

# WCB Roundup

A newsletter for local VI Groups in Wales

Spring 2011



**BME and Sight Impairment Special**

# Visual Impairment Roadshows

This month the first ever Visual Impairment Roadshow is touring Wales, offering people with a visual impairment the chance to take part in an exciting day packed full of interesting things.



The first event took place on the 17th May at Memorial Hall, Wrexham and was a great success. In addition to the exhibition stands featuring organisations and IT companies, there was holistic massage, and truffle making.

Further events are taking place across Wales, and the partners have worked hard to make sure that everyone can access one of the events taking place.

The venues and dates are:

St. Peter's Hall, Cardiff - 25th May  
Newport Leisure Centre - 1st June  
Bangor University - 8th June  
Carmarthen Leisure Centre - 15th June  
Grand Theatre, Swansea - 22nd June

Each day starts at 10.30 a.m. and the runs to 3.30 p.m. People are welcome to come for any time, and don't have to attend the full day.

Everything is free, and attendees are welcome to bring any number of visitors with them.

All the events promise an enjoyable opportunity to hear about the many services available to people with a visual impairment both locally and nationally, as well as a chance to try out fun new things.

Events include demonstrations of tips to stay safe in and around the home provided by rehab officers, a chance to see first hand all the latest new technologies designed to promote your independence, hear about what work is taking place in Wales by national agencies, and meet your local clubs and societies.



One of the key things WCB would like to do during these Roadshows is record the voices of the people of Wales living with sight loss. We will be using roving reporters to hear directly what people think of the services available to them, and where our future priorities should be.

## **Aiming to Promote Local Societies**

By now many of local societies will have been contacted by Javid Sarwar, WCB's Roadshow Coordinator. One of the driving considerations behind wanting to host these Roadshows is to promote smaller, local societies. These roadshows are an ideal opportunity to raise the profile of your club or society, without any cost, by having a table at the event. If you cannot provide volunteers or staff to promote your club, WCB would be happy to take any promotional materials you have and assist in the publicity of your group.

To book free places, please ring the booking line on: 02920 473 954



## WCB Awareness Training goes behind bars

WCB started providing awareness training to groups across Wales in 1989, and since 1992 all of our courses have been delivered by visually impaired trainers. Although there are elements of the courses which are fixed – such as showing attendees how to guide – each event can be tailored to the particular needs of the organisation. The duration of the courses, half or full day, can also be varied according to customer requirements.

Last year, around 430 people attended our training. Historically, social care workers have been our largest customers, although we also work with other organisations, such as the Welsh Blood Service. One growth area has been the law enforcement agencies. Following on from the series of courses which we delivered to the Crown Prosecution Service a few years ago, we are now providing training for the other two main organisations involved in Wales, the police and prison services. Visually impaired people may come into contact with these services as witnesses and victims of crime – and the increasing numbers of older prisoners means that sight problems are also becoming an issue for prison staff. One reason why WCB has been chosen is that we are an Approved Training Centre for Agored Cymru (formerly the Open College Network), and officers from Cardiff, Usk, Swansea and Bridgend prisons have recently attended our courses as part of their formal programme of training. We have also delivered training to Dyfed Powys and Gwent Police (including community support officers).

WCB is responding to the financial constraints facing our major customers in two ways, as we want to ensure that we reach as many people as possible. We are reducing the cost to local authorities and providing incentives for early booking, and are also targeting new types of customers. For example, the recent EU agreement to new rights for passengers on buses means that bus and coach drivers will be required to attend disability awareness training, and we will be following this up.

If you require any further information, can suggest any organisations who may be interested in receiving our training, or would be interested in volunteering as a trainer or training assistant, please contact Nicola Lewis at the WCB office.

## Obituary

### **A Sad Loss for Ceredigion**

WCB has been informed of the sad passing away of Mattie Williams, the longstanding chair of Cymdeithas Ceredigion i'r Deillion (Ceredigion Association for the Blind). Mattie was Chair of the society for eleven years, and worked tirelessly for the society to improve the lives of people in Ceredigion living with sight loss.

During her time as Chair, the Society introduced many new projects, including telephone visiting services, an ICT assessment service in partnership with WCB, and helped get many grants to assist the clubs members.

Mattie was great friend to everyone, and will be fondly remembered by us all.

# Wales Vision Strategy News

“The sweet smell of spring is in the air, and with pollen filling the skies and footpaths in the lead up to summer - it's good to see conferences relating to the aims of the Strategy springing up across the UK”, says the UK Vision Strategy, of which our own Wales Vision Strategy is a part. For us here in Wales, it is particularly pleasing to see recognition being given to the needs of people with a learning disability whilst whole new projects are developing pace, working towards improving services here in Wales for people with a sight loss.

## **Vision group engaged in Wales**

The Wales Cross Party Vision Group (CPVG) met in January to discuss progress and challenges in relation to the Wales Vision Strategy Implementation Plan. Presentations were received from members of the Advisory Group and a service user. The group plays a pivotal role in helping to secure engagement from the Welsh Assembly Government to progress the more challenging objectives of the Welsh plan.

The CPVG will host a reception at the Senedd (National Assembly for Wales) on 15th June 2011 to mark National Eye Health Week and the first anniversary of the Wales Vision Strategy Implementation Plan. RNIB Cymru's eye health inequalities report will also be launched at the event. The project funded by the Pfizer Foundation explores the barriers to sight tests in the South Wales Valleys. It is hoped this will provide an opportunity to raise key issues and meet new Assembly Members following the recent elections.

## **Making Vision Matter in Wales**

Cross-sector organisations are joining together in Wales to consider activities for National Eye Health Week from 13-19 June 2011. The group includes representation from Optometry Wales, Royal College of Ophthalmologists, British and Irish Orthoptists Society, Age Cymru,

MEGAFOCUS, Wales Council for the Blind and the pharmaceutical industry.

The group will promote the importance of eye health and the need for regular sight tests for all as part of the national campaign 'Vision Matters'.

### **GPs more aware of eye care.**

Optometry Wales and the Welsh Optometry Postgraduate Education Centre, (WOPEC) are soon to deliver eye health awareness sessions to GPs across Wales in May and June. This will be part of GPs compulsory continued professional development programme.

The presentation covers the importance of referral via primary care and community based optometry for most eye conditions. It is also designed to alert GPs to the importance of the Welsh Eye Care Initiative (WECI); in particular PEARS which is the Primary Eyecare Acute Referral Scheme, a fast track service where GPs or patients can self refer to a community optometry practice and receive first hand, quality assistance and diagnosis. The sessions are scheduled to begin during May.

For more information contact [salidavis@optometrywales.com](mailto:salidavis@optometrywales.com)

# Sight Loss & Minority Ethnic Communities (MECs)

Each edition of Roundup focuses on a theme: in this quarter we're focusing on how visual impairment affects black and minority ethnic communities in Wales. Guest editor, Nirmala Pisavadia of Sight Support in Pontypool, has put together an overview of work being done in Wales currently. Drawing on research and direct experience in her role at Sight Support, Nirmala presents some of the findings concerning groups experiencing a higher incidence of sight loss than whites, along with anecdotal evidence that people from BME communities are less likely to engage with health professionals. She goes on to outline some of the initiatives to tackle the problems raised by this inequality, such as **MEGAFOCUS**.

Also, Marcus Roberts reports on how Guide Dogs has been working with minority ethnic communities.

The next edition will focus on services that deliver audio format books, such as Talking Books, library services etc. and associated technologies.

Please contact [richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk](mailto:richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk) (or telephone Richard on 029 20 473954) if you would like to write something about the service you or your organisation offers in relation to the theme or visual impairment in general. The provisional deadline is July 15th 2011.

**Reducing preventable sight loss** is a key priority and objective for the Wales Vision Strategy. However, to achieve impact on this agenda, there needs to be a deeper understanding and targeting of health inequalities. As with other common conditions, such as diabetes and coronary heart disease, preventable sight loss does not seem to affect all groups equally.

Research has identified that avoidable sight loss is strongly linked with ethnicity, and social and economic inequalities. It is estimated that 1 in 10 people from an ethnic minority background over the age of 65 will experience serious sight loss.

The following shows the prevalence of eye conditions in MECs.

### **Condition and Prevalence**

**Diabetic Retinopathy:** 2.96 times more common in blacks than whites

**Glaucoma:** 5 times more common in blacks than whites

**Cataract:** 5.25 times more common in blacks than whites

**Refractive Error:** 4.25 times more common in blacks than whites

**Macular Degeneration:** 4.4 times more common in whites than blacks

In terms of specific avoidable sight loss conditions, people of African-Caribbean descent are significantly more likely to develop glaucoma than the general population, are more likely to present with advanced glaucoma and are more likely to become blind as a result of developing the condition. The risk of Type 2 diabetes in South Asians is about five times as high as that in Europeans, and they tend to develop it about ten years earlier than their European counterparts. Therefore the risk of diabetic retinopathy in this group is also higher.

Despite the high prevalence of eye disease, there is anecdotal evidence that people from ME communities do not use eye care services that are available to prevent and/or treat eye disease. There is some research to support this. South Asian women (especially Bangladeshis) have been found to be less likely to have visited an optician than white women and, amongst men, African Caribbeans and Bangladeshis are the least likely to have used opticians. The use by the Chinese of optometry services

is also thought to be low. Hence people could be losing their sight needlessly. Indeed research has indicated that interventions targeted to prevent eye disease in MEC would be the most cost effective to reduce blindness.



## **Sight Support**

Since 2006 Sight Support has worked hard to raise awareness of preventable needless sight loss amongst the many diverse communities in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. We have reached over 6000 people from different ethnic communities through giving talks at temples, mosques, churches, community centres, attending multicultural melas, health fairs, exhibitions and other MEC events. Sometimes the talks were delivered in the language of that community to enable them to better understand the message.

In the talks delivered the ethnic minority communities are also told about the Wales Eye Care Initiative (WECI) and that they are entitled to free eye examinations if :

- they have sight in one eye only, i.e. you are effectively blind in your worse eye;
- they have a hearing impairment and are profoundly deaf;
- they suffer from retinitis pigmentosa;
- their family origins are Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi;
- they are at risk of eye disease by other reasons of race or family history.



The 2001 Census recorded a total population in Wales of 2.9 million, 97.9 per cent of whom were white and 2.1 per cent from minority ethnic groups. The largest minority ethnic group was Pakistanis (0.29 per cent), followed by

Indians (0.28 per cent), Chinese (0.22 per cent), and Mixed:White and Black Caribbean (0.21 per cent). Geographically the largest proportion of MEC live in Cardiff (42%), followed by Newport (11%), then Swansea (8%) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (4%) and Vale of Glamorgan (4%).

A Thomas Pocklington Trust report entitled “People from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and Vision Services: a good practice guide” indicates that “despite being the most vulnerable, people from MEC are the least likely to receive the necessary care. When compared with the majority ‘white’ community, people from MEC who have health or social care needs are more likely to have difficulty finding appropriate services and are more likely to experience poor outcomes”.

## **Key issues People from MECs face in accessing Services**

MECs people may find it difficult to access services for many reasons:

- language barriers exist for some;
- referral patterns are not the same in all communities, and in some instances self-referral is less likely to happen;
- some migrant communities are unfamiliar with primary care services and think of health services mainly as hospital-based, and geared to emergency treatment;
- some new migrant communities may not be aware that health services in the UK are free at the point of use;
- some people are more comfortable with walk-in services and find appointments systems off-putting, particularly when they are associated with long waiting lists;
- previous experiences of feeling unwelcome deter people from approaching services;
- geographical isolation, transport difficulties and social exclusion also make access difficult;
- support for carers is essential so that they may enable those they care for to access services.

Working with MECs in Wales, Sight Support discovered over a period of time that there is a low level of awareness about the prevention of needless sight loss, of the impact of visual impairment and of services that may reduce sight loss or improve management.

Therefore, to rectify this, Sight Support set up Megafocus Wales.

### **MEGAFOCUS Wales (Minority Ethnic Groups Association for Ophthalmic Care Uptake and Service Improvement in Wales).**

On 12th February, 2009, Sight Support organized a very successful conference entitled “Understanding the Needs of People with Sight Loss from Minority & Ethnic Communities”. A very clear message came through that there was an urgent need to take further steps in South East Wales to prevent needless sight loss in people from Minority

## Ethnic Communities.

Also, despite being at higher risk of eye conditions, people from Minority Ethnic Communities are not accessing the services such as the Welsh Eye Care Initiative (WECI) or the retinopathy screening service which are available to prevent sight loss.



Therefore, Sight Support set up MEGAFOCUS Wales, a Group of multi-disciplinary professionals who work with people with sight loss, to draw out a strategic plan and oversee the work to prevent needless sight loss in people from Minority Ethnic Communities and what barriers they face in accessing eye care services.

The aim of MEGAFOCUS Wales is to reduce the number of people presenting with late stages of eye disease and hence the number of people going unnecessarily blind in Wales. In order to achieve this MEGAFOCUS is working to ensure that all communities in Wales are aware of their particular susceptibilities to eye disease and understand the eye health routes for diagnosis and treatment. They are raising awareness in communities of the role of optometrists in the detection of eye disease and working with GPs to reinforce this message. To ensure that the clinical culture is not be a barrier to eye health they

will work with eye care practitioners to ensure they understand the cultural diversity in Wales.

MEGAFOCUS was established with four main objectives :

- To lay out a strategic plan for sight loss prevention in Minority Ethnic groups;
- To draw up guidelines to see how resources can best be targeted;
- To examine barriers facing ME groups in accessing sight loss services;
- Raising awareness among professionals including GPs, Optometrist and other workers involved in eye care.

Welsh Assembly Government and Wales is unique in establishing Health and Social Care under one umbrella to highlight the fact that Social Care and Health are inextricably linked subjects. There is compelling evidence in literature to show that Health is directly related to inequality. Inequality has both social and economic dimension. Ethnicity is a strong indicator of social dimension. Some practical examples are diabetic retinopathy is 2.96 times more common in minority ethnic groups; glaucoma 5 times more common in African/Afro-Caribbean community and refractive error is 4.25 more common in minority ethnic groups.

Thomas Pocklington produced an excellent report *Our Vision Too: Improving the access of minority visually impaired people to appropriate services; building a supported community referral system* and the aim of the report was to examine and develop means to ensure services are delivered to people from ME Communities with visual impairment. The main findings from this report were :

- there is still a lack of knowledge about the prevalence of sight loss in different ethnic groups;
- potential service users in minority communities have a poor knowledge of eye conditions and of services;
- completed projects have not fed into general service provision;
- cost needs expressed by people with sight loss from ethnic

minorities are in common with those from majority 'white' communities;

- common themes between various minority ethnic groups may be better addressed if the initial response was 'community specific';
- the primary need is for information;
- people experience 'learned helplessness';
- stigma, shame or pride have a disproportionate impact on minority communities;
- information and outreach should be delivered through trusted routes.



## **Minority Ethnic Communities Health Fairs 2010 & 2011**

In order to address one of these key findings about lack of knowledge about prevalence of sight loss in different ethnic groups Sight Support, in conjunction with Ethnic Minority Communities First (Cardiff), MEWN Cymru, BAWSO Women's Aid and Voluntary Action Cardiff, had organized Minority Ethnic Communities Health Fairs on Thursday 21st January, 2010 and Monday 7th March 2011 both at City Hall, Cardiff.

Both events were a hugely successful attracting 350 people in the first year and nearly 520 people in the second year from a diverse range of minority communities and groups!

The aim of this event is to raise awareness and contribute to the development of the health and wellbeing lifestyle of members of the minority ethnic communities. The event is the first of its kind addressing the needs of the minority ethnic communities in Wales and will encourage and support people to look after their own health, both mental and physical, with practical advice about how people can choose a healthier lifestyle.



There were presentations on different health conditions which are predominant in people of minority ethnic communities such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

Besides the talks there were various exhibitors at the events and they included both statutory and voluntary organizations.

In a separate room there were “Eye Examinations” which were carried out by Andrew Feyi-Waboso (Consultant Ophthalmologist) at Royal Gwent Hospital and his Eye Clinic Team.

## **Megafocus Wales 1st Anniversary**

On 13th January 2011 Megafocus Wales Celebrated it's first anniversary at the Senedd and the event was hosted by Gwenda Thomas, AM, Deputy Minister of Social Services. She also gave the Opening Address. The event was attended by nearly 100 people. The day was a celebration the welcome speech was given by the Chair of Megafocus Wales, Mr Raghu Ram, followed by the Deputy Minister's Opening Address. There was a performance of Indian Classical dance and African Drumming to add to the celebrations!

### **What has Megafocus Wales achieved in its' first year?**

- We have successfully lobbied and continue to lobby NHS health boards to collect ethnicity data.
- A small pilot project is being undertaken in Royal Gwent Hospital looking at Ethnicity and Eye disease.
- DRSS Wales is one of the early organisations to adopt and have started collecting Ethnicity data. This will be a useful benchmark for future studies. WECL and PEARS scheme which are pioneering schemes in Wales by optometrist will be starting collecting this information.
- Talks, Health Fairs and Exhibitions have been successfully organised across Wales particularly targeting ME groups and spreading the message of eye care.

### **Train the Trainer: Prevention of needless Sight Loss in Minority Ethnic Communities (MECs)**

In November and December 2010 Sight Support decided that to reach even more ethnic communities and raise awareness about Prevention of needless Sight Loss in Minority Ethnic Communities they would run a "Training a Trainer" course for people working in the voluntary, community or health sectors who would like to promote prevention of sight loss.

Fourteen volunteers from diverse ethnic communities in Cardiff were

recruited to participate in the training course.

Topics to be included in the course were:

- factors affecting health and health inequalities;
- how to look after your eyes;
- unusual symptoms;
- explaining what to do if someone finds problems with their eyes;
- identifying barriers to accessing an optometrist;
- Information about WEICI, PEARS, diabetic retinopathy screening service and Welsh Low Vision Service;
- Possible risk factors for sight loss;
- Interactive ways to work with groups.



This course is primarily aimed at :

- people from South Asian background;
- people from African and Afro-Caribbean background;
- people from Chinese background;
- other ethnic groups.



The training was over four days and the sessions include time for discussion and group work. The participants were given access to sight loss prevention health resources and provided follow-up support

including help with evaluating their work.

All the participants completed the “Training the Trainer” sessions successfully and on 13th January 2011, Gwenda Thomas, AM, Deputy Minister of Social Services, presented the participants with their certificates at the Megafocus 1st Anniversary Celebrations.

## **Minority Ethnic Communities Young Persons’ Group**

Many young people from Minority Ethnic Communities with visual impairment often find they are isolated, find it difficult in accessing information (about welfare rights, career opportunities, employment issues) and miss the social interaction that people their age should be enjoying. Sight Support has been working hard to set up the above group so if anyone would like to join this newly formed group please contact Nirmala Pisavadia on 01495 763650 or e-mail : nirmala@sightsupport.org.uk

## **References :**

*Thomas Pocklington Reports :*

Our vision too: Improving the access of ethnic minority visually impaired people to appropriate services: building a supported community referral system (RF8, OPI0)

People from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and vision services: a good practice guide (GPG3)

Preventing glaucoma: can a health education package reach its target population? (RF13)

## Guide Dogs and MECs

*Marcus Roberts of the GDMI Cardiff District Team reports on the work being undertaken by Guide Dogs.*

At Guide Dogs we are working across the UK with people from ethnic and minority backgrounds, trying to raise awareness of the range of mobility services we provide in addition to guide dogs, to those that are blind or partially sighted. We are committed, not to rest as an organisation until blind and partially sighted people can enjoy the same freedom of movement as everyone else, on their own terms. We are passionate and determined to promote our inclusive and embracing values. DVDs and leaflets are available in alternative languages and distributed at Melas and Carnivals where staff offer information informally.

Sight loss presently has an adverse impact on particular groups. Poorer access to services is also likely to contribute towards higher risk burdens and resulting health inequalities across minority ethnic groups. British Asians, for example, appear to show higher risk of cataracts and develop it on average 10 years earlier than their white counterparts. British Black Caribbean or Black African backgrounds are at a four to five times increased risk of glaucoma. Prevalence of diabetes is also increased in British Asians and British Black Caribbean or Black African backgrounds. There is also an increased rate of severe sight problems and blindness in children from minority ethnic groups.

However, benefits have been realised through joining and working with both local multicultural health community groups and larger agencies such as MEGAFOCUS. People may seek the greater independence that a guide dog can offer but feel inhibited by cultural prohibitions on pet dogs, for example. Within the Muslim community support for guide dogs as working dogs has developed over time

with community leaders and Guide Dog owners promoting the benefit of using our service and addressing concerns about how it can be made to work and not conflict with cultural and or religious factors.

You need to have significant sight loss which is affecting your ability to walk independently to the places you would like to go, but not necessarily to be formally registered as blind or partially-sighted.

People who can benefit from a guide dog may have health conditions or additional disabilities alongside sight loss. There are no age restrictions. People of all ages can now apply for a guide dog. Young people through to people in their 70s, 80s and even 90s have become successful guide dog owners. Becoming a guide dog owner depends on being well motivated, and having the aptitude to be trained to handle a guide dog.

It can cost very little to have a guide dog – the training is free, and essential equipment is provided. Some people choose to cover the cost of dog food and vet bills for themselves; however, we recognise that owning a dog can be costly, so if people would like Guide Dogs to help cover these costs in part or in full, we can help. All a person is asked to pay is 50p after qualification with their dog.

There's a wealth of information on our website and you can find contact details for local Guide Dogs teams, [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk), or check us out at -

[www.facebook.com/guidedogsUK](http://www.facebook.com/guidedogsUK)

[www.twitter.com/guidedogs](http://www.twitter.com/guidedogs)

[www.youtube.com/GuideDogsUK](http://www.youtube.com/GuideDogsUK)

[www.flickr.com/photos/guidedogsuk](http://www.flickr.com/photos/guidedogsuk)

The telephone numbers for the district teams are:

North Wales 0845 450 0415

South Wales 0845 372 7405

# Diabetes CD for South Asian Communities

South Asian people who live in the UK are up to six times more likely to have diabetes than the white population. Now Diabetes UK have produced a free, interactive CDROM about type 2 diabetes to help people from these communities improve management of their condition, and improve their quality of life.



The CD-ROM, called "Patient Interaction Education for the South Asian Community", takes the viewer through a journey of understanding diabetes and how it can be managed. It uses interactive animations, voice-over and subtitles to explain what diabetes is, the difference between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, information about fasting and how to test blood glucose levels.

The production of the CD-ROM was sponsored by Lilly.

The CD can be ordered from Diabetes UK's on-line shop, [www.diabetes.org.uk/onlineshop](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/onlineshop), or by ringing 0800 585088. Although it is free, there is a charge for postage. They also produce a free guide to healthy eating for people from these communities, which is available in Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali and Gujerati as well as English.

## News and Events

### Action for Blind People – Mobile Sight Loss Information Service

The Mobile Sight Loss Information resource vehicles enable visitors to try for themselves the latest technology and gadgets to improve daily life for blind and partially sighted people, and will be in the following sites in Wales over the next few months:

North Wales: 28 – 30 June

Merthyr, Radnor and Brecon: 16 - 18 August

Powys: 13 – 15 September

Venues and times had not been confirmed at the time of writing, but once agreed, will be available on Wales Council for the Blind's website [wcb-ccd.org.uk](http://wcb-ccd.org.uk), the AFBP website, [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk), or can be found by ringing the RNIB Helpline, 0303 123 9999.

AFBP's visits are made at the invitation of the local societies to support their work— if your group wants to arrange a visit, contact them on 020 7635 4800 or write to:

Action for Blind People, 14-16 Verney Road, London SE16 3DZ.

### Wales and West Conference 2011

Thursday 7th July, 2011.

Main Hall, University of Newport, Caerleon Campus, Newport, South Wales, NP18 3NT.

This unique one-day conference is aimed at anyone involved with sight loss and supporting people with sight loss, across the public, voluntary and private sectors.

This conference will bring professionals together from all sectors working to prevent sight loss and those providing services to people with sight loss. This conference is a wonderful opportunity to find out about innovative and leading edge research which has been taking place in the UK. It is also an opportunity for professionals from different organisations to meet and share ideas and discuss the future and the way forward.

We have some great speakers lined up including Dr Declan McKeefry, Reader in Visual Neuroscience, Bradford School of Optometry & Vision Science, University of Bradford to speak about “Dementia and Sight Loss”, and Dr Jag Mallya, Consultant Physician, Aneurin Bevan Health Board to speak on “Vision and Falls”. A full programme will be released in due course.

There will also be an exhibition at lunchtime of technology companies and other organisations in the field of sight loss.

Conference fee: Normal price: £90 per delegate (including refreshments and lunch) **SPECIAL EARLY BIRD OFFER: Book before 2ND JUNE 2011 and you pay only £80!!!** And if two or more book from the same organisation you pay only £150 !!!

For more details, please contact:

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Tel: 01495 763650; Fax: 01495 764650  
e-mail: [Nirmala@sightsupport.org.uk](mailto:Nirmala@sightsupport.org.uk)

## Sight Village – 12 to 14 July

QAC Sight Village returns to Birmingham's New Bingley Hall from 12th to 14th July. The event is free of charge and will be of interest to visually impaired people and their families, professionals working in the field and employers. Visitors will have the chance to find out about the latest technology, support services and daily living equipment, and there is a programme of seminars and events.

For more information, and to pre-register, visit the website [www.qacsightvillage.org.uk](http://www.qacsightvillage.org.uk).

## Make a Noise in Libraries

The first 'Make a Noise in Libraries' (MANIL) was held ten years ago, with the aim of working with libraries to improve the access of visually impaired people to books. The 2011 campaign will be held from 6 – 19 June, and the theme is ebooks.

Ebooks have the power to transform access to books for people with sight problems, giving them access to the same book, at the same time as everyone else. Books in electronic format are inherently more accessible than print, as they have the potential to allow the user to adapt the content to their individual needs.

The event is run by RNIB's National Library Service and will involve a variety of events in local libraries. At the time of writing, details are not available, but in past years these have included open days, coffee mornings, book displays, reading groups and storytelling. More information will be on the website closer to the date, or telephone Megan Gilks on 0161 355 2080.

# Vision Support “Access to Arts Carnival 2011”

On Saturday 3rd September 2011 Vision Support are holding an “Access to Arts Carnival” at the Greenfield Valley Heritage Park in Holywell. Service users and members of the public are invited to come along on the day and try out the latest VI equipment, take part in lots of different workshops related to the Arts and explore the fantastic grounds of the park.

Further information about the Carnival Day will be put onto Vision Support’s website, [www.visionsupport.org.uk](http://www.visionsupport.org.uk), when available, but mark the day on your calendar - it is going to be a day with a difference for all the family!!! Alternatively, you can contact Vision Support on 01244 381515 for more information.

## Is your society earning enough interest?

It is the responsibility of charity trustees to manage their assets effectively, but finding a savings account which pays a reasonable rate of interest is difficult, and the average instant-access charity savings rate on the high street is just 0.22%. Although higher rate accounts do exist, it can be difficult to track them down.

This problem has been discussed in a recent edition of The Guardian newspaper. They report that a savings, investment and pension intermediary, Fair Investment Company, is trying to address this issue by providing an on-line table of savings accounts for charities which provide better rates of interest. At the time of writing, they feature accounts from Principality, Scottish Widows and Cater Allan. For example, Welsh building society Principality has a 9-month bond offering 2.00% and an 18 month bond offering 2.6% (both require a minimum investment of £10,000). Both of these accounts are available exclusively through Fair Investment.

It should be noted that Fair Investment does not pretend to cover the whole of the charity market, and it only features companies which pay it

some kind of commission. However, it does feature accounts which pay better than average rates. The website address is [www.fairinvestment.co.uk](http://www.fairinvestment.co.uk) – look under ‘Savings Accounts’ for ‘Charity Savings’. If you do not have internet access, there is a helpline number, 0845 308 2525, and information can be sent by post.

Although the leading independent provider of financial information, Moneyfacts, does not feature on-line comparison tables for charities, they can provide one-off help. It will email a selection of the best-paying charity accounts to individual trustees who make contact via the email form on its website [www.moneyfacts.co.uk](http://www.moneyfacts.co.uk).

## EU approves new rights for disabled passengers on buses.

Following a campaign by several disability organisations, the European Union has agreed new rights for bus passengers (including those on local bus services) which will come into force in 2013. Key gains for disabled and older people include accessible travel information both before and during the journey, mandatory disability awareness training for all drivers and a right to compensation for damaged wheelchairs or other assistive equipment. In addition, information about passenger rights will become available in terminals and online.

## Spot the Film Star!

It's been a busy time for Julie Thomas, chair of Bridgevis society, and ever-busy activist for greater accessibility within the disability sector. Not content with a number of engaging and thought provoking radio interviews about the struggle people with a sight loss face everyday, Julie has now gone on to film not one but two short films as part of the European and Human Rights Commission work on access to services. Go Julie!

## RNIB Cymru launches a weekly Work Club

RNIB Cymru is starting a work club which will provide young people with sight loss with an opportunity to come together and have support with their search for work. If you have a sight problem and are either:

Looking for work (part or full time) OR  
Interested in looking into Further or Higher Education courses

You can come along, use their accessible computers and search away!

You will have support from RNIB's Transitions and Employment Officers and meet other people who are in a similar situation.

Computers are limited so people are advised to book a place before coming along. The work club will run every Wednesday from 2 till 4 pm at the RNIB's office in Shand House, Cardiff.

To book a place or find out more, either email [sophie.dyment@rnib.org.uk](mailto:sophie.dyment@rnib.org.uk) OR telephone her on 07909 874 501.

## Summer Reading Challenge for Children

Every year, thousands of families all over the country are involved in the UK's biggest reading event for children in libraries, the Summer Reading Challenge, coordinated by The Reading Agency. In 2011, the Challenge is called Circus Stars. The aim of the challenge is to get children to read six books from their library during the summer holidays.

Everyone who signs up for the Summer Reading Challenge can keep track of the books they read and receive encouragement to keep reading all summer long. It's great fun for kids and what's more, it doesn't cost a penny to join.

Working with the RNIB, the Reading Challenge has created super size

materials with extra large print, available for children who are visually impaired or children who have visually impaired parents/carers. There are accompanying information sheets about the Challenge in Braille and a Circus Stars certificate in Braille. Ask at your library for these resources.

The RNIB also loans books in Braille, giant print (24 point type) and audio, for children and young people aged 5 upwards. Books are delivered by post free of charge and children can borrow six books at a time. A themed book list for the Summer Reading Challenge will also be available from RNIB to help blind and partially sighted children complete the Circus Stars Challenge. It is quick and easy to join the library - email [childrenslibrarian@rnib.org.uk](mailto:childrenslibrarian@rnib.org.uk) or call direct on 0161 355 2061

## Focus on North Wales Society for the Blind



North Wales Society for the Blind (NWSB) has been providing services to visually impaired people in the counties of Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbigh, Flintshire, Wrexham and North Powys since 1882. The services provided include:

- Rehabilitation services including teaching Braille
- Long Cane Mobility and daily living skills
- Audio transcription and talking newspapers
- Welsh talking book service
- Specialist computer training
- Social groups and events
- A resource and information centre

After a taster session to assess the level of interest, the society has recently extended the facilities it offers to members by launching a Shooting Club, based at its office in Bangor. It has purchased two



specialist air rifles with acoustic sights with the assistance of the Sports Council for Wales and Gwynedd Council. The acoustic sights on top of the rifles reflect the light and convert it into sound which the shooter hears through headphones: the closer the shooter aims at the target, the higher the frequency of the sound. So far over 100 people have used the range, and in April the first annual competition between NWSB and Amlwch Age Well group took place, with the NWSB team triumphing over their sighted opponents. As a next step, it is hoped that a league can be established with other clubs. Apart from the challenge of learning a new skill, there are social benefits for participants, as they have the opportunity to get out of the house and make new friends.

If you would like to find out more about the Shooting Club, or about any other services provided by NWSB, give them a ring on 01248 353604.

Wales Council for the Blind comprises the following team of officers:

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