

Training + awareness



Photo: Access Design Solutions delivering training.

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Introduction

This edition of *Perspectif* looks at awareness-raising and training both around vision impairment and pan-disability.

Disability Equality Training or Disability Awareness Training: what's the difference? The answer is succinctly put by Disability Arts Cymru on their website:

“Disability Awareness Training is often led by non-disabled people who are professionals in the medical or caring professions. This training has a medical focus; it informs participants about disabled people's impairments, and ways of ‘overcoming’ disability.

“Disability Equality Training is always led by trainers who are disabled people. The focus is on disabled and non-disabled people working together to overcome the disabling barriers in society. This training has a holistic focus, recognising that removing physical, financial and attitudinal barriers will create a more inclusive, accessible society.”

It seems that what is often called VI Awareness Training in the sight loss sector is really a mix of the two. They are often led by disabled people and they had both medical model information around the range of sight conditions alongside social model awareness-raising around rights – particularly in regard to the right to accessible information, which is seen as the key enabler for people with impaired vision.

When I proposed this theme for the newsletter, I was hoping to open up a debate on these various approaches to ‘awareness-raising’, so please write in with your views and experiences.

The material submitted on this theme covers different areas of awareness: rights and practical solutions, broadly speaking. It is by no means a comprehensive overview and the directory would benefit from input from readers, so please let me know of services to add to our database, Perspectif.

-Richard Bowers

Eyewitness accounts

John Sanders, guest contributor, gives his take on awareness-raising and the informal role he plays in it.

“I’m sorry. I had no idea you were vision impaired,” says Mrs H with a hint of embarrassment as we stand outside her house discussing the health of our dogs. Mrs H had just told me that she waved at me from a bus earlier in the week. Of course, I didn’t see her. I can’t see anyone inside a bus or any other vehicle.

I explained why I hadn’t seen her and assured Mrs H she had no reason to apologise. She wasn’t to know I don’t see well. There was a time I would only reluctantly admit to having a sight problem. Now I tend to tell people.

After all, if I don’t say I’m vision impaired, it can and does lead to all sorts of confusion. And talking about how I see the world is one small way I can help raise awareness of vision impairment.

Sight charities do occasionally run advertising campaigns. But they can’t match the “Settees-Are-Us” or “Lotto Gazillion” type ads that fill commercial TV breaks. Most charities don’t have the money. And, if they did, they’d probably get some stick for spending it on advertising.

Muddling through

In contrast, awareness raising talks are cheap yet effective. At the dozens of talks I've given over the years what people with ordinary sight want to know is: What do I see? They're fascinated by the everyday details, not the science behind my eye condition or yours. Once you realise this, there's no shortage of opportunities to explain what it's like muddling through life with poor vision.

The recent duvet of snow which closed down much of Britain provided a good example. Instead of sharing moans about not being able to get the car out, I told people how lucky I am not having a car. Yes, that does bring a look of confusion to some faces. But, honestly, there are many advantages to not driving. (And I'm always happy to elaborate on the joys of being car free.)

Then there are the helpful people behind desks who swivel their computer screens around so (they think) I can see what they're looking at. You've probably met them too. I politely thank them, but explain there's little point as I'm vision impaired. Cue looks of astonishment or stunned silence.

Yes, I may look like I have ordinary vision. After all I walked into their shop or office or whatever establishment it is without a guide dog and (probably) didn't trip over anything. But really, there is no way I can see what is on your screen. Why would I lie about a thing like that?

Pub quiz

Once they get over their shock and see I'm happy to talk about what most consider a taboo subject, many people are fascinated by what it's like in my world. They ask questions like: How far can you see? Why don't your glasses fix it? Is there a cure? Will your sight get worse? Are you colour blind? And so on.

I like to think that some of the people I meet go home or to the pub that evening and say to friends and family: “You’ll never guess what happened at work today. This bloke walked in and told me he couldn’t see the menu / where the lift was / what beer we had on draught.”

If they do, then I’ve done my bit to help someone understand that we don’t all see the same. What’s more I hope I’m demonstrating that being vision impaired doesn’t have to be a big problem if I’m willing to talk about it and they’re willing to listen. And if you’re the next vision impaired person they meet, perhaps my bit of awareness raising will make life a bit easier for you too.

John Sanders, March 2018

i2i: A Creative Approach to Vision Awareness Training

i2i Creative Learning began around four years ago when two founder members of UCAN Productions, Megan John and Mared Jarman, designed lectures to show students in Cardiff University’s School of Optometry what it’s really like to live with sight loss. As testament to their success, those highly successful training sessions are still being delivered to all optometry foundation students.

Megan says: “It has been immensely satisfying helping optometry students to gain a better understanding of what it might be like to live with sight loss. Hopefully, the more sight loss professionals understand how different we all are -- and how making small changes can make massive differences to us -- the better our visits to clinics will be.”

i2i is a spin-off from UCAN Productions, a performance arts group for blind and partially sighted children and young people. Founded in Wales, UCAN has spent the last 13 years delivering drama and confidence building workshops to over 700 children with sight loss. UCAN (which stands for Unique Creative Arts Network) has taken a unique approach to promoting the abilities of its members, while also challenging public perceptions and attitudes towards sight loss.

UCAN co-founder and Artistic Director Bernard Latham says: 'From the very start we recognised that our members were the absolute experts in living with their own eye condition. Jane (UCAN Development Director) and I knew nothing about sight loss when we started. These young people have been wonderful teachers and, along with their ability to perform and feel confident in front of an audience, vision awareness training has become a natural progression.'

A very strong sign of i2i's success is increasing demand for its training. After hearing about the visual awareness lectures for optometry students, Professor James Morgan (Consultant Ophthalmologist at the University Hospital of Wales) invited UCAN to design and deliver similar training to all fourth year junior doctors studying in Cardiff.

Professor Morgan says: "The i2i team provides excellent insights into the impact of vision loss. As a result, our students have first-hand experience of the impact of visual impairment and how you can assist patients with severe vision loss. They are now ready to approach and assist visually impaired patients in ways that are truly supportive."

But it's not just the medical world that is benefitting from i2i's services. In the four years since the initiative began, UCAN has

taken vision awareness training to public and private companies, schools, trade unions and youth organisations in the UK and abroad. And in the last month, for example, UCAN has delivered training to teachers, psychologists and artists from Bulgaria.

To meet the growing demand, long time UCAN members Jake Sawyer and Ben Richards have recently joined the i2i team. Jake says: “I love my work. Since we started the i2i project we have trained over 3,000 people. I find it very empowering to share my life experience with others. I also believe it is very important that we continue with our work, especially now when support for people with sight loss is changing and there may be challenges ahead. As blind people, we are great problem solvers. If we are to succeed we need to constantly adapt and find new ways to live in a world that wasn’t exactly built for us.”

Emma’s wish for more VI awareness in Wales

Emma Gaylard, 19, from Newport in Wales, has been at The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) in Hereford since 2015. Following years in mainstream schools, she has grown in confidence and become involved in projects such as one with Croome National Trust site in Worcestershire on accessibility. She is passionate about changing places for the benefit of vision impaired (VI) people, and wishes to carry the raised awareness from her work at Croome to the general public in Wales.

Having been in situations where people clearly had not seen a white cane before, Emma would like to help people be more aware of vision impairments and what the different types of cane are for. She also wants to encourage people to learn how they can

confidently ask someone with a vision impairment if they are in need of help, and what to do if a VI person is struggling.

“The people in town in Hereford understand that we have the College here, but in Wales the attitude to VI awareness is not that great,” she feels. “People just walk around or trip over the long cane. They don’t seem to know what it is for, which can be a bit annoying. In shops, for example, my experience is that you don’t get asked if you need help.”

Emma feels that more awareness would make life easier, not just for her but for other people with vision impairments. She recognises that there are not many VI people living in Wales, due to it being a minority disability. However, greater understanding would aid in creating a more inclusive experience for tourists, of which Wales has many.

“In Hereford, I would be confident enough to ask if there was a certain shop I was trying to find. I know I would put my trust in the people of Hereford because the College has been here for 40 years; they see canes every day,” Emma explains. “But in Newport, they wouldn’t see them as often, so I think there may be a nervousness about what to do, whether to ask if you need help or not.”

A common, and growing, problem is the number of people who walk around with phone in hand, looking down at the screen and not concentrating on where they are going. Amusing videos can be found on social media and the internet of people tripping over things or walking into lamp posts, but the hazard is particularly real for vision impaired people who can struggle to spot this from any sort of distance and have time to get themselves out of a person’s way.

Emma is investigating giving talks in schools – believing that

talking with children and young people would be the most helpful way to engage minds and challenge misconceptions. Going into schools might also help other VI children to receive class work in the correct format – Emma’s experience was to be given A3 sheets of paper with work in a standard size 12 font. This was not beneficial to Emma’s sight or learning, and she acknowledges one of the strengths of being at RNC is that everyone’s needs are considered and not guessed at.

“I don’t regret coming here [RNC]; I love it!” states Emma. “It’s a life-changer. I’ve become more independent, that’s a fact. I’ve made friends for life that I wouldn’t have made in secondary school. I wasn’t confident at school and now I am pouring with confidence. These are the three main things I’ve noticed with me.”

More awareness leads to greater independence; it gives more confidence to a person with a vision impairment to ask for help if they need it. This stretches from individuals to town planning, with particular attention given to tactile flooring and regular city centre market days. More can be done to emulate good practice by installing guide lines in city centres along with tactile markings at junctions, and through ensuring ordinarily-navigable high towns remain so by placing street markets in set locations every time, so that vision impaired people are not confused as to their whereabouts.

The Royal National College for the Blind offers academic and vocational courses, and runs many extra-curricular activities. Emma enjoyed a trial weekend at the College before deciding to commit her future learning here. For more information on RNC, visit: <http://www.rnc.ac.uk/living-at-rnc/have-a-go-activity-weekend>

Emma is now an enthusiastic player in the RNC Bulldogs cricket team and cannot wait to see how a match against staff from Croome will turn out this summer. This game is part of the

celebrations of RNC's 40th anniversary year at its campus in Hereford. Following her final year at the College, Emma hopes to gain employment as a receptionist or with customers, so long as she can use her Business and Administration skills.

Tactile Paving Training

Did you know there is a special kind of paving that tells you where you can cross the road safely? Have you noticed a different surface underfoot at the top and bottom of steps?

There are seven different types of tactile paving, each conveying a different message about the environment. It can warn you that you are about to encounter a potential danger, such as a flight of steps or cycle path.

After discovering that many people do not know what is indicated by the different types of tactile paving, Guide Dogs Cymru developed a friendly, informative training programme to help people who are blind or partially sighted to use it. It doesn't matter if you're new to going out and about, or whether you use a cane, guide dog or sighted guide.

The course, delivered all over Wales by engagement officer and guide dog owner Nathan Foy, uses real-life examples of tactile paving found in everyday situations. Sourced directly from the manufacturers, it can be handled or placed underfoot. Having these real-life examples lets Nathan set the tactile paving in the exact arrangement found in an actual on-street environment.

Nathan explained: "Some of the surfaces may seem similar at first, so people are able to discern the difference by standing with the left foot on one type of paving and the right on another. This is a

unique opportunity that cannot be found in a real street environment, and allows exploration of surfaces in absolute safety. So far, course feedback has shown 100% satisfaction among blind and partially sighted people who said they gained a greater understanding of tactile paving.”

The course has been welcomed by volunteers and sight loss professionals, who are able to pass on the information to their clients. It's also useful for professionals working with young people who have sight loss and/or learning difficulties, allowing them to potentially equip children with knowledge for life.

In Wales, Guide Dogs Cymru has found many real-life examples of poor installation of tactile paving. As a result, the course is also being offered to the professionals who plan and deliver street environments – architects, planners, designers, and those involved in developing highways. Although guidance exists to help them incorporate tactile paving into their designs, they are unlikely to share the experience of the unsighted end user. Guide Dogs Cymru is helping them to understand the impact of their decisions on people with sight loss.

To find out more about tactile paving courses from Guide Dogs Cymru, contact Nathan Foy on 0345 143 0195 or email Nathan.foy@guidedogs.org.uk

Visualise Training and Consultancy

Working with a person with a vision impairment can sometimes be deemed as being awkward. You're not really sure. You want to help, but just how or what questions would be appropriate to ask? Not sure if you should offer any help or assistance, you may

refrain from asking any questions at all (burying your head in the sand comes to mind!) Our vision impairment course covers all the questions you may have - no question is a silly question, we invite an open and frank discussion. Visualise Training and Consultancy delivers vision impairment awareness training to colleagues working with a person with vision impairment. Our training gives an insight into the barriers faced by many people with a visual impairment and provides the skills and confidence to better assist.

Our awareness training course covers

- Eye conditions and their effects
- The emotional impacts of sight loss
- How to assist and guide a vision impaired or blind person
- Effective communication and appropriate language
- Reasonable adjustments
- Accessible buildings and environments
- The importance of eye health
- How assistive technology can empower a person with vision impairment.

This course is invaluable to colleagues working alongside a person who has vision impairment, it fosters confidence and they truly feel inspired to assist and communicate with a colleague who has vision impairment and genuinely not afraid to ask questions.

An example of the power of vision impairment awareness training was when we delivered a course to sighted staff who had been working with a blind colleague for 2 years. At the end of the training session, staff members felt confident and comfortable to ask him what they could do to support him in his place of work; this had never been offered before. They spoke about how they would now announce their names when passing him in the corridor; ensure documentation was accessible for meetings; and to generally improve their communication skills. It was quite

apparent during the course that many colleagues had not felt comfortable to ask questions and this course, through its interactive and open delivery gave the colleagues the confidence to communicate effectively.

For more information on the training Visualise Training and Consultancy can provide, please visit:

<http://www.visualisetrainingandconsultancy.com/training/visual-impairment-awareness-training/>

Access Design Solutions

Access Design Solutions UK Ltd are access consultants based in South Wales but working throughout the UK and internationally. Carol Thomas and Caroline Lewis are town planners and consultant members of the National Register of Access Consultants. They provide consultancy and training services backed by extensive policy and research expertise related to access and inclusive design.

“We often carry out training in our 'field', which is the built, pedestrian and transport environments. Both Carol and I previously worked for disability organisations RNIB, Guide Dogs, Disability Wales and Vision Australia before setting up our consultancy 6 years ago. We train architects, planners, highways & transport engineers in inclusive design with vision awareness always being integrated - linked to design issues, for example, lighting, colour contrast, signage, wayfinding & orientation.”

They have provided this training for clients such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, Network Rail, Transport for London, University of South Wales as well as further afield to organisations in Poland, Spain and Germany.

They have also delivered vision awareness training focused on practical issues such as accessible information, communication, and sighted guidance for universities, theatres, and so on. Additionally, they work in partnership with associate Andy Fisher (Focalpoint UK) to run training for rehabilitation officers, housing officers and occupational therapists on 'Adapting Homes / Pedestrian Environments for Vision Loss'.

Alongside this they have gained a valued credibility within the disability and consumer sectors, regularly working for and with disability organisations.

"Our other audience is training for local disability access groups. We have received feedback that within the access group they gain a greater awareness of other people's impairments through, for example, simulation of eye conditions so that they can appreciate how these may impact upon how someone accesses their environment."

Carol and Caroline have recently trained Newport, Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire Access Groups. Quotes on feedback forms include:

'Great course – really useful!'

'I found the course really useful. Looking at other disabilities e.g. mental health gave me another dimension.'

'Very interesting and an effective 'eye-opener' to access for all abilities.'

The access group course is 2 days training but shorter courses are also available. The 2 day course is tailored to aspects the groups particularly want covered but tending to cover issues such as:

- The Legislative Framework – an outline of the access implications of the Equality Act 2010, Part M of the building regulations and current good practice standards
- The key principles of accessible inclusive design
- Applying these access principles in the audit process
- Assessing plans for new developments
- Capturing and presenting the information from audits and plan appraisals

The introductory sessions consider how design impacts upon people with different impairments. Use of simulations of different eye conditions allows an appreciation of how vision impairment impacts on the design of our environments. This increased awareness helps participants understand why they need to follow good practice standards in inclusive design and reasons they are being asked to do so. This hopefully leads to better outcomes for vision impaired people.

“Our training courses are designed to encourage participation with exercises, group work and practical sessions such as mini-audits. Courses can be tailored to meet the clients’ aims and time available.”

Directory

Disability Awareness Training

Through disability awareness training you will be able to fully understand the difference between disability and impairment, and how to apply this in a working environment. The aim of this disability awareness training course is to give individuals and organisations the time and opportunity to look at disability from a different perspective.

Weblink: <http://www.alisonjohn.com/disability-awareness-training/>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: Alison John & Associates Ltd.

Disability Awareness Training

Accessible Wales flagship training course is an Introduction to Disability Awareness which is a program of informal but professional training courses. This course is aimed at addressing day to day issues relating to disability within the workplace.

Weblink: <http://accessible.wales/index.php/training-consultancy/disability-awareness-training/>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: Accessible Wales

Disability Confidence Training

Creating an open and fair environment where all employees are valued is good for morale - enabling all employees to work to their full potential creates greater efficiencies.

Cost: £99 + VAT per person

Weblink: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/training/disability-confidence-training>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: Disability Rights UK

Disability Equality Training

DW's Disability Equality Training module will provide you with an understanding of the Social Model of Disability and barriers faced by disabled people. They offer bespoke training and can tailor the module to your organisation.

Email: info@disabilitywales.org

Telephone: 029 20887325

Weblink: <http://www.disabilitywales.org/training-consultancy/training-courses/disability-equality-training/>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: Disability Wales

Disability Equality Training (Arts)

Organisations participating in Disability Equality Training will be able to: demonstrate recognition of their accountability to disabled people; understand the implications of the Equality Act, particularly the disability provisions, and its relevance to arts provision in Wales devise an appropriate and realistic format for effective action planning; work towards best practice in inclusion and accessibility.

Weblink: <http://www.disabilityartscymru.co.uk/training-and-consultancy/disability-equality-training/>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: Disability Arts Cymru

i2i Creative Learning

UCAN has taken vision awareness training to medical settings, public and private companies, schools, trade unions and youth organisations in the UK and abroad. It is conducted by young disabled people and takes a unique approach to challenging public perceptions and attitudes towards sight loss.

Email: info@ucanproductions.org

Telephone: 029 2087 0554

Weblink: <http://ucanproductions.org>

Coverage: International

Provider: UCAN Productions

Inclusive Teaching Practice

A fundamental introduction of inclusive teaching and education practices for teaching Visual Impaired Learners.

Cost: Contact the provider for a quote.

Email: info@visualisetrainingandconsultancy.com

Telephone: 07472 305 268

Weblink:

<http://www.visualisetrainingandconsultancy.com/training/inclusive-education/>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: Visualise Training and Consultancy

Making Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled People in Employment

Know when you need to change the way things are done, when to make changes to overcome barriers created by physical features of your organisation and when to provide extra equipment or provide assistance.

Cost: Half-day: £430; full day £650.

Weblink: <https://www.diversecymru.org.uk/consultancy-training/>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: Diverse Cymru

Pan-disability Awareness Training

This course will aid participants in gaining an awareness and appreciation of various types of disability etiquette used to avoid offence and discrimination, along with the promotion of good customer service and effective engagement and interaction between people.

Cost: £49 per person

Postcode: WC1H 9NE

Weblink: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/business-services/training-services/rnib-accessibility-awareness-training-courses>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: RNIB

Sensory Awareness Training

Our Sensory Loss Awareness training is primarily aimed at people likely to come into contact with people with sensory loss within their working lives. The aim being to improve their awareness of the difficulties and barriers people with sensory loss encounter interacting within unfamiliar environments where communication and other difficulties are often experienced.

Weblink: <http://www.wcdeaf.org.uk/sensory-awareness-training/>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: Wales Council for Deaf People

Sight Cymru Training

Qualified staff to provide awareness training to volunteers, carers, nursing staff, GPs, businesses etc. A course that shows you how to understand the perspective of a vision impaired person and how to approach, guide and leave a vision impaired person.

Weblink: <http://www.sightcymru.org.uk>

Coverage: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys, Torfaen

Provider: Sight Cymru

VI Awareness Training

Description: CIB offer a basic vision awareness training course which includes sighted guiding training, covers basic eye conditions, as well as demonstration of the use of products. It takes place in their HQ in Womanby Street, Cardiff.

Email: michelle@cibi.co.uk

Telephone: 02920 398900

Weblink: <http://www.cibi.co.uk>

Takes place in: Cardiff

Coverage: Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Bridgend

Provider: Cardiff Institute for the Blind (CIB)

VI Awareness Training

VI Awareness Training covering North-East Wales delivered by the regional society for blind people for the area.

Email: information@visionsupport.org.uk

Telephone: 01244 381515

Weblink: <http://visionsupport.org.uk>

Coverage: Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Conwy

Provider: Vision Support

VI Awareness Training

Advice and training which will help raise awareness of the needs of blind and partially sighted people in both work and social situations. The training typically includes: low vision awareness, sighted guide techniques and demonstration, eye conditions, communication skills, aids and equipment demonstrations, practical advice and guidance.

Coverage: Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd

Provider: North Wales Society for the Blind

Visibly Better

Description: An accreditation and advice provider to enable organisations to create accessible and attractive environments in areas such as social housing, hospitals and offices.

Weblink: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/wales-cymru-how-we-can-help/designing-accessible-housing-and-buildings>

Coverage: All Wales

Provider: RNIB Cymru

Visual Awareness Training

This course will provide you with an understanding of what it means to live with sight loss and various types of sight conditions, the etiquette used to avoid offence and discrimination, along with the promotion of good customer service and effective engagement and interaction between

people.

Cost: £49 per person

Postcode: WC1H 9NE

Weblink: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/business-services/training-services/rnib-accessibility-awareness-training-courses>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: RNIB

Visual Impairment Awareness

This course provides awareness and basic information, advice and skills on visual impairment, identifying the relevant issues and how visual impairment effects and impacts on people's lives and the professionals who work with them.

Weblink: <http://www.focalpointuk.co.uk/training-brochure/visual-impairment-awareness/>

Coverage: UK-wide

Provider: Focal Point UK

VI awareness training

VIM provide vi awareness training to families and organisations.

Email: morgan@v-i-m.org.uk

Telephone: 01685 722135

Weblink: <http://www.v-i-m.org.uk>

Coverage: Merthyr Tydfil

Provider: Visual Impairment Merthyr (VIM)

What is the Perspectif Supplement?

This new series of supplements to **Roundup** quarterly features an area of the services listed online at WCB's Perspectif Portal. Each edition includes an article or two about the service area in question from people who are active in providing the service. It presents a way for WCB to highlight the work done by third sector, local authorities, health boards and others in providing support to blind and partially sighted people and make that work better understood and more widely known.