Public Document Pack

Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board

Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference

Monday, 25 September 2023

2.00 pm

STATUTORY MEMBERS	
Conwy County Borough Council Councillor Charlie McCoubrey (Leader of the Council) Rhun ap Gareth (Chief Executive) **Denbighshire County Council** Councillor Jason McLellan (Leader of the Council) Graham Boase (Chief Executive)	**Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board** Libby Ryan-Davies - Integrated Health Community Director Alyson Constantine - Integrated Health Community Director of Operations **Natural Resources Wales** Martin Cox (Head of Local Delivery North) Mark Hughes (Team Leader North East Wales) **North Wales Fire and Rescue Service** Helen Macarthur (Assistant Chief Officer)

INVITED PARTICIPANTS	
Community and Voluntary Support Conwy Wendy Jones (Chief Officer) **Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council** Tom Barham (Chief Executive) **Public Health Team** Louise Woodfine, Consultant in Public Health **Town & Community Councils** Councillor Carol Marubbi (representing Conwy) Councillor Gordon Hughes (representing Denbighshire)	**North Wales Police** Owain Llewelyn, Divisional Commander **National Probation Service** Andy Jones, Head of Probation Delivery Unit **Welsh Government Representative** TBC **Office of the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner** Stephen Hughes (Chief Executive) **North Wales Housing Association** Helena Kirk (Chief Executive)

Hannah Edwards, PSB Development Officer

Conwy County Borough Council, Bodlondeb, Conwy, LL32 8DU

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AGENDA

1   WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2   MINUTES OF LAST MEETING(Pages 5 - 10)

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 July 2023 (copy attached).

3   MEETING ACTION TRACKER(Pages 11 - 13)

The Chair will lead on this item (copy attached).

4   INVERSE CARE LAW

To receive a presentation by Helena Belmans, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board on the Inverse Care Law programme North Wales.

5   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

To receive a presentation by Mike Corcoran, Co-Production on the development of the community engagement plan.

6   EMPOWERING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN TO EMPLOYMENT: ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS(Pages 13 - 28)

To receive a report from Fran Lewis, Conwy County Borough Council providing provides a summary of engagement which took place between June and August 2023, on the topic of empowering diverse communities into employment (copy attached).

7   FORWARD WORK PLAN(Pages 29 - 32)

The Chair will lead on this item (copy attached).

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CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board held by multi-location on Monday, 17 July 2023 at 3.30 pm.

PRESENT

Members:

Councillor Jason McLellan	Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Charlie McCoubrey	Conwy County Borough Council
Nicola Stubbins	Denbighshire County Council (representing Graham Boase)
Rhun ap Gareth	Conwy County Borough Council
Martin Cox	Natural Resources Wales
Kevin Jones	North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (representing Helen MacArthur)
Helena Kirk	North Wales Housing Association
Louise Woodfine	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (Public Health)
Libby Ryan-Davies	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Wendy Jones	Conwy Voluntary Support Conwy (CVSC)
Tom Barham	Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC)
Carol Marubbi	Town and Community Council – Conwy representative

Officers:

Emma Lea	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Amanda Jones	Conwy County Borough Council
Hannah Edwards	Conwy County Borough Council
Fran Lewis	Conwy County Borough Council
Mike Corcoran	Co-Production Network for Wales
Iolo McGregor	Denbighshire County Council
Ceri Blythin-McDonough	Denbighshire County Council
Helen Miliband	Natural Resources Wales
Iona Hughes	Natural Resources Wales

ALSO PRESENT

Observer – Lydia Orford, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (Public Health)

1   WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from –

- Graham Boase, Denbighshire County Council
- Helen MacArthur, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Elin Gwynedd, Welsh Government
- Owain Llywelyn, North Wales Police
- Mark Hughes, Natural Resources Wales

2 **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board meeting held on 23 March 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 *be received and approved as a correct record.*

3 **MEETING ACTION TRACKER**

The Chair, Councillor Jason McLellan, presented the meeting Action Tracker.

Membership continues to be an ongoing action as delivery of the Well-being Plan develops. This will also be discussed as part of the Terms of Reference item later in the meeting.

Confirmed that the well-being plan has been published and circulated to stakeholders following approval at the March meeting. A joint letter has since been received from the Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner congratulating the PSB on publication of the well-being plan. As well as outlining where they believe PSBs can have the greatest impact in the next cycle of well-being plans, and their offer of support to help PSBs deliver this. This letter will be distributed to members following the meeting.

Councillor Jason McLellan confirmed that he and Tom Barnham have not yet managed to meet to discuss third sector partner involvement in the PSB.

PSB support officers are working on mapping the PSBs proposed activities against 'Whole Systems Thinking Levels' and this will be presented at a future informal meeting for member discussion.

The engagement mission statement item will be presented at this meeting for consideration.

4 **SEEING THE WOOD AND THE TREES – THE APPLICATION OF SYSTEMS THINKING TO COMPLEX HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CHALLENGES**

Christian Heathcote-Elliott, Principal Public Health Practitioner in Public Health Wales presented an overview of whole systems thinking approach in practice and its relevance to PSBs. The presentation also provided information of the work currently being undertaken to develop proposals for supporting PSBs under the Health Foundations Shaping Places programme.

Overview of whole systems approaches provided as -

- should be viewed as a way to understand and manage complexities – it is not a new or a quick way to address challenges.
- Is informed by a number of disciplines – no set recipe, the ingredients will depend on purpose and questions that are being addressed.
- This approach can be applied to a wide range of issues which affect population health and well-being.
- Key aspect of approach is that it helps us consider both the part and the whole issue.

- Helps senior leaders to address complex challenges.
- Systems thinking has a futures focus and ties in with the work that the Future Generations Commissioners office are undertaking in futures thinking. Helps us to look at uncertainty overtime and consider the intended / unintended consequences of actions.
- Helps to detect patterns, often called system archetypes – knowing these patterns can influence how we might intervene in a system.
- Important to gain multiple perspectives from a range of stakeholders to inform the process.

Christian Heathcote-Elliott informed the board that Public health Wales have been successful in their application to the Health Foundations' *Shaping Place for Well-being in Wales programme.*

This will be a 3 year programme, starting in January 2024. It will establish 3 national learning cohorts across Wales, which will be facilitated by an expert in systems thinking and practise and open to all PSB members and supporting officers to participate. It aims to support PSBs in Wales to apply theory and evidence informed by systems tools and methods to influencing wider detriments of health, learn from this application and share the learning.

The programme will work with the PSBs to agree 3 themes for each of the cohorts to focus on and apply the approach. Through the life of the programme, resources will be developed and shared with PSBs. It will also develop legacy plans to ensure learning is sustained.

The timeline of the programme was shared as,
- First 6 months, set up phase - recruitment to posts, establishment of an advisory board and delivery group, commission external evaluators and identifying themes with PSBs.
- Next 24 months, delivery phase – cohorts working through framework, sharing learning through various events across Wales and UK, PSB resources developed.
- Last 6 months, exit and sustainability phase – legacy plans, evaluation and learning reports produced, final shared learning events with cohorts and Heath Foundation.

Discussion included –

- Confirmed that the slides will be shared along with further reading on the subject.
- The themes of the learning cohorts will be determined and agreed by the PSBs that wish to participate in the programme. Anticipate these will be drawn from any common themes across Well-being Plans.
- Initial discussions have taken place with other PSBs across Wales to inform of the upcoming programme, however plan to engage further once the programme is live in January.
- How could the systems approach be applied to our well-being plan – first useful step would be to undertake a systems mapping exercise to establish how the themes in our plan relate to each other.
- Confirmed there will be a formal process to invite PSBs to participate in the programme.

RESOLVED that the PSB will factor in a discussion item at a future meeting (before the end of the year), on members thoughts on engaging with the learning cohort.

5   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mike Corcoran, Co-production Network for Wales, presented the draft engagement mission statement for discussion. At the informal meeting held in May, members discussed their approach to engagement. To support this thinking and to provide clarity, there was a recommendation to develop an engagement mission statement. Mike Corcoran asked the Board to consider the following questions -

1. Is the mission statement a fair and accurate reflection of what the Conwy and Denbighshire PSB want to achieve through engagement?
2. What are the implications in adopting this mission statement, are there any challenges / opportunities to consider?
3. What are the next steps to move forward with our approach to engagement?

Discussion included –
- Agreed, would be of benefit to have guiding principles – but how will we achieve it, would benefit from more detail.
- Lack of knowledge in the workforce of the PSB and its purpose. Concern that PSB is seen as another layer of decision making. Whereas its role is to untangle, build connections and reduce duplication – how can we get buy in from our workforce?
- Useful to build common understating of engagement.
- Consider revising order of objectives / outcomes.
- Success evident if we listen and make changes accordingly.
- Is there a wider conversation to be has about raising awareness of PSBs nationally. The Well-being of Future Generations act is an innovative piece of legislation that should be promoted, especially used within our workforce and in recruitment.
- Acknowledge that it may take time to achieve what is set out in the mission statement, but important that consistent progress is made – need to revisit at each meeting.
- As part of developing next steps, useful to consider if we want to establish a sub-group to lead on this area, keep it central or that engagement becomes a strand of each theme.
- Consider learning from our previous engagement activity, what worked and what didn't – will help inform next steps.
- Need to communicate better with people and organisations that have demonstrated interest and want to be involved in the PSBs work.
- Need to work smarter and build on regional engagement approach.
- Need to consider working better with elected members and City, Town and Community Councils and remember they're a valuable resource for engaging with communities.
- Need to ensure we undertake effective and meaningful engagement – keep it focused.
- Useful for support officers to develop examples and case studies of how engagement can work in practice for the PSB.

RESOLVED that

    i.   The PSB adopt the engagement mission statement.

ii.   The PSB discuss the next steps for developing our engagement approach / plan at the next meeting.

6   ACTIVE TRAVEL

Louise Woodfine (BCUHB, Public Health team) informed the Board that work is progressing on the charter, both nationally and regionally. The PSB endorsed adopting the charter last year. In order to progress this work further want to ensure that PSB member organisations are familiar with the charter and to look at what is happening within their organisations in terms of active travel.

To move this work forward, useful for partners to identify a lead officer from their organisation that the charter can liaise with. Aim is to conduct a baseline assessment, with the information collated by PSB coordinators (the Public Health team will provide support for this). Also want the Board to consider the frequency of reporting on the active travel charter.

RESOLVED that Louise Woodfine to circulate information to PSB support officers for progressing this work.

7   TERMS OF REFERENCE APPROVAL

Iolo McGregor, Denbighshire County Council, presented the updated Terms of Reference for approval following changes at the last meeting. Changes included –

- Amending paragraph 2.1 (aims) to reflect that the board will take a leadership role.
- Updating paragraph 13 to correctly reflect statutory duties
- Amending Public Health Wales to just Public Health to reflect organisational change.

Discussed the importance of revisiting membership as work develops, as conversations need to be ongoing.

RESOLVED that the PSB approve the Terms of Reference.

8   FORWARD WORK PLAN

A copy of the Public Services Board forward work programme was presented.

- The Board consider their views on the learning cohort at the December meeting.
- The Board consider engagement approach and examples of how it could work in practice at the next meeting.
- Defer the risk and issue item to the December meeting.

RESOLVED that the forward work programme be approved.

The meeting concluded at 4:50 pm

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Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board
Action Tracker

Meeting		Action	Action Owner	Progress Update	Deadline	Status Open / Closed / Not started
January 2023 - workshop	1	Explore better alignment with other regional partnership and inviting other partners to get involved in the PSBs work (such as Citizen Advice, National Trust and Snowdonia National Park)	Justin Hanson, Cllr Carol Marubi, Nicola Kneale and Cllr Charlie McCoubrey	Discussions ongoing	March 2023	Open
March 2023	1	Discuss the involvement of third sector partners in the PSB work going forward.	Cllr Jason McLellan and Tom Barnham	In progress		Open
May 2023 (informal meeting)	1	Map the PSBs proposed activities against 'Whole Systems Thinking Levels' (from System Events to System Beliefs)	PSB support officers	In progress – support officers will present findings at the informal meeting in November for discussion.	November 2023	Open
	2	Potentially developing a draft 'Engagement mission statement and objectives' for PSB to review and build upon, and around which a strategic approach to engagement and involvement can be devised	Mike Corcoran	Complete – mission statement discussed and agreed on at the July meeting.	July 2023	Closed
July 2023 (informal meeting)	1	Collate partner organisations risk and issues to identify commonalities & mitigations in relation to the well-being plan. Explore undertaking this regionally with the other PSBs.	Amanda Jones	In progress, aim to report back at the December PSB meeting.	December 2023	Open
	2	Table an update of the Accelerated Cluster Development programme at a future meeting.	Hannah Edwards	Tabled at the March 2024 meeting.	September 2023	Closed
July 2023 (formal meeting)	1	Table at the December PSB meeting, discussion item on engaging with the Whole Systems Leadership learning cohort (under PHW)	Hannah Edwards	Added to FWP for December 2023.	September 2023	Closed

Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board
Action Tracker

Meeting		Action	Action Owner	Progress Update	Deadline	Status Open / Closed / Not started
	2	Development of engagement plan (to be presented at September meeting)	Mike Corcoran	In progress - on agenda for September 2023 meeting.	September 2023	Open
	3	Share the Active Travel monitoring template with support officers – this will inform baseline assessment	Louise Woodfine	Complete.	September 2023	Closed
	4	Support with the collation of information for the Active Travel baseline assessment	PSB support officers	In progress.	December 2023	Open

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REPORT TO: Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board

DATE: 25 September 2023

LEAD OFFICER & ORGANISATION: Fran Lewis, Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC)

CONTACT OFFICER & ORGANISATION: Josh Cripps, CCBC

SUBJECT: Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment

1. What is the report about?

The report provides a summary of engagement which took place between June and August 2023, on the topic of empowering diverse communities into employment – specifically with regards to employment in the North Wales public sector. There's a range of suggested actions and good practice examples in the report which were shared / highlighted during the work.

2. What are the Recommendations?

There were numerous recommendations put forward in terms of addressing the barriers to employment, which are set out in full in the report in the sections: What can we do to support diverse and inclusive public sector workplaces in North Wales: Actions suggested during engagement, and Examples of Existing Good Practice.

Some of these suggestions included:

- Maintaining an ongoing dialogue about barriers to employment – to encourage any issues to be shared, so that employers are more aware of the barriers which can be a catalyst for change
- Anchor organisations (e.g. LAs, Health and Ambulance, Police, Fire and Rescue, Universities and Colleges) working together to create opportunities to enable people to get on the employment ladder, including volunteering, apprenticeships, placements and shadowing
- A diversity event across North Wales, inviting people and employers. It can be formal/informal but give opportunity for people to socialise and gain information
- Active/pro-active work to attract staff from diverse backgrounds through how we promote vacancies and to which groups as opposed to simply posting an advert online / Consider advertising in different places (e.g. places of worship, physical locations) rather than just online or on an organisations own website
- Staff Networks, Buddy Systems for new recruits
- Sharing of a 'Welcome to North Wales' welcome pack for people unfamiliar with the UK and the region

Full list available in the report, available in appendix A.

3. **Report details**

Through a conversation about empowering diverse communities into employment in the North Wales public sector, four overarching themes were identified by participants in terms of barriers to employment:

- Language Barriers
- Qualifications and Experience
- Cultural Differences
- Access and Processes

Information was drawn from the workshops, questionnaire responses and social media comments to inform a key findings section. In the 'Key Findings' section, a range of steps to tackle the identified barriers were proposed and examples of existing good practice were shared.

It is intended that through sharing the report public sector organisations can use the valuable feedback and insights shared by residents, service users and interested parties from across North Wales to take actions to continue working towards making public sector organisations, as employers, more welcoming and inclusive of all the communities that they serve.

4. **Consultation**

The work focused on engaging residents, service users and interested parties across North Wales (both individuals facing barriers to employment and professionals working with individuals facing barriers to employment) as part of a conversation to make sure that public sector organisations are welcoming and inclusive of everyone in their recruitment and retention processes. The work was carried out in collaboration between the two North Wales Community Cohesion teams and members of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network.

There were 2 x Workshops held via Zoom on the 12th July 2023, and a survey (hosted on the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership website) which was open between June and August 2023.

5. **Resource implications**

Funding from the Regional Skills Partnership and the regional PSB support grant were used to facilitate the workshop. Further grant funding will be sought to secure follow up work with these diverse communities.

There are no specific resource implications with regards to the report. Any use of resources, such as staff time, will vary depending on the actions (e.g. changes to recruitment processes) that are taken forward by organisations in response to the findings and recommendations highlighted through the workshop, survey and engagement that took place.

6. **What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The risks associated with the report are in not acting on the suggested actions and recommendations. There is a risk of contributing to 'engagement fatigue' if there are no signs

that the valuable feedback shared has been used to continue working towards making public sector organisations inclusive employers. This risk can be reduced by ensuring that the report is widely shared and that appropriate actions are implemented, and that the actions taken as a result of the work are reported back to participants in a timely manner.

7. Power to make the decision

The report links to a range of national and local policies and strategies. This includes Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan, Strategic Equality Plans, and local Recruitment Policies.

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Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment: Findings and Next Steps Report

Executive Summary

Through a conversation about empowering diverse communities into employment in the North Wales public sector, four overarching themes were identified by participants in terms of barriers to employment:

- Language Barriers
- Qualifications and Experience
- Cultural Differences
- Access and Processes

In response to these barriers, a range of steps to tackle these barriers have been proposed and examples of existing good practice have also been shared. It is intended that public sector organisations use the valuable feedback and insights shared through this conversation with residents, service users and interested parties across North Wales to take actions to continue working towards making public sector organisations, as employers, more welcoming and inclusive of all the communities that they serve.

Introduction

Work to engage on the theme of *Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment* took place between June and August 2023. The work focused on engaging residents, service users and interested parties across North Wales (both individuals facing barriers to employment and professionals working with individuals facing barriers to employment) as part of a conversation to make sure that public sector organisations are welcoming and inclusive of everyone in their recruitment and retention processes.

As part of this work the public sector was defined as any job funded by a local or national government. The organisations that make up the public sector are some of the largest employers across North Wales – offering a wide range of jobs including jobs in education, emergency services, the environment, healthcare, housing, social care and more. The purpose of these jobs is to provide a public service to the community and, as our communities across North Wales are more diverse than ever, that means making sure every public sector organisations as employers welcome people from diverse backgrounds.

The work is timely as, at the time of writing, many public sector organisations in North Wales are working on their Strategic Equality Plans for the period from the 1st April 2024 to the 31st March 2028. The valuable feedback and insights that were shared through this conversation, alongside a range of other engagement and research activities, will help to inform the objective and action plan development that is currently taking place as part of this work. The information gathered will also support the implementation of recently released Welsh Government plans, such as the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.

This work was carried out collaboratively by the North Wales Community Cohesion teams and members of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, and was supported by the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership and the North Wales Public Services Board Grant. We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who shared their experiences and insights with us, as we look to build on the valuable feedback that you shared in our work to ensure that public sector organisations reflect the diverse communities that we serve.

Methodology (Workshops and Questionnaire)

Workshops: Two Zoom workshops (one afternoon session and one evening session) were held on Wednesday 12th July 2023. The workshops were moderated by members of the North Wales Community Cohesion teams. The sessions were dedicated to hearing the views of the attendees and people at the workshops were invited to discuss a range of questions, including:

1. What barriers to employment exist in North Wales for people of diverse cultures and ethnicities?
2. What barriers are there for the LGBT+ community, or disabled or neurodivergent individuals?
3. How can we work together to overcome these barriers?

There were 31 attendees across the two workshops, including individuals who shared their personal experiences in terms of barriers to employment, representatives of community and third sector organisations, and public sector staff working with individuals facing barriers to employment. During the promotion of the workshops there were comments shared on social media posts which have also been incorporated into the key findings below as appropriate.

As well as individuals from across North Wales, participants at the workshops included representatives from organisations, including:

- North East Wales Multi-Cultural Hub (NEWHub)
- North Wales Ethnic Multicultural Association (NWEMA)
- Race Equality First
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)
- VOICES Network (Refugee Support)
- CLPW CIC (Wrexham Portuguese Community)
- North East Wales Chinese Women's Association
- Chester & North East Wales Anglo-Polish Society
- UNIQUE Transgender Network

Questionnaire: An online questionnaire was created to support the discussions that took place at the workshop. The questionnaire was translated into ten languages prior to being hosted on the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership website and the questionnaire was promoted using a range of methods and networks, including promotion at the workshops. The questionnaire was open from late June 2023 to the end of August 2023.

In total, 8 responses were received and the qualitative responses have been built into the key findings section below. The topics covered in the questionnaire were similar to the

discussions that took place at the workshops, but the low response rate may highlight that a survey was not the preferred method through which to engage on this topic. A summary of the questionnaire responses has been attached alongside this report.

Key Findings

Information has been drawn from the workshops, questionnaire responses and social media comments to inform the key findings section below. We have tried to ensure that the comments and feedback shared with us at the workshops are reflected as accurately as possible. After drafting an initial version of the report we shared a copy with workshop attendees for feedback, and received the following comments:

- *"Excellent feedback, you did capture every single important detail! Hope this can make a difference in the future and it can be shared with every employer and Welsh Government"*
- *"Thank you for sending the feedback summary. This is quite detailed and includes all the essential issues…It makes you realise how difficult it is for different communities to surmount these barriers and how it affects integration as well as wellbeing of the newcomers"*

The key findings section has been structured as follows:

1. Identifying barriers to employment for diverse communities in North Wales
2. Identifying how we can support diverse and inclusive public sector workplaces: Actions suggested during the engagement
3. Sharing Good Practice Examples

Barriers to Employment

The first step we took was to ask participants what they saw to be the main barriers to employment for diverse communities in North Wales. The responses to the questions regarding barriers to public sector recruitment have been grouped into four overarching themes:

- Language Barriers
- Qualifications and Experience
- Cultural Differences
- Access and Processes

Language barriers

On the theme of language barriers a range of issues were identified, including: Welsh language requirements in the public sector, confidence in language skills / perceptions of not having the language skills to meet the job requirements, and the need for training (and practice) opportunities to develop language skills further.

Specific feedback and responses received in relation to qualifications and experience being a barrier to employment were as follows:

- For a lot of minority groups, they don't feel their language skills are good enough for the requirements of the job
- Language is also a big barrier for workers trying to settle their families when they move to the area (school and community)
- Employers say that applicants need to speak Welsh to work in Wales but that is not always possible as many people can't speak Welsh – they are competing against companies who do not have that requirement and are not going to promote Welsh in the workplace so public sector has to remember - learning Welsh too is a barrier
- If we don't speak English and/or Welsh very well, which language do we learn to avoid having to learn 2 languages?
- When learning Welsh, you need to be around people speaking that language – the next generation will find it easier as our children are in schools learning English for school and Welsh and then their own native language at home but it's difficult for some who are hesitant as they never learned a foreign language and need to have a will of doing so – living in a different county we need to try even though we shouldn't forget who we are or where we came from but adjust to the new culture and environment
- There are chances for people to learn English and Welsh from scratch – free courses – but will be difficult for some – they may have never studied and learned in their own countries. This country is very welcoming and there are opportunities for everyone and you just have to open yourself to those opportunities
- Being a refugee, you don't choose the country you flee to – of course there are ESOL classes but we are taught grammar but what you need is language where you can apply for a job and socialise in that language – some jobs ask you to speak Welsh and you are just learning English so language barriers is an issue
- I've lived here 30 years now. Whilst recognising that English was so important – I couldn't find a proper job so I had to study and I tried but the language is still a barrier – similar situation as others
- People are taught abroad that the UK = English, so communities coming to Wales are often starting from nothing in terms of knowing about Welsh. With Welsh classes, places tried to run them before the pandemic and there was some success but it is difficult. Could there be a line (in adverts) about 'Do you have a second language?' as people coming to the UK often have 2 or 3 languages that they speak which can help to work with communities (e.g. Portuguese language doctor working with the Portuguese community) – so there's a real benefit to any second or third language that people can speak
- We want to see more adverts saying 'we welcome people with an ethnic minority background', that is really good – and explain what Welsh Desirable is - we know Welsh is desirable but our English isn't even good yet
- Most jobs in the council say Welsh essential or desirable – many ethnic minority people think they cannot be that person – even if they have the skills or can only say Bore Da, they won't apply
- Language is the main one as they only want Welsh speakers which is discriminatory – remove Welsh language barriers which stops English only speakers applying
- Not being able to speak Welsh is a barrier, even though an applicant may be perfect for the position advertised

- Welsh language requirement at the point of entry to the job. It feels unfair that young people coming out of school even now who are not fluent in Welsh (even when doing all that is required of them to learn) are automatically disqualified from any public sector job within the Council. If the goal is truly to increase the number of people speaking Welsh, why not offer on the job Welsh training?
- We didn't know what a GP was or council tax – there's no translation for that. So we had to learn by ourselves – luckily Facebook started and I put information on there and we helped each other and made connections. I started helping people what to do, how to get a National Insurance number, what to do with tax returns – I was learning – there were no Portuguese translations for it.

Qualifications & Experience

On the theme of qualifications and experience a range of issues were identified, including: qualifications obtained outside of the UK not being easily transferrable, opportunities for work experience (e.g. for refugees who are unable to work for up to 12 months after arrival) and barriers around the right to work in the UK.

Specific feedback and responses received in relation to qualifications and experience being a barrier to employment were as follows:

- Some people have qualifications from their own country but can't rely on the same qualifications in this country
- The employer should support candidates with obtaining permanent visas as part of the application process
- Create opportunities for work experience – expose students/trainees to business language and what to do and not to do or say in the workplace
- Sometimes job adverts don't include the level of experience so makes it difficult to apply for that job.
- Share experience and how to do things like apprenticeships
- Refugees don't have the right to work until you have been in claim for 1 year or more – and then jobs need to be on the occupational list – what if that job doesn't suit you? You have no opportunities to develop your interpersonal skills or to acquire experience while they are learning.
- Work experience – it is very difficult to find interpreters – many UK refugees have to wait and this can take years and you can't work while this is going on. Also you can't bring your certificates to say what you are so sometimes it is easier to retrain rather than prove you have a skill. It makes it so awkward
- We often talk about equality which is not applicable in most situations as the starting point is not the same for everyone – the word that should be used is equity so that we are all given the opportunities to achieve the same – our previous experience should be taken into account.
- I used to be a primary school teacher in China but can't use that qualification in the UK so I had to find a simple easy job to do so that doesn't help school children. Lots of Chinese friends face the same things.

Cultural Differences

On the theme of cultural differences a range of issues were identified, including: the barriers created by different workplace cultures and expectations (e.g. cultural behaviours, use of jargon), the ongoing need to address unconscious biases, and a lack of guidance and/or support when people arrive in the UK.

Specific feedback and responses received in relation to cultural differences being a barrier to employment were as follows:

- The culture you come from has an echo of the work culture you came from so work cultures are different – an applicant also needs to know the cultural requirements of the organisation, for example, someone with an Asian background may demonstrate workplace behaviours that they regard as a sign of respect in Asian culture but in the UK come across as lack of confidence – it is important to be aware of the difference.
- Religious practices can be a barrier, for example, a Muslim respecting Ramadan and other feasts impacting on eating and drinking which are alien to western culture – it is important to ensure understanding and that it is unfair to judge them on such practices
- Expand on cultural sensitivity – culture goes both ways – often an employer may have a misconception about the particular population they are trying to employ and vice versa so we need to learn on both sides
- The onus is often put on the employee to understand the cultural norm of the organisation but it is also the responsibility of the organisation to create an inclusive environment, for example, staff networks. It can be incremental small things that an organisation can do to create an inclusive atmosphere
- Use of jargon can be barrier – adverts can use very technical language – sometimes have no idea what they are looking for
- It is important to be able to be yourself in the work place – you bring yourself and your identity – shouldn't have to park half of you to the side when you enter the workplace. Need to feel welcome - cultural differences embraced – it's about bringing your own identity to work and opening the barriers to have an open dialogue about the issues – it's about visibility and inclusion
- Society has changed so much into the positive and into accepting others and I am so glad to see this positive difference in many ways in our lives. So we have that freedom of choice – who am I to say you mustn't live like that – I see that society has changed into acceptance and this is so important. It takes time and its happening now and I am so glad I am seeing it.
- No mandatory induction programme for new arrivals – refugees have to acquire information about living and working in the UK for themselves.
- The cultural issues have given rise to other related problems – under unconscious bias – in the fight against racism, bullying, harassment and promotions – we end up on jobs we don't like because they're the only ones left. We are a group of fighters but we do need to talk about it and go ahead with our lives.
- From a community cohesion perspective a lot of people come to live here and try to find other people from their own nationalities and one of the things we can work together is to avoid those groups being too isolated and look at how to expand those opportunities to interact more widely
- I've been trying to get our community (LGBTQ+) included in employment and other aspects of life for over 20 years, working on a basis of creeping inclusion, which

means getting involved in all kinds of activities and working with all kinds of organisations. Eventually people get to know you and a lot of the barriers disappear – our experience has been that people from LGBTQ+ communities automatically think they will be discriminated against but as we progress and communities become more accepting some of those barriers are no longer real so it can be seen from both sides, so it's important that people have sensitivity training. It's more about equity and it's about having a sense of belonging to the community and part of everyday life. If you feel that you have that sense it is be easier to do interviews. Big organisations do special engagement to support people applying for jobs and they will help you fill in a form

Access and Processes

On the theme of access and processes a range of issues were identified, including: the complexity of the application process, a lack of guidance and support for people who are new to the UK, and visibility of employment opportunities / jobs not being advertised in places that attract diverse applicants (e.g. only advertised via the organisation's website).

Specific feedback and responses received in relation to access and processes being a barrier to employment were as follows:

- It's ok to find easy jobs in factories but anything other – a huge barrier. If you look around you don't see any black people in banks or in the public sector – why is this? Because over the years we got qualified – so why? Don't know anyone who overcame that barrier until black lives matter happened and it was realised that racism is still happening and is a huge barrier. We can only overcome it with government support, with the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan - we have to do something to change - it doesn't even matter the colour of our skin as most of us are from Poland, Portugal – even housing – we are a barrier because of who we are
- Important to be aware of where to apply
- Application process can be very detailed and that can be its own barrier - ask applicants if our process is easy to navigate – are all the qualifications relevant and essential? Can a CV suffice? Make it streamlined and ensure the people you are seeking to encourage are not put off as it is difficult enough as it is.
- Employers need to go where we are – for example, places of worship, to advertise those vacancies – don't just rely on own websites or social media. Within the organisation, if you have a diverse workforce, set up chats and they will pass things on – build on social media aspects of what you have – don't reinvent the wheel
- It is not clear where to look for the jobs – there is a lack of guidance, particularly for people new to the country
- Often don't know how to fill in application forms – it's easier to allow a CV to be added. Employers need to   make it easier for us to apply
- Don't know how to perform well at interview as different styles used in different countries, for example, STAR process (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
- Organisations need to learn how to interact with different communities and interact in the spaces that minorities occupy (eg, LGBTQ+) as they are much more confident when talking to respective employees

- Go to the schools for careers talks – big employers should open up more on promoting how to take on training programmes
- Increase visibility of employment opportunities for people currently on ESOL courses, work together with other Anchor Organisations to promote each other
- On general reflection, we have 2 areas to look at – one side is attracting and the other side is retention. A lot of examples are already happening within organisations to retain but the area to look at is to get the skillsets into organisations in the first place as an employing manager and that is where we are struggling, that's the key part of that conversation and then the retention comes later
- Fixed shifts and working hours outside of office hours (9-5) affecting the ability to find appropriate childcare, particularly for single parents and people new to the country who might not have a support network
- Jobs adverts are not reaching the communities - people go straight to the job agencies – not even the job centres – they do an induction on the next day so people are employed the next day and the agencies even have Portuguese people working there
- Supporting people who are neurodivergent and sharing interview questions in advance, and consider whether assessment centres are appropriate
- The interview process with unknown questions is incredibly difficult for many neurodivergent people who otherwise could be great at many jobs
- Twice I have applied to work in public sector, each time unsuccessful at interview. The role was given to someone already working for the council. Happens a lot, and feel that it's a tick box exercise
- The application process was long and very arduous - wanted salaries for all the jobs I've had which was difficult to remember. I very nearly gave up applying as the process was that bad

Other Barriers Identified

Some of the feedback received did not fit into an overarching theme but did highlight other barriers to employment that people face. Specific feedback included:

- The need to support people's mental health
- Look at areas where there is a lot of employment and where productivity is needed – e.g. farming and driving, should be encouraging people from abroad and thinking about how the public sector can help with this
- Not receiving feedback on applications made - must have been because I had a foreign name and my accent/written word gave away my broken English
- First thing is names - if anyone applies for a job they will not be chosen because of the name on the application form, that is well proven in many studies, for example, the same applicant with an English name and a foreign name didn't have the same experience.
- Lack of childcare / Wrap around care for disabled children/adults, including school holidays. It's impossible. Fully flexible jobs with flexi hours and home/hybrid working plus an employer that understands what it means to be a full time carer, that would be a refreshing change

- Until my children ended primary school I couldn't find a job which was hard as a single mum. Mostly, if we did factory work, then the mum stays at home and the dad works but many employers don't cater for single parents - men don't have the same barriers

What can we do to support diverse and inclusive public sector workplaces in North Wales: Actions suggested during engagement

In the workshop, the final question asked was about steps the steps that participants would like to see to support diverse and inclusive public sector workplaces in North Wales and the list below reflects the responses received in relation to that:

- Provide emotional support for people because refugees have faced many traumatic experiences
- Focus on wellbeing, ensuring that workload pressures are manageable and sustainable and also that any risks around re-traumatisation are carefully managed and supported
- There should be some flexibility with the induction plan to allow responsibilities in the role to be taken on gradually if needed, and give additional space and time to meet with other people internally and externally
- Consider wellbeing and psychological support
- Maintain an on-going dialogue about any barriers to employment - to encourage any issues to be shared, so that employers are more aware of those barriers which should be a catalyst for change
- Anchor organisations (e.g. Local Authorities, Health and Ambulance, Police, Fire and Rescue, Universities and Colleges) should work together to create opportunities to enable people to get on to the employment ladder, including volunteering, apprenticeship, placements, shadowing etc.
- Key organisations to work with local universities to expand current opportunities offered to people from diverse background
- Some examples from wider UK initiatives include purpose built learning hubs in partnership with local health boards, Local Authorities and third sector businesses for pre-employment advice, training, guidance and direct links to the jobs available
- Public Sector HR leads share good practice e.g. the BCUHB welcome guide, ID lanyards etc., and share the development of different expertise with each other - also, to be more aware of the types of barriers highlighted here, and how best to tackle them
- Build links with colleges and ESOL classes to encourage employment attraction in relation to language barriers
- Provide extra language training (and promoting that language training can be offered)
- Staff equality networks are a great resource - for staff and employers - potentially link staff networks via North Wales Public Sector Equality Network events to share experiences/best practice etc. e.g. all the public sector disabled staff networks meet once a year for discussions and a social catch up etc. Potentially a separate network for all the network chairs to discuss issues, good practice etc.
- A diversity event across North Wales, inviting people and employers. It can be formal/informal but give opportunity for people to socialise and gain information

- Active/pro-active work to attract staff from diverse backgrounds through how we promote vacancies and to which groups as opposed to simply posting an advert online
- Consider advertising in different places (e.g. places of worship, physical locations) rather than just online or on an organisations own website
- Put the conversation out on the radio and other alternative communication methods
- Share jobs with community groups and leaders
- Understand that refugees wait years to get their status so their qualifications might be defunct – provide work experience opportunities during that time
- Change application forms, make use of alternatives (e.g. CVs, videos, cover letters) and offer application / interview support (including different formats for interviewing candidates)
- Provide constructive feedback for people who aren't shortlisted
- Promote volunteering opportunities in different fields / areas of expertise
- Make sure to mention in job adverts that we welcome people from ethnic and diverse backgrounds, and to include other languages as Desirable or Essential, similar to Welsh requirements
- Streamline the recruitment process to make the first hurdle easier to navigate
- Promote the benefits of working for a public sector organisation (e.g. providing an opportunity to put back into the community)
- Highlight the flexible working options that are available in public sector organisations
- Practical support around applying for jobs
- Be clear about the level of Welsh AND English needed for the job
- Maintain links with third sector organisations and charities who give specific support for specific health conditions to draw on their expertise

Examples of Existing Good Practice

During the course of this work, conversations often turned towards examples of existing good practice that organisations have in place to help create inclusive recruitment processes and work environments. The list below highlights some of these suggestions:

- Staff Networks
- Buddy Systems for new recruits
- Diverse Cymru supported the creation of a Welcome to North Wales welcome pack for people unfamiliar with the UK and region
- Diverse Cymru cultural competency scheme (to help understanding of different cultures, providing opportunities to ask / tell)
- Celebration of awareness days
- LGBTQ+ rainbow lanyards and "You are safe with me" badges to raise visibility
- BCUHB talk to communities about staff treatment policies – as a two-way partnership which is all about working together to bring confidence to minority communities
- [Familiarisation Videos](#) (made for people who might find it difficult to access buildings, e.g. physical access, social anxiety, seen applied in social spaces but could be useful in workplaces)
- Consistently make information available to managers about neurodiversity, reasonable adjustments, Access to Work and the Social Model of Disability in an

- ongoing information sharing process (with staff turnover there is always a demand and need for promotion)
- 20 Top Tips to make Health and Social Care Providers LGBTIQ+ Friendly (developed for Health and Social Care settings but could be transferable to a wider context)

20 Top Tips
for-making-health-a

- Race Equality First provide help and support in creating a CV / with job searching (Laura Kent - l.kent@raceequalityfirst.org.uk)
- Offering the opportunity to learn Welsh AND English
- Offer volunteering opportunities and step into programmes where people can come and do supported volunteering – e.g. "what's it like to work in Betsi"
- North Wales Regional Skills Partnership: Your Guide to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
- Support with filling in application forms – taking the opportunity to tell them about the organisation and support available to help people into the workplace
- Career Wales – Support Finder (Search for programmes that can help you improve your skills and work opportunities)
- Business Wales Employers Brochure – information about Welsh Government funded courses, including Community Employability Programmes and Apprenticeships
- Use the Community Cohesion teams who have good links with their communities (e.g. interfaith activities)
- Carry on the conversation in different formats and to consider progress / changes made – thinking about the 'what's next' question - Anchor institutions (e.g. BCUHB, 6 Local Authorities, local universities) should work together to continue the conversation
- Setting up ESOL classes at alternative venues and offering shorter classes as an introduction to English so people aren't intimidated by the college setting, initially working on building confidence to move to a longer course
- The value of shadowing to gain experience is really important
- A separate induction for international employees
- The importance of having people to trust (e.g. the Multi-Cultural Hub in Wrexham) really helps when there are questions or there's a need to learn something new
- Highlighting how useful it is to have another language – we talk about making people feel welcome and connected and facilitating English and Welsh but also learning other languages (e.g. Portuguese, Mandarin) helps create that feeling of belonging
- The importance of line managers / role models – "I have been working in [the public sector] for more than 12 years and I have been so lucky with people I work with, especially my line manager who is now retired. She supported me greatly and I witnessed and learnt the best practice and attitude in work from her"
- Providing training to familiarise people with meanings of key things (e.g. acronyms) – and opportunities to ask stupid question, like what is a PIP
- Employers should work closely with employability providers of all sectors, including the public sector, third sector and voluntary sector organisations. Employability providers work directly with people who have received training and support to overcome barriers to work and are ready for the world of work – they also work directly

with underrepresented communities and can support people into work (e.g. [Conwy Employment Hub – Case Studies](#))

- [Working Wales](#) and the DWP have direct access to people and could support with matching people to jobs, they also work with employers

Next Steps and Conclusion

Having talked with residents, service users and interested parties across North Wales about barriers to employment and the steps that could make public sector organisations work for everyone, we need to make sure that the valuable feedback and insights shared with us are shared with others. By sharing this report with participants and through public sector networks across North Wales we want this work to be viewed widely, and appropriate actions to be taken to address identified barriers.

We also want this work to form part of an ongoing conversation, and need to consider how best to do this. While work to improve recruitment processes is a constant process, we propose that we revisit the topic within the next 12 months to provide an update on the actions that have been taken in response to the information that has been shared with us. Some of the feedback received was about making this an ongoing conversation and we will be working to consider how best to continue this conversation going forwards, without burdening participants too much and risking 'engagement fatigue'.

Overall, we now need to use the information that has been shared with us to shape how public organisations continue working towards being welcoming and inclusive employers for everyone. By adopting new actions, or promoting good practice that is already in place, we can ensure that the workforces of public sector employers reflect the diverse communities that we serve, and we can therefore better meet people's needs.

CONWY AND DENBIGHSHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

2023 / 2024

Chair:
Councillor Jason McLellan, Denbighshire County Council

Vice Chair:
Councillor Charlie McCoubrey, Conwy County Borough Council

Co-ordinators:
Emma Lea (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board)
Amanda Jones & Hannah Edwards (Conwy County Borough Council)
Iolo McGregor & Ceri Blythin-McDonough (Denbighshire County Council)
Justin Hanson, Helen Millband & Iona Hughes (Natural Resources Wales)
TBC (North Wales Fire & Rescue Service)

Committee Responsible:
Denbighshire County Council

For Queries:
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		Meetings	
Meeting Date	**Topic**	**Purpose**	**Responsible Officer**
25 September 2023 (Formal meeting – County Hall Ruthin and Zoom meeting)	Inverse Care Law	To inform members of the work progressing across the region which is focused on inequalities and partnerships.	Helena Belmans, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
	Community Engagement Plan Development	To consider the type of activity options and develop the next steps for engagement approach.	Mike Corcoran, Co-Production Network for Wales
	Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment – findings and next steps	To update members of the finding and next steps of the recent engagement with diverse communities into public sector employment barriers.	Fran Lewis, Conwy County Borough Council
13 November 2023 (Informal meeting – Training Room 5, Coed Pella and teams meeting)	Whole Systems thinking – Mapping the PSBs proposed activities against 'Whole Systems Thinking Levels'	To apply the system thinking levels to the steps outlined in the Well-being Plan to identify gaps	TBC
	Theory of Change	To learn about this process and discuss adopting as an evaluation approach.	Mike Corcoran, Co-Production Network for Wales
	Well-being Plan Performance Framework	To present a high-level performance framework to support the well-being plan and discussions around equality and deprivation.	Iolo McGregor, Denbighshire County Council
12 December 2023 (Formal meeting)	Corporate risks and issues findings	To present the findings of the key risks informal discussion.	Amanda Jones, Conwy County Borough Council
	Community Wealth building and Progressive Procurement – pilot findings and recommendations	To consider the findings and recommendations following the project.	Amanda Jones, Conwy County Borough Council
	System Leadership – thoughts on engaging with learning cohort	To obtain members views in engaging with the national learning cohorts and	Chair

		potential proposing areas of focus for the group.	
	Community Narratives – Project update	To receive an update on the engagement project, which is being undertaken in Rhyl and Pensarn.	Rachel Hughes
	Active Travel – results of baseline assessment and reporting discussion	To discuss the result of the baseline assessment and next steps.	Louise Woodfine, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
January 2023 (Informal meeting – Room TBC and teams meeting)	North Wales PSB Well-being Plans	To obtain a better understanding of neighbouring PSBs work and the challenges they face.	TBC (but invite chairs of the other NW PSBs)
13 March 2024 (Formal meeting - County Hall Ruthin and Zoom meeting)	Accelerated Cluster Development programme update	To receive an update on the programme.	Sian Fearne-Thomas, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Standard Agenda Items
Apologies for Absence
Minutes of last meeting
Matters Arising
Meeting Action Tracker
Update from partner members / Share opportunities
Forward Work Programme
AOB

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