

Evidence submitted on the Priorities for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, 1 September 2021

Submitted by [Learning Disability Wales](#)

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. Learning Disability Wales works with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

We are grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the forthcoming priorities of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. We would like to suggest the following priorities for the committee:

1. Fair work and closing the learning disability employment gap

We are glad to have seen Welsh Government repeatedly showing a strong commitment to fair working conditions and particularly to creating a healthy, safe and inclusive work environment. We would like to underline that inclusivity in working environments has to include the environment to welcome and support people with a learning disability and/or autism as well as traditional attempts to make physical environments more accessible.

In order to ensure that workforces and recruitment become more inclusive for people with a learning disability and/or autism, we suggest integrating a range of measures into employment, namely supported work placements, supported internships and supported apprenticeships. It is important that these measures are widely available to all age groups, not just 16-18 year olds. Many young people with a learning disability and/or autism remain in education far longer than the general population and will often need some form of specialist employment support at various stages of their lives. Thus the typical 'one-off' support offered to school/college leavers or the unemployed is simply not sufficient for them.

To this purpose we would like to see the committee take leadership in setting standards and demonstrating the promotion of well-being built into private sector contracts. We support the development of clear consistent standards through new indicators and would like to see indicators that report on employment of people with a learning disability and/or autism, with particular emphasis on the public sector reporting efforts in leadership in the employment of these people in the next five years. Furthermore, we suggest developing clear targets to measure social value within procurement that should be linked to the Well-being of Future Generations Act in terms of job creation, inclusive workforce, workforce development and environmental standards.

2. Strategic Investments in Wales

Some areas of Wales struggle with poverty and have done for a long time. We recommend that the Committee scrutinises the Welsh Government's commitment to the Socio Economic Duty for Wales and ensures that all commissioning and investment decisions are taken with the Duty in mind.

3. Improving public transport

We urge the committee to engage with the Transport for Wales strategy and scrutinise its commitment to improving access to public transport in rural areas. Consideration needs to be given not only to making public transport physically accessible, but also for booking and purchasing tickets to be easy to understand and use by people with a learning disability. The plans to extend public transport and to make it safer, more reliable and affordable will greatly benefit disabled people in general and people with a learning disability in particular. People in North Wales in particular will benefit greatly from more reliable and accessible transport.

4. Inclusive Covid recovery

Much of Welsh Government work will be concerned with controlling and recovering from the Covid19 pandemic. We ask the Committee to use its powers to ensure that disabled people are not left behind and that policies intended to improve the lives of Welsh citizens do not have a negative impact on disabled people. We urge the Committee to closely study the report "[Locked Out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19](#)" published by the Disability Equality Forum earlier this year to understand more on what that would entail.

Further resources:

Steve Beyer, 2020: *Engage to Change briefing: What policy changes are required to provide people with a learning disability or ASD equal access to the labour market in Wales?* Available online: http://www.engagetochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/National-Job-Coach-Briefing-6July20-V6_final.pdf

Steve Beyer, 2021: *Engage to Change briefing: Jobs for people with a learning disability or autism - The role of the NHS.* Available online: http://www.engagetochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Engage-to-Change-The-role-of-the-NHS-Jan21_final_eng2.pdf

Further policy information from the Engage to Change project and Learning Disability Wales can be found on our policy page: <https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/policy/>

Disability Equality Forum, 2021: *Locked out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19.* Available online: <https://gov.wales/locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19-html>

All Wales People First Manifesto 2021 – Available online: <https://allwalespeople1st.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Manifesto-2021-Website.pdf>