfil Council has a scheme in place which enables people to borrow recycled stair-lifts for a period of time. They can be fitted within 48 hours. Work is carried out outside the DFG process with no means test. The stair-lifts can be returned when no longer required.
- Carmarthenshire Council have placed DFGs within a one-stop shop housing service, regardless of tenure or where someone has been referred from. So for example, someone approaching for advice about DFGs will also be referred for advice on energy use and a grant where appropriate. All officers working in the service are trained energy advisors. Technical officers dealing with DFGs have a wider home improvement remit, including prevention of falls and fires.

A new information leaflet on DFGs for older disabled people was launched in 2012. This was funded by the Commissioner for Older People in Wales and was developed jointly by Care & Repair Cymru, Age Cymru and the college of Occupational Therapists.

## 4.3 Personalised care and support

### Why this is important

For disabled people who are in receipt of social services, this support is essential to enable them to carry out everyday activities. The design of these services, how needs are assessed, and the quality and efficiency of provision, are all crucial to people's well-being and quality of life.

Giving people more influence over these services, including through direct payments, as discussed below, can make a major difference in helping them to increase their independence.

The Welsh Government has embarked on a major transformation agenda for social services provision in Wales through the White Paper 'Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action' published in 2011, through the forthcoming Social Services and Well-being Bill, and the delivery framework to support the implementation of Sustainable Social Services for Wales.

The Bill focuses on improved well-being and will give people rights to access information and advice, and find out about services. The Voice and Control project is part of the programme of implementation, and it will bring a clearer focus on meeting the needs of individuals, and enabling them to have a stronger voice in, and greater control of, the support they receive. This includes:

- developing a model of citizen-directed support ;
- developing a simplified and unified approach to assessment and eligibility; and
- introducing requirements on local authorities to develop and promote integrated advice and information services.

This Framework has been informed by the consultation and engagement with disabled people that took place during the development of the reform programme.

In terms of healthcare, our policy for more services, care and support at or as close to home as possible, Setting the Direction, and the 5-year framework for the NHS, Together for Health, and other key policies and strategies, recognise the importance of assessing the 'whole person' health and wellbeing needs of individuals and, in partnership with the individual, planning and delivering integrated and co-ordinated personalised care to meet those needs.

## Issues and evidence

In Wales, around 111,800 people aged 18 years and over were supported either in the community or in care homes by social services during the year 2011-2012. Of these people, 28,900 were aged 18-64 years and 82,900 people were aged 65+ years.



The percentage of the population aged 18 years and over receiving social service care during the year 2011-2012 was around 5%. Around 1.5% of the population aged 18-64 years received social service care, compared to around 15% of the population aged 65+.

We do not have a figure for the number of disabled people who receive social services care; however, it may be assumed that a large proportion of those receiving social service care are disabled.

In Wales, around 18,950 people under the age of 18 years were categorised as Children in Need (as of 31st March 2012). This represents around 3% of the population aged under 18 years. Of the 18,950 around 4,910 were disabled (26 percent of those in need).

The ethos which underpins the Welsh Government's reforms of social services is that services should:

- support the social model of disability;
- promote independence and autonomy;
- empower people and recognise their rights; and
- focus on the resources of the individual and the community, not on impairments and deficits.

This has implications for:

- service design;
- engagement processes; and
- staff recruitment and training.

Direct payments are one route to promoting this ethos. They mean that, following assessment, people can opt to have a cash sum which they use to buy the kind of support they want, e.g. by employing a personal assistant. This can be very empowering, enabling people to go out more rather than stay at home to receive traditional forms of care, and giving them direct control over how they spend their day and how and when services are provided.

Although direct payments have been available in Wales for some time, they need to be more widely promoted, and support services and systems need to be more readily available to help people take them up. The scope of direct payments also needs to be extended, to assist individuals to have more control over the design of the care package and services they receive (for example, see Chapter 4.4 on the use of direct payments to buy specialist equipment).

Young disabled people told us they would like more of an active say in how their support is administered. They said this would help to improve both the services they receive, and also encourage them to speak up and have the confidence to challenge their treatment later in life.

### **Good practice, innovation and collaboration**

The DEWIS Centre for Independent Living in Pontypridd is a social enterprise which is led by and employs disabled people. It provides a range of services including supporting people to plan and pay for their own care through direct payments, working across Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Diverse Cymru is a social enterprise covering Cardiff and the Vale local authorities. The organisation has grown from the previous Cardiff and the Vale Coalition of Disabled People. Through contracts and grants from the local authorities, it provides a support service for direct payments as well as a range of other advice and advocacy services. It supports problem-solving engagement with disabled people on a broad agenda including public transport, the built environment and taxis.

The Swansea Association for Independent Living (SAIL) is a coalition of disabled people in Swansea which is working with the local authority as part of its reform of social services provision. SAIL has also won Lottery grant funding to develop its engagement work.

## **Case study 2:**

### **Tina's story**

I have Friedrich's Ataxia and I am a wheelchair user. I wasn't a wheelchair user when I was in school but I did break my ankle and was on crutches for a few weeks, so was really glad they had a lift there. During my last year at school my condition did start to have an effect, but the teachers were supportive and made sure I could still participate in school life; I had a passion for performing and was still included in the school play. In my last year in school, I often lost my balance and would hear comments like 'can't you walk straight?!'. I think that people's attitudes towards disabled people is one of the biggest barriers we face.

It's great that many public buildings such as libraries have computers that anyone can use, but I know that disabled people often lack the confidence to use public transport to get there, or lack confidence to go to an unfamiliar building in case it doesn't meet their access requirements. For example, I have been to a building that the staff considered to be accessible because it had a ramp to the entrance, but what they didn't realise was that the ramp was too steep for most wheelchair users to push up it independently. And with this same building, once I got inside I was faced with a corridor of heavy fire doors. You can understand why this situation would knock someone's confidence in going places independently.

Awareness of accessibility issues is key to breaking barriers. I now live in Cardiff during the week and go back home at weekends. I must say that even though accessibility in Cardiff is far from perfect, it's better than a small village. Most country pubs don't have accessible toilets and you normally face a step to enter. Taxis aren't accessible but even in Cardiff if I ring for a taxi and mention that I'm in a wheelchair, they will say that no-one is working on the accessible cabs or that it will be with me in an hour. Once, I came from a restaurant in Cardiff Bay and went up to an accessible taxi at the rank; the driver was not happy to see me and shouted at the driver behind to take me. They both argued for a while before one gave in. I would have walked away if I could. I'm a Llanelli Scarlets fan and have been a season ticket holder for 7 years. I know that many fans and people from the town disagreed with moving from the beloved Stradey Park to Parc y Scarlets, but I wasn't one of them. As a wheelchair user, I welcomed the move. It meant no more sitting outside behind the post in the pouring rain. Now we have the best views in the house, the rain can't touch us, and it's just a short trip down in the lift to buy a coffee. I now look forward to supporting our boys, in whatever weather.

## 4.4 Person-centred technology

### Why this is important

Stakeholders identified the growing potential of Person-Centred technology (PCT) as an enabler of independent living and employment.

They highlighted the work of the European Commission's 'ImPaCT in Europe' project. Learning Disability Wales was one of the partners in this project which demonstrated how specialist and mainstream technology can be combined to provide new solutions for disabled people - at home, on the move, for leisure and in employment.

The project summarised the importance of PCT as follows;

1. Technology is a growing part of the daily and professional lives of Europeans;
2. PCT is a fundamental part of intervention strategies aiming at the empowerment of disabled people;
3. PCT can support the paradigm shift from "disabled people being objects of care" to "disabled people being able to self determine their life and increase their independence".

Article 26 of the UNCRPD says that Governments should ensure that everyone is aware of, and can use, the range of equipment and technology available to support independent living.

### Definition

PCT refers to any device, gadget, adaptation or Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) designed or used to support independence and safety for people. In the case of disabled people in the health and social sector, this can include telecare, telehealth and telemedicine, environmental controls, communication and mobility devices as well as Assistive Technology (AT) for desktop, mobile and web applications. Low-tech solutions such as artificial limbs or wheelchairs can also be included in this definition.

### Issues and evidence

The ImPaCT project's overall conclusions were, in summary, as follows:

1. ICT and EAT strongly improve the quality of life of disabled people, including their levels of independence, participation in the community and employability. They are a driving force and a tool for change.
2. Services and PCT should be tailored to individual needs, abilities and preferences.
3. There is a strong need for co-operation between mainstream and specialised services. There should be a focus on the 'normal' with provision of specialised services when needed.
4. Person-centred involvement in all steps of the process (design, testing, development of training etc) is needed.
5. There is a strong need for information dissemination and training on EAT and PCT. Both service providers and disabled people need to be informed and trained on the possibilities that PCT can offer, as well as the use of specific devices. Importantly, training should be provided on a continuing basis so that people can keep up with any changes.

6. PCT suppliers, service providers and disabled people should continue to build networks and promote the exchange of best practices on PCT and its possibilities. International networks are important as the use of PCT differs greatly between countries.
7. In the current financial climate, it is difficult to find sufficient funding for training on the use of PCT and its development. PCT should be a priority for funding.
8. There are several large-scale research and demonstration projects that provide an independent evaluation that the appropriate and personalised use of PCT can increase the independence of both individuals and their carers. This can both reduce cost and increase health, wellbeing and opportunities for employment.

### Barriers to achieving the benefits of PCT for independent living

The project also identified the barriers to achieving the benefits of PCT across EC countries, including:

- a confused and essentially a medical model of service delivery with the provision and development of PCT often led by manufacturers. The purchasers of specialist PCT devices are providers of services and not the individuals themselves. This restricts the influence of current and potential users on the use and development of PCT;
- the majority of people with intellectual disabilities (sic) do not live in supported services and access to technology is consequently limited; and
- there are many silos that inhibit access to and development of PCT including barriers between health and social care, silos focused on specific conditions and confused funding streams.



### PCT in Wales

The messages from the ImPaCT project were underlined by the Person-centred technology Working Group as highly relevant to independent living in Wales. This was reinforced in our engagement events – particularly the emphasis on the need for better training of staff in the use and potential of PCT. It was reported that problems with training and assessment can mean that people are given equipment that is too sophisticated for their needs – a cheaper and simpler solution would have been better.

The other issues identified by stakeholders as important in the Welsh context were:

- the cost of some specialist software is a major barrier;
- sharing the expertise of disabled people is important – to help resist aggressive marketing and get good quality relevant advice from peers;
- many disabled people are not online – tackling this is a priority for the Welsh Government’s Digital Wales project
- disabled people experience problems finding out where to go for technical advice and support. This information needs to be easily available, and in accessible formats;
- direct payments are key to helping people buy the equipment or software that they need but some social services staff are unaware that Direct Payments can be used to buy specialist equipment (see also Chapter 4.3);
- independent assessment of need is key to ensuring that people get the PCT they need (see also Chapter 4.3);
- there needs to be an understanding of what PCT can mean for carers as well as disabled people themselves; and
- there is a fragmented approach to assistive technology with all the various public services doing their own thing.

Stakeholders also highlighted the role of PCT in enabling employment, drawing on the lessons from the European conference convened by Learning Disability Wales in June 2011, as part of its participation in the ImPaCT project. The key messages from the conference are summarised in Box 1 below, which is also relevant to the employment priority (see Chapter 4.7).

#### **Box 1: The role of PCT in enabling employment**

##### 1. What do employees need from employers?

- awareness of individual capabilities and potential
- longer run, tapering support
- work trials and try outs
- improved opportunities for working from home

##### 2. What support do employers need?

- a widening of the UK Government’s Access to Work programme
- better training of Access to Work advisers on PCT and disability

##### 3. What needs to be done to increase the use of PCT in enabling the employment of disabled people?

- clearer strategies for local authorities and other public sector employers
- employers to employ disabled people and provide leadership
- much more sharing of examples of success
- better links between assessment at school and vocational training: more strategic approach
- appropriate training of assessors
- higher parent expectations.

#### **Good practice, innovation and collaboration**

**Vision Products:** a supported business established by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. It employs disabled people to refurbish and recycle complex equipment to meet individual needs, and offers a number of apprenticeships for pupils leaving special schools. The business includes running an equipment store and refurbishment facility which pools equipment across RCT and Merthyr local authorities, including social services and the special schools, and Cwm Taf Health Board. The business also competes for tenders to provide bespoke doors and windows for housing associations and other public and private organisations. The benefits include: employment and training for disabled people, value for money through collaboration, and better customer service in the supply of equipment to meet individual needs.

**Community Lives:** use of flip cameras as communication tools. Staff are provided with training on Person Centred Planning via a SPICT (Supporting Participation through ICT) training course. Part of this course is using multimedia as a way of communicating with the people they support. The flip video camera is very simple and discreet to use and provides benefits for staff and disabled people. The individual is included in making their own plans, and those plans can be filmed in a video, using audio or even taking the video/photos themselves. Individuals have taken ownership of these and gained confidence in the process. They have had a voice, been provided with choices and made decisions. Staff report that having a visual request from an individual, a life-story, or even a plan portraying how much support a person needs has a far bigger impact compared with just reading a piece of paper.

**Reach 112** is a project being delivered via Sign Wales to provide an online interpreting and relay service that enables deaf, hard of hearing people, as well as those with specific communication needs (due to strokes etc.) to communicate effectively with frontline staff via software that can be installed on desktop PCs, laptops, notebooks and Android mobile phones. The service also makes it easier for health care staff to reach clients visually at a distance and for staff to interact through an on-demand relay agent in speech, text or sign language (from their own ordinary phone). The underlying aim is to ensure that health and social services, business and education can reach deaf and hard of hearing people in a way which offers equality in interaction. There is also a cost benefit for public services as it reduces the cost of providing interpretation support.

## The Digital Accessibility Centre

The Digital Accessibility Centre in Neath is a non-profit social enterprise and one of the leading providers of web accessibility services. It is a team of accessibility specialists, many of whom are disabled people, who are committed to digital inclusion and ensuring everything digital is accessible. The company's website outlines the benefits of accessible websites as summarised in Box 2 below.

### Box 2: Why Accessibility?

First and foremost because it is a legal requirement, secondly it is courteous and inclusive, and last but not least, because it makes good business sense.

An inaccessible website costs more to run than its accessible counterpart. Time to maintain the site is considerably reduced.

If your website is selling for your business, your revenue can be increased substantially by making sure that everyone can buy from you without encountering difficulty. Providing an accessible website is simply common sense.

## 4.5 A barrier-free transport system

### Why this is important

Stakeholders emphasised the links between transport and wider participation in society. Many disabled people rely on public transport to get to work and participate in family and community events, and for access to leisure, culture and public services. Barriers still exist which prevent independent mobility, contributing to the isolation and exclusion of many disabled people.



As well as promoting equality, tackling these barriers supports the Welsh Government's wider objectives of increasing public transport use and promoting sustainable transport.

Difficulty in using public transport is a key barrier to disabled people's employment (see research evidence below and in Chapter 4.7). Disabled people who drive rely on the Blue Badge scheme which ensures that they are able to park within reach of their destination.

The changes in the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, and its successor the Personal Independence Payment, are likely to increase the numbers of disabled people who rely on public transport for independent mobility.

Article 20 of the UNCRPD says that Government should do everything possible to ensure disabled people can get around as independently as possible, including by ensuring people can travel when they want at a price they can afford.

### Issues and evidence

In Great Britain 74% of adults with impairments experienced restrictions in using transport compared with 60% of adults without impairments (ONS Life Opportunities Survey, 2009/10)<sup>13</sup>.

Research by the Office for Disability Issues (2009)<sup>14</sup> found that: lack of access to a car is a significant issue for disabled people and their families and results in a much greater reliance upon public transport services. Data from the Omnibus Survey (2004) suggested that disabled people were more than twice as likely to have no access to a car in the household than non-disabled people (i.e. 35.3% of those defined as having 'health conditions that limited activity or work' compared to 14% without). Similarly, 40% of non-disabled people had access to two cars compared to just 23% of disabled people.

The gap between disabled and non-disabled access to a car is greater in Wales than in other parts of the UK (Jolly et al, 2006)<sup>15</sup>. Welsh Government data (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003)<sup>16</sup> shows that six out of 10 disabled people or people with a long-term illness have the use of a car compared with eight out of 10 other people, and they are less than half as likely to have the use of more than one car.

Qualitative research conducted by the DfT (2008)<sup>17</sup> emphasised the importance of car access to disabled people: Car access was described as being 'fundamental' to maintaining mobility and independence by people with physical impairments and chronic health conditions. They felt that without having access to a car they would not be able to get out as often and would be 'housebound' for more of the time, able only to make essential journeys. Concern was expressed that without access to a car they would be unable to work, access services, fulfil their caring responsibilities or become socially isolated, and their quality of life would deteriorate.

The DfT found that in general, disabled people are less likely to drive and are more likely to be reliant on public transport, community transport or lifts from friends and family for their journeys. However, for some groups, for instance people with physical impairments and chronic health conditions, driving is still the predominant mode of transport.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/los/life-opportunities-survey/life-opportunities-survey/bulletin.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Office for Disability Issues. (2009). Choice and Control/Access to Goods and Services. A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) for the Office for Disability Issues. London: Office for Disability Issues.

<sup>15</sup> Jolly, D., Priestley, M., and Matthews, B. (2006). Secondary analysis of existing data on disabled people's use and experiences of public transport in Great Britain. Leeds: University of Leeds.

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Assembly Government. (2003). A Statistical Focus on Disability and Long Term Illness in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Transport. (2008). Travel behaviour, experiences and aspirations of disabled people. London: Department for Transport.

A report by Leonard Cheshire (Campion, Greenhalgh and Knight, 2003)<sup>18</sup> surveying disabled people's transport problems found about half having to turn down a job offer or interview due to lack of accessible transport, and half saying that lack of transport had restricted their choice of job. These figures rose to 62% for wheelchair users and 86% for those with a visual impairment.

The Leonard Cheshire report (2003)<sup>19</sup> also found that 21% of disabled people surveyed felt that transport problems had limited the availability of education and training, 30% found difficulty in attending social functions (45% for those without access to a car), and 20% found it difficult or impossible to access the healthcare they needed.

### Issues identified during engagement and consultation

The main barriers raised were:

- lack of accessible and up to date passenger information;
- public and staff attitudes;
- inaccessible buses, trains and taxis; and
- inaccessible stations, platforms and bus stops.

Many of these barriers were also identified in the National Assembly's Equality of Opportunity report on Service Provision for Young Disabled People, 2007.

### Passenger information

Many disabled people need to make detailed journey plans before travelling, so that they can be confident that they will not encounter accessibility issues at any stage of their journey. So easy to use and accurate passenger information is a very high priority for them. This issue has recently been examined by the Welsh Public Transport Users' Committee – the committee received evidence in particular in respect of hearing and visual loss. A range of communication methods needs to be used to meet disabled people's needs. Audio and visual announcements are particularly beneficial to certain disabled people. Where audio and visual announcement systems are available, they are not always activated.

In addition, the committee found that public transport information in respect of accessibility of services for disabled people is not consistently available.

Disabled people needing support to travel on trains are required to book support at least 24 hrs in advance, which makes spontaneous journeys impossible. Unplanned changes can present major problems e.g. when a train is delayed and the station is unmanned after a certain time and/or lifts are closed.

<sup>18</sup> Campion, J., Greenhalgh, C., and Knight, J. (2003). Mind the Gap: Leonard Cheshire's social exclusion report 2003. London: Leonard Cheshire.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

## Case study 3:

### Julie's story (2)

Since losing my sight I can really empathise with the struggle to use public transport. The many physical and attitudinal barriers and obstacles that I've encountered remind me of the Steve Martin film 'Planes, Trains and Automobiles', although they are not quite so funny.

There is no crossing to my bus stop and there is no accessible information at the stop. I cannot see bus numbers nor the bus itself so when a bus stops, you enquire what number it is. Sometimes the driver just says, 'no problem' or similar but all too often you are treated to a 'huff' or worse as you have been an inconvenience.

When getting on the bus, selecting my seat is done by touch and is quite difficult. On one occasion, a young lad began making extremely lewd and suggestive comments about where I should sit and why. This wasn't just one or two comments but a sustained and quite vile stream of inappropriateness. I felt extremely exposed and did not know where to go to get away from him. I did not want to put my hand out to touch anything in case he grabbed me and the whole situation was quite unbearable. The situation was resolved by an older lady coming from her seat and saying there was a seat near her. The fact that the driver did nothing made me feel very isolated. As this was very near the beginning of my attempts to travel independently, it put me off bus travel. If the bus driver had told me where the first available seat was, I would have felt more confident about where to go. He could have stepped in with that information at any time.

I was terrified of trying to use a train at first and I was advised to use assisted travel as I was assured it would revolutionise my travel. But I remain to be convinced and it also means I can't just travel when I need to, without planning ahead. With assisted travel, the fact that I need someone to meet me to guide me off the train means that I am often left sitting in my seat, beginning to panic slightly as everyone exits and passengers come on and no-one arrives to guide me off. I have been left on the train and reached a different destination. I have been guided off the train by a steward and left on the platform like a piece of unattended luggage, but the worse by far was, when having booked assisted travel to an unmanned station, I was actually refused assistance and left on a platform. A security guard then arrived and told me to follow him. I wear dark glasses and have a white cane and he asked me to follow him! On longer journeys, there are problems with access to the buffet car or toilet facilities as I do not know where they are, and there are not enough trained staff to help.

I use taxis a great deal especially on shorter journeys. Technology helps as I receive text messages so I know the taxi has arrived. If the drivers are made aware of my requirements, they don't park across the road from my house and they don't expect me to get out into oncoming traffic. On a few occasions there have been drivers who take me the long way round on my regular journeys and then charge me a bit more thinking I won't know any different (I do!). On one occasion, a driver decided to drop me at a random place in my road because he had a better job come through. He refused to tell me where I was as he said he didn't have time for 'all this fuss'. However, most drivers are courteous and happy to guide me to an entrance if asked.

## Public and staff attitudes

Some disabled people do not feel confident in using public transport even when physical access is possible. Some report that they don't use buses, or have stopped using them, because of problems experienced, in some cases with the attitudes of members of the public or individual drivers.

Disabled people look to drivers and other staff not only to comply with physical access requirements, but also to provide support (e.g. in asking other passengers to remove luggage blocking wheelchair access) or challenge unacceptable public behaviour. In many cases, positive staff attitudes enable disabled people to travel with the same freedom and confidence as other passengers.

Where this is not the case, staff attitudes are an important barrier, and some disabled people report being made to feel unwelcome by some staff. Disabled people feel that staff training emphasises the physical aspects of e.g. wheelchair handling, but gives inadequate attention to the customer care aspects, including the diverse needs of disabled people, and the impact of different impairments. People with learning disabilities report that communication can be a barrier – some drivers and other staff lack awareness of how to communicate effectively with disabled people.

An additional area of concern for disabled people is the fear of harassment or abuse while travelling. The EHRC inquiry into disability-related hate crime (EHRC, 2011)<sup>20</sup> found that disabled people view travelling on public transport as a 'hot spot' where verbal and physical abuse from other travellers are commonplace. Sometimes the abuse came from staff, or staff did not intervene to prevent the harassment.

Disabled people are realistic about the speed and cost of physical improvements where these require major capital works such as station refurbishment. When these improvements are planned, engagement with disabled people is crucial to ensure that opportunities to get it right for everyone are not missed.

In the short term, disabled people see better staff training as an affordable solution, which will have benefits for large numbers of people. There needs to be a focus on keeping training up to date, ensuring it is of high quality and involves disabled people so that staff can see what a critical issue this is for individuals.

## Physical access: vehicle, stops and station design

Inaccessible buses are a particular problem in rural areas. The National Assembly's Equality of Opportunity Committee report mentioned above estimated that 80-90% of buses are accessible in Swansea, Newport and Cardiff, but the figure for some rural areas is only 30%<sup>21</sup>.

The Welsh Government's target is that all buses will be accessible by 2017, and all trains by 2020. Two thirds of Welsh train stations have limited or no accessibility for wheelchair users. This is the legacy of Victorian train stations and is being addressed through the current programme of station refurbishment.

<sup>20</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2011). Hidden in Plain Sight. Inquiry into disability-related harassment. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

<sup>21</sup> P39 Service Provision for Disabled Young People, National Assembly for Wales Equality of Opportunity Committee, 2007.

## Transition to independence

Transport enables disabled young people to become more independent, including getting to work and going to the pub and the cinema with their peers.

## Better for everyone

Many of the improvements sought by disabled people will benefit other passengers. Making it easy to enter and use stations and buses becomes ever more important in an ageing society, and also makes travel easier for parents with young children. Easy to read and understand information benefits all passengers.

## Good practice, innovation and collaboration

As in other areas, it is important to take account of the diverse needs of disabled people – the issues for people with sensory loss are often overlooked. The Bus Users UK in Wales report: Public Transport for People with Sensory Loss: Best Practice Guidance highlights four key cross cutting themes as essential to improvement: training, engagement, information and accessibility.

Newport and Monmouthshire are examples of local authorities using contracts as a lever to raise standards on vehicle access and staff training.

The Cardiff Bus scheme to offer free transport for Police Community Support Officers is designed to promote confidence in all passengers, including disabled people.

The Bridgend Disabled People's Coalition Transport Conference in April 2012, obtained wide press coverage at Wales and UK level. The conference enabled direct engagement with transport operators on the problems people face at local level. This illustrates the potential impact of local problem-solving engagement.

The Diverse Cymru (see Chapter 4.3 above) taxi monitoring scheme is an example of an effective complaints mechanism, and a route to solve problems through Cardiff Council's Taxi Licensing Committee.

The Pembrokeshire Passport scheme is designed to address communication barriers faced by some disabled people using public transport. The scheme uses an orange wallet to hold clear messages for drivers and other staff on public transport. Cardiff Council is leading on a project to roll this out, and is working with transport providers and local authorities across Wales to raise awareness of the scheme.

Disabled people have been engaged in transport hub design and wider regeneration in, for example, Swansea, Cardiff and Newport.

## Working in partnership to raise awareness.

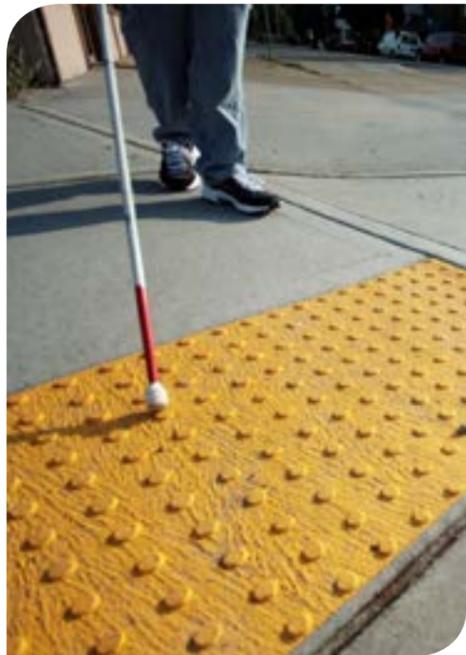
During April 2012, Disability Wales Young People's Transport Challenge arranged for a group of disabled young people from Pembrokeshire Young Voices to travel on Arriva Trains and Buses around Wales. The trip was planned in partnership with Arriva to identify both problems and good practice. The key messages are summarised in Box 3 below.

**Box 3: Pembrokeshire Young Voices/Disability Wales Transport Challenge 2012****Good things**

- staff helpful and well aware of the needs of disabled passengers
- staff checked disabled spaces were clear
- ramps well organised
- Changing Places toilet at Swansea station

**Continuing barriers**

- design of vehicles, stations and bus stops
- staff addressing the carer, not the disabled person
- passengers using disabled spaces to store luggage
- bus timetables too high and difficult to understand
- announcements difficult to understand.

**4.6 Accessible and inclusive places****Why this is important**

In our engagement events, people reported that poor design of buildings and places limits people's ability to participate in everyday life, including their ability to

- secure and maintain employment
- vote and contribute to meetings and consultations
- go shopping, to the cinema or to the pub
- go to the same secondary school as their friends from primary school
- see their child's school play.

The key message is that buildings and public spaces, as well as access to the countryside, should be designed for everyone to use – this promotes equality, sustainability and value for money.

Physical access barriers limit the choices that people have in their everyday life – where to shop, where

to go to school, where to meet friends.

Access to the natural environment enables disabled people to have the same choices for leisure and holidays as everyone else.

Access to play, leisure and cultural activities can contribute to the health and well-being of disabled children, young people and adults.

Disabled people and their families and friends represent a significant proportion of the population, so there is a strong business case for creating facilities that are fully accessible to them.

Every new development or adaptation creates an opportunity to promote the inclusion of disabled people. In spite of equality legislation and strong policy guidance, our consultation suggests that these opportunities are still being missed on a regular basis.

**Issues and evidence**

The Welsh Government is committed to promoting good design in the built and natural environment, reflected in Planning Policy Wales and the associated Technical Advice Note 12: Design. As explained in the TAN, most planning applications are required by the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 to include a Design and Access Statement (DAS). This statement should set out the design principles and concepts that have applied to the development, including how issues relating to access have been dealt with. DAS deal with the exterior of buildings, not internal issues. Pre-application guidance for those considering submitting planning applications was issued in 2012.

Powers for making Building Regulations in relation to Wales were devolved to the Welsh Ministers on 31 December 2011. Approved Document M – Access to and use of buildings, provides guidance on external and internal access to the buildings and the use of their facilities. There is also guidance on sanitary conveniences. The guidance is applicable to both domestic and non-domestic buildings.

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Where an Access statement is submitted relating to Building Regulations requirements, it should be seen as complementary to, and a development of, the DAS submitted for planning purposes.

Our engagement events identified a number of concerns with the implementation of the planning policy and the requirements of the building regulations, which question whether, in practice, buildings are still being built, or refurbished, by the private and public sectors, which are fully accessible by everyone.

The issues raised during our engagement events and other meetings include:

- in spite of equality legislation, there is a perception that disabled access is of low priority and seen as less important than, for example, heritage or wildlife issues; we were told that there are very few examples of enforcement action where buildings fail to meet the guidance;
- concerns about the quality and effectiveness of Design and Access Statements, and the fact that they are not validated by someone who fully understands disability issues;
- concerns about the capacity and expertise of planning departments to monitor and enforce the quality of proposals from an access perspective;
- limited understanding of disability accessibility issues amongst architects and developers;
- problems at the interface of planning and building control responsibilities;
- the role of private building control inspectors who are employed by developers and potentially less likely to challenge proposals on accessibility grounds;
- building regulations guidance not keeping up with technical changes e.g. larger powered wheelchairs;
- access barriers to schools have the effect of limiting choice of school so that, for example, disabled primary school pupils are separated from friends at secondary transition. Also, disabled children can be restricted to small areas of a school site due to limited access; and
- parents of disabled children often accept lack of accessibility as the unfortunate status quo. Because children in wheelchairs can be pushed up and down kerbs or carried upstairs, parents do not like to make a fuss or be seen to be awkward.

## Case study 4:

### Tony's story

I am an ex-policeman with a degenerative spinal condition and I have been wheelchair dependent for two years.

As an able-bodied person I took the ability to walk around my village and towns for granted. I could go into the shops and the bank and the businesses I needed to go to without a second thought.

Now I depend on a wheelchair to get around, I find that pavements are dangerous. They are either too narrow or at an angle which means I have to push the chair on one side just to stay off the road. There are not enough drop kerbs to enable me to get onto a pavement and where there are drop kerbs, cars are parked across them. To go into my village means going in the road into oncoming traffic.

I can't use most 'accessible' toilets as they are too small for a wheelchair or do not have the adaptations necessary for me to transfer to the toilet from my wheelchair.

Going to the bank means giving them advance notice so they can put out a ramp for me. I am unable to enter shops as the doors are too narrow or they have steps to them. Where I can get in the aisles are too narrow for me to get through. The display racks are placed too close together so I can't go in and browse; I have to stay outside while my partner goes into the shop.

In 2011, I founded the Disability Action Group Wales. We campaign on disability rights; we also provide social and sporting opportunities for disabled people with physical impairments. In September 2013 we will launch 'Disabled People Together', which is the culmination of a vision I started working on 18 months previously. Disabled People Together is a coalition of individual disabled people, disability organisations and other interested parties in Ceredigion, including Health, Social Care and other professionals. The Coalition represents the interests of disabled people who live, work or study in Ceredigion. We have an online web forum for disabled people in the County to discuss their issues and suggest ways to deal with them [www.disabledpeopletogether.org](http://www.disabledpeopletogether.org). This will form the agenda for regular quarterly meetings with the County Council.

Ceredigion County Council has embraced this idea and has welcomed the opportunity to engage actively with the disabled community in Ceredigion. I am hopeful that this model will be adopted by other County Councils and disabled people.

## The role of local Access Groups

Ensuring that public buildings, shops, banks, leisure facilities, streets, parks and other public spaces are fully accessible to everyone cannot be achieved simply by compliance with legislation, guidance and regulations. It also requires a detailed understanding of how the building and its wider surroundings will be used. This is where local Access Groups have invaluable expertise to help public authorities and private sector developers identify potential problems, as well as opportunities to create more inclusive buildings and places.

The evidence we received from Access Groups across Wales indicates that:

- there are some examples of good practice, where local Access Groups receive practical support from the local authority, including payment for their input to planning applications, have good relationships across the authority, often facilitated by an experienced and knowledgeable Access Officer, local elected Members are supportive and the group feels its advice is acted upon by the local authority and other public services;
- in many cases, however, Access Groups say that they are struggling to make their voices heard, a small number of members struggle to cope with the workload, and they receive little or no support; and
- in a small number of areas, we were told that there is no Access Group, and therefore no input from disabled people on planning and design issues.

Access Groups face a difficult balance in maintaining sufficient independence from the local authority to be able to challenge effectively, while relying on support in order to enable volunteers to contribute, many of whom devote substantial time, with no remuneration, and often inadequate compensation for costs incurred.

It is important to ensure that access issues are understood by those assessing planning and building regulation applications, so that these considerations are mainstreamed and implemented more widely across public services impacting on the built environment.

An additional issue is how to achieve effective engagement of Access Groups with public services and private developers, to ensure that all buildings and public spaces are accessible, safe and welcoming for all, and thus promote inclusion, participation and well-being. All public bodies have a strong interest in these outcomes and should establish support arrangements and relationships with Access Groups which recognise this.

## Changing Places Facilities

Changing Places facilities are specifically designed to accommodate people with very high support needs. They are a higher specification to the standard accessible toilet, requiring more space and extra features. They are essential to enable some people to travel and access public facilities. At present, there are only 15 Changing Places facilities in Wales.

The Welsh Government is a partner in the Changing Places campaign, which aims to increase the availability of these facilities in major attractions, shopping centres and transport hubs. There is a need for a partnership approach to identify opportunities to fill gaps – with the aim of at least one such facility in every local authority, more in larger population centres. The costs are modest as a percentage of major projects, and they make a huge difference to some disabled people and their families.

## Good practice, innovation and collaboration

The Framework for Action engagement events drew attention to the following examples of progress in promoting inclusive access.

A number of participants emphasised the positive impact of local access groups, for example the improvements secured at Machynlleth station through engagement with Dwyfor Access Group, and the on-going involvement of Access groups in Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Neath Port Talbot in major construction and regeneration projects.

The Welsh Government's engagement with Arfon Access group in the design of the Sarn Mynach building ensured significant enhancements in access, and also underlined a key lesson that even more could be achieved in future with engagement at an earlier stage.

The Design Commission for Wales was established in 2002 to champion good design and a high quality built environment. The Commission supports equality of opportunity across the built environment and an inclusive design approach to address barriers. It provides multi-disciplinary training in DAS and other design issues, working with planners and practitioners in Wales.

Disability Wales developed and delivered the Way-to-Go project, which helped to bridge the gap in knowledge, skills and awareness among disability groups, access groups and planners respectively. Training helped access groups and disability groups to understand the planning system and how to influence it, and planners gained an appreciation of how effective planning decisions can impact on creating an accessible and inclusive environment for disabled people and other members of the community. A best-practice toolkit has been produced and an interactive web-based version is in development.

The engagement events emphasised the importance of school design in enabling disabled children to be fully included. In March 2012, Priory Church in Wales Primary School in Brecon, Powys became the inaugural recipient of the 2012 Selwyn Goldsmith Award for Universal Design. The school design was described as an exemplar of how thoughtful and innovative design, together with a clear understanding of user needs, can combine to produce an environment that is inclusive and accessible to all those who use it. The design team consulted with local community and access groups and potential users to gain a valuable insight of their needs and what they hoped to gain from the completed building. The sensitive design has resulted in a building that creates a warm, readily navigable, flexible, fresh, and usable space for pupils, staff and visitors.

Disabled people told us that they recognise the challenges in improving access in older buildings, but would like to see more evidence of public authorities producing an audit and action plan to drive progress over time. Bangor University's access audit process, including engagement with the Arfon Access group and a phased action plan, was mentioned as a positive example. Others included Carmarthenshire's schools accessibility plan and Caerphilly Schools Access audit.

Our engagement events also emphasised the business case for accessible tourism, and making sure that Wales offers a wide choice of accommodation, venues and facilities to attract disabled visitors. Producing an access statement is a mandatory element of the Visit Wales grading process for tourism businesses. The work of the National Park Authorities and the Forestry Commission in enhancing the visitor experience for disabled people was recognised including, for example, the Coed y Brenin centre in Snowdonia.

## 4.7 Employment

### Why this is important

Stakeholders emphasised the crucial role of employment in promoting people's independence, confidence, health and well-being, providing a route out of poverty and enabling participation in society. In 2012, 44.8% of disabled people aged 16 to 64 in Wales were in employment, compared to 74.6% of non-disabled people.

The following specific barriers were identified:

- disabled people's relatively low skill and qualification levels, due to factors such as absence from education during childhood, barriers to accessing mainstream provision, lack of specialist provision where needed, and low expectations – of staff and parents, and sometimes disabled people themselves;
- physical barriers to taking up employment opportunities, such as access to transport, buildings and housing;
- negative and inflexible attitudes of some employers; and
- lack of awareness of support available e.g. through the Department for Work and Pensions Access to Work scheme which funds a range of adjustments to support disabled people to get or keep a post.



The role of assistive technology as a major potential enabler of employment is outlined in Chapter 4.4.

In order to increase disabled people's participation in employment, it is necessary to make progress on the other priorities in this Framework, and move towards a genuinely enabling and inclusive society.

Accessibility and the provision of appropriate facilities in schools can help to ensure that children and young people gain skills and qualifications. Perhaps more importantly, this can also help build confidence in disabled children themselves and develop an attitude of independence early in life through participation in school and out-of-school activities.

Early contact with other disabled and non-disabled children can also help promote inclusion and combat negative attitudes and behaviour. The point was made during the consultation exercise that

children can learn very early in life to see others who are different as equal, and it is better to learn this from direct exposure rather than as part of the curriculum.

At the same time, positive action to promote disabled people's employment is crucial. In this context, the value and growing importance of the Access to Work scheme was emphasised. This is due to both the current economic conditions and the pressure on more disabled people to enter the labour market as a result of welfare reform.

The different types of employment all have a role in increasing participation by disabled people – this includes mainstream employment, self-employment, social enterprise, sheltered employment, supported businesses, and supported work placements leading to mainstream employment.

Wales has many notable examples of social enterprises and supported businesses which employ disabled people in a variety of roles including governance, management, training, administrative and manufacturing. These include: DEWIS Centre for Independent Living in Pontypridd, Vision Products in Pontyclun, the Digital Accessibility Centre in Neath, Diverse Cymru in Cardiff, Agoriad in Bangor, Antur Waunfawr in Caernarfon, the Coleshill Centre in Llanelli, and many others. By expanding this sector, many more jobs could be created.

Voluntary work is also important – in its own right and as a route to paid employment. For some disabled people, paid work is not feasible. In trying to do everything possible to support disabled people's aspirations to work, we should not reinforce the stigma on people who are unable to do paid work, but value the contribution they are able to make.

Article 27 of the UNCRPD says that disabled people have the right to earn a living through work that they freely choose and in workplaces that are accessible and inclusive. The Equality and Human Rights Commission defines this not as a right to employment, but as a duty on government to create the conditions which promote the equal opportunities for disabled people to start earning a living through work.

## Issues and evidence

### Employment rates

In Wales, 44.8% of disabled people aged 16 to 64 were in employment in 2012, compared with 48.8% for the UK as a whole. The gap between disabled people's employment rates and those of non-disabled people is greater in Wales than in the UK as a whole.

<b>UK non-disabled employment rate</b>	<b>76.5%</b>
<b>UK disabled employment rate</b>	<b>48.8%</b>
<b>Wales non-disabled employment rate</b>	<b>74.6%</b>
<b>Wales disabled employment rate</b>	<b>44.8%</b>

The figures for some groups are much lower, for example, only 12% of people with severe learning disabilities in the UK are in employment (2011)<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/people-with-disabilities-in-the-labour-market/2011/rpt-people-with-disabilities-in-the-labour-market.html>

## Case study 5:

### Beth's story

Beth is 23 years old and has Down's Syndrome. Beth was trained in Hospitality and Housekeeping at Derwen College, and also developed independent living skills. In her second and third years, she lived in a bungalow with other students, and although care staff were always available, the girls lived by themselves. Beth trained and worked in the college's restaurant and coffee shop, which are open to the public. It was her hope to return to her home town and get a job as a waitress. She also wanted to live either by herself or with friends, with whatever support was necessary, and continue to enjoy as much independence as possible.

Beth returned to live in the family home because no suitable accommodation was available where she could live independently or with support, and she was unemployed for a while. She had a work placement in the coffee shop of a local supermarket, which became untenable when health and safety regulations prevented her from carrying out her role. Beth also spent some time in a sheltered workplace, but this felt like a step backwards after her experience of professional work opportunities in college.

Beth's mother spoke to the Chief Executive of the organisation that managed the sheltered workplace and told him about her expectations for Beth to find paid work and live independently when she finished college, and how disappointed she was that those expectations had not been met. He responded by suggesting that the family needed to lower their expectations. In his opinion, it was a mistake to send Beth to college, because it had given her aspirations for a future that she would never be able to achieve.

Beth's mother was shocked that this attitude could prevail within an organisation which claimed to be helping people to achieve greater independence and to realise their potential within the workplace. She feels that it is this attitude, wherever it is found, that is the greatest obstacle to people like Beth achieving their goals.

Eventually, through a chance meeting with a family friend, Beth was offered a long-term unpaid work-experience placement as a waitress in the restaurant at a local college's Management Centre. She began working there for a few hours each week, and the placement was a great success. Beth was able to walk to and from work by herself, and relished this independence. She regained much of the confidence and self-esteem which had been eroded since leaving college.

Staff at the Centre were welcoming, and eager to find out what Beth could do, rather than worrying about what she couldn't do. They were evidently pleased with her work: they offered to increase her hours, and began paying her for some of her hours each week. She continues to work additional hours voluntarily, and spends some of her time working with the housekeeping staff in the Centre's guest accommodation, meeting new people and practising new skills.

## Remploy Factory Closures

In 2012, the UK Government confirmed it would be closing seven out of nine Remploy sites in Wales during Phase 1 of Remploy's commercial process, and that further closures were likely. Since then, there have been further closures in Wales leading to the loss of almost all Remploy factory jobs for disabled people in Wales. This necessitated a proactive response to seek employment opportunities for the employees who otherwise might face difficulties finding new employment.

## Disability and low income

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2011)<sup>23</sup> has found that a third of low-income, working-age adults without dependent children are either disabled themselves, and/or have a disabled partner. Among those with dependent children, this proportion is a quarter.

Analysis of the Households Below Average Income data set for 2004-2008 by WISERD<sup>24</sup> shows that households where there is a disabled person (or persons) present have a median income that is lower than those living in non-disabled households. WISERD have calculated that, within Wales, 25% of individuals living in households where a disabled person is present are living in poverty. This is 6 percentage points higher than that observed within non-disabled households. This differential is identical to that observed within the rest of the UK.

## Living costs

Smith et al (2004)<sup>25</sup> found that disabled people experience additional costs in most areas of everyday life, from major expenditure on equipment essential for independence, to ongoing higher expenses for, for example, food, clothing, utilities and recreation. Deaf people face high costs due to their need for interpreter / communicator services. The weekly income of disabled people who are solely dependent on benefits is approximately £200 below the amount required for them to ensure an acceptable, equitable quality of life. Leonard Cheshire Disability (2009) estimate that, on average, disabled people of working age face additional costs of between 24% and 35% on top of normal expenditure.

Even when in employment, disabled people incur penalties. Analysis by the National Equality Panel (2010)<sup>27</sup> has shown that paid employment rates for disabled people are less than half those of people who are not disabled, and when employed, disabled people have median hourly earnings 20% lower for men, and 12% lower for women. The National Equality Panel concludes that "the disability employment 'penalty' has grown steadily over the last quarter century. Disabled people with low

or no qualifications have been particularly strongly affected, and more so than non-disabled people." Analysis of statistics for Wales (EHRC, 2011a<sup>28</sup>, EHRC 2011b<sup>29</sup>) has found similar trends to those reported by the National Equality Panel.

## Transport to employment

A survey by Leonard Cheshire<sup>30</sup> of disabled people's transport problems found about half having to turn down a job offer or interview due to lack of accessible transport, and half saying that lack of transport had restricted their choice of job. These figures rose to 62% for wheelchair users and 86% for those with a visual impairment.

The fact that so many disabled people rely on public transport (see Chapter 4.5) means that land use planning that isolates employment locations far from residential areas, without adequate public transport, is a further barrier restricting disabled people's access to employment opportunities (Sustainable Development Commission (2010))<sup>31</sup>.

## The transition to employment

Research by the Shaw Trust demonstrates that transition planning for young disabled people does not give sufficient emphasis to employment<sup>32</sup>. Many young people have strong educational qualifications but lack the independent living skills to become confident in the labour market: this is an issue also facing many disabled young people. Support for disabled young people should in the first instance focus on participation in mainstream education and training provision, and the enhancement of independent living skills. Specialist provision for disabled people who are unable to participate in mainstream provision is essential to support these young people to either move into mainstream provision, or to fulfil their potential in another suitable setting.

## Good practice, innovation and collaboration

The following are examples which the Independent Living project team has visited, or have been drawn to our attention during the engagement process.

Vision Products is a business supported by Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority which employs disabled people and competes successfully for public and private contracts (see Chapter 3.4 on person-centred technology). Vision Products is part of the Supported Business in Wales network which consists of 21 organisations across Wales that provide sustainable employment to disabled people, making a huge difference to the lives of their 800 employees, delivering quality products and services through a highly-skilled, adaptable workforce.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation. (2011). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>24</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). (2011a). An anatomy of economic inequality in Wales. Cardiff: EHRC Wales.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, N., Middleton, S., Ashton-Brooks, K., Cox, L., Dobson, B., and Reith, L. (2004). Disabled People's Cost of Living. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>26</sup> Leonard Cheshire Disability. (2011). Disability Poverty in Wales. London: Leonard Cheshire Disability.

<sup>27</sup> National Equality Panel. (2010). An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK. London: London School of Economic, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.

<sup>28</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). (2011a). An anatomy of economic inequality in Wales. Cardiff: EHRC Wales.

<sup>29</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). (2011b). How Fair is Wales? Equality, human rights and good relations. Cardiff: EHRC Wales.

<sup>30</sup> Champion, J., Greenhalgh, C., and Knight, J. (2003). Mind the Gap: Leonard Cheshire's social exclusion report 2003. London: Leonard Cheshire.

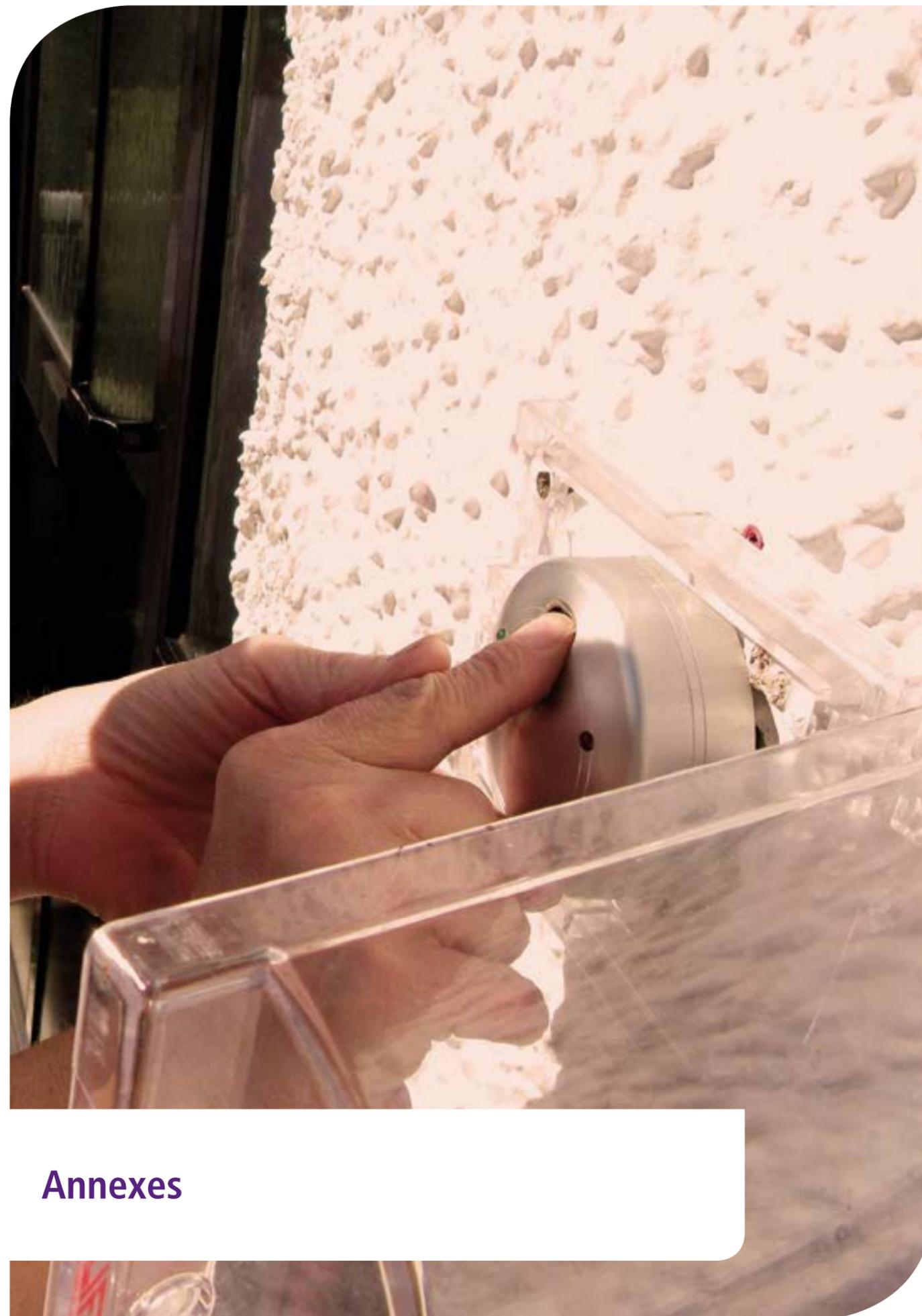
<sup>31</sup> Sustainable Development Commission. (2010). Sustainable development: The key to tackling health inequalities. London: Sustainable Development Commission.

<sup>32</sup> Beyer, S., Grey, J., Kaehne, A., Meek, A., and Sheppard, K. (2008). What Works? – Good practice in transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities. Cardiff University: Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities.

Agoriad Cyf is a social enterprise which operates across North Wales. It was established in 1992 to develop the employment possibilities for disabled and disadvantaged people. It provides a service in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbigh, Flint and Wrexham. Working with socially responsible businesses, Agoriad's teams seek the best opportunities and match these with appropriate training and after-placement monitoring to ensure a seamless transition into work for its clients.

DEWIS in Pontypridd, Diverse Cymru in Cardiff and the Vale, the Centre for Independent Living De Gwynedd, and Taran in Anglesey are social enterprises with which local authorities contract to provide a number of services, including support to disabled people in using direct payments (see also Chapter 4.3 and Chapter 3).

The Coleshill Centre in Llanelli has attracted European funding for a major new development which will offer a wide range of training opportunities and income-generating activities, as well as advisory and therapeutic services. It is a partnership project led by Carmarthenshire Council which promotes the economic inclusion and well-being of disengaged people, as well as supporting the regeneration of Llanelli town.



## Annexes

<sup>33</sup> Link: <http://base-uk.org/about/members/agoriad-cyf>

## Annex 1:

### Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

AT	Assistive technology
CIL	Centre for Independent Living
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAS	Design and Access Statement
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DfT	Department for Transport
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EC	European Commission
EAT	Electronic Assistive Technology
e-Health	the use of information and communication technology such as computers, mobile phones, communications satellite, patient monitors, etc., for health services and information.
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
ESG	Employer Support Grant
FE	Further education
HIW	Health Inspectorate Wales
IAA	Information, advice and assistance
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LHB	Local Health Board
mHealth	(also written as m-health or mobile health) is the practice of medicine and public health, supported by mobile devices, e.g. for collecting community and clinical health data, delivery of healthcare information to practitioners, researchers, and patients, and real-time monitoring of patient vital signs.
NHS	National Health Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PCT	Person-Centred Technology
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duties
SD	Sustainable development
SEN	Special educational needs
SEP	Strategic Equality Plan
SIP	Single Integrated Plan
TAN	Technical Advice Note
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WISERD	Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data & Methods

## Annex 2:

We are very grateful to all those who contributed to the development of this Framework for Action on Independent Living. The consultation document was drafted following extensive engagement with disabled people and their representative organisations. It is therefore important to acknowledge the contributions made during that period. Many individuals gave up their time to tell us about their experiences and the issues that they face in everyday living; that input was invaluable and has informed the contents of the final Framework for Action.

We would also like to thank individuals who participated in thematic workgroups, regional engagement events, and consultation events, and those who responded to the consultation document. This includes our partners and stakeholder organisations, and Welsh Government staff.

Special thanks go to the members of the National Steering Group who oversaw the development of the Framework and provided invaluable expertise and experience.

### Organisations represented on the National Steering Group

Action on Hearing Loss Cymru  
 Age Cymru  
 All Wales People First  
 Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People  
 Cerebra  
 Chartered Institute of Housing  
 Children in Wales  
 Disability Wales  
 Guide Dogs Cymru  
 Learning Disability Wales  
 Leonard Cheshire Disability  
 Mind Cymru  
 Multiple Sclerosis Society Cymru  
 National Autistic Society Cymru  
 NHS Centre for Equality & Human Rights  
 Participation Cymru  
 Planning Aid Wales  
 RNIB Cymru  
 Scope Cymru  
 Tai Pawb  
 Vision in Wales  
 Wales Council for Deaf People  
 Wales Council for Voluntary Action  
 Welsh Local Government Association

## Annex 3:

### Links to key documents

A Statistical Focus on Disability and Long-term Illness in Wales 2003

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/focus-disability2003/?lang=en>

Building Resilient Communities: Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/socialjustice/publications/taking-forward-tack-pov-plan/?lang=en>

Statistics for Wales – Labour market data for disabled persons age 16-64

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=3271>

Strategic Equality Plan – Welsh Government

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/equalityactatwork/?lang=en>

Tackling Hate Crimes and Incidents: A Framework for Action

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/130711-hate-crime-framework-consul/?lang=en>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/>