

News and information for Wales from:

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Call to reward Wales' outstanding volunteers

WCVA has launched the 2011 Wales Volunteer of the Year Awards which are supported by CCLA for the second year running.

Since the awards scheme started in 2004, it has grown over the years and now receives over 200 nominations in five categories, which have been chosen to reflect the range of volunteering opportunities across Wales.

As well as recognition of individuals, young people (under 25 years), and groups, the scheme also rewards 'green' volunteers and trustees. There will be up to three winners in each category, with 15 national winners presented with their awards at a ceremony in Cardiff in June, and all nominees awarded commendation certificates

at a local ceremony or by post.

The 2010 winners included two environmentalists who take weekly unpaid leave to volunteer and a trustee who has ensured the smooth running of Citizens Advice Bureaux across north Wales.

Second time supporter CCLA exists to help charities make the best of their investments. See www.ccla.co.uk for more information.

Details of the scheme, including nomination forms, are available from the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329, or e-mail help@wcva.org.uk. They will also be available to be downloaded from the website www.wcva.org.uk/voty. The deadline for receipt of nominations is 15 April 2011.

Welsh speakers urged to take part in research on health and social care services

The Welsh Assembly Government and the Care Council for Wales are keen to hear from Welsh speakers about their experience of health and social care services through the medium of Welsh.

They have commissioned a team of researchers from the Welsh Centre for Language Planning to carry out the work.

Researchers are keen to speak to patients, service users and carers to find out more about their experience. Was it easy to receive a Welsh-medium service or were there obstacles? What

effect did this have? Were they happy with the service they received or do they have suggestions about ways of improving services?

People will be able to take part in the research through confidential face-to-face interviews or pre-arranged phone interviews and they are also welcome to submit written evidence.

For further information, please contact either Elaine Davies on 01239 711668 (elaine.davies@iaith.eu) or Elin Mair on 01239 711668 (elin.mair@iaith.eu).

Charities permitted to take sides in AV referendum

The Charity Commission has indicated that charities will be able to support a Yes or No vote in the upcoming referendum on the Alternative Vote system, should they believe the outcome will directly affect the delivery of their objectives.

New guidance from the commission says the principles that govern political activity by charities also apply to referendums. It says it may be appropriate for charities to 'set out the pros and cons of a yes or no vote for their beneficiaries'.

It says: 'For example, if the outcome of a referendum will have a particular impact on older people, it would be appropriate for a charity that works with older people to explain the effects of the different outcomes to its beneficiaries.'

But it draws a distinction between setting out the pros and cons and actively campaigning for a yes or no vote.

'In exceptional cases charities may consider that the outcome of a referendum is likely to directly

affect, positively or negatively, the delivery of their charitable objects,' it says.

'Where the impact on the work of the charity is very indirect or uncertain, the trustees will find it difficult to justify campaigning for a particular outcome.

'The key question for the trustees is exactly how such activity would be an effective way of promoting the objects of the charity.'

If they plan to publish material that indicates support for a particular side in a referendum, the document suggests charities may be required to register with the Electoral Commission as campaigning organisations.

The No to AV campaign is reported to have written to 23 charities asking them to distance themselves publicly from the Yes to Fairer Votes campaign.

A statement issued by the No to AV campaign said: 'We welcome this guidance from the Charity Commission and will be seeking urgent clarification from the charities concerned over how their alleged support meets their charitable objectives.'

2011 Assembly election – a third sector agenda

In advance of the 2011 National Assembly election, WCVA has set out ways in which the third sector is already helping people and communities in Wales to meet the challenges of today the future years.

The document also proposes a series of practical steps that a new Welsh Government can take to

grow the contribution that the third sector makes to supporting active participation by people in community life and action.

2011 Assembly election – a third sector agenda can be viewed at <http://tiny.cc/301em> and the summary document, at <http://tiny.cc/v28or>.



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