

Vision in Wales

# Roundup

**Autumn 2013**



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# Wales Eyecare Conference 2013



The Welsh Government chose National Eye Health Week in September to hold the annual Wales Eyecare Conference, and once again Vision in Wales was delighted to be asked to organise the event at the Cardiff School of Optometry and Vision Science. This was the sixth time that this event has been held – and the number of attendees was the highest yet at around 150 people from across the sight loss sector.

In opening the conference, Dr Barbara Ryan, Chief Optometric Advisor for Wales described it as a ‘landmark day’, because the Welsh Government had decided to launch their Eye Health Care Delivery Plan for Wales at the event. Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for Health & Social Care, (pictured above) used his keynote speech to introduce **‘Together for Health: Eye Health Care Delivery Plan for Wales 2013 - 2018’**. The Minister explained the context for the report – there is expected to be a rapid increase in sight loss due to the ageing population, yet 50% of sight loss could be prevented through early identification and intervention. The key priorities in the plan were therefore identified as:

- Preventing avoidable sight loss and improving eye health;
- Early identification of poor eye health and sight problems;
- Providing high quality, efficient and accessible services;
- Ensuring integration of services and patient-focussed delivery;

- Providing care and support for people living with sight loss and dual sensory impairment.

You can read the document on the website

[http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/eye\\_plan/](http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/eye_plan/) or telephone 029 2082 3683 for alternative formats.

Other topics covered in a packed programme were the results of the 'Look After Your Eyes' campaign in Welsh pharmacies, how the use of clinical informatics can speed up the service to patients with eye problems, and the future of rehabilitation for people with sight loss in Wales. During the afternoon session, attendees were updated on the work of the third sector's 'Next Steps' forum, user experiences of the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer service, the work of the diabetic retinopathy screening service, and progress on MEGAfOCUS's work to tackle sight loss in the minority ethnic communities.

Presentations from all these talks will be put on Vision in Wales' website, [www.visioninwales.org.uk](http://www.visioninwales.org.uk) when available.

Feedback from those attending the conference has been very favourable: as well as appreciating the range of topics covered, many respondents said how much they welcomed the opportunity to network with others working in the sight loss sector.

*The cover shows Carys Goldsworthy with buddy dog Kemp. Her sister Rhian is in the background.*

# Children and Young People

The theme for this edition is services, support and resources for visually impaired children and young people. It's an enormous area, so we have decided to focus on a few recent developments which may interest our readers.

We have an overview of a report into the provision of specialist vi skills training in Wales; a look at a success for the Buddy Dogs scheme; news of how UCAN productions are working with American partners to celebrate the Dylan Thomas centenary next year; an article about how RNIB Cymru's Transitions team can support young people in the crucial move from education to employment and news of a range of projects being launched by North Wales Society for the Blind. Finally, we have a list of organisations which can provide support to children, young people, their parents and carers.

If you have any comments on any of the topics raised, or have any advice to offer, please let us know.

## **Specialist VI Skills training for Children and Young People in Wales**

*Elaine Kelleher, a Rehabilitation Officer – Visual Impairment (ROVI) with Bridgend County Borough Council, describes the findings of her research in this area.*

In Jan 2012 I undertook a piece of research on behalf of Sight Support (now Sight Cymru) which focused on services children and young people with VI are receiving in Wales. The research took a broad look at specialist VI services provided across education, social care and third sector.

As a Rehabilitation Officer (ROVI), I was particularly interested in who is responsible for teaching children and young people the mobility, independence and social skills training (collectively known as habilitation skills) needed for them to have the competence and confidence to move into adulthood. I wanted to find out the answers to questions such as ‘who teaches a totally blind child to face the speaker during conversation?’.

What struck me is the huge degree of variation in services for VI children across the 22 local authorities in Wales. Every authority has at least one Specialist Teacher for VI (also known as QTVI) and they take the lead on supporting children and young people with VI and their families from the point of diagnosis. Due to Welsh Government investment in training mobility specialists, most areas have at least a part-time dedicated mobility specialist. In the few authorities where a mobility specialist is not in post, the service is provided by a ROVI working with adults and children in social services.

As the mobility specialists work in education, there are limitations to the work they can do in the home environment. What happens to the mobility skills learned during school holidays and who supports young people develop their wider social skills? In over half of the authorities in Wales (12), ROVIs based in social services work with children as well as adults and bridge this gap in service provision, but in 10 authorities this service is not available. This is a gaping hole in service provision and the importance of the ROVI’s role is evident today when, in the classroom, prioritising the teaching of the curriculum can make it difficult to focus on provision of specialist VI skills.

I recently worked with a 17 year old young girl on developing her shopping skills. She had never been inside a supermarket and had no concept of what shopping was as she was always left at home when her mother went shopping. One ROVI was asked to teach a 14 year old boy a new route in his home environment. The young lad had years of long cane training with various mobility

specialists working for LEA on short contracts. She had to go back to basics and spend hours teaching him how to walk and run without a cane to enable him to develop his natural stride and plant his foot properly as he walked on the balls of his feet. This illustrates the difficulties arising from inconsistency of teaching and fixed time intervention.

We are in the midst of many changes in provision of specialist services in Education and Social Services which are taking place in Wales. In the field of VI, the provision of services for adults usually takes priority as tackling services for children is seen as difficult and is often put on the back burner. Improvements need to be made - working more closely across departments and sectors is a good starting point, as is investing in habilitation services for VI children by providing post-qualification training for ROVIs in working with children.

Speaking to parents, young people and professionals involved in delivering services, what was highlighted is the need to communicate and co-ordinate services to ensure that children and young people with VI receive the level of support they need to enable them to move on through life. As one parent commented on her experience:

‘Services were co-ordinated; Social Services did the home bit and we had Rehab meetings with school. This is where it all came together for her’.

# Buddy Dogs

*Deborah Rees, Communications Officer for Guide Dogs Cymru, describes the difference a buddy dog has made to one girl in Bridgend.*

When seven-year-old Carys Goldsworthy took part in this year's Race for Life, she had a spring in her step and a four-legged friend at her side. Black labrador retriever, Kemp, has made a huge difference to the little girl's confidence and mobility. But he's no ordinary pet – he's a Buddy Dog provided by Guide Dogs to help change young lives for the better.

The Buddy Dog scheme was introduced last year to help children and young people who are partially sighted to build vital communication and mobility skills. It redeploys dogs that were not quite suited to the full guide dog programme, retraining them and placing them with families or schools. This gives young people the opportunity to feed, groom and walk their Buddy Dog, and ultimately gain the skills they might need for future guide dog ownership.

Kemp is now firmly settled in Bridgend with the Goldsworthy family - Carys, who has nystagmus, sister Rhian, aged four, and their parents Jane and Jonathan. Jane said: "The girls love animals generally and adored our golden labrador, Jessie. When she died, I made enquiries online about the possibility of Carys having a guide dog later on in life and found out about Buddy Dogs.

"Guide Dogs felt Carys would be a good candidate for the scheme. She lacks depth perception due to her eye condition, so walking on different surfaces was an issue, but when Kemp is with her she just keeps going. Kemp hadn't made the grade as a guide dog because he was quite willful, but he comes with added benefits. Buddy Dogs have been really well trained. A lot of money and effort went into making him so much more than just a family pet.

“He is very calm in most scenarios, very relaxed with the children and very loyal. We explained to Carys when we had him that he was her dog, but I was keen that he should also be part of the family. We wanted to build towards such time that Carys might need a guide dog later in life. Kemp will take her to 16, and they’ve got a strong bond. It’s good preparation and as she gets older her responsibilities towards him will grow.”

Carys walks, grooms and feeds Kemp, and he is taken on regular visits to the family’s ponies and sheep. “It was an important factor that he should not be afraid, but he absolutely loves it,” said Jane. “We wanted a dog that loved the outdoor life. Carys has had a pony since she was three and goes to pony club. It’s really good for her mobility and core strength. But we started to gauge how little she could actually see by what she described on the ride. Even very good friends didn’t realise she had sight issues. She is very good at coping. But now they see the dog, they understand.”

Kemp has been good for Carys’s mobility and orientation. “She has to think about where she is walking, stopping at the kerb, and landmarks along the way,” said Jane. “She uses the correct guide dog commands such as “sit”, “stay”, “wait” and “run free”. She used to walk with her head down, looking where her feet were going. Now she has the dog, people speak to her and it makes her look up. She can engage with people while out walking.

“Even her ability to walk in a straight line has improved. Kemp has helped her with road safety and crossing the road. People often ask about him, so it’s a talking point for her and it’s made her more confident. He’s really helped her to move across surfaces or up and down steps. He’s very careful with her, and we know we can trust him to be her eyes and work for her.”

Kemp’s arrival coincided with Carys’s transition to a new school. “The transformation in her academic progress has been huge,” said Jane, a teacher. “She found reading a challenge, but someone



in work mentioned that boys had had success reading to dogs. Now she reads at home, making the dog lie down and go to sleep. She talks about him quite a lot at school and her friends are fascinated.”

Kemp joined the whole family for this year’s Race for Life. “You could see the improvement in Carys’s ability to walk, and her confidence,” said Jane. “She was adamant that Kemp should have a medal, too!”

To find out more about Buddy Dogs, ring Guide Dogs Cymru on 0845 372 7405 or email [cymru-mt@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:cymru-mt@guidedogs.org.uk)

## **UCAN Productions mark the Dylan Thomas centenary in 2014**

UCAN (Unique Creative Arts Network) Productions is an award-winning performance and creative arts co-operative for blind and partially sighted children and young people and their friends aged 7 to 25 years. Based in Cardiff, UCAN works across the UK and aims to prove that visual impairment is no barrier to success. Their programmes help to develop physical and vocal confidence, raise aspirations and promote individual abilities.

Like many organisations, UCAN are preparing to celebrate the 2014 centenary of Dylan Thomas’ birth. For the project they will be co-creating a radio play of *A Child’s Christmas in Wales*, developed with audio description embedded within the text with American partners Revels and Perkins Radio. Visually impaired young people from Wales and America will feature in the lead roles and create the accompanying music and live performances of this adaption will be staged in South East Wales.

This project is funded by The Arts Council of Wales and it was made possible by a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship, which was awarded to UCAN’s Co-founder and Development Director

Jane Latham in 2012. The fellowship enabled Jane to visit America and discover opportunities for UCAN members and develop new and lasting links with American organisations that support blind and partially sighted young people.

Jane said “We are delighted with the outcome of our visit to America and are very much looking forward to working with our American partners. We feel we have made real progress in developing links between the visually impaired communities here in Wales and in America and hope this will be the beginning of long and meaningful partnerships.”

To find out more about UCAN, and how you can get involved, visit the website [www.ucanproductions.org](http://www.ucanproductions.org), telephone 029 2087 0554 or 07812 051815, or send an email to [info@ucanproductions.org](mailto:info@ucanproductions.org).

## **Joining up the journey from education to employment**

*Sophie Dyment, Transitions Team Manager with RNIB Cymru, outlines how the team helps young people in this critical stage of their lives.*

Supporting young people aged 14-25 is a core part of the work of the RNIB Cymru Education and Employment Team. Our goal is to 'join up the journey from Education to Employment' and our committed team of Transitions Officers are key to making this a reality for many young people in Wales.

I head up the team which consists of two part-time Transitions Officers and two full time Employment Advisors. The Transitions Officers are available to provide one to one advice, support and guidance to people aged between 14 and 25. Many young people are unaware of the support available to them as they leave school and progress towards college, university and on to employment. The Transitions team are able to inform young people of the

services and support available to them as they move beyond school and offer a consistent single point of contact so that they can access expert knowledge in terms of their visual impairment throughout all points of transition.

The Transitions Officers liaise closely with our Employment Advisors who are available to support young people when they are ready to explore options around looking for work. This handover of cases between both parts of the team allows for smooth transitions and ongoing support meaning the help available for young people with sight loss across Wales is more specialised, personalised and consistent than ever before.

Our transitions and employment work is based at Neath Port Talbot College, where we are working in partnership to establish a Learning and Employment Centre on the Neath College campus. When funding is available this will be a tangible building with residential accommodation and will have a focus on life skills and independent living alongside acquiring vocational or academic qualifications. In the meantime we are developing a Wales-wide network of support for learners with sight loss from the college itself including specialist work clubs and person-centred planning for students before and during their studies, and after they are completed.

There are numerous barriers that can prevent young people with sight loss from translating academic success into actual employment and our range of bespoke residential events aims to give people the skills they need to increase their chances of making this possible. Our Bridging The Gap scheme, which focussed on a range of confidence building activities as well as equipping people with knowledge and skills about how to disclose sight loss to an employer, what Access To Work is and how it can help and many other issues was a huge success. Elin, who was 16 and attended the scheme, said:

“I have much more confidence now about applying for university and jobs. I had never even thought about disclosure before and had always been scared of it really. I’m not now.”

RNIB Cymru is very excited to be able to enhance the transitions support available in Wales thanks to the Big Lottery Fund. Future In-Sight is the name of our new transitions project which will run for five years. Working together with a range of partners including UCAN Productions, Guide Dogs, Neath Port Talbot College and others, the project will support a range of activities that young people tell us they need.

The project will enable us to provide a range of additional bespoke transitions support including peer mentoring, supported work experience placements and much more. Work experience was identified as problematic for many young people with sight loss (Work Experience as part of the Welsh Curriculum 14 – 19 for young people who are blind and partially sighted, 2006) due to many issues including a lack of support and accessible technology, restrictions on independent travel/mobility, a lack of opportunity due to the reluctance of employers to accept people with sight loss. Future In-Sight will enable us to tackle each of these issues head on here in Wales providing young people with holistic support before, during and after their work experience placements. Work experience is a young person’s first taste of what work is like and an important opportunity to show to employers exactly what they are capable of. We are very excited that this project will equip young people and employers with the tools they need to make positive placements a reality.

For more information please contact Sophie Dymant at [sophie.dymant@rnib.org.uk](mailto:sophie.dymant@rnib.org.uk), or telephone 02920 449 571.

# **North Wales Society for the Blind (NWSB)**

*Steve Thomas from NWSB tells us about their work for children and young people.*

## **New – Children and families group**

We aim to support blind and partially sighted children and young people to connect with their peers by establishing a peer support group where families can get together whilst trying new experiences or challenges. The group offers the opportunity for children and families to share experiences whilst taking part in a range of tailored organised activities.

To date the group has enjoyed days out at Foel Farm, walking on Mount Snowdon and a trip to the Slate Museum in Llanberis. For more information please contact the society on 01248 353604.

## **New ‘Children’s fund’**

Inspired by the story of a young family from Bangor who raised funds to provide a safe play area and specialist equipment for their blind daughter, we are in the process of setting up a new charitable fund for children.

Many families with young children who have visual impairments will have experienced lengthy delays and numerous application forms when applying for essential equipment like a CCTV system or specialist computer software. We hope to be able to attract enough support to be able to help meet some of these needs. Childhood and teenage years are the building blocks for the future. We hope that this new project will enable us to give children and young people with visual impairment the tools, opportunities and support they need, to become confident and independent adults.

St Deiniol Golf Club in Bangor hosted a charity golf tournament to help set up the new fund. The day was a huge success with 178 participants competing for various trophies. The competition was followed by an auction and all of the proceeds were donated to the fund. During July we held the first annual fancy dress sponsored walk from Colwyn Bay to Llandudno. Over 30 volunteers, dressed as teletubbies, fairies, kings, queens and superheroes, came together to support the fund.

Applications for help and assistance from the new fund can be submitted from September 2013. To find out more about the application process, or if you feel able to help support the fund in any way, please contact the society on 01248 353604.

## **Transitions Officer**

Rebecca Szekely is a Transitions Officer working for RNIB throughout North Wales. Her role is to work with blind and partially sighted young people between the ages of 14 and 25, supporting them to move through different stages in their lives such as from school to college, university, employment or training. A Transitions Officer ensures that a blind or partially sighted young person has a specialist point of contact when making important transitions: offering help with writing CVs; practising interview skills; completing university applications; providing information about Disabled Students Allowance; preparing to move away from home. Rebecca can arrange to meet with a young person at home or at school/college, can attend review meetings and provide one-to-one support, advice and guidance to ensure that the young person's voice is heard. For more information about the services of a Transitions Officer, please contact Rebecca on 07557 631434 or [rebecca.szekely@rnib.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.szekely@rnib.org.uk)

## **Children and Families Support Officer**

Jennifer Jones is a Children and Families Support Officer working for RNIB across North Wales. Her role is to work with children who are blind or partially sighted and their families to ensure that they are aware of the services and support available to them. Jen will also be looking to develop opportunities for peer support sessions and will be arranging social activities so that the whole family have the opportunity to meet others, try new things and above all have fun! To learn more about what Jen can offer, please contact her on 07776 284068 or email [jennifer.jones@rnib.org.uk](mailto:jennifer.jones@rnib.org.uk).

## **New- Audio Books project**

NWSB is in the process of publishing four Welsh language audio books for children and young people, and the books will be available in your local library from November 2013. Our aim is to work with the library service to encourage blind and partially sighted children to make use of their local library service. The first four books to be recorded are –

Henri Helynt yn Dwyn o'r Banc by Sian Lewis

Pst! Ti'n Gret by Gwen Redvers Jones

Byd Moi Misho by Fiona Wynn Hughes

Ar fferm Sgubor Wen by Caryl Lewis

The books are available on mp3 and CD, and we hope to record a further 16 books each year. For any further information or to suggest a book that you would like to be recorded, please call the society on 01248 353604.

# **Organisations and resources for visually impaired children, young people and their families**

The following organisations offer support or resources.

## **National Blind Children's Society** [www.nbcs.org.uk](http://www.nbcs.org.uk)

The Society's 'Starting Point' provides a wealth of information to guide parents following a diagnosis of sight loss. This includes an explanation of different eye conditions and how they affect what your child can see, the roles of various professionals, how to get the most from eye clinic appointments and guidance on helping your child at home. Look under 'Help & Advice' on the website, or telephone their family support service on 01278 764 770.

NBCS's CustomEyes Book Service provides tailor-made, large print books – each book can be produced in a font size, paper colour and format to suit an individual child's eye condition. Over 2,700 titles are available, including fiction, non-fiction and educational text books. Ring 01278 764 792 for more details.

NBCS also has a Grants Programme for children and young adults under 25 years who are registered (or eligible to be registered) as visually impaired. The applicant must be a permanent resident in the UK and must be pre-school, or in full-time or part-time education, and grant applications must be supported by a qualified VI professional. Funding must be used for activities which are in support of the charity's vision, and where no source of statutory funding is available. Examples include iPads, computer equipment, piano or swimming lessons or sensory equipment. Full information and an application form are on the website, or ring 0118 983 8329.

## **VICTA** [www.victa.org.uk](http://www.victa.org.uk)



VICTA - Visually Impaired Children Taking Action – provides funding for the purchase of aids and equipment, and for vacation schemes. They also organise activities and events. For more information, check the website or telephone 01908 240831.

VICTA also helps to fund the Royal Blind Society's Family Support Service which can help with many issues related to vi children and young people from birth to the age of 25. Their family support worker in Wales is Colin Towner, who can be contacted on 029 2062 4630.

**Contact a Family** [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

This is a UK-wide charity which supports the families of disabled children. They have a free helpline, 0808 808 3555 (or email [helpline@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cafamily.org.uk)) which can offer advice on a range of issues such as your child's medical condition, benefits, special educational needs and grants. They also have various local support groups which provide practical and emotional support – ring 029 2039 6624 to find out what is going on in your area.

**LOOK (The National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children)** [www.look-uk.org](http://www.look-uk.org)

A UK-wide membership organisation, providing support and advice to parents on all aspects of having a visually impaired child. Members have the opportunity to meet with others in the same situation through regional groups or via a Facebook group. LOOK organises events such as Family Weekends, and produce a magazine. There is a youth membership scheme for young people aged 11- 25, where members are encouraged to set up their own projects, events and campaigns. There is no charge for membership. For more information, contact the helpline on 0121 428 5038.

**RNIB** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

RNIB has a wide range of resources to help parents of a visually impaired child on the 'Parents' Place' pages of their website. This includes advice on coming to terms with the diagnosis, how to support your child's development, the roles of the professionals that you will meet and a discussion forum where you can raise issues with other parents in the same situation.

RNIB Young People's Section offers advice and guidance on all stages of a young person's transition, from choosing school subjects, planning for the future and study advice to starting college and university or moving into employment (including information around work experience, volunteering, interview skills and CV writing). These pages have been co-designed and reviewed by young people across the UK. The site includes individual stories and experiences including written, video and audio case studies.

From RNIB's home page, click on the 'Living with sight loss' tab, then 'Coping with sight loss' on the left hand side. Both parents and young people's resources can be accessed from this page.

**Young Calibre Audio Library** [www.youngcalibre.org.uk](http://www.youngcalibre.org.uk)

A postal service of unabridged audio books for young people aged under 16 with sight problems. As well as books for pleasure, there are titles for education. The joining fee is £20, but there are no further charges for subscription. For more information, ring 01296 432 339.

**Clearvision** [www.clearvisionproject.org](http://www.clearvisionproject.org)

A UK postal lending library of mainstream children's books with added braille. Services are free to families with a visually impaired child, although there is an annual fee for organisations such as schools and libraries. Ring 020 8789 9575 for more information.

**CHECT (Child Eye Cancer Trust)** [www.chect.org.uk](http://www.chect.org.uk)

A UK charity offering free membership to families and individuals affected by retinoblastoma and professionals with an interest in the condition. CHECT provides information, raises awareness and funds research. It has three support workers who can help parents through the diagnosis process, and can also put parents in touch with others in the same situation. For more information, telephone 020 7377 5578.

**IN-Vision** [www.in-vision.org.uk](http://www.in-vision.org.uk)

The organisation's purpose is to raise funds for research into Infantile Nystagmus, however the website has some useful information about the condition, and covers topics such as low vision aids, suitable toys and education.

**MACS – The Micro and Anophthalmic Children's Society** [www.macs.org.uk](http://www.macs.org.uk)

The charity supports the families of children born with microphthalmia (small eyes), anophthalmia (no eyes) or coloboma (cleft of the eye). They provide resources including a free helpline, financial assistance, respite holidays and practical advice on issues such as benefits. For more information, ring 0800 169 8088.

# Have Your Say!

## Welsh Government Consultations

Details of WG consultations can be found on their website, <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations>. The following may be of particular interest to people with a visual impairment:

- Framework for delivering integrated health and social care (closes 15 October)
- Tackling hate crimes & incidents: A framework for action (closes 18 October)
- Revised guidance on safeguarding children in education (closes 25 October)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) public consultation on statistical products 2013 (closes 31 October).

## Talk care – give your views on the NHS

Talk Care is an initiative by the Welsh Government to get people's views on their National Health Service – they want to know what matters to you, and how they can improve the way that the NHS's performance is measured. Whether you are a service user, or work in the NHS or social services, your views are welcome. The survey form is available on the Government's website <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/nhswales/care/?lang=en>. There are also two events where you can give your views in person:

- 14<sup>th</sup> October, at the Optic Centre, St Asaph
- 23<sup>rd</sup> October at the Sports Club, University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

Topics covered include outpatient and inpatient care, rehabilitation and prevention. If you want to attend either of these events, please send an email to [talkcare@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:talkcare@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

# Events

## **Royal National College for the Blind, Hereford**

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>-Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October – free ‘Have a Go’ day for young visually impaired people age 14-16 who are considering going to college. Parents can also stay at the college free of charge during the weekend.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November – Professional development day for people working with adults, such as disability employment advisors.

Both of these events offer attendees the chance to find out more about the RNC and the training and support it has to offer to visually impaired students. For more information and to book a place on any of these events, visit the website [www.rncb.ac.uk](http://www.rncb.ac.uk) and click on the ‘calendar and events’ link, or telephone 01432 376 621.

## **Information day for disabled residents in RCT**

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Council is holding a special information day for disabled residents, their families and carers on Thursday 31st October. “Reaching Out” will bring together a whole range of Council services that deal specifically with the needs of people who have varying forms of disability.

Representatives from a range of disability organisations will also be in attendance. The event runs from 10 am to 3 pm at Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad. For more information, ring 01443 424075.

## **Sight Cymru Expo**

This annual exhibition takes place on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> at October at Newport Leisure Centre, from 10 am to 3 pm. It's a chance to have a look at the latest aids and equipment, and find out about relevant services. Organisations represented at the event include Calibre Audio Library and Dolphin.

For more information, contact Sight Cymru on 01495 763 650.

## **Glaucoma Support Group meetings**

The International Glaucoma Association (IGA) is organising several support group meetings in Wales in the autumn:

1.30 pm to 4 pm, 18<sup>th</sup> October at The Vale Resort, Hensol Park, Vale of Glamorgan. Contact Eryl Williams on 07856 687931.

1pm to 3pm, 5<sup>th</sup> November, Ysbyty Gwynedd Hospital, Bangor.

1.15 pm to 3 pm, 6<sup>th</sup> November, Singleton Hospital, Swansea. Contact Sue Neale on 01792 200390.

3pm to 4.30 pm, 11<sup>th</sup> November, Abergele Hospital, Abergele. Contact Linda Lewis on 01745 448330.

Details of all support group meetings are on the IGA website, [www.glaucoma-association.com](http://www.glaucoma-association.com) – click the 'support groups' option towards the top of the screen.

# **New College Worcester**

New College, the national residential college for blind or partially sighted young people aged 11 to 19, has free Outreach Open Days on 24th October and 4th December for educational professionals working with vi young people and the parents of vi children. The events offer the chance to meet subject teachers, get hands-on experience of specialist equipment, and get practical support and advice on specific curriculum areas of your choice.

Visually impaired children and young people and their families can try a range of activities at New College's free Family Day on 23rd November.

The College is hosting a workshop titled 'Introduction to supporting students with vi' on 28th November for learning assistants who have recently started to work with visually impaired students in a mainstream school. There is a charge of £70 per delegate, including lunch.

Places for all of these events must be booked in advance. To find out more telephone 01905 763933 or book on-line at [www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk](http://www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk).

# **Vision Support Mobile Resource Centre**

Vision Support's Mobile Resource Centre travels around local communities in North Wales, giving those who are unable to visit their Rhyl Resource Centre a chance to find out about products and services which could help them. You can find out where the mobile will be on their website [www.visionsupport.org.uk](http://www.visionsupport.org.uk) at the start of each month. To avoid wasted journeys, it is recommended that you ring 01745 338914 to check for late changes to the schedule.

## **Wobbly Wednesday**

6<sup>th</sup> November is Wobbly Wednesday – the first ever international nystagmus awareness day. People are being encouraged to organise awareness and fund-raising events in their areas to support the work of the Nystagmus Network. Nystagmus, where the eyes move involuntarily, affects at least 1 in 1,000 people, and is the leading cause of serious visual impairment in school-age children. You can register for a supporter's pack by sending an email to [info@nystagmusnet.org](mailto:info@nystagmusnet.org).

## **Sight Village**

Queen Alexandra College's free Sight Village exhibition will be visiting Kensington Town Hall in London on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November, featuring the latest technology, equipment and support services for visually impaired people. Visit the website, [www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions.htm](http://www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions.htm) for more information.



# **News and Information**

## **Stelios Award for Disabled Entrepreneurs**

Once again, Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou (founder of easyJet) is sponsoring the 'Stelios Award for Disabled Entrepreneurs in the UK', in association with Leonard Cheshire Disability. A prize of £50,000 will be awarded to the disabled entrepreneur who can best demonstrate to the judges how this amount would make a major difference to their business. There will also be prizes of £1,000 each for the two runners up, and all three finalists will benefit from specialist support courtesy of the Stelios Scholar Reach-out Programme. Both of the runners-up in the 2012 competition were visually impaired.

The closing date for applications is 25th October. For full details of the competition and an application form, go to the website [www.lcdisability.org](http://www.lcdisability.org), or telephone 020 7112 1489 if you require the form in alternative formats.

## **Framework for Independent Living in Wales launched**

The Welsh Government launched its Framework for Independent Living, following consultation with disabled people and groups representing them. It is the first time that there has been a strategic approach to disability in Wales, bringing together issues which have previously been dealt with separately and describes how the government will tackle the key priorities identified by disabled people:

- Information, advocacy, advice and peer support;
- Accessible and supported housing;
- Personalised care and support;
- Person-centred technology;

- Barrier-free transport system;
- Accessible and inclusive places;
- Employment, including self-employment.

You can read the Framework on the Government's website, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/rightsequality/disability/framework-for-action/>.

## **Sighted Guide Ambassador for Wales appointed**

Guide Dogs Cymru are pleased to announce the appointment of Kylene Rafferty to the position of Sighted Guide Ambassador for Wales. This is a new position within Wales that aims to reduce the isolation experienced by many people with sight loss. Kylene will be coordinating the Guide Dogs 'My Guide' programme that aims to enable more people with sight loss to get out and about safely and confidently with the support of trained volunteers. In addition to direct services to people with sight loss, Kylene has responsibility for the roll-out of 'My Guide - Open for Business'. This service aims to raise awareness of sight loss and sighted guiding techniques by providing service providers and businesses with training, endorsed by Vision 2020, in how to offer sighted guide assistance. Kylene says "the My Guide Open for Business service presents a wonderful opportunity for organisations to increase access to their services by enabling staff to respond confidently to the needs of their visually impaired customers." Working closely with Guide Dogs Cymru colleagues, Kylene will support the development of the My Guide services in Wales and is looking forward to contributing towards the enhanced mobility and independence of individuals with visual impairments in this way. If you would like to find out more, please visit <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/services/my-guide> or contact Kylene at [kylene.rafferty@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:kylene.rafferty@guidedogs.org.uk). Alternatively, please call Guide Dogs Cymru on 0845 372 7405.

# Vision Support Social Clubs in North Wales

## Feeling Sociable?

Vision Support has a number of social clubs which are always keen to welcome new members. The groups run a wide range of activities including book reviews, creative therapy, speakers, trips, keep fit and are a good place to make new friends over coffee and a chat.

**The Prestatyn Visionaires** run by Mildred Taylor meet at the Scala Cinema, Prestatyn on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month from 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon. Contact Mildred for further details on 01745 852066 or ring the Rhyl Resource Centre on 01745 338914.

Building on the success of the Prestatyn Visionaires Social Club, we have started two more clubs where visually impaired people can socialise and enjoy new experiences.

**The Rhyl Visionaires** Social Club meets on the last Wednesday of every month at the Rhyl Resource Centre, Morfa Hall, Rhyl from 11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. Just turn up or telephone 01745 338914 to find out more

**The Wrexham Visionaires** Social Club meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Wrexham Resource Centre, AVOW, 21 Egerton Street, Wrexham. Just turn up or telephone 01978 318813 or 01745 338914 to find out more.

There is also a **Visually Impaired Persons** Club for people of all ages with sight loss in Mold. The Club is run very successfully by a volunteer, Mrs Kath Owen and meets every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at the Ebenezer Chapel, Mold

from 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. Please ring 01352 754959 for more details.

### **Feeling Active?**

Vision Support is looking for visually impaired people over eighteen who are looking to get more active and have the opportunity to take part in a range of indoor and outdoor activities. If you are interested in volunteering or taking part please contact Janette Williams on 01745 338914 or 07595412193 (Mon – Thurs).

### **Are You 18 – 30 Years Old?**

We plan to start a Young Persons Group for anyone with a visual impairment who is between 18 and 30 years old. For more information contact Janette Williams on the above numbers.

## **Low Vision Service Wales (LVSU)**

The service allows people with sight loss to be assessed for the most appropriate low vision aids, such as optical magnifiers, by accredited optometrists across Wales. The service provides for both visually impaired adults and children, and works closely with ophthalmologists, GPs, social services, education and the third sector. Referrals into the service are accepted from a wide range of professionals and from individuals themselves. Waiting times for most people are less than two weeks and in the majority of cases the service is provided on the local high street in their own community.

Also, in a groundbreaking move, over 2600 pocket size electronic magnifiers have so far been issued to sight impaired people across Wales through the Low Vision Service. This is the first NHS service to provide these devices to patients on free long-term loan, following a full assessment and suitable trial period.

[www.eyecarewales.nhs.uk](http://www.eyecarewales.nhs.uk) has the details of your nearest optometry practice (opticians) providing the Low Vision Service Wales as well as further information about the service.

# Useful publications

Sense, the organisation for deafblind people, has produced two new booklets:

**Enjoy Life!** is written for the friends and relatives of older people who are experiencing problems with their sight and hearing. Such problems can make it more difficult for people to get out and about, or keep in touch with friends, leading to isolation - but this doesn't have to be the case. The booklet aims to help you understand what your relative or friend is going through, how you can help, where to go for more support and how you can fill in the gaps that have appeared in their life.

**Multi-Sensory Impaired Children in Hospital** is aimed at hospital staff. It explains what is meant by multi-sensory impairment and how this affects the everyday lives of children and families. Going into hospital can be a daunting experience for any child, but for children who are deafblind or have multi-sensory impairments (MSI) the challenges are even greater, and this booklet offers practical tips and ideas to help make the hospital stay less stressful - and includes resources for staff who would like to know more.

You can find out more and download both booklets on Sense's website, [www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk).

# Advertise in ViW Roundup.

ViW Roundup is sent to more than 500 people, in a variety of formats. We are a not-for-profit organisation that hopes to recoup its costs so that we can serve blind and partially sighted people in Wales, and seek advertisers for our newsletter so that we can continue to produce this valued journal. Our rates are as follows (per edition):

Full A4 page: £125 (black and white) £200 (colour)

1/2 A4 page: £75 (black and white)

1/3 A4 page: £45 (black and white)

Enclosures: single sheet A4 500 copies, supplied in a ready-to-go format: £100. Enclosures (such as booklets): please ask for quote. To advertise in many editions, please contact us for discounts.

If you are interested, please contact Ann via **ann@wcb-ccd.org.uk** or telephone 02920 473954 to find out more.

## **Vision in Wales on Twitter - @VisioninWales**

If you have internet access, why not follow us on Twitter? It's the best way for people concerned with visual impairment in Wales to get the most up-to-date information about events, consultations, publications, research and other news items of interest.

Roundup is published quarterly by Vision in Wales. It is also available in audio CD format. Further copies can be requested from Richard Bowers, Vision in Wales (Wales Council for the Blind), 2nd Floor, Hallinans House, 22 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TD. Telephone 029 2047 3954.

Please send articles and news items to the above address and mark the envelope "Roundup". You may also send to [richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk](mailto:richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk).

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ViW, and as much of the material is submitted by third parties, we cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information therein. We reserve the right to edit for publication.

The theme for the next edition of Roundup will be '**sport**'. If you wish to make a contribution on this topic, or on any aspect of visual impairment, please contact [richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk](mailto:richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk) or telephone Richard on 029 2047 3954.



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# SMELL GAS?



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OUR CUSTOMERS SAFE



Clive says... Follow these 5 steps to safety:

- 1** Switch off all gas appliances, and if possible turn off gas at the mains
- 2** Open windows and doors to ventilate
- 3** Don't use electrical appliances or switch lights on or off
- 4** Don't smoke or use any naked flames
- 5** Remember to call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**  
Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

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