

# Vision in Wales Roundup

Spring 2014



*Julie Thomas of BridgeVis takes aim.*

## **Transforming lives** **Sport and visually impaired people**

This edition is supported by Disability Sport Wales



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# Vision in Wales News

*Owen Williams, General Manager, introduces the changes at Vision in Wales.*

The legal relationship between Vision in Wales (formerly Wales Council for the Blind) and Sight Cymru has ended. We can announce that on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014, Vision in Wales (ViW) held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) where members voted by 27 votes to 0, with 2 abstentions, to change our Articles of Association to remove the references to Sight Cymru in order to reflect this ending of the legal relationship.

ViW is now fully independent and we are excited to move forward representing the voice of people with sight loss in Wales. As the umbrella agency we will continue to support sight loss organisations throughout Wales, as well as channel the voices of vision impaired people to a national level.

Vision in Wales' Articles of Association sets out a way of letting our members contribute to setting priorities and work streams. We aim to achieve this through the establishment of Regional Steering Groups and by continuing to work with local societies and forge closer links with clubs and individuals to inform Vision in Wales' work. Each group intends to offer a platform for local clubs, charities, national agencies, statutory services and people with sight loss to get together and contribute to directing the work and resources of Vision in Wales. It's likely that priorities may vary from region to region, and we want that to be reflected in our work.

At our forthcoming AGM, to be held at our offices in Cardiff on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, a motion has been put forward to our members to revert back to our previous name but with one small but distinct difference. People with sight loss form the majority of our board of trustees and this will be a criterion moving forward.

Therefore, the motion proposes that we change our name to Wales Council of the Blind instead of Wales Council for the Blind. We would be keen to hear your views on this proposal.

## **Meet the staff and volunteers at ViW**

Owen Williams is the General Manager at Vision in Wales. He provides senior management to Vision in Wales and helps plan and deliver strategic direction to the sector.

Richard Bowers is our Campaigning and Communications Officer and he manages ViW's communications and will be developing a platform for campaigning.

Our Engagement Officer, Rebecca Phillips, will facilitate and organise the Regional Steering Groups, as well as enable the voice of people with sight loss to be heard.

Jill Cassidy is our ICT Development Officer and works within Ceredigion to provide an impartial assessment of need, demonstration of equipment and a basic level of training. This post is funded by the Ceredigion Association for the Blind

ViW also has a dedicated team of volunteers. Dilwyn Price has rejoined us as a volunteer and is our Finance Officer. Ann Pankhurst is responsible for keeping our database up-to-date and updating our Twitter feed, as well as collating the material for Roundup. Dewi Osborne is the voice you will often hear when you ring the office and also carries out usability tests on websites and documents on our behalf.

Our newest volunteer Barbara Dwyer, a former head of a sensory services team, shall be undertaking bespoke pieces of research and will be using her fine voice for our audio recordings.

# **Sport and visually impaired people**

In this edition we focus on sport and recreation. Disability Sport Wales has kindly provided us with funding towards this edition and towards issuing and reporting on the enclosed questionnaire. The following articles look at some of the work going on in Wales and beyond, and what's gone on in the wake of the Paralympics with a look ahead to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

We are especially keen to receive responses to the questionnaire. Please contact us on 029 20 473954 if you prefer to complete it over the phone.

## **Paralympic legacy: A dream or a realistic prospect?**

*Mike Brace, CBE was blinded by a firework when he was ten. His passion for, and involvement in sport was a major aid to his adjustment to vision impairment. He says he has had two parallel careers - one in social work and the other in sports participation and sports management.*

As someone who was integrally involved with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games bid, and then as a Board Member of LOCOG for six years, I had real hopes that the games would lead to a significant change in the way sport for people with disability was perceived and provided. I also hoped that the biggest change would be a substantial increase in the number of people with disabilities taking up sport and active physical recreation. Eighteen months after the games, are there signs of success?

Before answering the question just posed, I think it would be useful to consider some of the historical and evolving issues affecting sport for people with a disability, and in particular for those with a vision impairment, in the UK.

Starting with children, up until about 20 years ago, over 90 percent of children with a disability were educated in special schools. Whilst not wishing to enter into the debate as to the standard of educational provision in special versus mainstream schools, one thing is certainly clear, the provision and quality of sport and physical education in special schools was significantly better than that offered now to most children with disabilities in mainstream schools. As someone who went blind aged ten, in the early sixties, and who was sent off to a special boarding school for the blind, I remember that the opportunities to participate in an unexpectedly wide range of sports, was a big ray of sunshine in an otherwise bleak time in my life.

I recall, on my first day when being shown around by another child, being almost run over by 2 blind kids racing each other on home-made go-carts. Having just picked myself up from the side of the driveway and resuming my walk around, I was then flattened by 2 other blind children chasing the go-carts on roller skates! My first thought was, “wow! If they can do it then so can I”! After that I spent every moment I could, when not in the classroom, having a go at football, cricket, athletics, swimming and rowing. The PE lessons were my favourites with the rope climbing, vaulting and games of crab football (don’t ask what that is) being the best. Swinging on a rope towards a gym box or vaulting horse that you couldn’t see was scary, but taught me a lot about spatial awareness, visualisation of objects and environments beyond my physical reach, etc.

Having spoken to dozens of vi children in mainstream schools over the past 20 years, the picture is sadly uniformly poor. Playtime is spent by most of them in a classroom playing computer games. PE is limited either by a lack of suitably qualified PE staff with any knowledge of adapted PE or the dreaded “health and safety regulations” being invoked.

As for team games there are virtually no opportunities to be included in teams with their non-disabled peers, and not enough children with a disability to form a team or teams. Some enterprising schools have developed sports programmes but these tend to be multi-disability based and in many cases do not lead to the teaching and developing of specific disability skills. In addition, many children with disabilities attending mainstream schools are prevented from attending after school activities by rigid school transport services that leave at a fixed time. As someone who has also been involved in competitive sport, as a competitor, coach and sports provider/organiser, I have observed that the skill level of youngsters coming forward to participate either recreationally or at a higher level is abysmally low.

Another factor that needs to be taken into account that has changed significantly over the past 50 years is the nature and causes of sight loss in children. It is estimated that 2 in 1000 of the childhood population have some form of vision impairment. This, thank goodness, is a very low incidence disability when compared to say physical disability or learning disability. An estimated 60 percent of children with a vision impairment have one or more additional disabilities. This has inevitably meant that any development of active sports and physical recreation programmes for multi-disabled children has been virtually impossible to provide in a mainstream setting.

Turning now to the situation for adults: there have, undoubtedly been some improvements over recent years. Many facilities now have improved access for people with a disability. The focus still tends to be on physical access with poor lighting and colour contrast abounding in many sports facilities and gyms. Much of the equipment is still not accessible to participants with a vi, but some of these issues have been overcome or reduced by a change in the attitude of the staff or attendants running the facilities. This change in attitude is by no means universal and is still no answer for those who wish to be totally independent, but it is a major move forward which enables those of us that want to use and pay



for a gym or go swimming to do so with a minimum of fuss and denting of pride. I use my local gym for example, and they look after my guide dog in the sales office, guide me through the busy reception if I wish, and then the gym attendants set the machines with a minimum of fuss and readily link me from one piece of equipment to another. I also enjoy the interaction with them and think that I have helped develop their knowledge and skills in understanding not only how best to help a vi gym user, but also their skills in teaching physical activity and non-visual explanations of exercise tasks and activities.

Many sporting venues have developed better spectator facilities for those with a disability. Audio commentary is now available in many football and cricket grounds. Over the past 40 years I have attended 13 opening and closing ceremonies of the winter and summer Paralympic Games, but London were the first games where live audio commentary was available throughout both ceremonies. This is a real step forward and hopefully will lead to this “inclusion” being standard for all major sporting events.

Because of the difficulties mentioned above re mainstreaming of sport for people with a disability, the growth of specific sports clubs and governing bodies for disability sport has been crucial. The first Paralympic Games (originally called the paraplegic games) took place in Britain in 1948. Blind and partially sighted competitors however were not included until 1976 and other disability groups such as those with cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, and amputees, have been included since then. Most sports now, for people with a disability have an international and national sports body that is either specific to their disability or included in the non-disability sport's governing body.

Over the past 40 years I have had the opportunity to try over 50 different sports and many of these are on offer to the members of the sports club that I set up in 1973 and which celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary last April. We offer opportunities to participate in everything from bowls, cricket, football, skiing, sailing, sound tennis and archery!



So, what about the question I posed at the beginning of this article re the legacy?

I think there have been two main legacy outcomes- one that was hoped for, and the other great, but not well planned for. I think the Games undoubtedly raised the general public's awareness that "disability" doesn't mean "inability" and the stunning images of "ability in action" will stay in the public's mind for decades to come. The 2012 Games were seen by many as the first worldwide international sporting event for people with a disability as opposed to "a disability sporting event" i.e. the sport, and the abilities of the athletes came first. Big sponsors are coming forward to sponsor the games as "a sports event" and see advantages of being associated with the games as part of their core business instead of as part of their charitable programme. Channel Four's coverage was, in most people's opinion, great and the profile of many of the athletes from the Paralympics has soared.

The unforeseen consequences of the games relate however to the issues I raised earlier in this article. Because of the educational inclusion agenda, and the lack of sporting and recreational opportunities for those with a disability in mainstream sporting provision, many people with a disability saw for the first time what sports were possible "for people like them" and have come forward in their hundreds to have a go. The British Paralympic Association arranged, in conjunction with some of the sporting bodies, to hold taster events and have been overwhelmed with the response.

My sports club in London for example, has seen a significant growth in its membership with people of all ages wanting to know more about, and do more sport. Given that most sports clubs are run by volunteers and are short of funds, this was an area not included in much of the "legacy" provision i.e. who would meet and provide for, any increase in demand?

In conclusion, I think the legacy of the Games in 2012 is potentially positive. More people now know that there is a massive range of sporting and physical activities out there for them. I know my non-sporty friends who have a disability say to me that they are sick and tired of being asked if they are “Paralympians” and that many people with a disability don’t want to do sport, but I think that their annoyance, is a small price to pay if those of us that do want to try different things and have similar opportunities to our non-disabled counterparts, are enabled and included to have those choices.

A mum, who is blind and came to my club’s sound tennis classes said:

“I am not really sporty but I really enjoy having a go at the tennis and, more importantly, I have found a sport that I can play with my two sighted young children. I am not very good and they laugh at me, but it is fantastic to have something that I enjoy, that is active, and that we can all do together, if only I knew that things like tennis were possible years ago I might have been playing at Wimbledon!!”

(These are my thoughts and views and are not those of any body that I have been, or, are currently involved with. I would be interested to know your experiences or views? You can contact me directly by sending an email to [mike@mikebrace.co.uk](mailto:mike@mikebrace.co.uk) or by telephoning 01708 456832, or via Vision in Wales.)

# Transforming lives...

*Jon Morgan, CEO of Disability Sport Wales (DSW), describes the organisation's aims.*

Our vision at Disability Sport Wales is to 'transform the lives of disabled people through the power of sport'. That's a pretty big statement, but one that we feel reflects our ambitions and desire to impact, for the better, on the lives of disabled people throughout Wales.

Put simply, we want a nation where every disabled person is hooked on sport. A nation where inclusive sport is practised as the norm, without exception. A nation that can be proud of its approach to equality through sport.

And our ambition doesn't end there. We also want Wales to be regarded worldwide as a nation that regularly produces champions on the field of play. To be regarded as a nation that wins!

That's why we're setting the bar high in all that we do at Disability Sport Wales. Small steps towards achieving these aspirations will not be enough. We need to be bold in our actions, not be afraid of making mistakes along the way, and constantly review the way we, and others, work to ensure we provide the very best 'life chances' through sport for disabled people across the whole of the Principality.

Over the past decade we can point to evidence that demonstrates that some of these challenging aspirations are slowly becoming realities.

Our grassroots network of 'doorstep opportunities' now regularly delivers over one million sporting chances a year. With a

network of over 330 clubs and nearly 5,000 volunteers there's activity across the whole of Wales.

The Disability Sport Wales National Community Development programme is our delivery vehicle. A joint initiative between Disability Sport Wales, Sport Wales and the 22 local authorities, the scheme is aimed at developing quality community based sporting and recreational opportunities for disabled people through a network of accredited clubs and sessions. The programme is promoted and delivered through a network of Disability Sport Wales Development Officers. Their role is to help create sustainable networks by supporting existing disability sport clubs to develop or to create new opportunities by working with mainstream providers to become inclusive in their delivery – the national project we use to help create this change is called 'insport'.

A list of all 22 Development Officers is located after the 'Sporting Community Snapshots' section. They are YOUR route into sport and are waiting for your call.

As with community, the last 10 years have seen a dramatic shift in our levels of success in terms of performance sport. For example, back in 2000 at the Sydney Paralympic Games Wales had 17 athletes selected to represent Great Britain. By 2004, this figure had risen to 21. In Beijing, in 2008, we increased this figure to 31 and by the time the Paralympic Games came to our own backyard in London we were able to deliver our largest ever contingent of Welsh athletes into the Paralympics Great Britain team – 38!

Part of the reason for this sustained success has been the introduction of our Academy programme. The programme was the first of its type in the UK, identifying and developing the most talented of athletes, essentially fast-tracking them to success!

Over the past four Games we have seen Welsh athletes dominate across many sports, athletics, swimming, cycling and equestrian to name but a few. They have taken on the World – and they have won ensuring that as a small nation we continue to punch well above our weight.

We can feel very proud of the impact that our blind and visually impaired athletes have made over recent Games. Tracey Hinton (athletics), Claire Williams (athletics), Keryon Seal (football), Darren Harris (football) and Rhiannon Henry (swimming) have all become role models to inspire a new generation to commit to a life-long involvement in sport and recreation.

But at Disability Sport Wales we know that we cannot rest on our laurels – whether in terms of community development or performance there remains more work that needs to be done.

We know that education and training is a powerful key to unlock new partners and opportunities for disability sport. Over recent years we have invested heavily into new training products, helping our partners to feel more knowledgeable and comfortable when working with disability specific sport or in an inclusive setting. In 2012/13 we delivered 55 training courses, in 2013/14 we expect the figure to be even higher.

So the challenge is set, to create a sporting Wales where equality and inclusivity is at the heart of our delivery model.

That's why we are delighted to be working with Vision in Wales and using tools such as this newsletter to promote our work and the opportunities that are out there for blind and visually impaired people to enjoy.

# **Sporting Community Snapshots**

Here is just a sample of some of Disability Sport Wales's grassroots activities. For more information on blind or VI specific activity please visit [www.disability-sport-wales.org.uk](http://www.disability-sport-wales.org.uk)

## **Bridgend**

Tondu Target Shooting Club in Bridgend is pretty much open 7 days a week with flexible times as all members have access codes. The club has been inclusive for some time and recently, following a successful Development Grant, they have developed VI shooting. (See the BridgeVis article below). The sessions started off in segregation with structured timetabled VI shooting sessions where 14 people took part. Four VI shooters have now become full members of the club. The VI shooters have been involved in postal competitions and leagues and last week had their first open competition against VI shooters at Pembroke Club.

## **Powys**

The local Bell Bank Club for the Visually Impaired meets at the Community Centre in Hay on Wye every Thursday. They produce a cassette audio tape which can include information supplied or submitted by any individual. Its objective is to provide a club for people in the community who are blind or have vision impairments. Activities include social events and weekly guest speakers. Local Paralympian Josie Pearson visited the club this year to give a talk on her Paralympic experiences. For more information ring 01497 820 224.

Visual Impairment Breconshire meet at Watton Presbyterian School Room in Brecon on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30pm. For more information, telephone 01874 624 949 or email [vibrecon@gmail.com](mailto:vibrecon@gmail.com).

## **Cardiff**

Cardiff City Football Club run a Football Session for blind and vision impaired children at Fitzalan High School in Leckwith on Mondays from 6pm to 7pm. It's a fairly new session and the newest of the Cardiff City FC impairment-specific sessions. The club is keen to promote and increase participant numbers so that they can form a team to compete in matches, and would also like to develop a senior VI football session. The Cardiff City FC Disability programme co-ordinator Chris McDermott can offer more information: [disability.football@cardiffcityfc.co.uk](mailto:disability.football@cardiffcityfc.co.uk).

## **Pembrokeshire**

The Modern Print Inclusive Target Shooting Club meets at St Patricks Community Hall, Treowen Road, Pennar, Pembrok Dock SA72 6NY for target shooting with a VI range and pistol shooting (no VI range) at the following times:

Mon 6pm – 9pm;

Tues 11am – 1pm;

Thurs 6pm – 9pm

Laurie Brown, the Club's top acoustics shooter, is making a name for himself recently winning another gold medal in the 2013 National Championships in division 6. He won his first National gold in division 10 in 2011, the next year he was promoted to division 8 which he promptly won. Then in 2012 he found himself in division 6, where once again promotion looks promising this season. Not bad at all as Laurie only started shooting in March 2011! Robert Brown, Laurie's shooting companion, is doing very nicely as well with another win in the West Kent League and another medal to add to his collection. Laurie and Robert have been an inspiration to all Club members and have acted as superb role models inspiring many other people to take up shooting.



## **Torfaen**

Gwent Actionnaires meet at Cwmbran Stadium / Llantarnam Pool / PALC every other Saturday between 1-3pm: varies due to activity. It is a multi-sport club, currently offering trampolining, swimming, golf and rock climbing. The club has now linked to Dragon Sport expanding the range of provision on offer and is currently rebuilding after Sight Cymru took over its management. The group is aimed at children and young people aged 5-18 years and is now linking into other clubs in the community to offer more provision.

## **Gwynedd**

The Voice Trails Initiative enables people with a visual impairment to enjoy the benefits of walking within the Snowdonia National Park in Gwynedd and surrounding areas in Conwy & Ynys Mon. The project is the result of a partnership between North Wales Society for the Blind (NWSB), Guide Dogs (North West Wales), Snowdonia National Park Authority, Gwynedd Council – (Disability Sport Development Officer), CCW and North Wales Wildlife Trust. There are 18 volunteers working with the scheme and all have had VI awareness training. The group meet at 10.00am on the third Wednesday of every month.

Since the formation of the Voice Trails Initiative many interesting walks have been held including night time walks led by bat experts with audio bat detection equipment and walks enjoying the rural hinterland led by the National Parks Wardens. Other walks have included a trip to Bardsey Island on the Llyn Peninsula, the stunning Abergwyngregyn waterfalls, the beautiful Mawddach Estuary and Crafnant Lake, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB). More challenging walks have seen the Snowdonia National Park Authority Wardens lead visually impaired people to the summit of Snowdon and one adventurous individual from

Bethesda scaled to the summit of Tryfan which is as technical as it gets. The scheme has been filmed by S4C, and also had two walks led by Iolo Owen, who presents BBC's *Iolo's Wild Wales*.

The scheme's benefits have helped with the rehabilitation of many visually impaired people by re-building their confidence enough to go onto public transport buses independently. Prior to being involved, many people did not have the confidence to open their front door. Wendy Williams from Talsarnau, Gwynedd, after a walk on the Mawddach Estuary, said "what I received today was priceless, being able to hand over the responsibility to somebody else, not having to constantly worry that I would stumble and fall, there's no price that you can put on the freedom to walk without fear."

The scheme has had a base of 30 visually impaired members since its establishment and anyone wishing to join the walks can contact Carys Dafydd of the Snowdonia National Park Authority on 01766 772269 or at [carys.dafydd@eryri-npa.gov.uk](mailto:carys.dafydd@eryri-npa.gov.uk)

## **Anglesey**

Amlwch Judo Club meets at Amlwch Leisure Centre on Tuesday evenings with the following sessions:

6 - 9 yrs 5pm - 6:30pm

10 - 14 yrs 5pm - 6:30pm

14+ seniors 6pm - 7:30pm

Amlwch Judo Club has been practising at the local leisure centre since 1995. The club is a member of the British Judo Council, and its philosophy is to maintain a good standard of judo through continual development of their students. Once a student has demonstrated a degree of competence they will attend grading events where they will be assessed against national agreed standards. The club aims to offer recreational and competitive opportunities for youngsters and adults within their local area.

They are keen to stress that fun as well as discipline and hard work should be the foundation stones for a good Judoka.

The club works hard to develop local youngsters by offering open sessions at the leisure centre and local primary and secondary schools. It also aims to develop experienced members through training camps at a number of venues across the UK. Club instructor Mike Owen said "we have a fantastic mix of young people who are enjoying the rewards of their hard work. Travelling to different clubs and venues will further develop their skills, confidence and resilience."

A number of visually impaired members attend the club. In order to provide the same high standard of coaching, the club applied for support through the community chest grant. Having been successful in their application, the club were able to purchase different coloured mats to support these visually impaired athletes. In January 2014, club instructors will be attending a Disability Inclusion Training course as well as a VI CPD judo session in order to develop the quality of sessions they are able to offer all members. The club is also currently working towards the ribbon standard of 'insport' Club.

## **Caerphilly**

Blackwood Visually Impaired Club organises a range of sporting activities all over Caerphilly CBC. Details as follows:

**Monday:** Ten pin bowling at Bowlplex Centre Treforest from 11.00am - 1.00pm.

**Wednesday:** Learn to play indoor bowls at Islwyn Indoor Bowls Centre (Pontllanfraith) from Wednesday 10.00am – 12.00pm.

**Friday:** Gym & swimming sessions at Heolddu Leisure Centre from 2.00pm - 4.30pm.

# Disability Sport Wales Development Officers

If you would like some more information on Disability Sport, whether as a participant, coach or volunteer, please feel free to contact a DSO who will do all we can to assist you as quickly as possible. For more information, see also

<http://www.disability-sport-wales.org/inyourarea.html>.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Tel. No</b>
Anglesey	Thomas Rogers	01248 751871
Blaenau Gwent	Chris Garrett	01495 355447
Bridgend	Gareth Walters	01656 815220
Caerphilly	Paul Taylor	02920 869265
Cardiff	Joanna Coates-McGrath	02920 873935
Carmarthenshire	Lisa Pudner	01554 744345
Ceredigion	Gemma Cutter	01970 633659
Conwy	Mark Richards	01492 575593
Denbighshire	Brett Jones	07990561024
Flintshire	Donna Bullivant-Evans	01352 702480
Gwynedd	Marcus Politis	01758 704109
Merthyr Tydfil	Dan Bufton	01685 726270
Monmouthshire	Mark Foster	01633 644558
NPT	Vicky Radmore	01639 861111
Newport	Steve McGrath	01633 671801
Pembrokeshire	Angela Miles	01437 776240
Powys	Bev Tucker	01874 612034
RCT	Shelley Jones	01443 490242
Swansea	Sue Murphy	07971242898
Torfaen	Holly Hinchey	01633 628965
Vale of Glam.	Simon Jones	01446 704728
Wrexham	Leanne Brown	01978 297360

Other useful links: [www.britishblindsport.org.uk](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk)  
[www.sportwales.org.uk](http://www.sportwales.org.uk)

## Visually impaired football in Wales

*By Rob Franklin, Disability Football Officer, the Welsh Football Trust*

When you think of disability sport, football isn't one that instantly springs to mind. However, the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) is one of the most committed governing bodies, passionate about delivering inclusive sporting opportunities throughout Wales. Wales has already played a major role in the development and profile of the Great Britain Blind football team with players Kieron Seal and Darren Harris both playing their part in London 2012. But here at the WFT we want to do and achieve more!

As part of our 2010 - 2014 'Taking Wales to the International Stage' strategy, a focus has been established to create a clear player pathway for a minimum of two disability groups.

At grassroots level, the aim is to increase the number of players, teams, coaches and disability specific opportunities. Not afraid of a challenge, WFT has set some ambitious targets including establishing two disability national teams and three regional performance centres as well as increasing the number of registered players with a disability by 40% and establishing sixty-six pan disability teams.

WFT already delivers a number of pan disability clubs throughout Wales. These clubs are open to people with differing impairments. A skilled coaching staff is in place to ensure that sessions are accessible and can cater to all disabilities. Furthermore, the WFT will be running a handful of national development days over the next few months; these will be specifically aimed at vi/blind players. If you think football might be the sport for you, then you will need to be classified according to level of sight: B1, B2 or B3. Players in the B1 classification are considered blind while those rated B2 and B3 are classified as visually impaired or partially sighted. While some partially sighted players play in pan disability football teams, blind footballers play a different version of the game.

## **Blind Football**

- The game is played on a solid surface
- There are five players in each team
- Outfield players must wear eye-patches and blindfolds
- The goalkeeper is sighted, but cannot leave the area
- There are no off-side rules
- The football contains ball bearings so that it makes a noise when it moves

## **Partially Sighted**

- Games are played on indoor pitches with a size-4 ball, which are designed to bounce less than a normal one.
- Goalkeepers are sighted, but not allowed to leave their areas.

To develop disability football across Wales, the WFT have five Inclusion Officers. Their main aims are to increase participation and raise standards. If you would like more information about joining a club (as a player, coach or voluntary), want to create a new team, just want some more general advice or would like to attend a coach education course then please contact your local football officer. We're here to help and are looking forward to hearing from you:

Central Wales: Matthew Clement 07789 371701

Gwent: Wesley Bodden 07789 281052

North Wales: Michael Parry 07792 642053

South Wales: Grant Kalahar 07792 223573

West Wales: Debbie Wise 07788 310406

# **Glasgow Dreaming**

In this section we find out more about some of our World Class athletes who will proudly represent Team Wales at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow this summer (23<sup>rd</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> August). This summer is set to be a jam packed season of sport; as the countdown to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games is well and truly underway. The Games will bring together thousands of elite athletes, volunteers and spectators to join an incredible festival of sport and culture.

## **Rosa Crean and Gilbert Miles (Lawn Bowls)**

Two Welsh athletes who have already secured their place for Glasgow 2014 are Rosa Crean and Gilbert Miles, just two of the fourteen athletes selected to represent Team Wales in Lawn Bowls.

Cardiff resident, Rosa Crean, who is originally from Poland moved to the Welsh city in 1967 and after falling in love with a Welshman, has lived there ever since. After being born with a sight condition - genetic cataracts - and then contracting a childhood ear infection which resulted in hearing difficulties, Rosa was registered deaf and blind. She took up bowls 16 years ago after her daughter suggested she try it. Since then she has travelled the world with Wales and GB and racked up 28 medals including Paralympic gold from the Atlanta 1996 Games.

Rosa, who claims to make the best Greek chicken soup, has won a number of World Championship medals including bronze in the singles in 1995 and 1998, where she also won gold in the pairs. The 71-year-old, who is one of the most decorated bowlers in the squad, also scooped bronze from the IPC World Championships in 2002 in the singles and gold in the pairs. In 2004 she won silver in the singles and bronze in the pairs and has also won a series of Welsh titles throughout her bowling career. Glasgow will be



Rosa's second Commonwealth Games, having already competed in the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games in 1998.

Joining Rose in the Visually Impaired Mixed Pairs in Glasgow is Swansea born Gilbert Miles. A former student of Pontardulais School and Gorseinon College, 68-year-old Gilbert was introduced to bowls through friends after they invited him to start playing the sport. Previously a keen rugby player, Gilbert played for Wales at youth level and also played first class rugby for Swansea and Llanelli before losing his sight through a degenerative eye condition.

In September 2013, Gilbert competed at the 8 Nations Commonwealth Invitation Championships along with mixed pairs partner Rosa Crean where they scooped second place, helping Wales take third place in the overall Para-Sport event. Glasgow 2014 will be Gilbert's first Commonwealth Games.

With minimal adaptations the sport of Lawn Bowls can be accessible to those who are blind or have a visual impairment. Playing a game of bowls is an ideal recreation for visually impaired people; in so doing, benefits are acquired collectively which otherwise would need a far greater amount of public support. It has been described as a great sociological factor in the rehabilitation of blind people into society: mobility, orientation, confidence, physical and mental exercise, imagination and concentration are some of the factors which arise. To include bowlers who are blind or visually impaired in Lawn Bowls, the only major requirement is to have a guide or helper to assist with direction, length and description of how the game is developing.

### **Tracey Hinton and Steffan Hughes (Athletics)**

Cardiff born Tracey Hinton is no stranger to competing on the world stage. The 43-year-old has competed in no fewer than six Paralympic Games and was undoubtedly one of the most experienced British athletes to compete at London 2012.

Throughout her sporting career, Tracey has won three silver and three bronze medals at Paralympic level and now Tracey and her guide runner have their focus on Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Tracey had cancer of the retina at age 4, which resulted in her losing her sight. As a visually impaired athlete she is classed as T11 in the Paralympic classification system and runs in the 100m and 200m with her guide runner Steffan Hughes. Hinton said of her relationship with her guide, "Steff and I have known each other for 12 years and we have a great relationship, it's important that we have a good rapport on and off the track. We have to work extremely hard to ensure we have the best technique possible. Steffan is my eyes, he guides me round the bends and keeps me in the correct lane. Without Steffan, I wouldn't have achieved what I have this year, his job doesn't end on the track, and he helps me in so many ways."

30-year-old, Llanelli born Steffan Hughes is not only guide runner to Tracey but is also a primary school teacher. So whilst his colleagues will be getting ready to enjoy a well deserved break this summer, Steffan will be preparing for Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Speaking about how he first got involved in guide running, Hughes said, "I responded to an advert in the Daily Mirror looking for 'a pair of eyes' for blind athlete Tracey Hinton and I thought 'why not, let's give it a go, try a new challenge'. When I rang my dad he said 'you can't even look after yourself!' I'd never done anything like it before but thought it would be a new challenge. My name was put forward to UK Athletics and after a month's trial I found out I'd been accepted."

Being a guide runner can bring rewards for both the runner and the guide. At elite level this might provide a guide with new motivation for training, a chance to experience the buzz of competition and, for some guides, a unique experience of entering a world class arena. For the social, fitness and goal achieving

runner the need for guides can offer a whole new dimension to running.

For Tracey and Steffan it consists of the two running with their hands tied together, matching their strides and arm movements as closely as possible. Not all visually impaired runners use guides, but many do. Some train with them but don't use them in competitions. Others do the reverse.

Finding the right guide is tricky. It helps if the runners are the same height. If they're not, the guide changes his stride pattern to fit the runner's. During a race they must run no more than half a meter apart, according to Paralympics rules—so close that they sometimes bump shoulders. Guides aren't allowed to push or pull their runners or to cross the finish line before them.

The two have had their difficulties. In 2003, when they were competing in the European Championships, Steffan crossed the finish line before Tracey, disqualifying her from the race and costing her a medal.

With less than 200 days to go until Commonwealth Games kick off, Tracey and Steffan are hoping for a Team Wales selection. They are both currently training six days a week to ensure they are in the best physical shape possible in the run-up to what will be their first Commonwealth Games.

## **Blind cricket**

*Owen Williams and Richard Bowers from Vision in Wales met with award winning cricketer Nathan Foy to talk about his experiences of playing cricket at national and international level. Nathan is a guide dog user and lives in Cardiff.*

Nathan started playing cricket in 2000. Previously he had been involved in VI athletics, doing the long and triple jump; however, he was injured when trying to qualify for the Sydney Paralympics. He was concerned that he was becoming unfit, and a friend and

fellow athlete, Heindrich Swanepoel, suggested cricket as something to do while injured as the stresses on the body are different. Nathan started playing for Warwickshire Bears blind cricket team, and was then invited to an England training weekend and selected for the squad in 2001. Did Nathan find it difficult to find a club, and what barriers existed to participation?

“Word of mouth was the crucial factor. Heindrich gave me a good contact at British Blind Sport and without his advice, I wouldn’t even have thought of playing cricket. I was lucky that I knew the right person.” Unfortunately there isn’t currently a blind cricket team in Wales – an earlier team was disbanded as it hadn’t done sufficient development work to boost numbers. Since 2006, Blind Cricket England & Wales has been the organising body. Nathan felt that there was a need for a committed individual to do the work to get a Welsh cricket team together. Disability Sports Development Officers (DSDOs) within Disability Sport Wales could help with this, but although he admires their work, its scope is quite general, making it hard for them to start a club. An example of what is needed is Sussex, where one visually impaired player wanted to start a club and sought support of the local County Cricket team. They said that they would help in any way they could - not necessarily with money, but with finding suitable grounds and sponsorship. The individual had to do most of the groundwork himself, but it worked very well with the support of the county team. So, is the level of support from county cricket clubs similar to the support from football?

“County Cricket teams get some money from the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) which has to be spent on diversity cricket, but this covers many areas such as hard of hearing and learning difficulties.” Nathan was not sure how Glamorgan is using this funding, but thought that they could be approached if someone was interested in setting up a Welsh team. There are lots of grants available - his own team had been successful in getting funds from organisations such as Round Table and the Inner Wheel. The third sector could work with DSDOs to

encourage people to take the initiative to set up clubs of this type.

Nathan described the experience of a cricket career as “brilliant!” He added, “the pride in wearing an England shirt is very real for disabled sports people”. Touring together creates a bond between players and they form strong friendships. He has toured Australia in an Ashes series. A realistic goal in the 2002 World Cup had been for the team to escape the group stages, but everyone gave 110% and the team exceeded expectations by finishing in third place. Nathan is particularly proud of the team’s development work in West Indies – they were the first outside cricket nation to go there and support their blind team and coaches. “We showed them the game we play & encouraged them to play it. About 5 years later they had a blind team in the World Cup.”

Nathan had obviously travelled a lot - another perk of playing high standard sport. How much funding did players have to provide themselves when on tour? “Early in my career, I had been involved in fundraising – on one occasion, team members had been given a target amount to raise, and it was down to each player to decide how to do it. Later the ECB had given good support, for example, paying for flights if the team pay for kit etc. Flights are usually the biggest expense, as in addition to the team itself, the group need to take spare players in each sight category, sighted guides, physios, coaches and a leader, which comes to around 23 people.”

So if someone from Wales wants to play blind cricket, which is the nearest club? Nathan suggested Warwickshire, Somerset, London, Sussex, Hampshire, or Lancashire. “Players usually have to pay an annual fee, but can claim some of their travel and accommodation expenses. My own club pays 50% of players' expenses if you are in work, and 100% if you are not working, but other clubs will have different arrangements.” Anyone wanting to play blind cricket or wanting to set up a club should contact the Chairman of Blind Cricket England & Wales ([www.bcew.org](http://www.bcew.org)). Development funds are

available, and there are also development tournaments where you can play two or three games in a weekend.

Nathan has won awards for his cricket. Recently, he won BCEW's 'BI Player of the Year 2013' for his work with Warwickshire in the domestic game. He believes he was the first blind cricketer to win an ECB Disability Cricket award after beating Australia in Australia in 2009 in what the ECB described as "a phenomenal 12 months". He scored 200 runs in one game – the most by a player in an Ashes game - and his average for the series was 95. "During an extended tea break in the high scoring game, I got some spin bowling tips from famous Australian cricketer Richie Benaud. My bowling had been erratic, and Benaud suggested that I needed to alter my pace - my arm break bowling should be slower and the leg break should be bowled quicker." When play resumed, Nathan went on to take two wickets, one with the arm break and one with the leg break, so Richie Benaud had helped him to beat the Australians! Did Benaud have much awareness of blind cricket? "He had some limited knowledge. He watched my team play and found it interesting to see cricket played differently."

How does the game differ nationally and internationally?

"Surprisingly, they are quite different, although both use the same number of players. In the national [English Rules] game, a size 3 football with ball bearings is used, and bowled overarm. For players, different rules apply depending on their level of vision [sight classification] so people of all sight levels can compete. In the international game, a smaller hard plastic ball filled with ball bearings is used and bowling is underarm - it's almost a different game." Even fielding is different because air catching is important in the domestic game, whilst ground fielding is a bigger factor internationally. "These differences are due to the sport's origins: the UK game was influenced by our football heritage, whilst the international game was developed in the Asian sub-continent. This makes it difficult for selectors to choose players for the international team as they cannot rely on domestic form – they tend to rely on factors such as fitness."

A team generally has 4 B1s, who are totally blind. The rest of the team is made up of B2s, B3s and B4s. B2s include people with light perception who can recognise shapes, and also includes players with poor field vision (such as retinitis pigmentosa). B3s go from visual acuity above 2/60 up to visual acuity of 6/60 or a visual field of less than 20 degrees in the better eye after correction, and B4s include someone with a substantial and permanent sight impairment and their visual acuity is 6/60 to 6/24 with a full field of vision. Does the sight classification affect which position you can play?

“It doesn’t affect bowling but does affect batting order. At international level, in every three batsman there must be one B1, one B2 and one B3. In the domestic game, there must be two B1s in the top 6 and not more than one B4, with B2s and B3s more interchangeable.”

Are people with partial sight marginalised if they didn’t fit these categories because their sight was ‘too good’? At international level, B4s are not allowed. “Anyone who wants to play cricket should be able to do so. If they can’t play the mainstream (red ball) game because of their sight, they should be accommodated in the blind cricket game – it should be an inclusive sport.”

It’s not all plain sailing in cricket. Nathan recalls the coach suggesting a good team-building exercise would be to hire some jet-skis. Once out on the water, it became apparent that no-one could see their way back to shore, so they decided to keep going in one direction until the coastguard came to pick them up!



## **BridgeVis – Bullets, Bowls and Bikes**

*BridgeVis has just been awarded a Mayor's citizenship award to celebrate all they have achieved. Much of this over the last year has been directed at engaging with sports clubs, the leisure centre and working with our local sports development officer to improve opportunities for people with vision impairment to take part in sport. Julie Thomas explains...*

We didn't start small, we decided to set up a target shooting club as this seemed a great activity! It is a fabulous activity as it makes no difference what your level of sight is. This is because it uses sound in order to help you shoot accurately. You wear headphones and the higher the pitch of sound, the closer you are to the Bullseye. This makes it a really level playing field and makes it very exciting to participate in. It always amuses us when people are taken aback that a sight loss charity is participating in shooting! We have been holding postal competitions with another club in Pembroke and recently had a face-to-face competition. There is also a National League people can take part in and this is done through the post.

If people are interested in joining a target shooting club there are not many at the moment in Wales. However there are a great many shooting clubs and in order to set up a vision impaired part of the club there is a lot of support. Your local sports officer would be able to assist you and grants are available in order to purchase the rifles. We worked very closely with our local club Tondu and our local sports officer Gareth Walters and between all three of us we applied for enough money to purchase all the equipment and the club did the rest. It would be great to have many more facilities in Wales and if you are interested, your local development sports officer could help. If you have any queries please ask. Who knows, we could soon be shooting in a postal competition with you and that would be great.

Following the success of the shooting club we decided to venture into the world of the leisure centre! Having conversations with the gym manager and the centre manager it was decided to trial a few activities. We then participated in a taster session, a slightly shorter class where any interested member could have a go free of charge. We had a go at spinning; yoga is next. Spinning was really successful as the bikes are very easy to operate with only one lever that you move up and down. There was a little amusement during the first session as during the warm down at the end nobody actually said 'can you please get off the bike.' Therefore some people were off and some people were on trying to stretch! Working together this has been fully ironed out and this is a great activity to have a go at. Conversations have also been had with swimming pools and should someone with a vision impairment wish to swim, a lane will be sectioned off. Again if someone wishes to use the gym a one-to-one session will be laid on to go round the equipment and then a simple phone call to let them know when you wish to arrive ensures a member of staff will be there to assist. If no further assistance is required no phone call is necessary. (People are only required to telephone so that the leisure centre can make sure there are sufficient staff available.)

Lastly we have also been participating in coached Bowls sessions, again with a local bowling club. Each week we attend sessions and receive specific tailor-made coaching. Lovely to be part of an existing club and after several months of coaching several people have opted to join the club and play in the various leagues that are available. I myself have just got my bowls and am gearing up to the outdoor season!

We have had a very successful year and many opportunities have been created to participate in sports activities. What has been especially successful is attaching ourselves to existing clubs or activities rather than trying to fund and do everything ourselves. Not only does it help with the money side of things, it also helps

to raise awareness of visual impairment. We are looking at Archery and tenpin bowling next.

## **Touch Wood Bowls Club**

*Being visually impaired is no handicap to a group of bowls enthusiasts in Wrexham who have just completed another successful season – as Tony Lloyd explains.*

Touch Wood Bowls Club was formed 6 years ago at Belle Vue Wrexham's municipal park and has moved more recently to a new club at Bradley 5 miles away. They play on a crown green with an all weather synthetic surface and floodlighting. Touch Wood is the only bowls club for the visually impaired in North and Mid Wales and maybe in the whole of Wales. The members of the club have recently been helping some visually impaired enthusiasts to establish a similar club at Penrhyn, near Colwyn Bay but this club is having difficulties getting established alongside a traditional club.

The Wrexham Club presently has about 18 members, male and female, playing once a week during the season from April to October. It was one of the female members, Joan Jones, who won the club trophy in this her first year. The sight impaired bowlers are fortunate to have the assistance of coaches who guide them on length and which bias, thumb or finger, to use. The bowls used are in high visibility colours rather than the usual black and the jack is normally a luminous yellow. A marker in front of the foot mat is the only other concession to sight loss.

Games have been played against sighted bowlers in clubs in North Wales and Cheshire. To make it an even playing field so to speak, sighted opponents are asked to use darkened glasses during the game. If any other club wishes to start up a similar bowls club Touch Wood would be ready to help. The leader of the club is Ray Barnes a long term bowls enthusiast who jealously protects his green from winged marauders and two footed intruders to stop birds landing and fouling the green. Ray tried to deter them with a

coiled up and lifelike snake for the green but was mortified one day to see a buzzard land and take off with the plastic snake borne away in the bird's talons. A couple of life-like owls are now an additional deterrent against winged intruders.

Current Captain of the club is Rob Richards a former army sergeant with military experience in Canada, Hong Kong, Germany and The Falklands. The Chairman is Tom Lewis a retired piano tuner who succeeded Colin Gibbs, a retired clergyman.

## **Have Your Say!**

### **Welsh Government Consultations**

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

- Balancing the responsibilities for skills investment: proposals for co-investment in post-19 adult skills delivery (closes 16 May)
- Welsh Implementation Plan for Rare Diseases (closes 23 May).

Versions of these documents in alternative formats are available by ringing 0300 060 3300 (English) or 0300 060 4400 (Welsh).

### **Parliamentary Enquiry into ESA and WCA**

The UK Parliament's Commons Select Committee on Work and Pensions is conducting an enquiry into the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The ESA was introduced in 2008 for claimants making a new claim on the grounds of illness or incapacity and replaced Incapacity Benefit, Income Support by virtue of a disability and Severe Disablement Allowance. The review will consider a range of issues, such as the effectiveness of the WCA in indicating whether claimants are fit for work and the appeals process.

The committee is inviting submissions of no more than 3,000 words from interested organisations and individuals. For full details on how to submit your views, visit Select Committee website:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/>. Responses must be received by Friday 21st March.

## **Events**

### **‘Finding Your Feet’**

Finding Your Feet is a comprehensive workshop programme tackling everything from the aftermath of diagnosis of sight loss through practicalities of getting about, regaining self-confidence, independent living and getting reconnected with the local community.

The event will showcase the equipment and activities including creative arts that help to make this happen. It takes place on 20<sup>th</sup> March at Venue Cymru, Llandudno between 11am and 3.30pm.

Admission is FREE and there is free local transport available. To book transport call 01244 381515 (Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire) or 01248 353604 (Gwynedd and Anglesey).

### **VICTA Events schedule for 2014**

VICTA, the organisation which provides support to blind and partially sighted young people and their families, has published its schedule of events for 2014. These include a Youth Weekend for young people aged 14-17 from 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> April in Milton Keynes, and a Family Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> August at Folly Farm in Wales.

For details of all events and to book a place, visit VICTA's website, [www.victa.org.uk/2014-activities/](http://www.victa.org.uk/2014-activities/), or phone 01908 240831.

## **Wales and West Vision Conference**

This annual event will be held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June at Cardiff University's School of Optometry & Vision Sciences. The keynote address will be given by Mike Brace. Booking will open in March – contact [emma.richards@sightcymru.org.uk](mailto:emma.richards@sightcymru.org.uk) for information about attending or exhibiting at the event.

## **Vision Support Mobile Resource Centre**

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

## **Weekly technology sessions in Cardiff**

RNIB Cymru's award-winning Digital Inclusion Officer Hannah is now holding weekly drop-in technology sessions in the organisations' new office on Womanby Street in Cardiff city centre. The sessions are part of the charity's Get Connected project, and will focus on using iPads and smartphones, and how blind and partially sighted people can get the most out of this technology. So if you would like some help or advice on how to use these devices, please do get in touch. The sessions will run every Monday from 10am to 12pm. If you'd like more information, please ring 029 2082 8500 or email Hannah directly on [Hannah.Rowlatt@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.Rowlatt@rnib.org.uk)

The Get Connected project gives comprehensive training to volunteers, who then deliver services to blind and partially sighted people in their own homes and community venues. This can include anything from how to use a Kindle or iPad, to shopping or searching for jobs online. For more information on Get Connected, please contact Andy Williams, Communications

Officer on 029 2082 8563 or by emailing  
Andrew.Williams@rnib.org.uk.

## **Queen Alexandra College (QAC)**

### **Information days & transitions event**

QAC in Birmingham, the specialist college for disabled people, is organising a series of Information Days for professionals during 2014. They will give attendees the chance to find out about the curriculum they offer for young people aged 16-25 years, and the support which that can offer in areas such as independent living skills and finding employment. The events will be of interest to professionals such as employment advisers, teachers and learning assistants working with visually impaired pupils, SENCOs and local education authority staff. There is no charge, and lunch is provided. Dates are as follows:

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April; Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June; Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October;  
Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November

QAC is also hosting 'Moving On', a transitions event for visually impaired young people who are considering their options for the future, on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March. There will be information on topics such as writing a CV and preparing for interviews – and the chance to hear from VI people who have successful careers.

For more information and to book a place on these events, please contact QAC on 0121 428 5041 or send an email to [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk).

## **New College Worcester**

New College, the national residential college for blind or partially sighted young people aged 11 to 19, has a free Outreach Open Day on 3rd July for educational professionals working with VI young people, and for the parents of VI children. Attendees will have the chance to meet subject teachers, get hands-on



experience of specialist equipment, and get practical support and advice on specific curriculum areas of your choice.

Visually impaired children, young people and their families can try a range of activities at New College's free Family Day on 5th May.

Places on these events are popular and must be booked in advance. To find out more telephone 01905 763933 or book online at [www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk](http://www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk).

## **Free seminars for sight loss professionals**

The Knowledge Exchange Network for the Sight Loss Sector was launched by the Thomas Pocklington Trust, in association with RNIB and the National Centre for Social Research, with the aim of extending the use of research in the sight loss sector. Now, as part of this project, a series of free, interactive regional seminars are being organised. These will give sight loss professionals information to improve the way that they use research and information in funding bids, strategic planning and service provision. Venues which are most likely to be convenient for people from Wales are:

- Cardiff on Monday 9th June
- Birmingham on Tuesday 9th September.

For a full list of venues, further information and information on how to book a place, ring 020 8090 9269, email [martin.sigsworth@pocklington-trust.org.uk](mailto:martin.sigsworth@pocklington-trust.org.uk), or go to the website [www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk).

# **News and Information**

## **New money advice service**

The Money Advice Service has launched a new, on-line resource dedicated to supporting people who are disabled or become ill. It offers a range of practical tips and free impartial advice to help people understand their money matters, and information about benefits. The website address is

[www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/becoming-ill-or-disabled](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/becoming-ill-or-disabled). You can also contact the service on 0300 500 5000.

## **NHS Wales publishes accessible communication standards**

NHS Wales has produced 'All Wales Standards for Accessible Communication and Information for People with Sensory Loss'. The document gives healthcare providers specific guidance on how they should communicate with visually impaired, hearing impaired and deafblind people in order to meet their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Topics covered include the need to provide information such as letters, leaflets and other documents in accessible formats; a requirement to record an individual's communication needs so that these do not need to be repeated at every contact; and the importance of considering access issues at the surgery and in hospital. Information on how to raise a concern should also be available in accessible formats, and healthcare providers are encouraged to monitor feedback to identify problems and good practice.

# **Angharad Rhodes from Holyhead is CBeebies' Melody**

The BBC's television channel for children, Cbeebies has launched a new show called 'Melody'. It is designed to introduce preschool children to a variety of classical music through stories and delightful, colourful animation. Melody, the title character, is a partially sighted girl with an incredible imagination.

There's a moment in each episode where Melody's mum hands her an mp3 player to listen to a piece of music. The music prompts Melody to visualise wonderful stories and characters suggested by the mood of the music and the audience joins her on a fantastic journey from everyday life to the amazing animated adventures dancing through her mind.

To make this show more accessible to visually impaired children a number of different techniques were used; working with high contrast colours, having centrally focused action, bigger and definite (sometimes exaggerated) movements and holding on certain shots longer, as well as using sound to tell the story as much as possible with voiceover and sound effects.

The show focuses on the power of music and how it can articulate our emotions and help us make sense of the world. At the end of each episode Melody asks the audience what the music makes them think of – this is to encourage them to listen to the music outside of the show, and imagine things for themselves.

Melody is played by 10-year old partially sighted actress Angharad Rhodes, who was cast after being spotted at UCAN, a specialist theatre company in Cardiff for children with vision problems. We see her in real life at the beginning of each programme and she transforms into a cartoon character as she puts her headphones on to listen to music.

## **‘Through Scarlett’s Eyes’ – a new resource for parents**

‘Through Scarlett’s Eyes’ ([www.throughscarlettseyes.com](http://www.throughscarlettseyes.com)) is a website which provides a platform for the parents of children with sight impairments. It was the idea of the mother of a child with optic nerve hypoplasia and has been created by the charity VICTA. In addition to information about topics such as eye conditions, sources of financial support and assistive technology, there is an on-line forum where families can network and share ideas.

## **Guide aims to help VI people save energy**

A new guide offers people with sight problems help with choosing and using central heating controls. Research shows that dials and switches used to control central heating are often poorly designed and difficult to operate, making it difficult for visually impaired people to warm their houses and reduce energy bills.

‘Choosing Central Heating Bills and Saving Energy’ has been produced by the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA) in conjunction with the Thomas Pocklington Trust. It explains how the controls work, and gives a checklist of five key points which people buying new controls need to consider, It also contains useful contacts for help with energy-related issues.

You can read the Guide on RICA’s website, [www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk), or order a copy in audio or braille formats by ringing Pocklington on 020 8995 0880 or emailing [research@pocklington-trust-org.uk](mailto:research@pocklington-trust-org.uk).

# Focus on Sight Support Cymru

Sight Support Cymru is an independent sight loss society operating in Wales. We don't need to tell you that being diagnosed with permanent sight loss is a huge shock to the system. It is often a time that people need emotional support and we have several Eye Clinic Liaison Officers at hospitals in South Wales. We also have counselling and emotional support services, although we signpost to local services wherever available.

As part of its e-cvi hub project, Sight Support depends on local and national provision and we act only as a referral service where there is an existing provider. Early intervention is important to prevent confidence being lost, and the likely downward spiral of health and wellbeing, so whilst recognising that not everyone will take up services immediately after losing their sight, we think it's important that people should have information about where to go when the time is right for them.

In the town centre of Pontypool, Sight Support has a well-stocked Resource Centre that people can visit, try out devices and purchase or order them. We provide minibuss transport to clubs and groups wanting to visit the centre, as well as to individuals. Groups wanting to combine a trip to the Resource Centre with a picnic in the park are advised to keep Guide Dogs close at hand as the duck-pond has provided a pungent reminder of the downsides of dog-handling on all too many occasions!

If your group doesn't want to visit but still would like to see the aids and equipment, we're happy to bring them out to you for demonstrations provided we can be assured of tea and biscuits. Seeing and using products 'in the flesh' is so much better than brochures and computer screens so give us a call if this is something your group could benefit from.

Many people are finding modern tablet PCs and smartphones useful to get accessible information and communicate with others. At Sight Support we can help people learn how to use and get the best from these devices, and in some cases help identify potential funding sources.

Many people with sight loss will find it difficult to get out and about and for those who are isolated in their own homes, we provide telephone support through our volunteers. Known as our 'Ringaround' service, this also helps us call in extra help where necessary – twice in the last year we have called paramedics because someone has had a major health issue that would not have been picked up had we not called them.

As the biggest provider of 'Rehabilitation' services for people with Visual Impairment, we can help people develop new ways of doing things to keep them independent at home or work despite their sight loss. For some this might be getting out and about, and for others it might be preparing food, identifying money, using a telephone or a myriad of other tasks. And it isn't all chores – some of the best rehabilitation has been helping someone get to the Millennium Stadium on International days!

We also have a number of clubs, groups and activities that we are involved with. These include gardening, walking, computing, and straightforward social groups. In particular we have a thriving children's club that meets on Saturdays and does everything from crazy golf to making chocolate crispy cakes. So sticky was this last activity that they very nearly needed to call in the Pontypool front row to prise the children from the table.

There is also a Young Person's Group that meets in a pub, restaurant, at the indoor bowls venue or similar places. They get into a few sticky situations too, but we try not to ask too many questions. Best not.

We have a newsletter and website, and provide a wide range of training opportunities. In 2014 we're running a free conference in Abergavenny for people with sight loss – we've run an annual 'professionals' conference for many years now and this time will be also running one aimed at individuals.

So whether you want information on this, or any of our other work please call 01495 763650 or [postman@sightcymru.org.uk](mailto:postman@sightcymru.org.uk) or call and see us at Bradbury House, Park Buildings, Pontypool NP4 6JH.

## Advertise in ViW Roundup.

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

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

1/2 A4 page: £75 (black and white)

1/3 A4 page: £45 (black and white)

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Welsh runner Tracey Hinton and her guide Steffan Hughes.

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The theme for the next edition of Roundup will be **‘employment’**. If you wish to make a contribution on this topic, or on any aspect of visual impairment, please contact [richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk](mailto:richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk) or telephone Richard on 029 2047 3954. You may also post to the following address: please mark the envelope ‘Roundup’.

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