



# A message from the

*It's 2036 and Learning Disability Wales is busy preparing the 200th edition of Llais. Technology has moved on so fast that they have been able to send an article back in time to appear in the 100th edition. It's full of good news, and messages about what needs to happen to make it come true....*



## **Hi everyone,**

I'm Sal. I'm one of Learning Disability Wales' roving reporters that make sure Llais gets all the news on what's happening for people with learning disabilities in Wales. I'm 28 years old and I'm doing alright, I reckon.

I've got this job, which I do part-time for a proper wage. It's not enough to cover all my spending, but it gets topped up by a Disability Payment from the Welsh Government. If I work more, the payment goes down, and if I work less, the payment goes up, but I'm always a bit better off if I work. Because of my disability, I have a life-long right to these payments, which stops me worrying about losing my job. But I want to work. I don't want to get everything for free, and never give anything back. I want to be like other 28 year olds. And what really helps is that everybody wants me to be like them too.

## **Doing nothing to doing a job**

When I was in school the future

didn't look too good, job-wise.

Just about everybody with a learning disability was leaving school and ending up stuck doing next to nothing. Some went to day services where nothing much happened every day, and people stayed there forever!

Some people went to college and did the same Life Skills courses over and over again! Everybody else just stayed at home in their parents' houses, and tried not to get too bored! And if anyone dared to get a job, the government stopped their payments, and made it really hard to get them back again if they lost their job.

Then one day the Welsh Assembly took over disability payments, gave us clear rights to a basic income, and started encouraging everyone to work!

They didn't wave a stick at us or anything like that. They just started treating disabled people like they wanted us around, and like we had something to offer, and like we had responsibilities too. They started waving sticks at schools, and colleges, and

businesses, and social services, saying "This is the law, folks! Get your acts together, and start helping people with disabilities to get some freedom and respect! To get jobs, for God's sake!".



When I was in school the future didn't look too good, job-wise. Just about everybody with a learning disability was leaving school and ending up stuck doing next to nothing. Some went to day services where nothing much happened every day, and people stayed there forever!



### Out and about

Anyway, so I'm out and about looking at what is happening in Wales today, and what I like is I'm seeing lots of people with disabilities everywhere I go. I went to the supermarket in Aberdare last week and they had four people with learning disabilities working there. Last month I was in Carmarthen and there was a big town carnival going on, and I bought this really amazing necklace at a stall run by people with learning disabilities. They were part of some local co-operative thing. Susie was in charge of giving out the necklaces. She can't speak, or move much, but she gave every necklace out with a kiss and a smile.

I also met Susie in her school. She's in a special class for people who can't speak and stuff, but everybody in her school, even the ones in A level, meet up for citizen classes and lunch-times. That thanks to the Welsh Government's Integrated Education Act in two thousand and twenty something. I gave a speech to a whole school once about how bullying is bad, and kissing is good!

### Shared Lives

Let me tell you about where I'm living. I share a house with Ceri. We got to know each other because, although we both had independent living payments to help live in our own homes, there was a problem. The money wasn't enough to cover our support worker's pay if we lived on our own. So my Support Advisor suggested that I might want to live with someone else

and share the cost between us. He suggested I sign up to "Shared Lives" on the internet, and that's how I met Ceri. Of course, we didn't move in together straight away. I wanted to know if we got on OK together. The first thing I did was get him to meet my mum. Then we went out for some evenings together. Then we went on holiday together. He's a bit boring (shhh!), but we decided we got on fine.

Then we had to choose our support workers. That was great fun. Ceri and I sat down with our Support Advisors and told them what sort of people we wanted. We made a big list, but the main thing we wanted was people who listened and understood us. It took a while, but the ones we picked have turned out brilliant and I love them to bits.



### John

In fact, my support worker John, whose helping me write this, can say hello to you himself. Go on, John!

*Hi everyone,  
 Firstly let me just say... I love you too, Sal!*

*Secondly, greetings from 2036!*



*And thirdly, here's what I think you need to do...*

- *Sort out your Benefits legislation, to remove disincentives to work*
- *Reinforce citizen rights in relation to all the following:*
  - *Housing tenure and ownership*
  - *Work opportunities*
  - *Health equality*
  - *Learning opportunities*
  - *Leisure opportunities*
  - *Family and social life*
  - *Civic participation*
- *Make it an absolute requirement that services deliver on citizen's rights*
- *At the same time, reinforce citizens' obligations and expectations*
  - *To reduce their dependency*
  - *To make their contribution*
  - *To participate in their active citizenship*

*Pass some good laws, boys!*

Thanks, John. I have no idea what all those big words mean, but if you say so, I'm for it!  
 Best wishes, everybody,  
 Sal.  
 2036