

Wales Council of the Blind Roundup

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Spring 2016



**LOOK – Supporting VI
children & their
families for 25 years
In the supplement: Finding
Funding**

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25 years of LOOK

LOOK, the organisation which provides help, support and services for vision impaired children and their families celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

It's a small charity, but LOOK-UK packs a mighty punch. As it celebrates its 25th anniversary, it is clear there is still a real need for its services. Ambitious plans for its next phase are soon to be unveiled.

It's something its founders could only have dreamed of. Standing in the hallowed halls of the House of Commons a quarter of a century ago, nobody could have guessed the battles Brian Mawby, Gareth Bowen and Jennifer Bowen would have to fight to get to this point.

And it was a mighty fight.

Recalling those days, Jennifer said: "We were delighted to get the ball rolling at last, but it had been a long and hard road and we were ready to get back to our lives again."

What brought the indomitable trio together was a singular eye condition that affected their children - Stargarts Disease. Their struggle to get appropriate help for the Bowen's daughter Charlotte - compared with the support Brian's son Richard had received - was to bring them all together, thanks to Marianne Eustis of the RNIB.

Brian was an assistant Director of Education in Gwent at that time and had been pivotal in setting up a very good service

for VI pupils in Gwent. But, as Jennifer and Gareth, a photographer and journalist respectively, were to discover, it was a huge struggle to get appropriate help for their daughter in mainstream school.

Jennifer said: “Both children were seven when they started losing their sight, but their experiences of support in school was very different.”

In response to the lack of help and paucity of organisations to help families in similar positions, the Bowens set about to do something about it.

“We set up a group in Cardiff called VICTA. The going was tough with no funds, but we were given a free meeting room in Cathedral Road, and a bit of publicity brought parents and carers together,” remembered Jennifer.

It quickly became clear that the lack of organisational help available didn’t adequately represent the support families of VI children needed.

Jennifer added: “We decided we needed to find out what was happening in other parts of the UK. Three years later, with help only from the Cardiff Institute for the Blind, we had contacted families all over the UK and decided that we should go National.”

Jennifer is quietly spoken and unassuming, and is quick to gloss over the hard-fought battles that would bring the charity to national status.

“There were a handful of groups interested in uniting and so, after many meetings, the official launch took place in 1991 at the House of Commons.”

One of the first parents to contact LOOK, when it was still VICTA, was John Brookes, who lived in Milton Keynes. He arranged LOOK's first Golden Bonds for the London Marathon.

Since then, the London Marathon has remained crucial to LOOK's ability to continue providing a service. The many runners were - and still are - the backbone to LOOK's funding strategy. John and his partner Nina worked tirelessly in those early days. Nina even designed the LOOK logo that is still used today.

Within time, a large grant from BBC Children in Need allowed LOOK to set up an office at Queen Alexandra College in Birmingham as a neutral centre. LOOK broke new ground by being the first UK charity focusing solely on supporting families with visually impaired children. Incredibly, no charity had done this before.

Jennifer said: "We just wanted to get the best possible outcome for the children and young people. Not just in education, but in all aspects of their lives.

"We are proud that LOOK was the first National Organisation totally run by and for the families of visually impaired children and young people."

Most parents would fight heaven and earth to get the right support and to create opportunities for their children. And so it was with the Mawbys and the Bowens. They discovered the acute need for an organisation like LOOK and set about filling the gap.

In time, LOOK set up the Family Support Project, where trained volunteers and some paid workers supported families in their regions. They worked closely with the professionals and were much valued.

In those days, Wales was rather sidelined in services, but it did have one Family Support Worker in Wales and a number of dedicated volunteers. Despite its success, funding was always difficult and the service was impossible to sustain.

But other charities followed LOOK's lead and it quickly became a catalyst for change.

Most importantly, many local Family Support groups set up under the LOOK umbrella, some using the LOOK name and others using their own. Holidays for young people became a regular event, even Atlantic College at St Athan got involved, being the first to host LOOK.

Family weekends were and still are a regular event. Young people felt particularly isolated and wanted their say in LOOK so the YOUTH project was born. OUTLOOK produced its own online magazine.

The helpline was busy and LOOK quickly became recognised by the profession. But sadly it did not develop as it could in Wales, although it did have a Family Support Officer and held weekends for families in Wales.

After three more years the founders withdrew and went back to their lives, leaving a solid and thriving charity, well regarded by families and professionals alike. The excellent newsletter, described by some as the best of its kind, continued to thrive - although now the plan is to go digital, a further sign of LOOK's ability to evolve with the changing needs of young VI people and their families.

Although the Family Support workers disappeared, the Helpline continues.

Jennifer returned periodically to the charity when necessary and has once more returned as a volunteer after an absence of twelve years.

But it saddens her to see, even after all these years, that some things haven't changed.

“I have been shocked to find that families still feel isolated and without support. Specialist services for children and young people in school are being cut and some areas have no specialist teachers (QTVI).

“I was told the other day by one of the recently retired teachers, that the theory of the day seems to be: ‘give the kids a laptop with speech or large print and they will be OK’.”

Despite all the leaps forward in technology, problems still wait to be solved. Most children who can't see as well as their peers need encouragement and support from trained experts, who understand the implications of their often hidden impairment. A pair of glasses and a laptop doesn't always solve the problem.

Paediatric sight loss is growing by 2% each year in London and the South East, where there are 7,000 young people and children up to age of 25yrs known to the London Society for the Blind, who conducted this research.

Visually impaired children are twice as likely to have emotional difficulties and be bullied at school. Nine out of ten people who lose their sight in childhood or youth will never work more than 6 months in their lives. 25% are clinically depressed and 30% suffer from anxiety.

The work of LOOK is as relevant now as ever. Serendipity brings the Bowen's daughter, Charlotte, back to LOOK 25 years after its founding, as the new Director. She

has left a successful career as a disability equality trainer and consultant.

Charlotte is registered blind and is LOOK's first vision impaired Director and she is passionate about the work of LOOK for the future and has recently secured funding to pilot a mentoring project.

She said: "LOOK's vision is to have young VI people mentored by their VI peers. The recent funding award means we can now start making the vision a reality.

"Our website is currently under reconstruction so look out for a new-look LOOK with the views of young VI people central to its development.

"Our Audio magazine continues and we are soon to recruit some new reporters and will soon be hosting multi-media training days. We want the news and views to come from VI young people and to be accessible to everyone.

"Our weekly youth forum at our base in Hereford is proving to be popular and will grow because there is demonstrably a need for it.

"I am very excited about our future and I would urge any young VI people – and their parents – to keep in touch with us. We want to hear from you. We have some wonderful new trustees.

"In its 25th year LOOK is aiming to relaunch its services in the summer."

You can contact LOOK on 07939 508 485 or visit the website <http://www.look-uk.org/> for more information.

WCB News

WCB's AGM 2014-15

Wales Council of the Blind's Annual General Meeting was held at its offices. There was a good turnout and the membership of the Board of Trustees was re-elected or continued in post as follows:

Brian Mawby (Chair)
Julie Thomas (Vice-chair)
Miriam Wright (Treasurer)
Janice Powers
Peter Curtis
Brian Hobart

In due course the Regional Groups will nominate the remaining three Trustee places from their own members.

Brian Mawby reported that the year had been one of continuing consolidation of WCB's financial and organisational recovery and of seeking long-term sustainability. Miriam Wright reported that WCB finished the financial year with funds in the region of £230k and, in accordance with our investment policy, £200k will be invested to help secure a sustainable future. Owen Williams talked about the work of WCB reflecting our status as the independent umbrella organisation for sight loss in Wales. He stressed our independent role through, for example, the provision of impartial advice and information.

Your Voice: A Shared Vision

West Wales Group meeting.

WCB had a great turnout for the March meeting with thirty participants from Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

Gareth Morgan from **Hywel Dda Health Board** gave the group an update on the work being undertaken to improve hospital accessibility. The North Road eye clinic in Aberystwyth has received thirty-five points of improvement with a schedule of work agreed in the short term. 'Walk and Talk' exercises have taken place across the health board area to identify access improvement opportunities, including better colour contrast and awareness training for staff.

Other obstacles included lack of audio announcements at GP surgeries and inaccessible touch screen check-in systems. An improvement would include flagging up patients' needs and requirements on all systems to ensure the correct support and interaction can be offered by the service. Gareth agreed with this in principle but stressed that it was outside of the health board's control as it is a service provided by the National Informatics Centre.

There were concerns that follow-up appointments were not being scheduled and it was left to the patient to chase these up. There were also reports of clinics regularly cancelling appointments.

An example of good practice was reported by one group member. He was invited to attend the hospital prior to his

operation so that he could get to know the environment. This alleviated much of his anxiety prior to admission.

Gareth asked that he would welcome more examples of good or bad practice.

Alison Johnstone, Partners in Health Manager from the **Welsh Ambulance Service** outlined the services delivered by the trust including the 999 clinical response, volunteer responders, patient care transport and NHS Direct Wales. Good communication with the patient is identified as necessary for receiving the correct treatment.

Mike Newman and John Galloway from **Speed of Sight** talked about his charity. Mike, blind from birth and 6 times Guinness World Record holder, set up the charity to provide disabled people with track racing experiences. He hopes to set up an event in South Wales soon – watch this space for details.

Julie Thomas gave a brief outline of her journey to becoming UK and Welsh Womens VI Bowls Singles Champion. John Wilson, Team Manager and Vice Chair of the **Welsh Association of Visually Impaired Bowlers** spoke about his commitment to ensuring visually impaired bowls is introduced into mainstream clubs. He was very keen to generate interest and motivate more vision impaired people to try it out. Players will benefit by meeting new friends and playing a game that is safe and inclusive.

They held a taster day in Llandrindod Wells offering vision impaired people an opportunity to have a go and talk to other bowlers and coaches. Go to www.welshvibowls.org.uk/news.php

The meeting closed with a discussion of topics for further sessions, and was swiftly followed by a visit to Carmarthenshire Talking News where WCB staff and our

Vice-Chair, Julie Thomas, talked to Arwell Fowler about the work of WCB.

Meeting on the future of services for residents of Newport with sight loss.

WCB is inviting residents of Newport to attend a meeting to discuss changes to the services for people with sight loss in the county.

The venue is the Salvation Army Centre, Newport, on 5th May at 11am to 1pm. Please note lunch is not provided but there will be refreshments. The address is 1 Hill Street **Newport** NP20 1LZ.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Wales Council of the Blind on 02920 473954 so that we can reserve a place.

BCDP Social Services and Wellbeing Act Event.

This report from Cathy Rogers at Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People outlines work done through the ‘Sharing Ideas and Planning Together’ project on awareness of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. The project is run in conjunction with Disability Wales and Wales Council of the Blind.

“BCDP are a diligent, forward thinking and hard working group. They really will make a change and a difference to the lives of Disabled People in Bridgend thanks to training events like this.” - Roger Jones, BCDP Member.

BCDP began to gather information on the Social Services and Wellbeing Act in order to respond to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Consultation. The Development Officer broke down the information and sent out via email to members in anticipation of gathering comments to respond to the Consultation. Following our response we realised how little the disabled community, as well as service providers, actually knew about the changes this Act would bring, despite its impending implementation. We dedicated our next Coffee Morning to discuss our findings and during these discussions our members identified a need for additional training for service providers and disabled people in relation to this Act.

The Development Officer, the Chair and a handful of members began to meet with external organisations from the private, public and third sector to advertise our event and obtain views from all groups and gauge the extent of their knowledge on the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. The information gathered helped us shape the event and identify commonalities between concerns and gaps in knowledge. We found many organisations were unaware how their role would change and service users were unsure how the Act would give them more autonomy.

Once all target groups had been met, the Development Officer made contact with the Social Services and Wellbeing Department of the Council, Dewis CIL and the Care Council of Wales. Although the Care Council of Wales were unable to attend they sent information leaflets and sent us a link to an easy to understand video (www.ssiacymru.org.uk/home.php?page_id=8875) showing the basic rights and changes the Act will bring. We showed this at the event.

Certain organisations and members were concerned that some of the disabled community may find it difficult to understand such a complex Act. We therefore linked in with Every Link Counts, an organisation that supports people with Learning Difficulties throughout Bridgend, to participate in a play that would show two scenarios, one displaying life before the Act and one after the Act. This clearly presented the change of control from the Service Provider to the Service User.

We had an excellent turn out with 46 people in total attending including service providers and representatives from various organisations. 87% of participants recorded an increase in their knowledge of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act after attending this event, 89% of participants believed they had a clearer understanding of their rights laid down by the Act and 92% felt they had better links with supporting organisations from participating in this event. Our event gained some really positive feedback with one service user saying “The supporting agencies invited today will help me in the future. I feel more confident on what my rights are and I will be happy to take the information forward to others.”

We also obtained strong feedback from a service provider from Dewis CIL saying “BCDP provide a wonderful learning centre for access to information on rights, entitlements and

support. They are a very important group to the people of Bridgend.”

Following the event the Development Officer wrote down the pros and cons of the Act that were raised at the event and the concerns and questions that people had. She then sent this to Sarah Atkinson, Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, who spoke at our event and invited her to our next Coffee Morning to discuss our members’ concerns and answer their questions.

97% of BCDP members who attended the event explained that they felt more confident when speaking to service providers and disabled people about their rights under this Act since attending our event. We therefore took this opportunity to gather 3 members to talk to the Older People’s Association and Bridgend People’s First about the Act. A date is being decided.

We plan to build on the success of this event by hosting similar events in the future based on the feedback from this event. With the support of people within Bridgend we are confident that we will make Bridgend a more accessible place to live and work.

Concerns
How many formats is it in? CD, Easy Read, Braille? How can we get hold of them?
How will Social Workers handle the increase in their case loads because of the Act?
Is the appropriate funding available?
Is the appropriate training going to staff and service providers?
Unsure of the carers assessment process under the new

Act and how often they will be reassessed

Access to information on the Act is an issue for those who cannot go online or read or write

Comments on the Act from Service Users and Providers.

Pros	Cons
Wonderful Act which seems to be unifying various elements of the Equality Act	How will information go out to people who cannot attend meetings or leave their house easily?
Advocacy being implemented and accessible for all	How many formats is it in? CD, Easy Read, Braille?
Becomes the first point of contact for all disabilities	Community services will not be able to support the Act unless funded accordingly by the W.G
Adjusts services to better meet the needs of disabled people	Disabled People will also need to adjust to the change which can be difficult depending on their needs
Inclusive of all disabled people to better meet their needs and incorporate their rights	The Act assumes relatives/friends will provide support needs to keep costs down rather than organisations
It is a needs-based approach making the care more flexible.	Before this Event this is the first many of us have heard of this Act – Advertisement is poor, more collaborative working needs to be carried out by W.G
Uses a holistic approach	Complementary Management Systems
Social-Model of Disability approach rather than a	Budget cuts and access to appropriate resources within

medical model one	all services effected may be an issue
Creates links between services for a collaborative approach to care	It looks good on paper, but we don't live on paper so it is doubtful that it will reach its true potential
Creates a sense of empowerment for disabled people to take control of their lives	The change in processes will effect disabled people and how they access services; if advertisement is not increased this may effect peoples mental health
The Act puts a responsibility on everyone, if it works it will change the services and the lives of disabled people	Service providers need to get involved with groups to ensure the implementation is smooth and clear

Sharing Ideas and Planning Together.

The next event for the **Sharing Ideas and Planning Together** project will focus on mental health. The day is set to be held on Wednesday 18th May at Bethlehem Life Centre, Cefn Criwbr from 10:30am-3:30pm.

The course aims to raise awareness of mental health, and to understand and recognise the causes and support options for a range of mental health problems.

The day will be led by individuals with lived experience of mental health problems with guest speakers from supporting mental health organisations. GPs and health representatives

will also be present. The day will be interactive with videos and plays and will end with a panel of people sharing their personal experiences and answering any questions the audience may have. We hope these shared insights will help to challenge the stigma still surrounding mental health and offer further advice and support.

We aim to break down what we mean by mental health and what factors can cause a person's mental health to decline.

If you would like to attend, please contact Cathy Rogers via bridgendcoalitiondp@gmail.com or telephone 07814 209472.

Coming soon in Roundup . . .

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

WCB shall be publishing an edition of Roundup towards the end of this year that focuses on the Act. We would appreciate any stories or case studies, guidance and other material. We would be particularly interested in the various implementations of the pathway to services in local authorities.

Please email richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk with any material.

Across the Sector VI Bowling

On Saturday 2nd April a Para Bowls Development Day was held in Llandrindod Wells. John Wilson in partnership with Disability Sport Wales had identified that although there have been successes, it was still apparent that large numbers of vision impaired persons residing within our cities, towns, and rural communities have no access to Bowls. It was also determined that the pathway / structure for disabled bowlers could be strengthened to include greater competitive opportunities. As a result the 'open day' for 'pan-ability' individuals was the way forward for existing bowlers, and also a means of attracting new players to the sport of Bowls. What a day it turned out to be! - a resounding success, proving beyond doubt that there is a real appetite and need for this. More than one hundred persons including players, coaches and volunteers attended. All six rinks were full from 11am to 3pm, people were enjoying themselves so much they did not want to come off the green. The hospitality shown to us by the club at Llandrindod was second to none.

John Wilson, Welsh Team Manager, said "It was for me personally a heart-warming occasion that has given me further inspiration to ensure that Bowls is inclusive and available at the majority of bowling clubs throughout Wales. Disability Sport Wales are being very supportive: they have proved to me that they are truly committed to transforming peoples lives through the power of sport."

Moving forward there are plans to repeat this event outdoors in a different venue due to its incredible success. What an amazing day. Following the second event, selections will be made for a Parabowls Test Series in Glasgow in June involving both Visually Impaired and Disabled Bowlers. With all these great opportunities and exciting developments ahead John Wilson said of the day "I discovered a number of talented players, previously unknown to myself, who are very capable of representing Wales in the future, one of whom is a nine year old boy. Everyone attending the event thoroughly enjoyed the special day, there were indeed very many compliments stating they felt inspired and enthused to participate in the sport from now on. It is my intention to ensure there are opportunities for them to do just that!"

If you would like to participate in bowls or simply want to know more about taking part in the sport, please contact Owen Williams at Wales Council of the Blind on 029 20 473954 and he will refer your request to the Association.

Managing Better

'Managing Better' is a new scheme helping older people in Wales who live in poor housing, and are frail, have dementia, sensory impairment or are vulnerable in other ways. The service will be delivered by a partnership of Care & Repair Cymru, RNIB Cymru and Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, and is funded by a grant from the Welsh Government.

Under this all-Wales scheme, specialist caseworkers will visit older people, then work with agencies such as primary healthcare practitioners, GPs, hospitals, social care, and third sector organisations to provide individually tailored solutions which ensure that they can remain safely in their own homes.

We hope to provide contact details on the Perspectif portal when available and a feature in the forthcoming Roundup social care edition.

Eye care to be delivered closer to people's homes

The Welsh Government is introducing two schemes aimed at bringing treatment for eye conditions closer to people's homes.

In January, it was announced that four pilot projects are to be set up to provide treatments for people with wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in local communities, where they will be delivered by optometrists and nurses, overseen by an ophthalmologist. The pilot areas are Gwent, Cwm Taf, West Wales and Powys.

From March, people who have had cataract operations and those with suspected glaucoma will receive follow-up treatment and checks at their local optometrists instead of in hospital.

It is hoped that both of these schemes will enable patients to be seen more quickly, and also free up hospital-based ophthalmologists, so that they can treat patients with the most complex conditions.

DRSSW becomes Diabetic Eye Screening Wales

On April 1, 2016, the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Service for Wales transferred from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board into the Screening Division of Public Health Wales, who already manage all of the other national, population-based screening programmes in Wales.

Also the name of the service changed to '**Diabetic Eye Screening Wales – Sgrinio Llygaid Diabetig Cymru**'. This is following stakeholder and staff consultation to improve public understanding and enable a clearer image of the programme.

Diabetic Eye Screening Wales is designed to detect sight threatening retinopathy at an early stage before visual loss occurs. Every eligible, registered person with diabetes in Wales aged 12 years and older is invited for regular retinal screening. The service is community-based, delivering from clinics/sites that are chosen to allow patients reasonable and equitable access.

The transfer will build on the excellent reputation and strong performance of the diabetic eye screening programme and the Public Health Wales screening division, which is enabled by dedicated and motivated staff. It is anticipated that there will be learning, development and sharing of good practice across the screening programmes.

It should be noted that the screening programme will be responsible up to the point that a patient is identified with a referable diabetic retinopathy and confirmation of acceptance

of referral has been made by the relevant Health Board. The funding for the treatment aspect is therefore not included within the remit of Public Health Wales and will be provided directly to health boards from Welsh Government from April 2016.

Diabetic eye screening really works!

A publication in the British Medical Journal (Liew, Feb.14) reports that, for the first time in at least five decades, diabetic retinopathy is no longer the leading cause of certifiable blindness among working age adults England and Wales. The authors point to the introduction of national screening programmes during the study period as one of the likely causes, along with improvements in diabetic control.

Diabetic Eye Screening Wales was established in 2003 by Welsh Government to improve diabetes care and prevent sight loss. Since becoming fully operational in 2006, 1.8 million eyes have been screened, 8.5 million digital retinal photographs captured and 40,000 patients, identified as being at risk of sight loss, referred to specialist eye services.

Jason Harding, Deputy Director, Diabetes UK Cymru says “Understanding your diabetes and managing it properly is really important if you want to protect yourself against some of the complications that can occur. The eye test you receive from the Diabetic Eye Screening Wales (DESW) is one of the most important appointments you receive to help you do this. It is important because it identifies this diabetes complication early and they can refer you for treatment quickly. People in Wales are lucky because an appointment letter gives you access to one of the leading diabetic eye screening services in the world. If you do receive an appointment letter, protect yourself and make sure you attend”.

‘For the times they are a changing...’

Following strong research evidence presented by the four UK diabetic retinopathy screening programmes, the UK National

Screening Committee has recommended that programmes can safely change to offering screening intervals based on clinical risk. Previously everyone routinely received a recall every 12 months regardless. Now, patients in a low risk category (no retinopathy in their last two screens) will be offered screening every two years, with all others remaining on an annual recall. Wales will be the first country to make the change and DESW estimates that it could take 2-3 years to roll out across the whole population. They are right at the start of this change and will provide a lot more information as plans develop.

Diabetic Eye Screening Wales can be contacted on 01443 844244. Website www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk/DRSSW

The Accessible Friends Network

The Accessible Friends Network (TAFN) is a national independent UK charity providing realtime social networking, computer technical support, training and entertainment via the internet. It is run by and for vision impaired people. It is a user-led voluntary group which uses email, the internet, voice conferencing and other resources to improve the quality of life for vi people and their partners by networking. TAFN provides support, raises funds and organises activities online.

To take part in events you need to be a member with access to the internet and a microphone and speakers, or a headset. The membership fee is £15, and a month's free trial is available, giving people the chance to try TAFN for themselves. Events, which are moderated, include quizzes, musical theme nights, jazz club, and computer skills workshops.

For more information, visit the website,
<https://www.tafn.org.uk/> or telephone 0203 290 9254.

The Rights, Advice and Information Service (RAISE)

The Rights, Advice and Information Service (RAISE) has been set up to provide information, advice and support to people with sensory loss in Wales. It is provided by RNIB Cymru, in association with Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, Deafblind Cymru and Sense Cymru, and with support from the Big Lottery Fund.

The team can check that you are getting the benefits and concessions that you are entitled to and let you know about other services and support that is available to you in your area. They will arrange for any benefit application forms to be completed for you and provide support through the claim process.

They also have a team of specialist case workers who will be able to support you in challenging the most complex of benefit decisions if your decision is wrong.

To contact the RAISE advice Line, ring 0333 323 0227, send an email to RAISE@rnib.org.uk or visit the website <http://www.rnib.org.uk/rights-advice-and-information-service>.

Have Your Say!

Access ALL Areas

Almost half (49%) of guide dog owners surveyed have experienced an access refusal in the last year. Guide Dogs is campaigning so that assistance dog owners can access taxis, shops and restaurants without being refused entry, in line with their legal rights.

“Each refusal is crushing, confidence shattering, rejecting, and traumatic. I always feel that I don’t want to go out after – but work dictates I must.” Guide dog owner, Stevenage.

Under the Equality Act, guide dog and other assistance dog owners have the right to enter the majority of services, premises and vehicles with their dog. However the GD survey has shown that the majority of assistance dog owners have been refused access to somewhere. The most frequent places that guide dog owners are refused access is taxis, restaurants and shops

Take action to ensure that drivers allow guide dogs and other assistance dogs access to taxis:

<http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/access-all-areas/how-can-i-help-the-access-all-areas-campaign>

Respite holidays

Able Magazine, a leading disability lifestyle publication, is currently pulling together success stories of people that have experienced respite holidays in the UK. They aim to show how important they are in terms of providing a welcome break and a change of scenery and how this can go towards strengthening relationships and enriching lives.

If you've had a successful respite break in the UK recently, please contact Carrie-Ann: carrie-ann@tourismforall.org.uk, so that the importance of respite holidays can be highlighted.

Welsh Government Consultations

Details of all WG consultations can be found on their website, <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations>. The following may be of particular interest:

- Supporting learners with healthcare needs (closes 29 April)
- School Pupil Eye Care Service for Wales (closes 2 May)

If you would like a consultation document in a different format, email the document title and the preferred format to CustomerHelp@wales.gsi.gov.uk or call 029 2082 3683.

Opportunities

Job opportunity for VI person

RNIB Cymru is looking to recruit a **Trainee Community Development Assistant** to join their North Wales Vision Alliance project and assist in providing support, information and services to blind and partially sighted people in North West Wales. You will have the opportunity to support a variety of interesting projects and get involved in planning and organising events.

This post is part of RNIB's Trainee Grade Scheme (TGS), to be eligible to apply you need to be unemployed and either blind or partially sighted. The closing date for applications is 28th April.

Download the application form from their website:
www.rnib.org.uk/trainee-community-development-assistant-bangor
or ring 0207 391 2116 to request alternative formats.

Coming Soon! Wales Blind Drive from Speed Of Sight

Do you know someone who is blind, who would love to drive but can't? Well now they can! Speed Of Sight charity are bringing their specially adapted dual controlled track cars, which can be driven by disabled children or adults alongside one of their qualified instructors. A Speed Of Sight driving experience is a day to remember.

If you are interested in taking part in the Wales Blind Drive please register your interest by calling 0161 714 4567 or visit <http://speedofsight.org/our-events.php>.

Volunteer with VI Breconshire

Are you looking to get more involved with your local community? Visual Impairment Breconshire is offering you the opportunity to support people with sight loss.

We currently have two positions available, a telephone befriending co-ordinator and a newsletter producer/editor post.

If you or someone you know are interested, please contact Nick Lancaster for further information on 01874 610513. Both volunteers will each receive an honorarium of £600 per year, plus out of pocket expenses.

Volunteer with the Macular Society

The Macular Society is looking for volunteers who can help to make a difference to people with macular disease, and is offering two specialist training opportunities in Wales.

'Skills for seeing' volunteer trainers deliver free one-to-one training to people in their local community affected by macular degeneration, by showing them how to use techniques such as eccentric viewing which can make everyday tasks a little easier. As a 'Skills for seeing' trainer, you will work with your trainee for up to three one-hour sessions, usually over a three month period. The two and a half day course will show you how to train others in these techniques, and you will have the opportunity to accredit your skills to Level 3 or 4 on the Quality and Curriculum Framework. A Disclosure & Barring (DCB) check is required. The course will be held in Llandrindod Wells from 4th to 6th May.

'Gadget Guides' can have an impact on people's lives by showing them some of the simple and cheap equipment that can help them carry out everyday tasks, and by explaining how to use new technology such as smartphones and tablets. A training course in Cardiff on 21st-22nd June will give you the skills you need to carry out this role.

For both of these roles, you must be able to travel within your area, but all expenses will be paid by the Macular Society. To find out more, and to book a place, please contact Adele Francis, South Wales Regional Manager at the Macular

Society by telephone on 01639 843236 or via email at adele.francis@macularsociety.org.

VI Musicians classes

The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD) is running a free workshop for vision impaired musicians as part of its summer school programme. The workshop will be held from 2nd - 4th August in Cardiff. The course director is Jackie Clifton OBE, founder of 'Musicians in Focus'.

Working in groups, you will take part in sessions on improvisation, music technology (with assistive software), and Braille music. The event is open to people of all ages with a vision impairment who would like to develop their musical skills – previous musical experience is not required.

For more information and to book a place, visit the RWCMD website, <http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk/> or contact Jackie Clifton on 029 2023 1113 or jackie.clifton@rwcmd.ac.uk. The closing date for applications is 30th May.

Jackie is also running 'Exploring Music', a series of classes for VI people of any age and ability at the RWCMD. They explore all kinds and aspects of music. Classes are free although there is a £5 admin fee per year course. The 2 hour classes are on Saturday afternoons during term time 2 – 4pm.

Please contact Jackie to discuss any ideas of what you would be interested to learn. All requests will be considered.

Examples of areas covered in previous classes include:

- Dance music from "Strictly"
- Unusual string instruments
- Music and computers

- Music notation including braille music
- Basic keyboard skills
- Folk music and dance
- World music

Publications & resources

Braille books for children

The DK Braille series is a newly developed range of custom-designed braille books for blind and partially sighted children and their parents or care-givers. Each title in the series combines images with high-contrast colours to maximise any sight that vision impaired readers may have. The images in the books are made tactile with embossing and stimulating finishes such as flocking and high-gloss for children to feel with their fingers. Printed text appears above Braille on the page allowing sighted parents, family or friends to read along to create a shared learning experience. Titles in the series include 'Animals', 'Counting', 'Shapes' and 'It can't be true', and the books are available from Amazon and all good bookshops.

Guide to vision impaired friendly sport

British Blind Sport (BBS) has produced a guide which helps coaches, teachers and parents support people with a vision impairment who want to get involved in sport. 'A guide to vision impaired friendly sport' includes information about how you can help VI people get active: guiding and supporting

them; adapting and modifying sports and physical activity to include vision impaired people into mainstream sessions; and understanding the pathways available for VI people.

This is a generic guide. BBS has already produced sport-specific guides covering swimming, athletics, judo and football. You can find out more and download all of the guides on the 'Education' section of the BBS website, <http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk/education/> or telephone 01926 424247 to request a copy.

Power for Life

Western Power Distribution (WPD) operates the electricity distribution network in the Midlands, South Wales and the South West. Put simply, our role is to ensure the power network of poles and pylons, cables, wires and substations – the infrastructure that we all rely upon to live our lives to the full – delivers electricity to our homes and businesses around the clock.

Power cut? Call our emergency number 0800 6783 105

Sometimes power cuts can happen for reasons beyond our control. During a power cut we are able to help.

We know it can be particularly worrying if you rely on electricity for medical equipment or if you are elderly, very ill or disabled. If you depend on electricity for a reason such as using a nebuliser, a kidney dialysis machine, an oxygen machine, a ventilator – or any other reason – you should register with us.

WPD provides a FREE Priority Service Register, which helps us to identify customers who may need a little extra help during a power cut.

If you join our FREE Priority Service Register we can:

- Give you a direct number to call in the event of a power cut so you can get straight through to us.
- Agree a password with you before we visit you, so you feel safe.
- Provide special help, if needed, through the RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) or British Red Cross.
- Ring and tell you about planned interruptions to your electricity supply.
- Keep you as informed as possible in the event of an unplanned power cut.

To join, call **0800 9177 953**, or visit our website
www.westernpower.co.uk

Events

Sight Cymru Wales & West Conference 2016

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

The conference will bring professionals together from all sectors who are working with blind and partially sighted people, with a focus this year on those who have lost sight through stroke. There will also be information about innovative and leading edge research which has been taking place in the UK. This is an opportunity for professionals from different organisations to meet and share ideas and discuss the future and the way forward.

To be held at the School of Optometry & Vision Sciences, Cardiff University, Maindy Road, Cathays, Cardiff CF24 4HQ on Thursday 23rd June 2016.

For bookings and more information please contact Emma Richards on 01495 763650 or email emma.richards@sightcymru.org.uk.

North Wales Mobile Information Unit

April

- Monday 25th Corwen Main Car Park 1:00pm – 3:00pm
- Friday 29th Hafan Gwydir, Llanrwst 10:00am – 3:30pm

May

- Tuesday 3rd Dolgellau Marian Car Park 11:00am – 2:30pm
- Friday 6th Benllech Car Park 10:30am – 3:00pm
- Monday 9th Rhyl Town Hall 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Monday 16th Porthmadog High St 10:30am – 3:00pm
- Friday 20th Llangefni Town Hall car park 10:30 am – 3:00pm
- Monday 23th Pengwern, Llangollen 10:30am - 3:00pm;
Gwrych Medical Centre Abergele AM 9:30am – 12:00pm
- Friday 27th Pensarn Promenade 1:00pm – 3.30pm
- Tuesday 31st Pwllheli Y Maes car park 1:00pm – 3:00pm

June

- Friday 3rd Menai Bridge car park AM 10:00am – 12:30pm and 1:30pm- 3:00pm
- Monday 6th Prestatyn Retail Park 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Friday 10th Llandudno North Shore by Cenotaph 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Monday 13th Blaenau Ffestiniog Diffwys Square 10:30am – 3:00pm
- Friday 17th Holyhead Lower Hill car park 10.30am - 3.00pm
- Friday 24th Rhos on Sea by TIC 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Monday 27th Barmouth main car park 11.00am – 2:30pm

Please check www.visionsupport.org.uk or ring 01745 338914 to confirm details before travelling.

RNIB's Online Today events

Online Today is coming to venues across Wales in the next few months. The team can give help with Smartphones, Tablets, Laptop and E-readers of all descriptions.

April

- Monday 25th, 10.30 am to 12 pm, Rhiwbina library Pen-Y-Dre, Rhiwbina CF14 6EH; 10 am to 12 pm, Merthyr Tydfil Library, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AF; 10 am, 11 am and 12 pm, Neyland Library. St. Clements Road. Neyland. Pembrokeshire. SA73 1SH; 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm, Milford Haven Library, Cedar Court, Haven's Head Business Park, Milford Haven SA73 3LS
- Friday 29th, 10 am, 11 am and 12 pm, Tenby Library, Greenhill Avenue, Saundersfoot, Pembrokeshire SA70 7LB and 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm, Saundersfoot Library, Regency Hall, Saundersfoot Pembrokeshire SA69 9NG

May

- Tuesday 3rd, 10 am, 11 am, 12 pm, St Davids Library, City Hall, St Davids SA62 6SD and 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm, Fishguard Library, Market Sq SA65 9HA
- Wednesday 4th, 10 am, 11 am and 12 pm, Haverfordwest Library, Off Dew Street, Haverfordwest SA61 1ST
- Thursday 5th, 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm, Narberth Library, St James Street. Narberth SA67 7BU
- Friday 6th, 10 am, 11 am and 12 pm, Pembroke Dock Library, Water Street, Pembroke Dock SA72 6DW and 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm, Pembroke Library, Commons Road, Pembroke SA71 4EA
- Thursday 12th, 10 am to 12 pm, Pontypridd Library, Library Road, Pontypridd, CF37 2DY
- Monday 16th, 10 am to 12 pm, Brecon Library, Ship Street, Brecon, LD3 9AE

- Monday 23rd, 10.30 am to 12 pm, Llantwit Major Youth Centre, Station Road, Llantwit Major.

June

- Monday 6th, 10.30 am to 12 pm, Llantwit Major Youth Centre, Station Road, Llantwit Major.
- Thursday 9th, 10 am to 12 pm, Pontypridd Library, Library Road, Pontypridd, CF37 2DY
- Monday 13th, 10.30 am to 12 pm, St Mellons Hub/Library, 30 Crickhowell Rd, St. Mellons, CF3 0EF
- Monday 20th, 10 am to 12 pm, Brecon Library, Ship Street, Brecon, LD3 9AE
- Monday 27th, 10 am to 12 pm, Rhiwbina library Pen-Y-Dre, Rhiwbina CF14 6EH and 10 am to 12 pm, Merthyr Tydfil Library, High Street, Merthyr, CF47 8AF.

Booking is not essential. For more information, please call RNIB Cymru on 029 2082 8518.

North Wales Vision Alliance Exhibition/Information Day

The North Wales Vision Alliance is hosting an Exhibition/Information Day on Tuesday 10th May 2016 from 10am-4pm. The day is a chance for blind and partially-sighted people in the North Wales area to come along and see what is new in the world of vision enhancement and offers the opportunity to discover more about attaining and maintaining independence. The exhibition this year is in the stunning village of Portmeirion.

For more information please contact Marian Radcliffe at the North Wales Society for the Blind, 325 High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1YB or email to: admin.nwsb@btconnect.com. You can telephone Marian on 01248 353604.

New College Worcester

New College Worcester (NCW), the residential school and college for young people aged 11 to 19 who are blind or vision impaired, is running an Outreach Open Day for education professionals on 20th April. This free event will give you a taste of how the College teaches vision impaired students, the opportunity to meet subject teachers, and offers practical support and advice on specific curriculum areas.

NCW is also holding a family day on Monday 2nd May. It is a great opportunity for any family who has a child with a vision impairment to find out more about the college, while the children try activities such as archery, pony riding, crafts and mini-golf.

For more information on these events, and to make a booking, visit the 'Events' section of the NCW website, <http://www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk/events>, or telephone the College on 01905 763933.

Professional Development Day at RNC

The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) is running a Professional Development Day on 26th May. It is an

opportunity for any professional working with a young person with a vision impairment to come and learn about how RNC works to support students as they move into higher education, employment and independent living.

For more information and to book a place, visit the RNC website, <http://www.rnc.ac.uk/events/pdd-may2016>, or telephone 01432 376 621.

Sight Village in Birmingham

Sight Village will take place on 19th and 20th July at the New Bingley Hall, Hockley, Birmingham. The event is a great opportunity to find out more about the latest technology, equipment and support services available to blind and partially sighted people.

To find out more, go to www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions.htm, send an email to sv@qac.ac.uk, phone 0121 428 5041 or write to QAC Sight Village, Court Oak Rd, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9TG.

Focus Day in Llanelli

Llanelli Blind Society is hosting a Focus Day on Monday 25th April from 11 am to 3 pm. Exhibitors will include Calibre Audio Library, Dolphin Computer Access and Enhanced Vision. For more information about the event ring Llanelli Blind Society on 01554 784 958.

UCAN Perform Festivals 2016

UCAN, the performing arts group for young people with sight loss, is running two festivals: at Torch Theatre, Milford Haven (18th May 10.30am -2.30pm) and Millennium Centre, Cardiff (26th July 10am - 4pm). There will be workshops and performances, a chance to learn new skills and make new friends aged 11 and over. The festival is FREE. There are limited places so book early by calling UCAN on 029 20 870554 or email info@ucanproductions.org

Advertise in WCB Roundup

WCB Roundup is sent to more than 1200 people, in a variety of formats, the download version is available from our website and an audio version is on www.soundcloud.com/wales-council-blind. We are a not-for-profit organisation that hopes to recoup its costs. We seek advertisers for our newsletter so that we can continue to produce this valued journal.

Advertisers will reach a readership of individuals with sight loss, optometrists, ophthalmologists, rehabilitation officers, social workers, and organisations working for blind, partially sighted and disabled people.

Our rates are (per edition):

Full A4 page: £150 (black and white) £250 (colour)

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Enclosures: single sheet A4 750 copies, supplied in a ready-to-go format: £200.

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To advertise in many editions, please contact us for discounts. Contact Ann via ann@wcb-ccd.org.uk or telephone 02920 473954.

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Further copies, in audio CD or large print formats, are available. All editions are online at <http://www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/roundup.php>

The focus for the next edition will be '**accessible shopping**'.

Smell gas?

Staying safe in six easy steps

If you smell gas in your home or business, we're here to help. Here's what to do.

- 1 Call us immediately on Freephone 0800 111 999. We're available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and will send out an engineer to make your property safe.
- 2 Turn off all your gas appliances and, if possible, switch off the gas at the meter (unless the meter is in the cellar or basement, in which case don't go in).
- 3 Open windows and doors.
- 4 Don't use any electrical appliances or switch lights on or off.
- 5 Don't smoke or use naked flames.
- 6 If there's a smell of gas in the cellar or basement, please wait outside or with a neighbour.



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