



Dr Chris Llewelyn

Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive

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Welsh Local Government Association**

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Dyddiad / Date: 2 December 2024

Gofynnwch am / Please ask for: Luke Nicholas

Ebost / Email: luke.nicholas@wlg.gov.uk

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru

Dear Jenny,

Inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap

Many thanks for your letter regarding the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into the disability employment gap. On behalf of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) I'm keen to respond to the points raised by the committee.

Our understanding is that in the broader picture, all 22 local authorities have a genuine and active commitment to widening participation in their workforces from underrepresented groups in our society, across all equalities considerations including disability. While as Leader I cannot speak for specific authorities, I understand that a generally positive approach has been embedded across local government in Wales, which strives towards continuous improvement on disability and employment with all councils achieving Disability Confident status.

In October 2024, local government HR directors and relevant Cabinet Members for workforce received a presentation by Terry Mills at the Joint Council for Wales meeting, a social partnership structure that brings together our local government employers and trades unions. The presentation was well received and stimulated discussion regarding current practice. All councils took away key messages including the need to deepen and accelerate progress on disability employment, and as a sector we will be looking to continue to work individually and collectively through

professional networks and the Joint Council for Wales to support improvements to practice.

In his discussions with your committee, Terry Mills was right to indicate that Disability Confident Leader status has only been attained by Pembrokeshire County Council, while all other local authorities have reached either stage one or two of the scheme. The WLGA will explore with councils their future ambitions and intentions with regards the Disability Confident scheme, which I anticipate will have renewed interest following the presentation at the Joint Council for Wales.

It will come as no surprise that resources and capacity can be a key obstacle for councils wishing to progress to level three of the scheme. The current priority remains the need to recruit from as wide a pool as possible to meet our future workforce challenges, address skills shortages, and retain talent at a time of constrained budgets and annual rounds of service cuts enforced on us by the wider financial situation.

Councils recognise and value the diversity that exists within the labour market and continue to actively recruit from this diverse pool, working locally to provide opportunities to attract and develop talent, so that our workforce is representative of the community it serves.

However, as Leader of the WLGA I would be keen to support efforts to enable councils to become Disability Confident Leaders. As a next step I intend to share this correspondence with WLGA and local government colleagues, so that we can create further momentum regarding the Disability Confident scheme and collectively work towards understanding what the opportunities and challenges are with regards progression to Leader status.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE
WLGA Leader