



Chair Update

My year as Chair of SOLACE Wales is nearly at an end and I thought that I would take a moment to reflect on the year and how and what SOLACE Wales has achieved during the year.

I commenced by circulating an e-mail advising on the reframing, purpose and activity of SOLACE Wales and what it was hoping to achieve. Upon reflection, and I hope you will agree, that SOLACE Wales is a more engaged group. The alignment of portfolio groups with SOLACE UK new portfolios has worked well and the Leads have been invited to be members of various groups and have also responded to consultations. Portfolio Leads are also now invited to attend meetings of the Executive Group. I list below some of the work that SOLACE Wales has been involved with during my year as Chair.

Instead of branch meetings these were replaced with themed sessions/workshops.

Demand Management led by PWC - this was a peer discussion about many of the demand management issues that face us and indeed society and was interesting to discuss aspects of primary/future demand and to share examples within authorities.

Prudent Health Care - session with Andrew Goodall, Director General, Department for Health and Social Services/Chief Executive NHS Wales to highlight specific NHS experience of making prudent healthcare happen in Wales, reflect on how this approach might impact on wider public service stakeholders and discuss and debate how might a prudent lens be applied to public services in Wales.

Continuous Improvement session with Academi Wales – Tony Mizens, Head of Continuous Improvement from Academi Wales, provided an overview of AWCIC on the future 'strategic direction setting' of AWCIC. Academi Wales have offered to put a programme together to undertake further work with SOLACE Wales.

Solace (Wales) – Making Change work – work with Geldards – this is an ongoing project with Geldards and Kim Howell provided an update in April 2015 explaining where the work was up to and how it will be reconfigured.

Sponsors

I met with Sonia Rheinlander, Business Relations Business Relations Consultant and Kim Ryley, Group Director Solace UK and Chair of Solace in Business from Solace UK to discuss our purpose of the refocused SOLACE (Wales) and if there would be any support from Solace UK with regard to a joint Policy Officer and also to reengage with our Sponsors Eversheds and Zurich. I have met with contacts from Eversheds and Zurich and they have also attended a couple of our events in Cardiff. With regard to a Policy Officer it is felt that in order to take Solace Wales forward that recruitment should be undertaken for a part time Policy Officer under the guidance of the new Chair.

Partnership working

My initial e-mail was shared more widely with Welsh Government officials, WLGA, SOLACE (UK) and other relevant stakeholders so they knew and understood our refocused purpose, style and foci. Regular meetings with Welsh Government Officials have been held and now that they have been established will be continued.

Requests have been received for SOLACE Wales representative to be members of steering groups and Portfolio Leads are now members of these groups to add to discussion and ensure that as a group we are represented and views put forward.

As Chair of Solace Wales I was approached by Michael Trickey from Wales Public Services 2025 with regard to the next phase of this work, Fiscal, economic and policy analysis of public spending and public services in Wales, and if Solace Wales would be prepared to support the next phase. The Executive Group agreed to provide financial support for the next 3 years and Alison Ward will have a presence on the programme steering group. As a group it will be interesting to see how WPS 2025 develops over the next 3 years.

Earlier this year Solace UK offered the Aspiring Future Public Sector Leaders programme. The Solace Wales Executive group agreed to sponsor 2 places on the programme and nominations were requested from all the Welsh Local Authorities. From the nominations 2 successful candidates were selected and have now embarked on the programme. One of the criteria for attendance was that they had to demonstrate that they have a planned contribution back into the Welsh Local Government and I am looking forward to hearing how they will undertake this.

Response to Consultations

Solace Wales are contacted on a regular basis to provide responses to consultations as a group. Many of these are undertaken by the Portfolio Leads and I would like to thank them for their contribution and additional work that is involved. In my year as Chair responses have been provided to:

- Public Services Staff Commission – January 2015 to Welsh Government
- Evidence to Committee on LG bill
- Solace Wales response to White Paper

I am sure that there were many others also.

I would like to thank the Executive Group and Portfolio Leads for their support during my year as Solace Wales Chair and I am sure that the appointed Chair for 2015/16 will continue to build upon this work and promote the voice of Solace Wales.

Dr Helen Paterson
Chair of Solace Wales 2014/15