

Consultation launch – Action on Disability: the Right to Independent Living

Replacing the 2013 'Framework for Action on Independent Living', the new approach focuses on key issues identified by disabled people including transport, employment, housing and access to buildings and places.

Disabled people have been consulted throughout the framework's review, which was overseen by a Steering Group led by Disability Wales.

Contributions to the consultation have come through workshops run across the country, including people with expertise and experience of a wide range of disabilities; through hundreds of emails, letters and phone calls and through conversations in homes, workplaces, schools and communities.

One of the key messages to come out of the engagement process was that, while Welsh Government legislation, policies and programmes are in place to support equality for disabled people, there are often problems with local implementation.

The new framework and accompanying action plan set out how Welsh Government is fulfilling its obligations in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and also highlights the role of key legislation, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Welsh Government's national strategy: Prosperity for All.

Underlying the whole framework is the "Social Model of Disability" which recognises the need for societal change – removing barriers so that disabled people are able to participate fully.

There are 75,000 disabled people in Wales who are either actively seeking work or would like to work. They are often being held back by barriers beyond their control, such as organisational systems and other people's attitudes as well as physical and environmental barriers.

Just 45% of working age disabled people in Wales are currently in employment, compared to 80% of those not disabled. This is a shocking 35% "disability employment gap".

Julie James, Leader of the House and Chief Whip, said:

"The Welsh Government is committed to helping disabled people to fulfil their potential, achieve their ambitions and realise their dreams. Disabled people tell us time and again there are many barriers which frustrate them – it is imperative we break these down.

“Tackling these challenges, whether they be physical obstacles such as inaccessible buildings or something more entrenched like people’s attitudes, will require real partnership working to create real change. We’ll achieve the best results by working with disabled people so we understand the issues properly and find the right solutions.

“I commend this framework for encouraging action with and for disabled people across the whole of Wales. I would urge everyone to respond to the consultation.”

Rhian Davies, Chief Executive of Disability Wales, said:

“The Right to Independent Living and being included in the community is fundamental to the draft Framework for Action on Disability. This doesn’t mean doing everything for yourself but having appropriate support and access to the necessary resources where needed, as well as action by government and wider society in tackling longstanding barriers in education, employment, housing and transport.

“The aspiration behind the draft Framework is nothing less than the creation of an inclusive nation where all disabled people enjoy their rights on the same basis as others.”

The consultation is open from Monday 22nd October and will close on Friday 18th January 2019.