

Wales Council of the Blind **Roundup**

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No. 36

Staying safe through the Coronavirus pandemic

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WCB Roundup is published quarterly by **Wales Council of the Blind**, 2nd Floor, Hallinans House, 22 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0DB. Tel: 029 20 473954.

Email: richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk.

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

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WCB Roundup is sent to more than 2500 people, in a variety of formats. We are a not-for-profit organisation that hopes to recoup its costs. We seek advertisers for our newsletter so that we can continue to produce this valued journal. Advertisers will reach a readership of individuals with sight loss, optometrists, ophthalmologists, rehabilitation officers, social workers, and organisations working for blind, partially sighted and disabled people.

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Larger enclosures (such as booklets): please ask for quote.

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Editorial

It hardly needs to be said that the Coronavirus outbreak has created considerable fear and panic amongst our communities, resulting in bulk-buying of crucial products such as paracetamol. This has a knock-on effect that creates considerable hardship for some of our most vulnerable people. There is an additional risk that reduced services will impact on disabled people in other ways. Many disabled people are highly dependent on face-to-face services, often involving physical contact, so it is a matter for concern that they may be disproportionately affected by preventative measures such as social distancing. We have compiled some information about the effects on services, particularly regarding our member groups, that we hope will be helpful to readers. There is a wealth of contact information in there, so do check through it if you need to find out what's happening to your services.

This kind of work – informing and signposting – that WCB carries out on behalf of the sector is highlighted in the other article in this edition. People often ask us 'what does WCB do?' Here we outline many of the pieces of work we've initiated or been involved in over the past four years. Dry stuff, perhaps, but essential nevertheless.

So, stay safe. I hope you find this Roundup useful.

*Richard Bowers,
Editor.*

CALL ON WELSH GOVERNMENT TO SAFEGUARD DISABLED PEOPLE.

Wales Council of the Blind has joined other national disability organisations to raise concerns about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people living with preexisting medical conditions.

We have released the following statement:

Disability Wales, All Wales People First, Wales Council of the Blind, All Wales Parents and Carers Forum, Learning Disability Wales and Mencap Cymru call on the UK and Welsh Governments to act decisively to safeguard the well-being and survival of disabled people and others categorised as being at high risk of contracting the virus in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are extremely concerned that necessary measures to minimise fatalities in these groups are not being taken.

In particular we are concerned that:

The NHS in both England and Wales is already underfunded and struggling to keep up with demand. This means that in the case of a mass outbreak, NHS workers will not be able to provide adequate care for all patients. Reports from Italy, where the pandemic is in a more advanced stage, are extremely troubling. We note that in Italy some people are already not receiving treatment due to lack of resources. The UK Government and Welsh Government must do everything in their power now to prevent similar decisions being made here at the height of the pandemic.

For disabled people, much of the advice on how to avoid infection (eg self-isolation, social distancing) is impossible to

follow particularly for those who require daily assistance and likewise for people employed as personal assistants (PAs) or care and support workers. The UK Government and Welsh Government must act quickly to offer support both to disabled people who require PAs or care and support workers to provide daily support and also to the PAs and carers themselves.

Many care and support providers have been financially impacted following 10 years of austerity measures resulting in an overstretched workforce. We are concerned about the quality of care that can be delivered when care workers go into isolation or become sick. Both the UK and Welsh Government must urgently put co-ordinated plans into place on how to respond to a shortage of care workers. In particular, care providers must be given substantial financial support now in order to recruit additional carers and be able to offer these care workers good wages.

Taken together these factors lead us to believe that disabled people are likely to face harm not just through the Coronavirus itself but through the general strain on the health and social care system as well as wider societal barriers. The UK Government has announced £5 billion in emergency funding for public services to alleviate the pressures resulting from the Coronavirus.

As organisations representing the interests of disabled people, we call for urgent support from this fund to ensure social care delivery and provision or accessible information and support is adequately resourced in Wales. We urge both the UK and Welsh Governments to intervene urgently to ensure disabled people are not treated as unavoidable casualties in this pandemic.

Coronavirus - updates from the sector

We have been contacting the vision impairment sector for updates to their operations during this period. This paper lists the changes that have been introduced by many of the local societies, national organisations and eye care service providers in Wales.

In addition, we have included relevant information and news from other sectors about the measures in place to help disabled people.

If you would like to include or revise information about your services, please contact us on 02920 473954 or email a member of staff.

WCB Update

We at WCB would like to reassure members that we will continue to provide advice and support via telephone or email. Roundup and Sylw will also be circulated as normal, assuming there are no other disruptions. Visit our website for the latest news and updates from across the sector.

Telephone: 02920 473954 Website:
www.wcb-ccd.org.uk Staff Email
addresses:

Owen Williams (Director) - owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk Rebecca Phillips (External Engagement Officer) - bec@wcb-ccd.org.uk

Richard Bowers (Communications Officer) - richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk

WCB Storm

The WCB Storm team has produced a useful update for young adults:

With all face-to-face activities and events cancelled or postponed this can be an isolating time for a lot of people, but please know that there are options to keep social communication with others going. Some of these include RNIB telephone group calls:

- Ceredigion association for the Blind's technology group: Wednesday, 25th March. Telephone connection will take place 1pm-2pm.
- Cardiff Young people's group: Tuesday, 14th April. Telephone connection can also be arranged for this 6.30pm-7.30pm.

All the usual telephone groups will take place as normal:

- Rhondda Cynon Taff phone group: Friday, 3rd April 10.30am-11.30am.
- Volunteer catch up: Thursday, 19th March, 5pm-6pm

In addition, there are a couple of new telephone groups starting this week and next week:

Younger people's group – for 25 to 50 year olds Thursday, 26th March, 5pm-6pm.

Contact Eleanor on 02920828565 or 07702821915.

Welsh speakers' group

Wednesday, 18th March 10.30am-11.30am Contact
Bethan on 02920828500.

CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION AND ADVICE.

For advice and updates about the Coronavirus, visit the appropriate website below:

UK Government advice and guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronaviruscovid-19-uk-government-response>

Coronavirus Symptom Checker:

A new online symptom checker for Coronavirus has been added to the NHS Direct Wales website:

<https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/SelfAssessments/symptomcheckers/?ScName=CoronaVirusCOVID19&SCTId=175>

Self-Isolation:

Current Government guidance on self-isolation is provided by Gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Social Distancing:

Current Government guidance on Social Distancing and for vulnerable people can be found on the Gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Updates from Public Health Wales:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novelcoronavirus-covid-19/>

LOCAL AND NATIONAL VISION IMPAIRMENT ORGANISATIONS – CHANGES TO SERVICES.

Macular Society.

We are working hard to keep in contact with all our supporters, volunteers and beneficiaries during this difficult time and we have created a detailed plan to ensure we keep in contact with everyone. By keeping in regular contact, we will ensure that we stay engaged with them and keep them up-to-date with current news and information.

It's so important that we make sure our members, supporters and volunteers are all protected as much as possible, so for the time being we have suspended our face-to-face services. That means we recommend that our local support groups do not meet for now.

However, we are still on the end of the phone – you can call us for support, advice, information, queries about membership or fundraising enquiries, we are all on hand to help. Our social channels and website are being regularly updated, and of course you can contact us via email should you wish to.

Our Advice and Information number is 0300 3030 111, or you can email help@macularsociety.org.

While the Macular Society's face-to-face services have been suspended. We will continue to provide lots of support over the

phone and online. We are offering conference calls to everyone, this will enable people to take part in non-face-to-face meetings and ensures that our members are continuing to take part in a social activity, helping to reduce isolation and stimulating people when they need it the most. We are also using our social media platforms to engage with members and are continuing to develop ways to engage in this way.

Support Group Telephone Conferencing:

Our telephone conference support groups will continue to offer support and help in understanding macular disease and coming to terms with sight loss. These groups are open to anyone with a macular condition, their family and friends.

For further information contact

Email: adele.francis@macularsociety.org (South Wales)

Telephone: Adele 07494468007

Email: marian.williams@macularsociety.org (North Wales)

Telephone: Marian 07495054053

Face book and Twitter social media platform:

Search Adele Francis Macular Society (South Wales) and Marian Williams Macular Society (North Wales) to catch up with all the latest information.

Advice and information:

Our Advice and Information staff are friendly and knowledgeable professionals who can answer questions and provide information and advice about any aspect of living with macular disease.

Befriending:

Befrienders offer a friendly listening ear to people affected by macular disease, to help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Treatment buddies:

Treatment buddies offer telephone support to people who are anxious about their injections, offer information and reassurance.

Counselling:

Our team of professional, accredited counsellors are available for free confidential telephone sessions for anyone with macular disease, or their family, in the UK or internationally. Anyone who would like support during this period is encouraged to call Macular Society's **Advice and Information Service** on 0300 3030 111. All our services are free to use. Please be assured that no matter what, our work continues.

Visual Impairment Breconshire.

Visual Impairment Breconshire has postponed all face-to-face activities. However, they will continue to operate their telephone befriending service.

The Chair, Nick Lancaster and Secretary, Rebecca Phillips will also continue to offer help and support via telephone and email. Should you wish to get in touch, please call 02920 473954 or send your message via email to: vibrecon@gmail.com

Radnorshire Association for the Blind.

All engagements and committee meetings have been postponed until the Autumn. If there are any changes, the Secretary will inform members.

Ceredigion Association for the Blind.

The Aberystwyth branch has suspended all face-to-face activities until further notice. They will continue to contact members via their telephone befriending service.

Cardigan VI Club has cancelled all activities until further notice.

Sight Life (formerly Cardiff Institute for the Blind) and Visual Impairment West Glamorgan.

Sight Life has closed their Resource Centre and Offices. However, they will continue to provide telephone support.

Sight Life and Visual Impairment West Glamorgan members will be contacted to provide a variety of telephone support services. Further updates can be found via social media and on their website: <https://sightlife.wales/news/coronavirus-update/>

Contact Sight Life on: 029 2039 8900

Visual Impairment Merthyr.

All meetings and activities have been cancelled until further notice. However, they will be contacting their members regularly by telephone.

Sight Cymru.

They will continue to provide the following services over the telephone:

- Welfare and Advocacy service (Caerphilly)
- Emotional support
- Club members will be contacted regularly (Clubs include: Barry, Cowbridge, Newport, Abergavenny, Penarth, Torfaen, Blackwood, Caldicot, Monmouth, Risca, Sight life (Ethnic minority club), Line Dancing club, Young people's group, Games (Bingo club), Walking and gardening clubs). People can still make referral to these clubs and

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each member will be contacted regularly. Technology support and guidance via telephone

- Talking News in Gwent, Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda Cynon Taff
- ROVI service in Monmouth, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Neath Port Talbot: This will be a phone only service for now and referrals need to go via relevant local authority).
- ECLO referral via email, phone from clinics in ABUHB
- Ring Around Service for anyone isolated.

Contact Sight Cymru on: 01495 673 650

North Wales Society for the Blind.

NWSB will continue to provide support services over the phone and online. Anyone who would like support during this period is encouraged to call their helpline on 01248 353604.

Visit their website to view their update:

<http://www.nwsb.org.uk/2020/03/19/coronavirus-covid19/#more-693>

Carmarthenshire Blind Society.

The Llanelli branch of the Carmarthenshire Blind Society have suspended all meetings indefinitely. However, they will be making regular contact with members by telephone.

RNIB.

All face-to-face activities have been suspended. The following events have also been postponed or cancelled:

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- Virgin Money London Marathon - postponed to Sunday 4th October 2020;
Manchester Marathon - Sunday 5 May 2020 cancelled;
alternative date not yet confirmed;
- Glasgow Kiltwalk - Sunday 26 April 2020 cancelled;
alternative date not yet confirmed.

Living with Sight Loss courses.

The planned courses in Aberystwyth, Pontypridd and Bridgend have been postponed, and will be rebooked for later in the year. Presently the following courses are still hoping to be run, subject to constant review:

- 3rd & 10th June, The Guildhall, High Street, Brecon LD3 7AL
- 22nd & 29th June, Neath Community Centre, 10 - 12 Orchard Street, Neath SA11 1DU
- 15th & 22nd June, Caswell Room, School of Medicine, Singleton Hospital, Sketty Lane, Swansea SA2 8QA
- 17th and 24th August, Teifi Leisure Centre, Ceredigion College, Park Place, Cardigan SA43 1HG

There are also Autumn 2020 courses planned for Carmarthen and Welshpool.

Here is what RNIB is doing to assist members:

- RNIB's Helpline (0303 123 9999) remains open on weekdays (from 8am-8pm) and on Saturdays (9am-1pm). In addition to the usual advice and support about anything to do with living with sight loss, their team can offer further

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support to anyone with sight loss who becomes isolated or is concerned about accessing information, products or services. Their team of advisers will help to connect people to sources of local support. They are working with public information providers to ensure information is accessible, including image descriptions online.

As people are spending more time at home, RNIB is offering more opportunities to connect with others via

telephone and online by again calling the Helpline. Their regional Facebook groups are very popular at the moment with many people sharing local information, useful hints and tips and interesting things they have been up to. View all groups here:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/rnibuk/groups/>

- RNIB's online shop and equipment service is working as normal and has new supplies arriving shortly. It can be accessed here: <https://shop.rnib.org.uk>. If anyone is experiencing issues accessing equipment, please contact RNIB.

Contact RNIB on: 0303 123 9999

Guide Dogs.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Guide Dogs Cymru has suspended all routine face-to-face services, including My Guide, habilitation, and training of guide dog partnerships, both hotel-based and domiciliary. Support will be offered by phone or online. They will continue to offer their children and parents services through their advice line. The Cardiff centre is currently closed, with staff working from home where possible.

You can contact the team directly by ringing 0345 143 0195 or emailing cardiff@guidedogs.org.uk and access the latest information via the website on www.guidedogs.org.uk/coronavirus/Services.

UCAN Productions.

All workshops have been suspended until further notice.

Contact UCAN Productions on: 02920870554 or 07812

051815

Royal Society for Blind Children.

All face-to-face meetings have been cancelled.

Contact Royal Society for Blind Children on: 020 3198 0225

Visionary.

All face-to-face meetings have been suspended.

This is how Visionary will continue to support you:

- They will continue to share information via special briefings and their Covid-19 web pages;
- Facilitate new, regular online regional meetings where local organisations can share their approach to Covid-19 and areas of concern. They hope these meetings will also encourage organisations within regions to join up to ensure the most effective support for people locally. Key regional staff from national organisations will also be invited. Please email Visionary to express your interest in joining these meetings – they will be sending out further invitations next week;
- They will offer regular closed CEO support sessions, hosted by their own CEO. Being a CEO can be lonely, particularly in times of extreme stress, so these sessions will be an opportunity just to talk and share how we are feeling;
- They are gathering local sight loss organisation specific advice, FAQ's, action plans, risk assessments and examples of what people are doing. These will be shared and published as soon as they can on the web-page;

- They are also aiming to set up a help desk for you to contact them about any issues or questions you have - watch out for further information.

Visit their website for further updates and useful information:
<https://visionary.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Contact Visionary on: 020 8090 9264

International Glaucoma Association.

All upcoming IGA patient conferences and IGA-organised Glaucoma Support Groups have been cancelled.

If you attend other support groups organised by hospitals and other organisations, please be aware that these are also likely to be affected. The IGA recommend you call in advance to confirm that these events are going ahead before travelling.

Their Glaucoma Helpline remains open and their advisors will continue to provide advice and support. The helpline is open Monday-Friday from 9.30am to 5pm on 01233 64 81 70.
Website: <https://www.glaucoma-association.com>

Vision Support.

Vision Support are temporarily suspending visits of their Community Information Service with immediate effect. They will be reviewing the situation on a weekly basis and will let people know when they will be restarting the service. They will be continuing to operate other services. If you have any questions or queries, please contact them on 01244 381515. Website: <http://visionsupport.org.uk>.

Low Vision Service Wales.

Welsh Government has taken the difficult decision to suspend the Low Vision Service until further notice in order to try to shield their vulnerable patient group. If patients or stakeholders have any particular queries, contact the Service Manager on 01267 248794 or by email: Donna.Martin@wales.nhs.uk

OPTOMETRIC PRACTICES.

Welsh Government have advised all optometric practices that they are to cease delivery of routine sight tests and other local and national services, including domiciliary work. However, if a patient attends with what is determined to be the need for an 'essential' consultation, they will be able to see the patient. An example would be the need for a repair of spectacles.

Low Vision Services have also been stopped but again, always a good idea to visit your optician (optometrist) and just speak to them about any problems or concerns you might be having. Your optician (optometrist) will, where they can, want to help and they can see you if they deem it to be 'essential' to your ability to function etc. Welsh Government have asked health boards to support local practices to ensure that where safe, services that you might have to access can be delivered.

If you have any queries, contact Sali Davis, CEO, Optometry Wales on 01443 400796 or email Salidavis@optometrywales.com

Behçet's UK

Tips for Behçet's patients to manage anxiety whilst at home during the Coronavirus outbreak (but also useful to other vi people): <https://behcets.org.uk/wp->

<content/uploads/2020/03/BUK-Tips-for-patients-to-manageanxiety.pdf>.

Cwm Taf Care and Repair

Cwm Taf Care and Repair is launching two new services to help older people in the area during the corona virus crisis:

- Telephone befriending: Officers will be contacting all existing clients to ask whether they would like a regular 'How are you?' call.
- Essential Delivery and Collection Service: Officers can support clients who are self-isolating or vulnerable by collecting food, prescriptions and any other essential items.

If you know of any vulnerable person in the area who would benefit from either of these services, please telephone 01443 755696.

EVENTS

The following events have been cancelled or postponed:

Sight Village Wales - Postponed

Retina UK Cardiff Information Day – Cancelled

CONTACTING SOCIAL SERVICES

If you have any questions about the support you receive from social care such as from your Rehabilitation Officer for Visually Impaired (ROVI) or would like information on such services as meals on wheels, contact your local authority directly:

Anglesey 01248 752 752

Blaenau Gwent 01495 315700
Bridgend 01656 642279
Caerphilly 0808 100 2500
Cardiff 029 2023 4234
Carmarthenshire 0300 333 2222
Ceredigion 01545 574000
Conwy 01492 576333
Denbighshire 0300 456 1000
Flintshire 03000 858858
Gwynedd 01766 771000
Merthyr Tydfil 01685 725000
Monmouthshire
• Monmouth/Usk/Raglan 01600 773041
• Abergavenny 01873 735885
• Chepstow/Caldicot 01291 635666
Neath Port Talbot 01639 686802
Newport 01633 656656
Pembrokeshire 01437 764551
Powys 0345 602 7050
RCT 01443 425003
Swansea 01792 315969
Torfaen 01495 762200
Vale of Glamorgan 01446 700111
Wrexham 01978 292066

READING SERVICES / TALKING NEWSPAPERS

RNIB

RNIB have increased the number of Talking Books for USB users so you can now have three books at a time. In anticipation of potential issues producing and delivering USB sticks over the forthcoming months, RNIB would encourage as many customers as possible to receive Talking Books via their new

digital service. For further information or to register, call 0303 123 9999.

Calibre Audio

Calibre Audio are allowing their members to stockpile a few audiobooks. They have increased the number of memory sticks and CDs you can borrow in one go to 10 of each. You can also listen to their books online 24/7. Website: <https://www.calibre-ebook.com>.

Contact Calibre Audio on: 01296 432339

TRANSPORT

Taxis

DRIVE taxis in Cardiff are offering FREE local shopping trips for the elderly and vulnerable. All drivers are DBS checked and extreme care will be taken when interacting and delivering those much-needed essentials. Telephone 02920 140140.

TECHNOLOGY

Dolphin

To ensure their customers have all the help and support they need now and in the coming months, Dolphin has put together a series of video trainings, phone-ins and live action webinars.

If you're not technical, you just need to be able to make a phone call. And if you're a little more computer or app savvy, they've got webinars and online meetings.

Browse the complete list or find out more at:

www.YourDolphin.com/webinars. Their support and sales teams are all open and fully operational. Call 01905 754 577 or email dave.salisbury@yourdolphin.com.

Be My Eyes

The 'Be My Eyes' app is reminding vi people that their volunteers are available to help: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/>

Be My Eyes is a free app that connects blind and partially sighted people to sighted volunteers for visual assistance through a live video call. The app is available on iOS and Android devices.

SUPERMARKETS

Measures in place to assist elderly and disabled people.

Iceland

The first hour of each trading day will be reserved for vulnerable and elderly customers only.

ASDA

Priority will be given to elderly and vulnerable customers only, between 9am-10am on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. (This will not apply to express stores).

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's have reserved the first hour of opening every Thursday for elderly and vulnerable customers only to ensure they do not miss out on essentials. They will also help elderly and vulnerable customers access food online. From Monday, 23rd March, their online customers who are over 70 years of age

or have a disability will have priority access to online delivery slots.

Tesco

Tesco is prioritising one hour every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning between 9am-10am for vulnerable and elderly customers (except for their Express stores).

OTHER NEWS

Government support for charities

The Government is looking at how they can support charities during the Coronavirus outbreak. For further information, visit their website: <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/governmentin-talks-with-voluntary-sector-to-offset-covid-19-effects.html>

Staying safe from fraud - Coronavirus phishing scams

The following information has been provided by Gwent Police Cyber Crime Team:

There have been reports of fake Coronavirus emails and text messages being received. These messages claim to be from official sources for example, the HMRC or World Health Organisation. They claim to offer safety advice, tax refunds or similar, but include malicious web links or attachments. Whether a message is received by a phone call, text or email, to help avoid these scams:

- Do not give out your personal or financial information
- Do not click on attachments or web links
- Do not use any contact information in the message itself

Verify via your own trusted method.

People are also being urged to be vigilant about other scams offering help with Universal Credit, malicious software sent via fake emails and text messages that can encrypt and lock your device, and emails, texts or calls purporting to be from HMRC and Microsoft.

You can report fraud and cyber-crime to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. For further information, visit their website:
<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk>

LOOK.

LOOK supports VI children, young people and their families to thrive. This section outlines the support they shall continue offering during the pandemic.

LOOK is working hard to respond to the Corona Crisis. Our online mentoring support is continuing and we'll be offering online events for VI children, young adults and their families to get involved in.

We're a Cardiff born charity. Contact us if you'd like to join our LOOK Cymru group. Contact info@look-uk.org

Online Mentoring.

Our FREE online mentoring service matches VI young people aged 11 – 35 with a mentor for peer-support. Matches are made based on the mentees' needs such as a similar eye condition, similar hobbies and interests or similar studying or career aspirations. We are here for peer support at this difficult time.

Our mentors are trained VI volunteers aged 18 – 35 who can offer advice based on their own lived experience on a range of topics including:

School life, friendships and socialising, coming to terms with your VI, thinking about university and much more.

To find out more and sign up for online mentoring, please visit the mentoring pages on our website. Or email info@look-uk.org

Online Events.

Find Your Calm - Nurturing well-being sessions for VI teens, young adults and parents/guardians.

This series of 4 workshops in collaboration with Cardiff-based Dr. Sangeet Bhullar from Wise Kids will focus on how to cope with anxiety during these troubling times, and is aimed at 18-35 year-olds VIPs.

This series of workshops has been designed to help our Visually Impaired Community cope with anxiety during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Now more than ever we need to promote the wellbeing of our Visually Impaired community; from children to young adults, parents, and families.

For more information and to book your free place, contact info@lookuk.org or go to the following online booking forms:

Find Your Calm Workshop Series for Visually Impaired Young Adults ages 18-35:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wellbeing-workshop-series-for-visuallyimpaired-young-adults-ages-18-35-tickets-100410975932?fbclid=IwAR22QpsNsNZ2CF2_Gf5pN2KG1OPSA54zlTGCU8Asmr7m7GKHWums_W9OyoU

Find Your Calm Workshop Series for Parent/Guardians of Visually Impaired Young People:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wellbeing-workshop-series-for-parentsguardians-of-visually-impaired-youth-tickets-100301133390?fbclid=IwAR2feZltTpDMn_bBk0AfHm7jeJCHYzTgw6KP29TNCjXR_4B0uxg7i4t_Gol

Find Your Calm Workshop Series for Visually Impaired 14 - 17 year olds: [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nurturing-wellbeing-workshopseries-for-visually-impaired-youth-ages-14-17-tickets-100310687968?fbclid=IwAR3Y-](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nurturing-wellbeing-workshopseries-for-visually-impaired-youth-ages-14-17-tickets-100310687968?fbclid=IwAR3Y-8igCaUrRUO24hESNdeCN9RlrGPoeY_CA-rwMgduRjL___s4xvoK3_M)

[8igCaUrRUO24hESNdeCN9RlrGPoeY_CA-rwMgduRjL___s4xvoK3_M](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nurturing-wellbeing-workshopseries-for-visually-impaired-youth-ages-14-17-tickets-100310687968?fbclid=IwAR3Y-8igCaUrRUO24hESNdeCN9RlrGPoeY_CA-rwMgduRjL___s4xvoK3_M)

There will be more online events happening so stay tuned to our socials and website.

LOOK Creative Community - We're reaching out to VI children, young people and families to be part of our LOOK Creative community. Not sure how to spend your time at home in the coming weeks? Get involved with our LOOK.

We are launching a new media YouTube channel. We want to bring people together for fun and happy times! We're here for you. Get in touch if you'd like to get involved with this project and create some content for the channel. We're in this together! info@look-uk.org

Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/looknational>

Follow us on Twitter: @Look_UK https://twitter.com/look_UK

Instagram: @Look_UK. website: www.look-uk.org

‘What exactly do you do?’

Our work since 2016.

In the Winter 2015 edition of Roundup we outlined our three-year plan (four years, as it turned out) for delivering support that addresses the outcomes of the Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

A lot of what WCB does is not particularly visible to the general public. We are an umbrella organization that concentrates its work on supporting our members and contributing to the various agendas on sight loss that take place in Wales at local authority, local health board and Welsh Government levels. We engage with blind and partially sighted people and gather their views to take to these strategic and policy-forming bodies, whether that be through formal consultation exercises or through our representation on various forums. This role – that of building a national perspective on the views of people – is crucial for building a bridge between isolated, local activity and decision-making that affects the whole of Wales. This report, then, is to make clear what WCB has been involved in over the past four years under the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector grant.

THE PLAN 2016-19.

Our project work-streams addressed five outcomes:

- That people with sight loss benefit from improved support from local societies and groups
- That people with sight loss influence design and delivery to achieve citizen-centred services. We want the voices of visionimpaired people to be at the heart of service planning and delivery
- That people with sight loss and social care professionals are fully informed of the wider range of services/support available through an integrated information service

- That the expertise in social services is used more efficiently and effectively. We believe rehabilitation is the core service that enables people with sight loss to achieve independence
- That services are better coordinated and monitored

These outcomes are addressed by a range of activities and as some activities address many outcomes, this article looks at the work streams under their own headings.

MAPPING SERVICES.

Perspectif, WCB's online database, collates all information necessary for people with sight loss within one portal. Its usefulness is promoted to organisations, professionals and individuals and expanded to incorporate sensory loss and disability services more generally.

Bespoke information packs built from Perspectif were delivered to Care and Repair staff who work specifically with people with sensory impairment, as well as each of the Local Health Boards. Support and services available in individual local authorities has also been sent.

It is important that people with sight loss are signposted to the most appropriate services. To achieve this WCB has mapped services across Wales. Perspectif, our on-line portal, has been updated. We hope this evidence will help partners plan their services to strengthen their roles.

In order to promote services, we launched a Perspectif supplement to Roundup that focused on a particular service area in relation to the portal. The Perspectif Supplements issued over the period were on ECLOs, support for specific eye conditions, training and awareness, and third sector services.

The first supplement on the ECLO services in Wales prompted us to extend Roundup distribution to include the eye clinics throughout

Wales. This had the purpose of bringing the broader social care services to the attention of people in a health setting.

COMMUNICATIONS.

Roundup.

Roundup evolved from being a general newsletter to something more journal-like, leaving news items to Sylw. The topics covered in Roundup were:

- 25 years of LOOK, the organization for families of children with sight loss;
- Retail Experiences, looking at accessible shopping options;
- Housing;
- Community Voice projects;
- Independent Living Framework;
- Direct Payments;
- General Data Protection Regulations;
- WCB's 80th Anniversary;
- NHS at 70;
- Sight Loss and other conditions;
- The cost of sight loss;
- The many shapes of third sector organizations.

Sylw.

Sylw was originally launched back in 1990 or thereabouts when WCB launched its first website. We saw Sylw as a way of ensuring people who didn't have access to our website could receive information in print and audio format. There still seems to be an appetite for this as we now mail out over 1,000 copies each month, as well as providing the information instantly on our website and fortnightly via email. It is also now produced in the Welsh language, the Welsh version being recorded by North Wales Society for the Blind in Bangor. It is distributed to members of NWSB, Vision Support, Vision Impaired West Glamorgan, Radnorshire Association for the Blind and Visual

Impairment Merthyr, as well as our own mailing list. Consequently, Sylw has become perhaps the most important channel of communication for many of our members.

Twitter.

Twitter is useful for spreading the word within the sector of the work of various stakeholders. It is quick and informal, so is ideally suited to getting urgent or time-sensitive messages out, particularly to the sector organisations. We now have 1,659 followers.

SECTOR SUPPORT.

Support to members.

We provided advice on governance and provided template policies and procedures (such as General Data Protection statements), as well as assisted and supported societies' funding applications. We produced publicity materials for a number of member organisations.

Rebecca Phillips, our Engagement Officer, sat on the Executive Board of BridgeViS, Ceredigion Association for the Blind (Acting Secretary), Radnor Association for the Blind, Visual Impairment Brecon (Acting Secretary). We have also helped Welshpool VI Club with advice about their constitution.

We have continued to help societies develop and produce an online web presence. It is hoped that this will help them to attract new members and volunteers, as well as promote local services to people with sight loss.

We worked with the Welsh Association of Visually Impaired Bowlers to develop their website and keep it up-to-date with all the latest news and achievements, and to assist with their funding applications.

Our members were given opportunities to be involved in consultations and to contribute to setting priorities and work streams of WCB through our regional steering groups, as well as meeting others working in the field of vision impairment.

We encouraged member groups and other clubs and societies to understand and raise awareness of Welsh Government initiatives. Promoting the Welsh Low Vision Service through local societies to encourage referrals to the scheme is one such example. We have also raised awareness of the refresh of the Framework for Action on Independent Living.

Support to individuals.

Although, as an umbrella organisation, we don't provide direct services, we do answer inquiries and direct people to sources of support and advice. We do this through telephone and email.

In 2016, WCB led on the production of a resource sheet to accompany the Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) to provide information to patients upon receipt of their certificate. It signposts to organisations that can support them at this challenging time.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

Our Voice: a Shared Vision provided great opportunities for service providers to share and discuss their work and initiatives with service users. The forums offered a mechanism for people with sight loss to get their views known at various planning committees and so forth.

In order to maximize our reach, the grant enabled our partners Vision Support, North Wales Society for the Blind, UCAN Productions (WCB Storm, working with young adults) and Sight Cymru (BAME) to run groups and directly influence the work of WCB as the umbrella body.

The groups debated a range of themes and received presentations including on a benefits advice service, the role of rehabilitation officer, sensory loss standards, accessible transport and more.

Our groups across North Wales were set up by our partners there:

Vision Support ran 7 groups that met monthly or bi-monthly. Blind and partially sighted people attended these groups on a regular basis. The

meetings had a range of speakers from across social care, health, transport and the community.

North Wales Society for the Blind

The NWSB supported and facilitated 8 groups across Anglesey, Gwynedd and Conwy. The groups met monthly.

NWSB ran a consultation exercise to evaluate services and identify any gaps in provision.

STORM/WCB - Young adults forum

A number of events were held across Wales, in South and North Wales, with many blind and partially sighted young people attending.

One event focused on the role of the Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired (ROVI). As members were not all fully aware of the role a video was created aimed at people with sight loss to promote and educate them on the role of the ROVI. A newsletter has been produced for young adults on the work of the project. Awareness of the project has been raised through attending other events.

Sight Life

This group of Black and Minority Ethnic people with sight loss (or caring for someone with sight loss) reported negative experiences in accessing services. Whilst the group welcomed the need and desire for local authorities taking control of how the service is delivered under an overarching national framework, currently - when a service is not delivered appropriately - it is important the local service is held to account. Concerns remain as to how local authorities will engage accessibly with those most vulnerable within our society including BME groups where language is a barrier.

The group would like to see open and transparent social services that are accessible for all.

The financial support from WCB enabled Sight Cymru to develop Diversity and Equality training that they will roll out to social care professionals.

BRINGING THE SECTOR TOGETHER.

Wales Vision Forum.

Wales Council of the Blind, as the umbrella organisation for vision impairment in Wales, is responsible for convening, chairing and providing secretariat to the Wales Vision Forum. This group comprises national, regional and local sight loss organisations within Wales. The purpose of the Forum is to share, discuss and agree work programmes and priorities to enhance joint working and reduce duplication to maximise our collective reach and impact. It is the priority of the Forum to give local societies and people with sight loss a voice.

The Wales Vision Forum reported on a number of outcomes within the Eye Health Care Delivery Plan for Wales. Nominated representatives on the sub-committees consulted with members on papers and agenda items prior to meetings; represented the views of all members and fed back relevant points. WCB ensures that the Forum is represented at all of the Welsh Government sub-groups, as well as each of the Local Health Board Eye Care Groups. Representation is shared amongst the members of the Forum. Given that a lot of societies find it difficult to attend these meetings, one of our roles is to represent their views. The development of the regional groups enables the local voice of vision impaired people to be represented at an all Wales level.

The Wales Vision Forum reported directly to the health Minister on key themes in order to reduce duplication and to make best use of the Minister's time. The Forum presented viewpoints that the sector had arrived at consensually. The Forum worked with WROF and LVSW to produce a report on the population needs assessment for people with sight loss. This document was requested by the Welsh Government's Eye Care Steering Group and put forward the case for Regional Partnership Boards to consider the needs of those with sight loss. The report highlighted a number of key themes including the legal framework, the adult and children's sight loss pathways and the importance of timely access to rehabilitation and habilitation.

WCB sent a questionnaire to 676 blind and partially sighted people across Wales. We asked people to consider 5 questions in relation to the support received from their rehabilitation / habilitation officer. We received 138 completed questionnaires. The responses showed that there are still large numbers of people with sight loss who do not know what a ROVI can do for them.

Those who had received support highlighted an improvement in confidence with some expressing that waiting times had meant that they had adjusted to their sight loss themselves. Our findings highlight the need for timely access to a ROVI and the monitoring of waiting lists.

Wales Vision Strategy.

WCB continues to contribute to the Wales Vision Strategy. We attend the implementation group and report on targets relating to information provision and signposting of services, accessible information, Key Performance Indicators within social care, employment, as well as representing the voice of people with sight loss on a number of themes.

WCB will continue to identify, but not provide, services that should be available across Wales and report this through the various committees and forums we attend. The WVS is a fixed agenda item on the Wales Vision Forum and this enables the sector to monitor service provision, as well as report successes and discuss problems.

Other forums.

WCB attends both the Cross-Party Group on Disability (CPGD), for which we provide secretariat support, the Cross Party Group on Vision (CPGV) and the Welsh Government's Disability Equality Forum.

WCB is a member of the Wales Disability Reference Group along with Disability Wales, Learning Disability Wales, Mind Cymru and Wales Council for Deaf People. The group meets 4 times a year to provide a coordinated response to Ministerial meetings and to report back to the sector. In this capacity WCB represents Disability on the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC). TSPC meetings happen twice a year.

WCB sits on a number of sensory loss implementation groups and, through our regional groups of people with sight loss, we report on accessible information, as well as provide patients' experiences. WCB will continue to gather examples of good and bad practice. We will share these with each of the 7 Local Health Boards as a positive approach to people with sight loss receiving a better experience when accessing health care.

CONSULTING, LOBBYING AND CAMPAIGNING.

Neath Port Talbot.

Residents of Neath Port Talbot raised concerns in relation to Rehabilitation Services. WCB, working in partnership, lobbied to ensure that a rehabilitation and habilitation service is provided within the authority. We are pleased to report that a full-time ROVI was appointed contracted by Sight Cymru.

Welsh Government has also agreed to fund training for 3 Habilitation Officers across Wales including local provision in NPT.

Support for Children across Gwent.

Led on by WCB, the sector campaigned against Newport Borough Council's decision to withdraw from the SenCom group. As a result, the Gwent authorities jointly agreed to a review of the service. WCB insists that this should include a proper consultation with stakeholders.

Ceredigion Association and the Rehabilitation Service.

Working with the Ceredigion Association of the Blind and local clubs, WCB has raised concerns of a large waiting list in Ceredigion for intervention from a ROVI. A ROVI assistant has since been appointed but they are unqualified. As a sector we will continue to lobby for an additional ROVI, as previously funded. We recognise that workforce planning is a concern across Wales and would welcome local authorities investing in training for ROVIs. There is an apprenticeship

levy currently in place in Wales and this could be an opportunity to support training of additional ROVIs.

Working to get the CVI on the high street.

Wales Council of the Blind was asked by the Low Vision Clinical Lead to set up a CVI Patient Focus Group to discuss the pros and cons of Low Vision Service Wales practitioners issuing Certificates of Visual Impairment.

The feedback was invaluable and supported fully the choice to have CVIs issued by high street low vision practitioners. WCB sees this work as an opportunity to strengthen referral pathways to the third and social care sectors.

We would also feel more confident that information, such as the patient leaflet, would be distributed at the point of diagnosis. Additionally, the Low Vision Practitioner would be better suited to monitor referrals, disseminate all forms of information, as well as monitor the impact that this has had on an individual's wellbeing.

Focus on Employment

Less than one in four registered partially sighted or blind people of working age is in employment. This figure is even worse for people who are completely blind. Only around one in 10 people with poor functional vision is in paid employment.

WCB and RNIB Cymru launched a report highlighting people with sight loss' experiences of the Access to Work scheme in Wales. WCB wrote the source report and recommendations.

The report, gathered from over 50 service users' views, revealed considerable shortcomings with the service since it underwent changes. It gives recommendations for actions to be taken to make improvements.

Subsequently, **WCB convened and chaired a meeting** with Access to Work officials, third sector partners and people with sight loss to

highlight concerns and to seek reassurance that these concerns will be addressed.

WCB drafted a report to look at the state of Access to Work three years on from the original report. This was presented to the Wales Vision Forum and Wales Vision Strategy Implementation Group.

We worked with Welsh Government to ensure that the promotion of the Access to Work scheme is included with the refresh of the Action on Disability - The Right to Independent Living.

We welcome the focus on apprenticeships and that Welsh Government will build on the opportunities from gaining additional support for internships, apprenticeships where feasible, for those individuals with disabilities. We have sought assurance that people with sight loss will be able to access a level of support and equipment that will empower them to fulfil their role.

The reports can be read at
http://www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/our_work/our_work_information.php

Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

WCB, in partnership with Cardiff Institute for the Blind and RNIB Cymru, set up a meeting with Capita and DWP to discuss concerns around the PIP process.

People with sight loss attended and shared experiences. WCB remains concerned that people are being given sight and functional vision tests during an assessment despite assurance from DWP that this should not happen. We have been in further talks with Capita and the Department of Work and Pensions in regard to sight tests being carried out and optical magnifiers being used to assess visual function as part of the Personal Independent Payment (PIP) assessment. WCB and the Low Vision Advisory Group, remain strongly opposed to this, as the PIP assessors are not qualified to carry out such tests.

Capita confirmed that their assessors do indeed perform sight tests, particularly when they are unsure of what an individual can see. Not

only does this show a lack of trust in the client, but also a lack of understanding of the nature of various types of sight condition because the sight test only measures visual acuity and not overall visual function. It is also not acceptable for non-qualified assessors to use optical magnifiers to assess for visual function. We have requested a face-to-face meeting, as this is an opportunity for Wales to address a UK concern. Capita was not engaging with this issue and through the Low Vision Advisory Group, we initiated a media campaign. BBC Wales Live interviewed Owen Williams and other people with sight loss and we have written to Welsh Government in the hope that they follow the lead of Scottish Government where sight tests are not allowed as part of the process.

Influencing service delivery in Newport.

By being part of the regional groups, people with sight loss can influence service design and delivery. An example of this was in Newport where WCB held an event, with 30 blind and partially sighted people in attendance, to discuss changes to the services for people with vision impairment in the local authority. Residents and third sector partners were concerned that the rehabilitation service would not continue as part of restructuring of services. WCB collected the voice of the residents and presented this in a letter to Newport City Council. The letter highlighted the need for timely access to rehabilitation and cited a number of personal stories. Further lobbying by WCB and third sector partners ensured that, after a break in service, a rehabilitation service is now available to residents of Newport.

Auditing hospital facilities in Hywel Dda.

Members of the Your Voice a Shared Vision West Wales Group worked with Hywel Dda Health Board to improve facilities at the North Road Hospital, Aberystwyth. This is another example where people with sight loss have instigated change and how services will be improved and monitored in the future.

Consultations.

WCB gathered the opinions and views of vision impaired people through groups and consultation. We put their voice at the centre of

what we do, reporting their views to the people who are responsible for the services that help them.

To give some examples, we have consulted on:

- Changes to Disabled Students' Allowance;
- Connected Communities: Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation;
- Eye Care Delivery Plan Outcomes;
- All Wales Sensory Loss Standards;
- Framework for Action on Independent Living.

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE.

Social Care Group.

A third sector group has been established to focus on social care and the services provided across Wales. We continue to work with third sector partners to promote the need for people with sight loss to gain timely access to this invaluable service. We continued to promote the revised Vision Impairment Good Practice Guidelines.

WCB contributed information to inform Population Needs Assessments across Wales. However, we are concerned that people with sight loss are not represented in all areas of Wales.

State of the Nation Report on Rehabilitation Services.

We have done a great job as a sector on working collaboratively on this report that was presented to influential groups including the CrossParty Group on Vision and the Welsh Government Eye Care Group.

The report defines three important areas:

- A universal model for Rehabilitation Services;
- An overview of current provision;
- Recommendations to implement.

A State of the Nation report on Habilitation was also completed.

These reports are available at

http://www.wcbccd.org.uk/our_work/our_work_information.php

Framework for Action on Independent Living.

WCB sent out over 1,000 questionnaires in relation to Welsh Government's Framework for Action on Independent Living. We used these responses to inform Welsh Government of the views of blind and partially sighted people in relation to the refresh of this document.

Community voice projects

Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People (BCDP), in partnership with Wales Council of the Blind, ran a county-wide Community Voice project administered by Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations. The *Sharing Our Lives, Planning Together* project provided opportunities for disabled people to gain knowledge, confidence and ability to speak out about issues affecting them and others. Information days and training events increased the knowledge of both disabled people and service providers to understand the needs of disabled people and how they can change their services to become more inclusive.

Good practice Guidelines updated.

WCB worked with the sector to align the rehabilitation good practice guidelines (produced in 2006) to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

The Vision Impairment Good Practice Guidelines, which are aimed at social care professionals, now comprise:

1. The provision of information to service users;
2. Referral and initial assessment;
3. Support in the Community;
4. Rehabilitation and Specialist VI Assessment;
5. Children and Young People.

We have added a section on community-based support, as this was an important additional ingredient in the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

We held a series of meetings across Wales to promote these guidelines and receive further feedback. This was an opportunity to promote the role of the ROVI, their specialism and encourage commissioners to apply best practice.

TRAINING.

Our grant enabled the commissioning of a range of training packages that were delivered in conjunction with WROF. Sessions were held each year throughout Wales:

- ROVIs and the Managing Better service;
- Advanced orientation and mobility;
- Deafblind training;
- Effectiveness of digital technology;
- Transitioning from education to social care.

In addition to offering training opportunities across the sector, it is important that professionals take part in knowledge-sharing.

WCB continues to run VI Professional Network in West Wales and attends and contributes to professional networks in Bridgend and Swansea. We also ran a network across North Wales in partnership with Vision Support.

Social Care professionals also attend WCB's regional groups of people with sight loss. This gives them a unique opportunity to receive feedback and promote best practice.

WCB provided an update to WROF members at their AGM on the Good Practice Guidelines, the work of the sector and the Welsh Government Eye Health groups.

WCB would encourage WROF to seek membership to all regional eye care groups to raise the profile of the work of the ROVI.

That was an overview of the kind of work WCB was involved in during the grant-funded period 2016-20. This work is in the nature of an umbrella organisation and can seem a little remote to many people who are more used to work that gets delivered on the ground. We know, however, that it is valuable work because it supports and defends the infrastructure that the organisations delivering direct services rely upon.

Power for Life

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

Power cut? Call 105 or 0800 6783 105

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

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

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

If you join our FREE Priority Service Register we can:

- Give you a direct number to call in the event of a power cut so you can get straight through to us.
- Agree a password with you before we visit you, so you feel safe.
- Provide special help, if needed, through the RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) or British Red Cross.

- Ring and tell you about planned interruptions to your electricity supply.
- Keep you as informed as possible in the event of an unplanned power cut.

To join, call **0800 096 3080**, or visit our website
www.westernpower.co.uk

Free Audio Publications For people with a visual impairment



A weekly Cardiff Talking Newspaper and
monthly South Wales Talking Magazine

Available free of charge on mp3 memory sticks
for those who are registered blind or partially
sighted.

South Wales Talking Magazine Association c/o

Sight Life, Jones Court,

Womanby Street, Cardiff CF10 1BR.

Tel: 029 2039 8900 info@swtma.com



A registered voluntary charity established 1971.

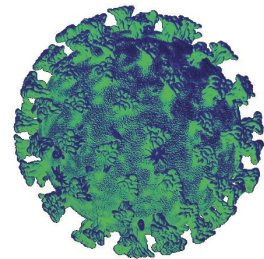


Coronavirus

Isolate your household

Stay at home

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature or a new and continuous cough – even if it's mild



✓ **Everyone in your household must stay at home** for 14 days and keep away from others.

✓ **DO NOT** go to the GP, pharmacy, or hospital.

Go to phw.nhs.wales/coronavirus to check your symptoms and follow the specialist medical advice. Only call NHS 111 if your symptoms worsen.

✓ **Protect** older people and those with existing health conditions by avoiding contact.

Find out how to isolate at home at

CORONAVIRUS

**PROTECT
YOURSELF
OTHERS &
THE NHS**

phw.nhs.wales/coronavirus

