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Cardiff STORM Event.

On a cold November evening in Cardiff we hosted our very first Storm Event. We invited young adults from across South Wales to join us in Urban Tap House for a few hours to discuss the services they're receiving and what they feel is missing. Of course there was an opportunity for everyone to grab a drink and have a chat before and after the meeting. We were so pleased with the turnout and would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who came. Around 30 people joined us for the event.



We wanted to make the meeting as relaxed as possible and a celebration of our first event. The structure of the evening was super simple and interactive. We explained the project, what we wanted to achieve and what we would be doing. We then split into three groups and discussed the following questions:

- What services are you getting?
- What would you like to be getting or think is missing?
- What would you like to get out of this project?
- What next for you?

We came together at the end to discuss everything that had been collected during the meeting and we ended by continuing the celebrations with a drink at the bar.

The most popular topics that were discussed during the meeting were Rehabilitation Officers for the Vision Impaired (ROVIs), employment, education and public perceptions of sight loss, housing, benefits and opportunities.

We're looking to have our next Cardiff group meeting in February, which will cover one of the topics we discussed in the meeting.

It was one of those nights

It was one of those nights, in one of those places, in one of those towns that felt like something out of a book. Not to sound melodramatic, but there are times in life that have a certain kind of ambience. Ein Llais, Ein Storm - Our Voice, Our Storm, is a new project by Wales Council of the Blind in partnership with UCAN Productions. It is designed to give us as young adults with sight loss a platform to express our opinions and aspirations. It'll be instrumental in helping to connect and identify all kinds of services, which we may need.

The first event took place on the 30th of November at Tiny Rebel in Cardiff. Walking in I was surprised to see how many people had turned up. The meeting began with a brief introduction before we dived into three groups for a discussion, and though I cannot speak for anyone else I found that as soon as I had

expressed one idea, another came to mind. It was the same for the other groups, and the feedback was encouraging. True, not all of us agreed on certain things, but we were all willing to take every idea on board.

I feel honoured to have been there and I recall becoming very emotional, because I've been wanting to share my feelings about sight loss and its impact for some time. Given all that's happened in the world over the past year, it's more important than ever to have projects like Ein Llais, Ein Storm.

I thoroughly look forward to being involved in something with the project in whatever capacity I can, and I hope others will consider doing the same.

Written by Kiel Gibbson

If I was a graffiti artist...

I recently watched a documentary about the origins of graffiti and the vital part it has played to help historians discover how humanity thrived prior to the abundance of documentation such as journals, certificates and newspapers.

Some of the earliest examples of graffiti can be found in the Grottes D'Arcy, a cave system which was inhabited 30,000 years ago and the walls inside withhold paintings which were crafted by the generations of families who lived there. It seems as though the painters were careful and precise not only about the art itself, but with the location. They used the shapes and curves in the rocks to create a sense of volume or distance. It is obvious that each drawing is poignant and gave an insight into their values, priorities and ways of life. These people took the time to disclose their identities in a way that we still do now - creatively.

As a creative person, I spend a lot of my time writing songs and poems that no one will ever

necessarily hear or read. Many of which talk about how I identify and very rarely does my vision impairment ever crop up. I write a lot about heartache and frustrations but as somebody who has been blind since birth I have simply grown accustomed to having poor sight. Being vision impaired doesn't really bother me. I am not ignorant to the fact that I have missed out on some experiences but my vision impairment has led to me having many great opportunities and so, I am not bitter or upset about being V.I. Therefore, having Achromotopsia has never really been at the forefront of any of my creative endeavours. However, once it was.

Four years ago, I was sat in my mainstream GCSE Drama class pulling my hair out. The task of devising a ten minute long piece of Brecht-style theatre felt seemingly impossible, My group were disruptive and disinterested in the task and after a rather tense discussion with my teacher, he gave our group a stimulus. The stimulus was a newspaper article, the details of which elude me now but the story recalled a tale of social injustice: a man who was in a

minority group and showed defiance against society's expectations of him.

His story was very remarkable and certainly produced discussion between my group. However, the conversation took a turn that was unexpected. It turned to me.

'Ellie, you're registered blind! We could make our piece all about you! About how you aren't the stereotypical blind girl! Don't you think that's a good idea?' I agreed but not because I thought it was a good idea, but because at least it was an idea and the performance deadline was a week away! And so we began working on what was a shambolic excuse for theatre depicting the hardships of disability in which my creative input was minuscule. Despite my best efforts to conjure up a beautiful soliloquy about my perceptions of beauty and reliance on my other senses, I struggled. I struggled because even the teacher suggested that I shouldn't look at people during the performance. I struggled because I was asked to use my mobility cane as a prop. I particularly struggled when a member of the

group suggested we should only use Stevie Wonder songs as the accompanying music. I struggled because what was supposed to be a creative expression of my vision impairment was being tainted by stereotypes. I struggled because I was pressured to disclose and represent my vision impairment in a way which I felt uncomfortable with but I am also to blame. I didn't speak up or express my concerns and to this day I regret not saying something. It actually upsets me that I allowed myself to be presented as just a 'poor blind girl' because I'm not. My values, interests and passions are not dictated by my level of sight; nor are my goals and ambitions compromised.

I suppose what I'm trying to say is that if I was a graffiti artist, and I decided to paint, draw or etch my identity on walls for future historians to examine and determine who I was, I don't think that my vision impairment would even cross my mind.

Written by Eleanor Wait

Cardiff Storm Event 2

While Storm Doris was creating havoc across the country, in Cardiff we were creating a Storm all of our very own. On Wednesday the 22nd of February we ran our second Cardiff Storm event on Independent Living. Now, while for many those two words can be quite daunting, we wanted to take away all the common misconceptions and show people how much support there is available to young people to allow them to live independently with confidence.

With a group of about twenty meeting at Cardiff Central Library, with plenty of biscuits to feed an army, we were set for an afternoon of productive discussions.

We were lucky enough to have Jason Grubb from Sight Cymru, a Cardiff-based Rehabilitation Officer, who spoke about what he and the service can do for you. Nathan Foy, the Engagement Officer for Guide Dogs Cymru, also joined us to discuss the benefits of having a Guide Dog and how the process of applying works. For more information on this keep an

eye out for our next blog post around rehabilitation and getting a Guide Dog coming soon.

Mared and I spoke and led the discussion around benefits and concessions. This was a beneficial and productive discussion for the group that gave us awareness of even more services available and helped us decide what the next session would focus on. We discussed things like - Radar Keys, concessions at sports events and assistance when travelling on trains, coaches and planes. A lot of questions came out of this that Mared and I can investigate further.

We're already looking forward to our next event for the Cardiff and South East group. It will be centred around Employment and Direct Payment, two topics that were mentioned a lot at this session.

Finally, we would like to say a massive thank you to everybody who came and joined in but most importantly, thank you to Jason and Nathan for coming to speak to the group.

Written by Megan John.

Our next event will be on the 18th of March in Llandudno. Contact Mared or Megan for more details.

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