



**In this issue: VI Rugby with Cardiff Blues, things to do during lockdown, dance, karate, employment tips and more!**

# Visually Impaired Rugby with Cardiff Blues

The Cardiff Blues Rugby Club have recently started running a Visually Impaired rugby team. Sessions run most Tuesday evenings from 5pm-6pm at the Cardiff Arms Park with a regular turn out of around 8 or 9 VI adults. This club has been running for several months now and is starting to form a strong team, improving week on week.

On Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February the members of the VI Rugby Team were invited to go and watch the Cardiff Blues vs. Benetton match at the Cardiff Arms Park. They were also given the opportunity to meet Ian McKinley who now plays for Benetton as a part of the Pro14 and nationally for Italy. In 2011 Ian retired from professional rugby due to losing the sight in one eye, but returned to play despite this in 2014 after moving to Italy to coach junior teams.

Ian is an ambassador for The Change Foundation and so is very supportive of the work that's happening to increase the popularity of VI Rugby nationally in the UK. He came to meet the team straight after the match to have a chat, share his experiences and offer the opportunity to ask some questions. He was really impressed with the work the Cardiff Blues are doing and with the progress and commitments of those on the team so far. Due to his sight loss Ian wears goggles while he plays to protect his eyes and kindly donated an old signed pair. This was a very inspiring evening for all involved.

If you have any question or are interested in taking part in the Visually Impaired Rugby feel free to get in touch with the Cardiff Blues Community Foundation Team for further information.

## 15 ways to keep busy in lockdown

Ok so, the country is now in lockdown. There are only a few reasons why you can be out and about still. But for most of the time, we're stuck at home – there's nothing to do, absolutely nothing! ... Woah now! Yes, there are, people! Be lucky that if it's had to happen, it's in a time where we're lucky to have phones, social media, internet, video calling, etc. Don't get me wrong: with the weather getting nicer, it would be preferable to be out with friends or going for walks, etc. But, unfortunately for, hopefully, a short time, that is not possible. But there are still things to do.

'Like what', you ask? Well here are a couple of things off the top of my head and things I've found in general:

1. While schools are closed Audible are offering audio books for free. Yes, a lot are aimed at children, but there are still books available for adults too. Or if you're just a big kid, go crazy. To have a look at what is available simply visit [stories.audible.com](https://www.audible.com) from any web browser to get started. No log-ins, credit cards or passwords needed. Always meant to pick up a book and start reading again? Well, here's your opportunity.

2. The BBC has a short 2-minute clip regarding HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training). This is the link:

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/programs/p05w69pz?xtor=ES-211-%5B30768\\_PANUK\\_NLT\\_12\\_YTH\\_BBCweekend\\_2020\\_25to30%5D-20200324-%5Bbbcne\\_howtodohiitathome\\_factualhealthwellbeing%5D](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programs/p05w69pz?xtor=ES-211-%5B30768_PANUK_NLT_12_YTH_BBCweekend_2020_25to30%5D-20200324-%5Bbbcne_howtodohiitathome_factualhealthwellbeing%5D). Could be good if you've wanted to get exercising with all of your newly found spare time or just need something to do. If you're interested this came from the BBC series THE TRUTH ABOUT Fitness. Which may still be on BBC iPlayer.

3. Enjoy Yoga? Or fancy giving it a go? Try this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=DUUiTEsex48&app=desktop> – it is specifically designed for those with Visual Impairments.

4. Learn a new skill or do an online course. If you love learning this could be a great opportunity to have that time to finally sit down and learn something new and/or interesting. Maybe you've always wanted to learn Welsh? Maybe you want to do that online safeguarding qualification you've been meaning to get around to? Well, there are loads of online platforms and smartphone apps to do these things. Get going y'all.

5. Meditate. Some people love to just have a bit of quiet. This could be good for those who find meditation relaxing, or if you just need a bit of 'you time' without kids screaming or dogs barking around you. Again, there are loads of apps and websites to help with this. Or even Alexa if you have one. If you have a dot, plus, etc. try asking - "Alexa! Open guided meditation!" See if you find this one simple and soothing enough.

6. Learn how to play an instrument. Bought that drum set months ago and still not bothered or had time to learn what to do with it? Then look up tutorials on YouTube. YouTube is a great resource for learning skills,

listening to podcasts or just listening to what others think about different topics. Check it out.

7. Do you play a sport or partake in a martial art? Why not take the opportunity to do either inside (only if it is appropriate, people!), or outside in the nice weather practice some skills? Throw a ball around, practice your technique, hone your skills, find a different tactic, etc. Then when the lockdown is over, impress your club-mates.

8. If you love to exercise point-blank, this could be for you: <https://britishblindsport.org.uk/stay-in-work-out/>. It's created by British Blind Sport with their hashtag #StayInWorkOut. They will be uploading exercise videos on this site in the hope to keep us all moving and active.

9. Take a breath. Had a stressful few months? Do you go out and when you get home you can't relax as there's too much to do? Had some family issues recently? Are you having to constantly be doing things for other people? Then stop! This is YOUR time. Every now and then humans need to just put a pin in it all. We all need to just sit down, put our feet up, and breathe. Don't take it as being lazy or unproductive. Put the kettle on, put something on the TV, and relax. A time to get away from the hectic ways of life is great to help you de-stress. Or if you're more an outdoor person, take a chair out into the garden and bask in the glorious sunshine.

10. Spend time with others. If you live with family or friends. Take the time to get to know them better, or to just spend some general time together. Get a board game out, get a video game out, play rock paper scissors – whatever it is. Use this time to bond and potentially, get competitive! Have a week-long monopoly marathon – if you can handle it!

11. Keeping creative. Here's a link to a website which encourages people to keep the creativity flowing: <https://www.marchnetwork.org/creative-isolation> (there are lots of things from stories to origami)

12. If you live alone, have no pets and aren't really an exercise person. How about catching up with shows you've been watching or have been meaning to watch? Why not research something online? Catch up with a friend you've not spoken with for years via Skype or Facebook. Or just plain take the time to clean and tidy. Go through your house, have a

proper spring clean. Do all the things you don't normally have time for or that you purposely procrastinate. It might actually help your mental health by doing some of these things.

13. Get arty with it. Either using things you already have or buy something online that takes your fancy and get creative and crafty. Sketch, build, doodle, colour in, stitch, or sculpt. Either just for fun, or maybe it's a family or friends special occasion soon – birthdays, anniversaries, Easter or maybe you make your nan a card that says "Happy Just 'Cos Day". It may end up brightening yours and someone else's day.

14. Alexa. Yes, hail be to Alexa. Alexa is full of so many things to do. If you have one, have a look at what skills she can offer you. Most are free but not all so do be careful. From music to quizzes, from games to interesting facts, from the news to jokes. Have a browse through and see what takes your fancy.

15. Check online. Since this is worldwide, there are dozens of organizations and charities taking the time to help keep us all sane. Take a look at some websites. There are many that give you handy hints, interesting things to try, and info on how to survive just generally during this time. Plus, some even are holding telephone social calls, online workshops, and general help and support if you just need someone at the end of the phone to talk to. There are lots out there from RNIB, Sightlife, and LOOK UK. And many many more.

So don't look at this as OMG I'm so bored. Change your perspective. It really will help.

## **Bollywood Bonanza**

Before the country went into lockdown, like the rest of you I was out and about doing my usual wandering around, looking for new things to give a go. One of these included the Bollywood dancing sessions at Sightlife.

If you're looking for something new to try, or just love to move and shake those hips – it could be your next love. When we're all free again of course!

When it restarts the sessions are every Thursday in the activity room of SightLife (formerly Cardiff Institute for the Blind) between 11am and 12pm - priced at only £2.

The session is led by an extremely passionate lover of dance named Anum Munawar. She started her love for Bollywood dance from the age of 12 until she was about 15 but then had to stop due to other commitments. But! Due to Anum's love for dance she recently expressed her desire to continue with it which developed into her leading these dance sessions at SightLife.

Anum's passion for dance is easily noticeable. The way in which she speaks about dance is undeniably infectious! You just want to get up there, let loose and get moving to the beat.

Why should you try it? SO MANY REASONS, PEOPLE! These include (and these are straight from the mouth of Anum):

1. These sessions give you an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends while participating in an activity you probably haven't done before.
2. Using dance as a platform this can really help develop your spatial awareness, which is really important for a Visually Impaired person. Having that awareness of the things and people around you is really useful, as this develops independence and confidence too.
3. Everything works together and simultaneously - meaning your body is in sync with itself. Through dance you learn to move your body in time to a rhythm and because in Bollywood dance each movement causes another reactive move it helps your body to swing naturally to the beat.
4. Finally, Anum feels that people with Visual Impairments are more likely to learn, what she calls, "true music". This is because you're not concentrating on the teacher at the front of the class and checking what others are doing. You concentrate more on the music, the rhythm, the lyrics, the beat and the emotion of the song.

So, What is it that Anum likes most about this type of dance? "The emotion" - When you dance Bollywood, you don't go back. The emotion of the song and dance just pours out of you; you feel it all. For example, when I (Meg P) went to the taster, the song was all about love. One particular line, when translated into English, basically meant a "heart kite"

- Anum tried to explain to us the meaning behind this and in her words “it’s a kite of hearts, that flies away to your loved one”.

The final thing to finish off Anum’s love for Bollywood: the costumes, of course. The bright and beautiful clothing that you get to wear while performing the dance are so elegant and mesmerising.

Whether you’re just looking for a new and different way to have fun, exercise or just de-stress - give it a go, you’ll be surprised how much fun you have.

# List of Employment Support Services

**Finding employment can be challenging. But with the right support, it can be made easier.**

Below is a list of employment services for different areas of Wales. If you're at home just twiddling your thumbs at the moment, why not have a look into them? This could be the perfect time.

Please note that this is not an extensive list. If you know of others please let me know!

## Remploy

### **Work and Health Programme throughout Wales.**

Criteria - To be eligible for the programme participants must live in Wales, not be in work and meet one of the following criteria:

- Disabled or have a health condition
- Not working and have been unemployed for two years or more
- A veteran, a reserve or a partner of a member of the Armed Forces
- Homeless
- Have a drug or alcohol addiction, an ex-offender, carer, ex-carer, care leaver or a refugee.

## **Intensive Personalised Employment Support Service**

Criteria –

- 16 or over
- Unemployed and live in Wales
- Disabled, with complex barriers to work
- Able to work for 16 hours or more each week.

Support -

- Increasing confidence
- Identifying skills, abilities and job goals
- Job searching, interviews and CVs
- Access to volunteering, job taster sessions, work trials, local services and employers
- Advice on health, wellbeing, housing, money, debt and substance misuse
- Help with work-related qualifications
- Getting ready for self-employment



- Help with travel or childcare costs
- Ongoing support, once in work.

## **Careers Wales**

### **Jobs Growth Wales**

Criteria and support -

- Be aged between 16 and 24 years
- Live in Wales
- Not already be in full time employment (full time employment is 16 hours per week and over)
- Not completed the full 6 months of a previous Jobs Growth Wales vacancy
- Not have been referred to/or are taking part in the Work Programme or Work Choice Programme (Check with your Jobcentre Plus adviser if you are registered with them)
- Not be in full time education (fulltime education is 16 hours and over)
- Not be on a Welsh Government work-based learning programme
- Jobs Growth Wales is a six months opportunity in a paid job
- It pays at least the National Minimum Wage
- You will have a contract written by your employer
- You will get the chance to gain the work experience you may be lacking
- If you have a disability or face other barriers you can get additional help and mentoring while you are in the job
- Jobs Growth Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with the support of the European Social Fund

## **Merthyr Tydfil Institute of the Blind (MTIB)**

### **Agored Cymru Training**

MTIB is an accredited Agored Cymru centre that focuses on Employability skills courses such as Preparing for Work. Interview Skills, Food Safety Level 2, H&S in the Workplace, Identifying Barriers to Work, IT for Work Search, Confidence Building and Motivation.

Criteria – anyone living in Wales can attend these courses.

## **Elite SEA**

## **Jobsense**

Criteria and Support –

- Economically inactive, or long term unemployed
- Over 25 years old
- Living in one of the following geographical areas – Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire or South Powys.
- North Wales – Flintshire and Wrexham (covered by centre of sight and sound)
- Have sight loss

JobSense has been funded by the European Social Fund to help people, aged 25 or over, with a sensory loss to find employment. If you have a sensory loss and are currently out of work, JobSense could help you access employment, education or training.

## **Supported Employment Project**

Criteria and support –

ELITE delivers Supported Employment services to the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Powys. If you are aged 18+ and have a disability, we can offer one-to-one support to help you obtain paid employment.

We can help with:

- Travel Training
- Volunteering
- Gaining Qualifications
- Work Experience and Workplace Visits
- Confidence Building
- Assisting with workplace adaptations and aids

## **ITEC**

### **Employability Skills Project**

Criteria and support - The programme is suitable for people over the age of 18 and who are receiving a benefit such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC).

The Employability Skills programme focusses on high quality work placements leading to jobs, assisted by employability workshops, upskilling in essential skills and dedicated support staff.

The 26 week programme will consist of 12 weeks in a training centre and a 14 week meaningful work placement with a local employer.

## Leonard Cheshire

### Changing Futures

Criteria and Support –

- 18 years old or over (18-24 years old unemployed or economically inactive and 25+ years economically inactive or unemployed for over 12 months)
- Live in the Swansea or Bridgend areas
- Legal right to live and work in the UK
- Have a work limiting health condition
- Want to be placed in training, volunteering or employment

The project provides one to one support to develop essential skills and confidence through a series of employment sessions, facilitating practical, real-world scenarios and paid work placements to improve employability.

## Business Wales

Anyone who wants to set up their own business and recruit people. This is across Wales.

## Cartrefi Conwy

Criteria and Support –

Anyone who lives within the housing association homes.

**Job skills** – With all the changes in the welfare system, there is a real push for people to get back into work. Quite often, this can be a big step and a bigger challenge. We can support you to sharpen your basic skills and regain confidence, and we can point you in the right direction for specialised assistance. We work very closely with Creating Enterprise who have a great facility in Mochdre offering space for tenants to do training, job searches, and much more to help you get the skills and experience to get back into work.

## **Bridges Into Work 2**

Criteria and support –

Bridges into Work 2's employment support is available to residents who are economically inactive, long-term unemployed and aged over 25 who live in non-Communities First areas within Caerphilly, Torfaen, Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr.

Bridges into Work 2 provides opportunities for improving an individual's employment prospects by providing support in the following areas:

- One to one support to help find work
- A dedicated Employment Support Worker who will help you at every stage of your journey
- Industry recognised training, accredited qualifications and local opportunities
- Supported job searching, CV writing, cover letter drafting and personal presentation skills in preparation for interviews
- Free vocational courses such as: Food Hygiene in Catering, POVA, First Aid (CPR), CSCS, COSHH and Dementia Awareness to name but a few
- Soft skill courses such as STEPS for confidence, interview skills to give you practice and Mindfulness to help you develop techniques to overcome your hurdles
- Additional support ranges from walking groups, exercise classes and coffee mornings
- Financial support with childcare
- Financial support with transport

## **Communities for Work**

Criteria and support –

For all people of all ages and abilities who live within the 52 communities first areas:

- One to One mentoring
- Access to a wide range of training, work experience and volunteering opportunities.
- Training for specific qualifications such as CSCS, SIA, Food Hygiene, Hairdressing.
- Employability skills, including updating CV's, job applications and interview preparation.
- Confidence Building

- Help and advice with travel, childcare or caring responsibilities
- Guidance and support to access the internet for online job applications
- Help with finding suitable job opportunities.

## Keen for Karate

Possibly two words you never thought you'd see in the same sentence? SightLife and Karate – but YES it's true. SightLife (formerly known as Cardiff Institute for the Blind) are holding Karate taster sessions. Which should hopefully restart at some point after the lockdown. For reference, it usually took place on a Thursday between 10am and 11am – right before Bollywood dance! (hint hint haha).

I've attended 2 sessions so far. The first session was unfortunately cancelled, but as this was a last minute decision, a few people still turned up. One lady in attendance, Jackie, used to teach Karate herself, so she offered to show and teach us some very basic moves (HI-YAH!).

The most basic form we learnt was punching. Please note that I am not an expert and if Karate interests you please go along to a session at Sightlife or join a local club/group/class to learn proper technique. Anyway, professional talk over with, let's get back to punching! Here's how the movement went:

1. Stand with your back straight and feet shoulder width apart.
2. Make a fist with both hands and place them, knuckle side down at your waist (at the sides of your waist). Ensure that your thumb remains at the outside of the fist, not tucked in. This is very important.
3. Slowly punch your right hand forward in front of you, and while you do this, when your elbow passes your waist you need to turn your fist (so that knuckles end up facing upwards). So it goes from knuckles down, to knuckles up. Making sure to keep your arm, wrist and fist in a straight line, this is also very important.
4. Return your fist to your waist again by doing the opposing moves. Slowly pull back your fist towards your waist and once your elbow passes your waist turn the hand over so that knuckles return to facing downwards.
5. As the right hand returns to your side, repeat the first few steps with your left fist. So as the right fist is being pulled back, you want to bring

forward your left fist and once your elbow passes your waist, turn your fist so that knuckles are facing upwards.

6. Do this slowly until you've really got the motion. Think of it like a pendulum movement. Your opposite sides working synchronised. Once you think you've got it, you've got a basic Karate punch stance!

I found it very interesting as I've never tried martial arts before, even though I've always fancied giving it a try. I must admit though, I did find it difficult when not being able to see what others were doing around me to check I understood the moves correctly. But as I said, this was a last minute show and tell type session rather than an official session.

I suppose the main thing I took from this session - that I felt was a very important point - was to "approach it as exercise first. Use it to help you develop your strength and increase your flexibility. Because if you want it specifically for self-defence it will take a couple of years to really get to grips with the movements and use them correctly." Jackie said that "it's not really something you can do just once a week in a class. You would need to do around 3 or 4 classes a week to use it as any kind of Self-Defence".

The second session I attended really got down to more Karate. Rob Green, who was delivering the session was very enthusiastic about welcoming everyone and getting everyone to give it a go. Too much was done in just this one hour to go through it all, but be assured that there was a warm up, there was punching, there was body movement, there was physicality, there was Japanese spoken ... it had all the stereotypical things you think of when you think karate.

If I'm honest, at the start I was really quite confused. I didn't understand some of the instructions being given. So I was feeling very baffled watching the others that had enough sight to follow Rob's demonstration as they got more and more into it. It wasn't until I'd got a bit annoyed at myself and then spoke up to Rob, asking what did he mean by arm here? Or arm out, out where? etc. Once I decided I wasn't going to just guess what Rob meant I started to enjoy the session so much more. But I guess that's part of the partnership. People learn in so many different ways. Rob needs to know that I'm not getting it, and I need to keep in mind that he's not a mind reader. Once I explained to Rob that I didn't quite understand he was more than happy to come over to me and go through it all. Perfect, I was finally on the same level as everyone else, and from that point I have to say, it was really fun. Not only this, but Rob used Jordan Allen a lot in his demonstrations. It was an excellent display to see

someone with not much sight to look like the next kung fu panda (I joke!). But seriously, Jordan was so professional, making it all look so sleek and solid. But then again he is a brown belt! Which is very close to the black belt – watch out people! Just goes to prove you can do anything with the proper partnership of teacher and student.

The thing I enjoyed most was the physicality and mentality of it. Your brain has to be engaged to know what move comes next in the sequence and the body is always moving from one phase into the next. Keen for karate? Yeah, I think I am to be fair.

## **How to access Zoom with Voiceover on the iPhone**

### **Find and Install 'Zoom' from the App Store**

1. Using Voice Over, locate the App Store.
2. Once you are in the 'App Store' Voice Over will say 'App Store Search Heading'.
3. Swipe to the right once and you will hear Voice Over say 'Games, Apps, Stories and More Search Field double tap to edit'.
4. Double tap on the search field.
5. Once your cursor is at the beginning of the search field, a keyboard will appear at the bottom centre of the screen. You will then need to type in 'Zoom'. Once you have written 'Zoom' keep on swiping to the right till you hear 'Search'. Double tap on this to select it.
6. You will then be given a list of suggested apps. Swipe to the right three times. You will hear 'Zoom Cloud Meetings' Swipe to the right again and you will hear 'Get'. Double tap on this.
7. You may be prompted to sign into iTunes Store. Please note this app is free to download.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you do not know how to download an app using Voice Over or need additional support to learn how to use Voice Over then please seek support from the RNIB Helpline, or book an appointment to be seen by a member of staff at your local Apple Store.

### **How to create an online free account on Zoom**

1. Once 'Zoom' is downloaded on your iPhone, you need to sign up for a free account. Once you have located the 'Zoom' app on your iPhone, swipe to the right 5 times till you hear sign up. Double tap on this. Alternatively, if you swipe to the right again, you will hear 'sign in'. You can then sign in using your Facebook account, google account or SSO.
2. Once you double tapped on 'sign up', you will then need to type in your email address, first name and last name. Then keep on swiping to the right till you hear sign up. You then may be sent a confirmation email that you will need to click on the link to verify your email.

Or

Once you double tapped on 'sign in'. Swipe to the right to the account you would like to sign in with and then double tap on this. Depending on which account you use to sign in, there may be additional steps you will need to complete to complete the setup of your account.

## **Host Group Meetings on Zoom**

1. Once you are in the 'Zoom' app, and have signed up/signed in you will be taken to a page called 'Meet and Chat'.
2. Keep on swiping to the right till you hear 'Schedule'. Double tap on this to select the option.
3. You will be taken to a page called 'Schedule Meeting' keep on swiping to the right till you hear the details of your Zoom Meeting. If you need to edit the meeting details then double tap on it to change it.
4. Once you are happy with all the meeting details. Place your finger at the top right corner of the screen and you will hear 'Done' double tap.
5. You will then be taken to 'New Event' which is on the 'Calendar' app of your iPhone. Keep swiping to the right to check through all the event details. If you need to edit the meeting details then double tap on it to change it. If happy, place your finger on the right corner of the screen and you will hear 'Add'. Double tap on this.
6. Once you have scheduled in the meeting, place your finger to the bottom left corner of the screen and then keep on swiping to the right till you hear 'Meetings'. Double tap on this to select the option.
7. This will then take you to the 'Meetings' page. Keep on swiping to the left till you hear 'send invitation button'. Double tap on this to select this option. It will then make a sound which is a notification. On the notification the options to send out the meeting invitation is 'Send



Message', 'Send email' and 'Copy to clipboard'. Swipe right and double tap on the method in which you would like to send the invitation.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There are other ways to host a Zoom Meeting but I feel this is the easiest way of hosting a Zoom Meeting with Voice Over. For more information on the different ways of hosting a Zoom Meeting, please visit: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362993-Getting-Started-with-iOS>

## **Join Group Meetings on Zoom**

1. Once 'Zoom' is downloaded on your iPhone, you need to wait for the person running the Zoom meeting to send you a link to the meeting.
2. Next, make sure you are on the home screen on your iPhone by pressing the home button on your iPhone. If you have an iPhone XS or higher, slide your finger away from you to get to the home screen. You should feel a beat and hear a sound when this happens. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you have set up Face ID or a passcode then you will need to go through this to get you onto the home screen.
3. Once you are on the home screen, keep on swiping your finger to the right till you hear 'Mail'. Double tap on this to select and open the app.
4. Keep on swiping to the right till you hear the name of the person that will be setting up the Zoom Meeting (known as host). You will know when you are on this email if you keep listening. You will hear the subject of the email, followed by a small content of the email. Double tap on this to access the full email.
5. If the link has come via email locate and select this email. Keep on swiping to the right till you hear 'Join Zoom Meeting'. Swipe to the right again and you will hear the link starting with <http://zoom.us/> followed by a unique set of numbers. This just means that the meeting is its own and no one can access it unless they are sent that specific link.
6. Double tap on the link. This will then direct you straight to the meeting.
7. If you arrive at the meeting early then, if you keep swiping to the right you will hear the details of that particular meeting. Don't worry, just wait until the host of the meeting lets you in.
8. Once you are in the meeting, swipe to the right till you hear 'enable internet audio'. Double tap on this.

9. Now you are able to take part in the meetings and others will be able to hear you.

## **Identity and Intersectionality STORM Event**

We started the new year when many Storm members braved the cold to join us at our next event at Bigmoose to discuss identity and intersectionality. Joining us for the evening was Adam the Community Engagement Officer for Pride Cymru and Jake Sawyers.

Adam kicked the evening's discussions off by introducing Pride Cymru and their annual event, focusing on the accessibility features on offer. Throughout the Pride Cymru weekend, there are volunteers on hand specifically for any access requirements. There followed a mini-quiz which involved identifying the various flags of the LGBTQ+ community and what they stand for, whilst highlighting the importance of being an ally. By doing this the discussion surrounding identity and intersectionality began. These discussions inevitably led quite nicely into a conversation about internet dating from the perspective of someone living with sight loss. For many, one of the inner turmoils of internet dating is whether to disclose their sight loss or not. For some, it was quite imperative to disclose such information before a first date, but for others, this was not the case.

To break up the discussions, we had a hilarious and relatable standup set from Jake Sawyers. His set included the ins and outs of being sight impaired but also identifying as a gay man.

The evening's discussions educated those in the room who were unaware of the role Pride Cymru has, the events that they run and how diverse the LGBT+ community is. Identifying as someone with sight loss came up within the discussion, which included how this could interconnect with other disabilities. Overall, the evening contained enlightening discussions.

## **Cardiff STORM Event: Sport**

On a gloomy Friday afternoon in Cardiff, the December STORM event came to pass. In a meeting room at the WCB office, the attendees

gathered around a table laden with Christmas treats. The topic for this festive edition of STORM: VI Sport; an appropriate theme for potential New Years resolutions.

Joining the regulars this month, we had two special guest speakers; Chris George who runs VI tennis and Jane McCann from Sight Life. They led the discussion surrounding the mechanisms, intricacies and also the accessibility elements of several sports.

Chris introduced the group to VI tennis, explaining how it works and the categorization of the sport. For example, Chris explained that someone who fitted in to the category of a player with either little or no sight would be categorized as B1. The categories determine the number of bounces the players are allowed to have. For instance, in B1, the ball would be allowed to bounce a maximum of 3 times. Alongside this, Chris described the ball itself. It's a sponge ball with a rattle in it. As a result, the sport has to be played on an indoor court. For those of us who had never heard of VI tennis, it was incredibly helpful to understand the mechanisms and intricacies of the sport.

The other discussion during the meeting was a more general conversation about VI sport led by Jane McCann. Introducing the other sporting clubs available in and around the Cardiff area we heard about VI Rugby, which was quite a hot topic as a few of the group attended the weekly sessions. These sessions are run by the Cardiff Blues Community Foundation. Based in the Arms Park, many of those that participated said that the accessible location made it a lot easier to attend training. Jane also spoke about the potential prospect of a Ju-Jitsu taster session in the New Year ... what this space!

Transport and getting to venues became quite a substantial topic regarding accessing sport. A discussion around how to ensure adequate VI training for coaching staff could be implemented. A possible suggestion was that coaching staff from various sports attended a session of another VI sport, there would be an opportunity to share knowledge and skills. But there would also be greater awareness of other sports that are doing on.

Finally, all the mince pies and Christmas cupcakes had been demolished, and the teas had been drunk. To conclude, there is a real appetite from those in the group to participate in sport.

# Know Yourself – Know Your Body

Ok, so I've written a few articles in my life but I hardly ever focused entirely on the "VI aspect". So I thought I'd do one today. This may apply to some people, or may apply to no-one. But here we go all the same!

An unexpected element I've found due to my Visual Impairment is how it has affected the rest of my body. Woah now! Before you wonder where I'm going with this. I mean posture and body alignment.

So here are two specific examples that I've found for myself. First off, it is important to note that I am not medically qualified, so do not take these as "these happen to all VI people". These only apply to myself, but they may be things you might want to keep an eye out for.

**Neck** – As you can probably imagine, when you're VI you tend to lean your neck more forward than you should. This is because constantly we're trying to get closer to what we're trying to see, such as a computer screen, a phone screen, an object in the distance or even just trying to get close to something to read it. Instead of being leant forward, your neck should be in what's called the neutral position, which means that your neck should be held straight upwards with your chin aimed straight forward, this should mean that your neck is in a straight upwards alignment with the rest of your body. If you're like me and the alignment is not correct, then you may be suffering from some neck or shoulder issues. This could - or at least in my case, can - cause more frequent or more painful headaches, tight neck muscles and can encourage a bad posture which in turn can affect and worsen your back.

Your neck can also be affected if you're like me and you wear a baseball cap to help control the amount of light entering your eyes. Because my eyes try to avoid the brightness, I automatically ensure that the peak of the hat blocks as much light as possible, therefore my neck is normally pointed at a downwards angle. This was picked up by a physiotherapist who informed me that, again, I need to keep in mind my neck's neutral position. With it leant at a downwards angle this was throwing off my neck's alignment and posture.

**Feet** – Have you ever taken note of the positioning of your feet? A bit of a strange question I know! But, the position of your feet can make a surprising difference to the way you stand and your posture. Due to going

to the gym, while doing one exercise my trainer had a proper look at the placement of my feet and we found that one foot was further forward than the other. When I lined them up together, to me, it felt fine, but my trainer said if he was to “get a piece of string and put it from one foot to the other, there would be a visible difference”. I’ve never noticed this before (as I can’t see my feet due to the distance), but this small thing can actually affect the way in which you stand. This can in turn affect your posture, your balance, the way you walk and the pressure you place on your pelvis when balancing your weight when standing. See – small thing, big consequences.

When you’re exercising, weightlifting, walking down the highstreet or even just standing there twiddling your thumbs – try your best to ensure that both feet are in direct alignment with each other. If you don’t know then ask a friend, a family member or maybe even someone at a gym if you attend one. It may sound a bit random, but it’s a simple short question that may well really benefit you physically.

Obviously, these types of afflictions can happen to anyone, no matter if you have a disability or not. Especially in our slouch days. But I’ve found these two are directly linked with not being able to see myself and the way I stand, so I thought it worth pointing out! Keep in mind, correcting these types of issues will not only help you physically, but will in turn help you to present yourself in a better way.

If you have any concerns please do speak to a GP or if you’re having major problems then get a self referral for physiotherapy.

## **Park Run or Park Walk It**

Saturday 16th November: this was the fateful day I finally attended my first Parkrun. I know a few people that take part in these around the UK, but for myself I didn’t know what to expect. Just to be clear at this point, I did not follow the example of my friends; I did not run it. Admittedly, it is due to a medical issue but that did not stop me attending.

I’ve always wanted to do a Parkrun, but never had the confidence to do it. How good would the guiding be? Had they had VI participants before? Would I feel welcome or feel like a burden? Would I be encouraged? ... Well anyway, after some persuasion (and a pinch of guilt tripping!) I decided it was time to screw up my courage and try it, especially after

reading Dan's running story via the WCB STORM Blog page and seeing the positive experience he's had.

So, I arrived at 8:30am (which in itself was an achievement as I'm really not a morning person!) and was slightly unsure of where I was suppose to be going (not a great start) and then I walked into an orange cone ... oops. Anyway, I headed towards where I was told the group met up. (By the way, I knew the vague area as I had contacted my local Parkrun via email beforehand and asked a couple of questions first, which I found really helpful). Very quickly I found the group and they were very welcoming. They had seen me "find" the cone and had verbally guided me out of the way of obstacles.

Once some introductions were done and the volunteers had a short briefing – including that it was my first Parkrun #cringe. I made my way over to the start line with my guided walkers, Adrian and Ann. Before the run begins all participants are also given a short briefing. This is where they announce first-timers, milestone runs and special occasions. The things I found interesting were that it was my local's 69th Parkrun in total and that the participants this particular day were helping to support National Epilepsy Awareness Month – be #SeizureSavvy! We were told some facts and statistics about Epilepsy and once this was done, the run began.

So, the part you're probably more interested in than all my babbling so far: being involved as a VI participant. I must say, I am ashamed to say I was pleasantly shocked by how helpful, welcoming and encouraging every single person was, and this included other runners, general public and my sighted guides. Ok, at the beginning there were a lot of "this way" or "that way", but soon they realised how unhelpful these types of directions are! Other than this right at the start, it was such a fantastic experience.

I'd walked in the park before so I had a general idea of the route around, but having my guides made it really easy. I walked on my own using my white stick as a general guide, and as the upcoming bends appeared, my sighted guides would give me prewarning and they also gave me specific instructions when we came up to the slight diversion that was in place specifically as part of the run course. It was as easy as having a general walk in the park, though obviously with a bit more effort put in. Even

though I wasn't running I did want to put some effort in, so it became my Park Power Walk.

My guides had conversations with me on the way and we got to know each other a little, helping me to feel really comfortable with putting my trust in them. I found it really interesting when Ann informed me that making me converse was also a way they use to measure your breathing. This was interesting as I'm asthmatic and I'd not have realised that without it being pointed out.

So, tips! Contact your local Parkrun first in case you have any questions or worries (you can do this via the Parkrun website); ensure that you let them know beforehand if you are planning to attend and need any sighted assistance or other support; ensure you have a good pair of comfortable trainers; find out exactly where the group meets and then go with an open mind. It may end up being extremely fun. For me I'll definitely do it again but it'll be much more for some Saturday morning cardio and for a bit of fun. I'm not going to be the fastest nor do I want to be. But it will be a great way to start my Saturdays – even if you just want to reach those massively important 10,000 steps on your Apple Watch's activity tracker!

## **A Passion for Sport: Physicality and Mentality**

Growing up I never thought I was a 'sporty' person. You give a Visually Impaired person a tennis racket and tell them to hit the tennis ball (you know - that small green blur that you have no chance of seeing?) and it probably isn't going to work very well. But in 2012, I found the love of my life – Goalball! An inclusive team sport that involves no sight. Every player is blindfolded, the ball is audible and the court is tactile, so anyone can play, no matter how little or how much sight you have. And for a VI person, this was amazing! No straining your eyes looking for your teammates, or feeling embarrassed because you're aimlessly waving a bat around hoping for the best. So yeah, since I found this sport, my life has entirely centred around it. Which explains why I made a very long trek to York for a conference.

Just over 6 hours. That's how long it took me. On Saturday 7th September 2019, to travel from South Wales to York St John University to attend the first ever Goalball UK 'Grow OUR Game' Conference.

So, what was the conference all about? Well, it included almost every aspect of the game, from rule updates, tournament venue changes, attack and defence basic training, how to prepare for training and what you need to know when coaching from the bench. So yeah, a lot to take in, but well worth it.

My favourite talk though was from Ian Braid who gave a powerful talk entitled "who's looking after the people, that look after the people?". This was all about the duty of care to everyone in your club, specifically the mental health side of it. Yes, we might get into sport to develop ourselves personally, or to have fun, to coach, or to volunteer etc. But the key message for me from the conference, is that sport isn't based solely on your physicality. You've also got to take care of your mentality too. How can you coach someone or help out a fellow player and enthuse them with passion for the sport that you play, unless you're in the right frame of mind yourself? I think it's one of the reasons I enjoy participating in the sport so much; it doesn't just help with making you fitter etc. For me, it's definitely a way to destress after a long week. The bus drove past you this morning? You missed your train? The dog threw up? You've lost your keys? No problem, take that frustration and focus it. Make it your strength in game-play. For example, when in Goalball, after a bad day, instead of getting in a bad mood or becoming frustrated, I use that extra energy into throwing the ball. If you're into mindfulness: imagine, it's as if you're throwing away that bad energy. It's an amazing feeling.

Outside of the talks at the conference my next favourite part was the social quiz on Saturday evening. People from all over the UK came to the conference, including myself from Wales, someone from Scotland, people from Yorkshire, Derby, London, Birmingham etc. etc. but by the end of the quiz, you'd think we had all known each other for years. That can also be the power of sport. It's not only the activity of playing the sport, but those extra activities you do to encourage teamwork and team dynamics. Yeah, we all play the same sport but we also all enjoy letting down our hair and having some good banter.

So if you're looking for something to do or you want to try something new. Why not take up a sport? Now, in South Wales, not only do we have the



South Wales Goalball Club, but there's VI Bowls, VI Tennis, Bowling, Guided Running, VI Football, Swimming and most recently – VI Rugby (c'mon, it's Wales! Of course we have rugby!). Nowadays there are so many more choices than there ever used to be. Want to get fitter? Want to destress? Want to meet likeminded people? Well then, you know what to do! Find a local club and as we say in Goalball: #GetInvolved !

## **The Volunteering Pathway**

Sometimes it can be difficult to find fulfilling things to do with your time. Maybe you've just finished Uni and are finding it difficult to find employment, or maybe you need to start filling your CV with that all-important experience that employers look for. Well, there's a lot out there but, like everything else, you just need to get out there and find it.

It can be difficult at times to find the right role when you have a Visual Impairment, but it can certainly be done. There are plenty of VI people out there who volunteer regularly either full time or as something on the side of employment because they enjoy their volunteering role just that much. You may even find that you only need support with learning a route or getting hold of adapted equipment. Or you may not even need that if you're lucky!

I myself have been fortunate to have volunteered for lots of different organisations – from sight loss charities to sport organisations, from performance centres to libraries, and I've definitely found that it's helped to define what I want to do in the future. I have a love of sports and the arts so those sectors were great to help support. For the library, even though I was lucky to work with some especially lovely people in my role, I didn't enjoy it at all and knew that I didn't want to spend my future 24/7 stuck behind a computer, in an office. I want that full-on 'human' aspect, so that volunteering was still a positive as it helped to shape and develop my future choices.

Take a second to think about what you enjoy, or what environments you prefer – though if you don't know this yet, that's fine! Don't worry. Volunteering is a great way to fill time, help find what you like and don't like, without the pressures of your employment role/contract.

Have a look around where you live, or where you can get to realistically. There are so many things around: local clubs, organisations, community groups, RNIB activities/groups, LOOK mentoring opportunities, museums, sport centres, volunteering within Guide Dogs or their MyGuide programme – or even go online. As one example, go to sites like [volunteercardiff.co.uk](http://volunteercardiff.co.uk) (there are sites like this that cover regions all across Wales), or sometimes they post volunteering roles via Indeed or [CharityJobs.co.uk](http://CharityJobs.co.uk).

So if you haven't anything to do, or if you're anything like me and just can't sit still for more than two seconds, why not find something to brighten your day? But don't forget: at the end of the day, it's your time you're giving up to help support others. So give the time and effort that you can, ensuring you're not impacting yourself negatively. Ensure you're not spending too much money on transport or you're not having to get up at silly o'clock. Perhaps have a conversation with your potential organisation and be realistic about what you can do and what you can't do. AND GO HAVE FUN! Volunteering not only gives you a great feeling of accomplishment and the sense of helping others, but the fun you can have with other volunteers, who more than likely will have similar mind-sets as you, makes a great atmosphere.

You get to learn, develop and have fun. So why not?! Get up, Get active, Get volunteering.

## **Sensory Theatre**

Theatre can be a great leisurely and social activity to enjoy. But sometimes it can be difficult if you can't see what's happening, at these times it's great to have Audio Description.

That being said, in the last couple of years there has been more performances that has audio description intergrated into the show or are so dependant on dialogue that no extra description is needed. These types of theatre performances are so much more accessible and inclusive for those who have low or no vision.

On Wednesday 16th October 2019 I attended the short performance "Simone" at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) with a small group of other Visually Impaired people of varying ages. This

piece was scripted and designed by a third year student and it was specifically created for a Visually Impaired audience. The idea was that the audience members would either be visually impaired already, or those who were fully sighted would wear a blindfold, which was placed under each seat, so that all audience members would experience the performance as intended.

“Simone” was a short drama with an unexpected ending that emphasised change (I won’t say any more in case you don’t want spoilers!). The show began with a short word from the creator informing us of the reason behind the show, the background and an explanation of the set. From here began sound effects - rain hitting the window and a tap spouting water. These sound effects, and stage set up gave a homey feel, it was a very relaxing start. On the other hand, I did feel that this went on a bit too long. We were sat there for a good five minutes if not more just listening to the effects. Maybe a little too much emphasis was given to the audio at this point? but hey, at least it was effective.

Once the story had begun other senses were brought in. The warmth of the cosy room on your skin, the sound of the actor’s shuffling feet to move around the performance area, the smell of perfume when it was being sprayed onto clothes. It certainly gave a more 3D experience than more conventional theatre.

It was a different way to experience theatre. It was a great evening, and one of the best points to note was that the creator didn’t just assume that it was all done successfully, but she waited around at the end to listen to feedback. There was plenty of positive input and a small amount of constructive criticism. But hopefully, from this feedback, this will help to encourage and develop more of this type of theatre experience!

# **The WCB Storm project is changing and we need your input!**

Megan and Mared have gone on to do other things. They did a great job of heading up the Storm project for four years. We hope they'll keep us up-to-date on what they are doing in their new roles. And good luck to them in those! In the meantime, WCB would still like to keep the newsletter, the website, the Facebook page and twitter feed active, so if you would like to volunteer your help or ideas, please contact Wales Council of the Blind.

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