

SOLACE Cymru Newsletter

Summer 2011



In this edition:

SOLACE Cymru AGM

Chair's Report

Quarterly meeting with
WLGA & WG

Beyond Direct Delivery

Leadership & Collaboration
in Practice

Diary dates

Aspiring Leader
Development Scheme

SOLACE Summit

Ruth Marks – Older
People's Commissioner for
Wales

Keith Towler – Children's
Commissioner for Wales

Macmillan Cancer Support:
Help with the cost of cancer

Eversheds: People Issues
and Shared Services

Welcome to the summer edition of the SOLACE Cymru newsletter.

I am extremely pleased to be the new Chair of SOLACE Cymru and look forward to working with Vice Chair Tracey Lee and SOLACE Cymru members.

Tracey and I have circulated a document including our biographies and our priorities for the year ahead which is accessible here:

[http://www.solacewales.org.uk/Wales/Library/Message_from_incoming_Chair & Vice Chair %20June2011.pdf](http://www.solacewales.org.uk/Wales/Library/Message_from_incoming_Chair_%20Vice_Chair_%20June2011.pdf)

Our key priorities for the year ahead are the continued reform of public services to meet the aspirations and expectations of our communities and citizens; the acceleration of collaborative working; and promoting trust and confidence in local government. SOLACE Cymru will continue to be effective by providing a strong and collective voice on the issues affecting local government and through the co-production of public policy with the Welsh Government and other national bodies and representative networks.

Moreover, the news that our Aspiring Leader Development Scheme (page 5) is to recruit a new group of aspiring leaders is extremely positive and I hope you will take the opportunity to encourage colleagues to apply for this excellent development opportunity.

The rest of this newsletter contains information about Beyond Direct Delivery our latest publication, a summary of our meeting held in June, news of our Leadership and Collaboration in Practice project, and contributions from Ruth Marks, The Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales, our business partner Eversheds and from Macmillan Cancer Support.

I look forward to seeing you at our next SOLACE Cymru Branch meeting on the 8 September at the Ramada Plaza in Wrexham.

Best wishes,

Colin Everett

For up to date news about SOLACE Cymru events and activities visit the SOLACE Cymru website

www.solacewales.org.uk



EVERSHEDS



ZURICH
MUNICIPAL

SOLACE Cymru AGM 2011

The SOLACE Cymru AGM was held on the 9 June at The Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. New branch officers for the year were appointed as follows:

- Chair, Colin Everett, Chief Executive Flintshire County Council
- Vice Chair, Tracey Lee, Managing Director Newport City Council
- Immediate Past Chair, Jo Farrar, Chief Executive Bridgend County Borough Council
- Honorary Secretary, John Maitland Evans, Chief Executive Vale of Glamorgan Council

Chair's report

My first month as Chair has been a busy one here is a summary of my activity:

- Attending an ADEW meeting with WLGA spokesperson Councillor Peter Fox to support the progress of the education consortia, to work on the 'matrix' of big actions for an improvement in standards in education and to bring education more into the corporate fold as a top priority;
- speaking in a plenary session at the ADSS annual conference *Making Change Work* with caution over the need for reform to have a sustainable funding base for social care and for local governance of performance and safeguarding not to be lost in a sea of collaboration;
- supporting the WLGA annual conference and AGM in building support for local government's 'big offer' following the Simpson Review- to which SOLACE Cymru has made a major contribution;
- attending the Inspectorate Forum alongside the WLGA where we made some positive ground on practical models of self-assessment and peer review to support effective regulation and to reduce its scale; and
- you will have noticed a series of themed and timely email updates that have been used to allow us to effectively communicate and build our position.

SOLACE Cymru Quarterly Meeting with WLGA and Welsh Government Officials June 2011

The New Government

June Milligan, Director General of Local Government and Communities, began the meeting by setting out the context for Welsh public services resulting from the recent election and appointment of a new Government. The changes at a UK level were noted as a seismic and significant shift, which will play out through a different intergovernmental dynamic, as can be seen at the Joint Ministerial Council.

In Wales we can expect to see an increase in the pace of legislation with a five year legislative programme, and more debate about the balance of power with Westminster. June explained the new ministerial portfolios and some of the priorities for the new Government: The focus 'delivery' is expected to lead to more differentiated performance data, greater scrutiny of spend and funding streams, and a developing narrative that makes the impact on outcomes more real. Another priority issue set out by the Government is poverty and fear of poverty.

The new Ministerial portfolio and management structure within the Welsh Government brings together local government and public service improvement and demonstrates a commitment to a new

configuration of service delivery through implementing Simpson and the other major reviews of local government services. Change to the configuration of services across Wales is a consistent theme and the financial pressures provide a driver for innovation in this area. June reiterated that the Simpson review and negotiation of the compact was an important opportunity for local government to shape this agenda and influence the future pattern of service delivery across Wales.

Education issues

Chris Tweedale, Director of Education for the Welsh Government led a discussion about Consortia and the School Standards Unit, school reorganisation and capital funding.

In terms of capital, the SOPs (Strategic Outline Programmes) produced by local authorities requested far more funding than is available and there will be a need to explore other approaches to bringing schemes forward, including revenue funded capital options and making more and better use of borrowing abilities. SOLACE members emphasised the variation between areas. It was agreed officials would visit each area as soon as possible to gain a deeper understanding of local circumstances.

Chris said that the Consortia should be about driving up schools standards and improving the mechanism for support and challenge, not collaboration for the sake of collaboration. SOLACE members raised their concerns about the lack of clarity on what structures are expected, and that this could lead to wasted time and resources pursuing options which would not be supported by the Minister. The proposed banding system for schools and the stock take which is currently being undertaken by the standards Unit was explained. Chris agreed to prepare a briefing paper to be sent to the regional boards and to invite the Minister to visit each region.

The Welsh Government are committed to speeding up the school reorganisation process and hoped to bring forward legislation soon for a new system which would mean that most cases are dealt with and decided locally with only the minority being called in to the Minister.

Older People's Commissioner and Children's Commissioner

Ruth Marks the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and Keith Towler the Children's Commissioner for Wales, each spoke about their role, the work they do and some of the key issues affecting children and older people which are relevant to local authorities. An outline of these issues can be seen in their contributions to this newsletter.

Assembly reviews of local government

The implementation of the Simpson review and development of the Compact was the main issue in this discussion. Colin Everett started by sharing his thoughts on the opportunity and the challenge this posed. There is a lot of work going on within this agenda and huge amounts of ambition for further collaboration. It was recognised that a statement of intent and set of principles would not be enough, but that the Compact also needed to focus on a small number of 'big ticket' items covering the major review outcomes, alongside some regionally negotiable items. 'Big tickets' might include areas such as education consortia, social care commissioning, transport, and national procurement and ICT strategies, and the question was raised about how much space there was for regional differences and choices. It was agreed that it is fundamental for local government to deliver on whatever is offered, and also that it was important for chief executives to reintroduce a sense of positivity and focus on the task in hand, rather than being distracted by talk of reorganisation.

Beyond Direct Delivery: New approaches to local services in Wales

SOLACE Cymru has published its report on new models and approaches to public services, which can be downloaded from our website at;

http://www.solacewales.org.uk/Wales/Library/Beyond_Direct_Delivery.pdf

The report explores the advantages and disadvantages of a range of pragmatic options within the Welsh context including; coproduction with citizens and communities; social enterprises; cooperative mutuals; whole area working; cross boundary collaboration and working with the market.

It does not advocate any specific approach as this will depend on local circumstances, but does suggest a set of principles for local government based on retaining ownership of political vision, outcomes, 'brand' and local identity, and connection with citizens.

The report aims to inform senior managers about the options available and to contribute to a national debate on the future shape of public services.

Leadership and Collaboration in Practice

This insightful piece of work aims to guide and inspire current senior leaders; provide a useful basis for mentoring and training senior collaborative leaders of the future; aid the definition of the competencies and skills needed for collaboration and transformational change; and increase understanding of the complexity of collaboration.

It will showcase case studies that provide chief executives' own accounts of the leadership lessons learnt from collaboration, including overcoming difficulties and barriers, and engagement methods that worked and those that did not.

We are asking senior leaders to nominate case studies from individual local authorities or regional groups. Please contact us if you would like to nominate a case study.

Diary Dates

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 08 September 2011 | Branch meeting and dinner Ramada Plaza, Wrexham |
| 09 September 2011 | Quarterly SOLACE Cymru/WLGA meeting Ramada Plaza, Wrexham |
| 11-13 October 2011 | SOLACE Summit 11-13 October, Edinburgh International Conference Centre |
| 01 December 2011 | Branch meeting and dinner Cardiff |
| 02 December 2011 | Quarterly SOLACE Cymru/WLGA/WG meeting Cardiff |
| 21-22 March 2012 | SOLACE Cymru Annual Conference 2012 21-22 March, Catrin Finch Centre, Glyndŵr University, Wrexham |



SOLACE Cymru Aspiring Leader Development Scheme to re-open for applications

We will be recruiting our next set of aspiring leaders this September. The Aspiring Leader Development Scheme is a two year programme for talented individuals working in Welsh local government, which will help develop their skills, abilities and knowledge to progress within the sector.

Chief executives and senior managers are invited to recommend colleagues within their organisation who would benefit from participating in the scheme, which offers a unique opportunity to enhance learning and development, build a professional network and gain invaluable experience of working in an influential national policy forum, at minimal cost to the local authority.

It is based on a range of work experience and development opportunities, tailored to the needs of the individual and based around SOLACE Cymru projects and activities that are undertaken alongside their current role.

Craig Macleod, Denbighshire County Council and SOLACE Cymru Aspiring Leader

“I have found the Scheme invaluable in developing my insight into the human side of leadership. Having read and studied the theories of leadership the Scheme is providing me with a whole new layer of understanding about the practice of leadership. The opportunity to attend, and directly observe Chief Executives in Branch meetings, has highlighted how closely leaders are working together in Wales to deliver a unified direction that is built on integrity and a commitment to deliver good outcomes. The Scheme has led me to focus on, and to reaffirm, my core values and to consider how I can enhance the approaches I take as well as areas for development.”

Isobel Garner, Aspiring Leader Champion, SOLACE Cymru

“Since playing my part as Aspiring Leader SOLACE Champion, I have been delighted by the value our Aspiring Leaders make to our SOLACE work. But this is matched by the value that the Scheme brings to the individuals. Both through the assistance with their ‘corporate’ personal development opportunities, with formal conferences and courses and informal mentoring and Chief Executive shadowing.”

The elements of the scheme will include:

Project work – Undertaking and contributing to policy development, projects, events and other SOLACE Cymru activity.

SOLACE development and networking events – Attendance at SOLACE Cymru and SOLACE UK events such as conferences, seminars, dinners and meetings.

Learning and development – Shadowing and/or mentoring with a chief executive or other senior leader in Wales, and support from the current group of aspiring leaders. Other training and development will be available and based on individual needs and preferences.

Further details: For further details please visit www.solacewales.org.uk or email lizzie.swaffield@solace.org.uk



SOLACE Summit 2011

Edinburgh International Conference Centre 11-13 October 2011

The SOLACE Summit will provide inspiration, participation and collaboration through a series of plenary sessions and discussion groups. Including a select number of high quality speakers, the SOLACE Summit's focus is on debate, discussion and output. The SOLACE Summit is more than an event; it is a key point in the year's conversation. It will begin by building on collective thinking and action and will end by providing energy and impetus for a forward programme. The SOLACE Summit communiqué, coproduced by participants, will capture the challenges we face, the vision we share and the action we will take.

The programme will feature five propositions:

- Proposition 1: The times are changing and we must change with the times
- Proposition 2: Local government is a public health organisation
- Proposition 3: We must put the democracy back into localism
- Proposition 4: There is no generation gap: the old and the young have a common need for strong public service institutions supporting excellent services
- Proposition 5: Local government can drive local economic growth

For more information and to book visit www.solacesummit.org.uk



Ruth Marks – Older People's Commissioner for Wales

I was pleased to be invited to the recent SOLACE meeting in mid-Wales to talk to Chief Executives from different parts of the country and hear interesting discussions about differing challenges and priorities. As Older People's Commissioner for Wales, I regularly meet older people in their local communities and learn about their issues and concerns, which are equally wide-ranging.

The Strategy for Older People provides a recognised and valued framework for active dialogue with older people and I hear about many examples of good practice relating to the engagement of older people and how their voices are being heard by officers and councillors across Wales. I know that the strategy coordinators and elected member champions are also committed

to involving as many older people as possible in their work.

My role as an independent advocate for older people aged 60 and over in Wales has a range of powers. These include the provision of information and advice, as well as dispute resolution in certain circumstances, which allow me to provide direct assistance to older people.

In addition to undertaking research and issuing guidance, I also have the power to review most public bodies in Wales. This power was recently used in my Review into older people's experiences in hospitals, where local authorities were subject to one of the twelve recommendations in relation to planning timely and effective hospital discharge.



EVERSHEDS



ZURICH
MUNICIPAL

I am able to examine individual cases where there is a wider application to other older people in Wales and can also consider arrangements for complaints, advocacy and whistle-blowing.

The Commission's Strategic Plan 2010-13 is based on the four functions set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 that established my office:

- To raise awareness of the interests of older people
- To encourage best practice
- To challenge age discrimination
- To review the effectiveness of the law

All of my work is underpinned by the UN Principles for Older Persons, which are helpful to use as a guide to policy and service development. The 18 principles are grouped under 5 key themes: independence, self-fulfilment, participation, dignity and care.

As always, my work priorities have been informed by older people across Wales and during 2011-12 will focus on the following:

Social Care

The provision of residential and domiciliary care features regularly in what older people talk to the Commission about. Changes in services can be a real worry, not only for older people themselves, but also for relatives and friends.

Advocacy

While many older people are able to speak up for themselves, some find this more challenging. Availability of independent advocacy is therefore vitally important and the current lack of provision in many parts of Wales is a matter of concern.

Information and Advice

Access to services should be made as straightforward as possible to ensure that older people have the right support when they need it and are encouraged to claim all of their entitlements. I will work with a range of key partners to explore current gaps in information and advice provision and consider how to address this.

Age Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 provides a huge opportunity linked to the forthcoming Public Sector Equality Duty. I recommend that this is discussed as part of the Local Service Boards Agenda to ensure that this remains high on the list of priority work areas.

Many services that older people use and rely on are provided by local government, particularly for those who might be in vulnerable situations and need support and protection.

Above all, every older person has the right to services as well as the right of dignity and respect. There are many links between the work of local authorities and the Older People's Commission agenda and I look forward to developing these links in the future.

For further information:

www.olderpeoplewales.com

Keith Towler – Children's Commissioner for Wales

Children's Commissioner for Wales calls for consistency and fairness as he launches a resource for young people and report for practitioners

As the number of looked after children and young people living in Wales continues to climb, a new resource and report have recently (13 July) been published by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, highlighting the inconsistent support

and lack of accurate information available to vulnerable young people.

Responding to concerns raised with him by young people, the Children's Commissioner set about working with young people in care from across

Wales to produce a resource to help make the successful transition from care into independent living.

The resource, *My Planner*, includes advice and information on areas including health, education, social services and independent living skills. It outlines young people's rights and entitlements and, where possible, signposts them on to other organisations for further advice and support. It is intended that every young person in care will receive a copy of *My Planner* on their 15th birthday from the local authority.

Accompanying the resource is a report for government, practitioners and service providers, outlining the experiences of young people about the difficulties they face living in care.

This report, *Lost After Care*, highlights the significant efforts of some practitioners and local authorities in going that extra mile to meet their responsibilities as corporate parents. It also focuses on the disparity in services and information provided to young people as they start planning for their move into independent living. Young people spoke about:

- Support: "We got help at the beginning but it all faded away"
- Education: "Why are you discriminating against me because I choose to work?"
- Social Workers: "I had six workers in three years"
- Independent living: "It's forced on you too young... it kind of ruins your childhood"

It concludes with a series of suggested service improvements for the Welsh Government, local authorities and for the inspectorates, to encourage better coordinated response by local authority departments in identifying and responding to the rights and entitlements of young people moving on to independent living. Also included are suggestions around the importance for local authorities to scrutinise

delivery of services to ensure they are as effective and consistent as possible.

On the publication of his report and resource for young people, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, said:

"As we mark the tenth year of the Office of the Children's Commissioner, it felt right to listen and to give a national platform to the voice to children and young people in care – whose experiences all those years ago instigated the appointment of an independent champion for children.

"Listening to their views and experiences over the last few months has shown that there have been significant improvements in the way we support this vulnerable group. However, there are still frustrating inconsistencies, leaving young people feeling isolated, feeling like a case number not a person, feeling as if they're forced to grow up and move on too quickly.

"I'm hoping the resource will become a practical tool to ensure young people from across Wales have access to relevant, consistent and up-to-date information as they start planning to move into independent living. The other report I'll be publishing today will hopefully focus the minds of professionals, who have a duty to protect these young people."

Helping to launch both publications at the Senedd were Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM and Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM, who said that she would be writing to all local authorities to highlight the publication of the report and Planner and to reinforce the corporate parenting messages. The Deputy Minister also reiterated one of the Commissioner's key messages from the report: "To listen and do nothing is unacceptable."

Copies of *Lost After Care* and *My Planner* can be downloaded from www.childcomwales.org.uk



Help with the cost of cancer

2011 marks the centenary of Macmillan Cancer Support, one of the leading and most recognised cancer charities in the UK. Initially founded to provide financial support and information about cancer it continues to provide these essential social and health care services to people affected by cancer across Wales today.

Macmillan is perhaps best known for its iconic Macmillan nurses who have provided care and support to people affected by cancer for more than 35 years. The first two nurses were appointed in Wales in 1981 and today there are more than 200 Macmillan professionals working in hospitals and out in the community in Wales. However, as well as our much loved nurses there are many other health and social care professionals including Macmillan physiotherapists, pharmacists and dieticians, library information coordinators, specialist social workers and welfare benefits advisers.

Macmillan is delighted to be working in partnership with local governments across Wales to fund vital financial and social care posts. Currently there are nine Macmillan Welfare Rights Services in:

- Flintshire
- Wrexham
- Conwy
- Powys
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Neath Port Talbot
- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion

Last year in Wales Macmillan Welfare Benefits Advisers helped people affected by cancer claim **£4.8m** in benefits to which they are entitled. Macmillan Welfare Rights Advisers also offer advice on issues relating to debt and housing.

In addition, in 2010 Macmillan awarded patient grants totalling more than £600,000 to people affected by cancer in Wales. These go towards one-off costs such as paying increased fuel bills or buying equipment and wigs. In 2010, half the people who applied for grants in Wales used their money to pay their fuel bills. Research by the charity has shown that cancer patients are twice as likely to fall into fuel poverty as the general population.

Nine out of ten people diagnosed with cancer will suffer loss of income and/or increased costs as a direct result of cancer. For people under 55 years, the average fall in income is 50%.

Cath Lindley, general manager for Macmillan Cancer Support in Wales, said:

“After their initial diagnosis people affected by cancer tell us that money is their next biggest worry. Macmillan welfare rights advisers not only provide a vital service to people affected by cancer, but also generate millions of pounds for local economies throughout Wales.”

Macmillan's [cancer support specialists on 0808 808 00 00](tel:0808808000) can offer advice to people with cancer, their family, and carers who need help to access benefits financial support.





People Issues and Shared Services

As local authorities continue to grapple with the challenges of shared services to deliver service efficiencies, one of the biggest issues that will impact on any shared arrangement is how staffing issues are dealt with.

No shared service will work effectively without staff buy-in, as ultimately staff will be responsible for delivering shared services. In our experience, people issues are not always given the priority required and at a sufficiently early stage.

Shared services does present some challenges from an employment law perspective. For example, employment legislation largely focuses on the one employer per employment contract as opposed to a "joint employment" arrangement and there are limited means of transferring employees between different employers in other sectors with statutory continuity of service preserved.

Typical employment challenges include TUPE and secondment; redundancy; re-organisation; and equality issues. The financial and wider costs of failing to properly deal with these issues can be considerable. However, a well thought out process with people issues as an integral part of the process from the outset can significantly increase the prospects of success of any proposed shared services arrangement.

We have worked with a number of local authorities on many innovative staffing models that do not necessarily require TUPE or secondment. This is a form of partnership agreement whereby employees do not change employer, and this has worked even where there is interface between the public sector and private sector in partnership working. Redundancies and re-organisations can be properly planned where necessary, but only if factored in and considered as part of the overall outcome and project plan.

Equalities issues are increasingly coming to the fore following the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. Care has to be taken, for example, not to reopen the equal pay agenda, particularly where authorities have already implemented Single Status. The transfer of employees between authorities and other providers in a shared services arrangement could open up new equal pay liabilities. Other discrimination issues should also be considered, particularly where arrangements could result in indirect discrimination against a group of protected employees.

Experience dictates that where there are challenges, none of these are insurmountable provided they are afforded proper consideration at the outset. Care should also be taken to avoid making rash commitments early on, such as a commitment to no redundancies (which could be an unlawful fetter of discretion in any event) or no TUPE transfer, as such commitments can significantly reduce the options going forward. Ultimately the application of TUPE will be a question to be determined on the particular facts of each case.

Engagement with the employees and their representatives is also key. Again, in our experience where time is invested in engaging with staff, this pays rich dividends in terms of staff commitment and support. Transparency and trust will be key to success.

Yes, shared services presents interesting employment challenges but our experience of working with a number of local authorities demonstrates that these challenges can be met but only if supported by a well thought out strategy factoring in all the employment issues from an early stage. Employment legislation does present options, which coupled with a robust industrial relations and communications strategy, can be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful shared services arrangement.

Huw Rolant Jones, Partner, Eversheds LLP,
Email: huwrolantjones@eversheds.com
Direct Dial: 0845 498 7483