

Wales Council of the Blind

R.E.S.E.T.

Incorporating Sylw Bulletin.

Employment

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Sylw Bulletin.

News.

An invitation to Low Vision Service Wales Patients

If you have been a Low Vision Service Wales (LVSW) patient, we would like to hear about your experience of the Service so that we can make the right steps to improve it for others. Your opinion of the Service matters to us so we would be delighted if you could get in touch.

A meeting will take place on Thursday, 28th January at 2.00 pm using Zoom. You will be able to also join the meeting via your telephone. If you would like to join the meeting please contact Owen Williams, Wales Council of the Blind, by email at owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk or by calling 029 2047 3954.

Covid-19 vaccine: scam warning

There is a warning that scammers and criminals are trying to trick people regarding the Covid-19 vaccine. The NHS don't need your bank details and would never ask for them in a phone call, email or text. There is no need to pay to find out your place in the queue for the vaccine, and vaccines are not being delivered door-to-door. If you receive such a request or message you should hang up and report it by sending an email to report@phishing.gov.uk or forwarding the text to 7726.

Sense Summer Holidays

Sense has published details of its summer 2021 holidays for children and adults with multi-sensory impairments. The one-week holidays are held in a variety of locations across England during July and August. Each holiday is managed by one or more experienced Sense Holiday Leaders, who have a specialist understanding of how to provide personalised group holidays for people who are deafblind and may have additional needs. They are an opportunity to try new activities, have fun and make new friends. Holidays for children and young people

include an activity break at Macaroni Wood in Gloucestershire, while adults could visit Butlins in Skegness. A financial contribution of £800 to the cost of the holiday is required.

The Sense Holidays Team will make reasonable and robust adjustments to reflect the Government Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance in place at the time of the holiday. This includes reducing the number of places available to allow for social distancing.

To download the brochure and book a place, visit Sense's website, <https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/holidays-short-breaks-and-activity-groups/sense-holidays/>. You can also find out more, and request the brochure in alternative formats, by telephoning the Sense holiday team on 0207 520 0962 or emailing holidays@sense.org.uk. The closing date for applications is 7th February and the holidays are usually very popular, so act quickly if you are interested.

Consultations and Surveys.

Welsh Government Consultations

Here is our list of Welsh Government consultations of potential interest to the disability sector:

- Carers' national plan for Wales (closes 20th January 2021)
- Access to Elected Office Fund (closes 20th January)
- Llwybr Newydd: a new Wales transport strategy (closes 25th January)
- Improving social care arrangements and partnership working (closes 6th April)

For information on how to receive any of these consultation documents in an accessible format, call 0300 0604400.

Events.

Events via Zoom

Many organisations now hold events online, for example via Zoom. You can find the latest information on our website: <http://www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/news.php#events>

Living with Sight Loss course

A 6 week telephone course for people living in Wales starts on Thursday the 4 February and continues on 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th February and 4th, 11th March from 2pm until 3.30pm

Guest speakers with expertise around the topics are also expected to join. These courses are useful for anyone who has experienced sight loss or who has been blind or partially sighted all of their life, and can include family, friends and carers.

Topics covered are below:

- Week 1 is an introduction to the course and a focus on various RNIB services.
- Week 2 is Mobility and Orientation, Guide Dogs for the Blind, different mobility aids, public transport, etc.
- Week 3 is COVID 19 updates, Eye Health, Sight Loss and Wellbeing, Charles Bonnet Syndrome, Sight Loss Groups, Counselling, etc.
- Week 4 is Independent Living, Daily Living and Sight Loss, role of a ROVI, lighting, magnification, etc.
- Week 5 is technology, phones, tablets, kindles, apps, etc.
- Week 6 is RNIB Connect, Next steps, overview of the previous weeks' sessions.

If you or anyone you know would like to join please email LWSLenquiries@rnib.org.uk or call 0300 123 3933

Glaucoma Support Groups

Glaucoma UK is running digital support groups – but if you don't have internet access, you can still ring in and listen to the event. The next event is:

- Thursday 28th January, 7 pm to 8 pm, Glaucoma research and how it might influence future glaucoma care. (Telephone 0203 481 5240 or 0330 088 5830).

To join the session by telephone, dial in to the number shown above at the start time. Please note, if joining on the phone you will only be able

to listen to the verbal presentation. You will not be able to ask questions or view the supporting presentation slides.

If you have internet access, you can find out more on the Glaucoma UK website, <https://glaucoma.uk/get-involved/glaucoma-uk-events/>

If you need any further information, Glaucoma UK's Helpline is 01233 64 81 70.

Sight Life Telephone Groups

Sight Life continues to run telephone groups for people in Cardiff, Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact their local office:

- For Cardiff, Jane on 07864 964 833 or email: jane.mccann@sightlife.wales
- For Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot, Anita on 01792 776 360 or email: anita.davies@sightlife.wales

RNIB Connect Groups

The RNIB Community Connection team in Wales run telephone groups covering a wide range of age groups, interests and regions (including Welsh language groups). Most of them run monthly, and last for one hour. For more details, see the previous issue. Please contact Connect Community Coordinators for more information:

Eleanor: 0770 282 1915, email eleanor.rothwell@rnib.org.uk

Carol: 0786 496 8859, email Carol.McKinlay@rnib.org.uk

Izzy James: 0776 8503050, email izzy.jones@rnib.org.uk

Other Resources.

Sight Cymru services

Since the first lockdown back in March meant face-to face support was no longer an option, Sight Cymru has adapted their way of working to allow them to continue supporting people with sight loss, especially as most service users fall amongst the most vulnerable in these circumstances.

The charity started a Covid-19 ring-around service, making around 500-700 welfare calls every week. It quickly became apparent that these calls were becoming a lifeline for some people, with feelings of isolation increasing and the pandemic having such an impact on wellbeing. A decision was made to prioritise this service, to ensure that regular emotional support and in-depth wellbeing calls could continue.

With support from Welsh Government's Voluntary Services Emergency Fund, Sight Cymru was able to recruit dedicated Emotional Support Officers, allowing consistent emotional support calls to continue. They have recognised an increase in the need for more in-depth support throughout the pandemic and have also started to provide a counselling service for those who need more support and intervention.

In addition to these services Sight Cymru is trying to combat feelings of isolation by operating virtual and teleconferencing meet-ups for their clubs and groups, operating a general ring-around and a talking news service to ensure that they can maintain a support network and ensure people have regular contact with others.

To find out more about any of these services, please contact Sight Cymru on 01495 763650.

Sense Information and Advice Service

Sense, the charity supporting people with dual sensory loss, and RNIB are working together to deliver a telephone and email-based information and advice service.

The Sense Information and Advice Service offers free and impartial information on a range of issues, including advice on conditions causing deafblindness, and signposting to sources of support. It can be contacted by ringing 0300 330 9256, via email at info@sense.org.uk or via the Sense website: <https://www.sense.org.uk/get-in-touch/contact-information-and-advice/> The service is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and closed on Bank Holidays.

Welsh Government

Vaccination advice

Welsh Government and Public Health Wales have begun the vaccination process across Wales. Here is all the information you need.

Which vaccine will I get?

In the UK, we will only use COVID-19 vaccines that meet the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used.

These vaccines will have been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) based on a full assessment of their safety and effectiveness. The MHRA will only approve a vaccine for supply in the UK if the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met.

The vaccines currently available require two separate doses to provide the best longer-term protection

Who should have a COVID-19 vaccine?

The NHS offers these vaccines first to those at highest risk of catching the infection and of suffering serious complications if they catch the infection.

This includes older adults, frontline health and social care workers and those with certain clinical conditions. When more vaccine becomes available, the vaccines will be offered to other people at risk as soon as possible.

You should have the COVID-19 vaccine if you are:

- an adult living or working in a care home for older adults
- a frontline healthcare worker
- a frontline social care worker

- a domiciliary carer providing personal care
- aged 65 years and over
- in the clinically extremely vulnerable group

Everyone who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable group will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Whether you are offered the vaccine may depend on the severity of your condition. Your GP can advise on whether you are eligible.

The vaccine will also be offered to those aged 16 years and over with conditions such as:

- blood cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- diabetes
- a heart problem
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as HIV infection, steroid medication, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- having had an organ transplant
- having had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- a neurological or muscle wasting condition including epilepsy and dementia
- severe or profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or having had your spleen removed
- being seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above)
- severe mental illness

At the same time as those aged 16-64 years with long term health conditions, the vaccine will also then be offered to:

- those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
- younger adults in long stay nursing and residential settings, and staff

After these groups, those aged 50-64 will be offered vaccination.

When more vaccine becomes available in 2021 it will be offered to more groups of the population.

I am pregnant or breastfeeding, or might be pregnant, can I have the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines are not currently recommended during pregnancy. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding you should not have the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. If you think you may be pregnant or are planning a pregnancy within three months of the first dose you should wait until your pregnancy is completed before you are vaccinated. You should have the vaccine as soon as possible afterwards if eligible. You should avoid becoming pregnant until at least two months after the second dose of the vaccine.

Further information on the use of the COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy is expected and the guidance will be reviewed as soon as it becomes available.

Who else cannot have the vaccine?

If you have ever had an immediate-onset anaphylaxis to any medicine, vaccine or food you should not receive the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. A small number of people cannot have COVID-19 vaccines – this includes people who have had an anaphylactic reaction to an ingredient in the vaccine.

The vaccines do not contain living organisms, and so are safe for people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine.

If you are currently unwell with a fever, or have had another vaccine in the 7 days before your planned appointment, or a positive COVID-19 test in the last 28 days you should book a later appointment.

Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a week or two after your second dose for your body to build up protection from the vaccine.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is 100% effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

Will the vaccine have side effects?

Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Although you may get some protection from the first dose, having the second dose will give you the best protection against the virus.

Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection for several days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

A mild fever may occur for two to three days after vaccination but a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection. You can take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) and rest to help you feel better. Do not exceed the normal dose. A less common side effect is swelling of the local [vocal?] glands.

Rarely, some people have an allergic reaction soon after a vaccination. This may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body. Even more rarely, some people can have a severe reaction soon after vaccination, which causes breathing difficulties and may cause them to collapse. This is called anaphylaxis and can happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are rare and nurses are trained to manage them. People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated and usually recover within a few hours.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, visit <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/> or seek medical advice. If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them your vaccination card if possible) so that they can assess you properly.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. But it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell
- some people also have a sore throat, headache, nasal congestion, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting

If you have any of the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test. If you need more information on symptoms visit <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/>

What should I do next?

You will receive information about when and where to get vaccinated. On the day of your appointment, wear practical clothing so it's easy to access your upper arm. If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, let the person giving you your vaccine know. They will be understanding and can support you.

What should I do if I am unwell on the appointment day?

If you are acutely unwell with a fever, call to cancel and wait until you have recovered to have the vaccine. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test or result.

Can I give COVID-19 to anyone, after I have had the vaccine?

Two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. We do not know yet whether it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus. So, it is important you continue to follow the COVID-19 guidance to protect those around you.

Additional guidance (not NHS Wales / Welsh government)

Attending a vaccination centre with a guide dog

The Guide Dogs organisation is advising that your guide dog can legally accompany you when you get your vaccine. However, to avoid any delays on the day, it would be beneficial to let the vaccination centre know that you will be bringing your guide dog with you in advance, in case they need to make additional provisions. Guide dogs are not vectors for coronavirus, so are safe to travel with you and be around other people.

The Guide Dogs Corona Helpline number is 0800 781 1444 and it is open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Making the vaccine rollout process accessible – advice for health workers

Wales Council of the Blind has joined with RNIB Cymru and Guide Dogs Cymru to call on the Welsh Government to ensure that the rollout of the Covid 19 vaccinations is accessible to people with sight loss.

This includes ensuring that communications are sent in accessible formats, and that venues are set up correctly, with clear signage and guiding assistance. The three charities have also produced advice for staff involved in administering the vaccine rollout on the steps they must take to ensure accessibility to blind and partially sighted people.

Employment.

Job interviews and work in the shadow of Coronavirus.

Megan John is the Disability Equality and Inclusions Officer for Disability Wales where she is responsible for the development and delivery of DW's programme of regional networks event and training sessions and to promote knowledge and understanding of the Social Model of disability. Megan is also a disabled actor and is a member of UCAN Productions.

In Wales, Covid-19 restrictions happened before she was interviewed for the job. Here she discusses the challenges of home working, particularly with its emphasis on conducting meetings over the internet, and the impact that has on her as a partially-sighted person. I asked her how she found the interview process.

“The interviews were meant to take place in March as we went into lockdown so they were rescheduled for April.

“I felt more at ease and in control; I didn't have any of the anxiety about how I would get to the meeting; would public transport be on time; would I be able to find the building and then the correct room.

“It was the same interview panel as would have been conducting the face-to-face interview. It was held like a normal interview as well as it could be.

“Unlike a normal interview when you're going into a room with people you don't know, I was more at ease and the anxieties you normally have weren't there. Having the ability to see the interviewers' faces and read the situation better by being able to see people was really helpful. I was more anxious about my technology not working to be honest, so the anxieties were different really.

“I could control my lighting in my room and I could see the interviewers better than in a face-to-face interview. It brought them closer and made

it a different experience for me with my particular vision impairment. It was a different experience rather than a better experience, if that makes sense.”

How was the interview structured? Did they give you any tasks?

“Yes, we were asked to prepare a ten to fifteen-minute presentation to be delivered via Zoom. I had less anxiety about it because I had my notes and some bullet points to use for the presentation, and I was using the technology in my own environment in a way that suited me. I wasn’t worried about doing it in front of people because I was just showing head and shoulders, and the tablet I had my notes on could have the text as big as I wanted and I could use it without it being watched by people. I didn’t use Powerpoint - I just did a verbal presentation.”

Do you think employers should be more open to interviewees doing verbal presentations?

“Yes, I do. I don’t see why when someone asks for a presentation it automatically means Powerpoint. For me a presentation is conveying information to people in whatever format you choose. Unless they specifically ask for a particular mode of presentation you should choose what you feel comfortable with and what you’re best at.

If you were to advise employers on best practise would you recommend flexibility on this point?

“Absolutely, yes. It’s good for all applicants – disabled and non-disabled – but for disabled people it should certainly be a choice.”

Anyway, you got the job. Congratulations! Covid gave you a strange baptism in the job last year. How do you find remote working?

“As a disability organisation they offer flexible working. At home it is more possible to take proper breaks from the screen. As a person with a vision impairment, I find the screen more of a strain than many people so I really need those breaks. Working from home means I can manage those breaks more effectively because I can work later to make up time without worrying about catching a train or whatever.

“It’s important for disabled people to be able to manage situations such as fatigue, and the home environment is often the best place to be to do that. As a person with a vision impairment, I need to be able to control my environment. Lighting has to be right and I need to be able to change that as much as I need at any given time. Being able to do that is really important to me. In a shared office you have standard lighting you can’t really change. You can’t move to a new place all the time if you’re at a fixed desk. You’re stuck in an environment where you have only one specific lighting arrangement and the only way you can change that is to maybe put on a baseball cap or a pair of sunglasses. At home, I have lights that I can dim so I can adapt the lighting to suit me throughout the day.”

How are you finding using online technology for working? Is it accessible enough?

“I guess, in terms of training online I can zoom in on my computer to read a Powerpoint and I can change the colour contrast on my screen so that the Powerpoint is in my preferred contrast. In face-to-face training I can’t do that. In conferences, not just in interviews and meetings, I can select which speaker I wish to focus on and I can look at the presentations without having to use my phone as a camera. It’s much easier.”

So, you’re able to manage this technology quite well?

“In terms of moving between speaker view and group view, yes. Obviously, the more people involved the smaller the faces get. But in, say, a staff meeting there are only a few people so I would leave it in group view. But I know how to use the assistive technology on my computer well for my benefit, so that helps as well.”

How do you find using the chat area in Zoom?

“In meetings I can use the chat box but it does take me a little more time and concentration to keep up with chat and the verbal conversation at the same time. Sometimes there are just one or two comments but sometimes they are coming literally one after the other quite quickly, and to keep up with that can be quite challenging. When I’m running a focus group or presenting, I find it difficult to do that and keep up with the chat box, especially if there is a lot being posted in it. That’s one of

the biggest negatives for me because you wouldn't have that going on in a face-to-face situation – the comments and questions would come afterwards. Now they have the luxury of putting questions throughout and expecting a response. I have had another member of staff to monitor the comments and to pick out the questions and help anyone who is having technology problems. But I'm now going to be delivering sessions by myself so I'll have to ask people to put comments in the chat box but keep them to a minimum – there'll be an opportunity to have a conversation about them afterwards.”

I find the chat intrusive. I can't manage the two streams of information – I just want to pay attention to the presenter. It can have a quality of being sat next to someone in a conference and they are whispering to you during a presentation.

“Yes, but it is really good for giving a platform for people who might not be confident enough to speak up in a meeting or people with certain impairments, but it can be a distraction from what is going on in the meeting. It has two sides – it's a good thing and a bad thing. It's like working from home generally – it has negatives and positives.”

How are you finding the other aspects of work? Is it harder to motivate yourself at home?

“Working from home you have to work on your own initiative. You can't expect people to keep telling you what to do. Luckily, I have experience through being self-employed of working from home and working independently. But it is really frustrating when you're in the middle of doing something and you just want to turn around to someone in the office to ask them something. You have to ring them and if they're unavailable you leave a message or drop them an email. It can be challenging when you don't have that immediate response. Obviously that is not particularly disability-related; more of a general working from home problem. But I'm working in a quiet environment and I can focus on what I'm doing.”

Is working from home something you would consider continuing? Would you be happy to stay at home or would you prefer being in the office?

“I think - depending on what you were doing - it would be good if you didn't always have to go in. There are people who prefer to be in the

office but I'm someone who doesn't need to be around people to get the work done. That comes from my experience as a freelancer and when I've worked in an office it's been with a small group of people.

"I'm enjoying the luxury of not having to deal with the difficulties and anxieties of over-crowded public transport, but there is an element of missing that office environment where you can sit and have a conversation with colleagues. I can go a whole week without speaking to a colleague. We have bonded as a team quite well given the circumstances, but you don't get to know people in quite the same way and you don't get to just have a chat."

To find out more about Megan's work, contact Disability Wales on:

Email: info@disabilitywales.org

Phone: 02920 887325

Website: www.disabilitywales.org

Twitter: www.twitter.com/DisabilityWales

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DisabilityWales

Employment Enjoyment.

Megan Price tells us of her experience of being interviewed and getting her first job.

It took a while. A long while. A really, REALLY long time. But in 2020, the year of Zoom and Doom (AKA Coronavirus), I finally managed to gain my first ever employment - let the victory dance begin!

Anyway, as I was saying, I gained my first employment. It was a long road getting there. I'm 29 and I feel like I should have had a job well before now in my life, but I guess that's natural. We all want to be able to be like the majority and do all the normal things, grow up, be educated, get a job et cetera, et cetera. But hey, I got there slowly but surely. I feel that one thing that stood me out from the crowd was: 1) my passion and 2) the amount of volunteering I had been involved with. My job involves a lot of duties where I will be supporting other disabled people, and since I've been involved in lots and lots of this exact type of volunteering, I had LOTS to talk about in the interview. So if you know what type of role, or what type of things you want to do as a career I

would strongly recommend getting involved in as much as possible. I know that can be daunting, but it really will help.

Talking about the interview, mine was, of course, over video call. In this instance - Teams. I did all the usual, got professionally dressed (as I thought having my camera off and doing it in my PJ's might not get me in the right mind set, and I needed to be on the ball!), I also ensured to click the link with plenty of time to spare in case there were any IT issues, and I made sure all preparations were in place. As the interview commence, yes I was nervous, but I was able to answer all the questions and we even had a casual conversation at the end – you know it's going well when you end up having a whole 10 minute conversation about dogs and why we love them after an interview, haha.

One thing I'll admit to as well, and some might consider this a risk, but at the end, I screwed up my courage and I was honest. I said: "I'd just like to say, I know I might not be the best at interviews, but I do hope that I've shown you the passion I have for this type of work." And the interviewers were a bit surprised, but said I had 100% done that.

Then the very next day, I had a call to say I had smashed the interview and had the job offer! Let the victory dance commence once more!

So, what has happened since? Absolute loads. Access to Work became the priority, especially if you don't know much about it, get to know it. Ask questions, ask the RNIB or other organisations what help they can provide or even go on Facebook or other social media because there are lots of groups and people on there that can give you some advice. It's definitely the number one thing you should do after you have a job offer (heads up, you can only apply once you have a start date).

Access to Work is a huge thing. Lots to plan. Lots to get through. And you need to be really specific. So prioritise it! As well as this process, I am also doing some online training. And, between you and me, it's been a bit of a frustration. There's been some really interesting training, I've learnt a lot of new and fun things, but accessibility wasn't the best. So what did I do? Yup! I told them! Very diplomatically, I emailed them (which I found via the website) and I just sent a basic first email to give them some feedback. I told them what I was struggling with and what was challenging. This was mainly down to colour contrast. I didn't think

it would go very far, BUT, I had the most loveliest reply from a wonderful lady! Who has since, encouraged and welcomed any further feedback. So I've been working closely with her to improve their knowledge of accessible digital practice.

And of course, other than these things, I've been getting to know others in my team and getting to grips with the role and what is involved.

It's brought every emotion so far: joy, delight, stress, frustration, laughter, irritation. But it's absolutely worth it. I wouldn't change a thing. Even with the negative feedback I've been giving about the training accessibility, I don't see it as negative. It's constructive and proactive. They're not mind-readers, and you can't expect them to be. So, even though I've only been working for 2 months now, I already feel like I've been contributing to the team and event, the organisation in such huge ways. I'm not the 'poor blind person, tucked in the corner to tick a box', I'm 100% part of the organisation, with so much knowledge and experience to give to them.

BEST MOMENT SO FAR:

Partying with Radio One. I started in December 2020, and within a week I was involved in a Team's Christmas party! Woo! (see what I did there? My team? Microsoft Teams? ... sorry!) – not only that, but, since it had to be all online, the lady that organised it got in touch with Radio One. And it resulted in our team having a Christmas office party with Radio One on air. You may only hear my wooing and cheering on there, but who cares!

Working Wales: Angharad won't let redundancy or a disability get in the way of her career aspirations.

Progressing to a career in marketing

Since graduating from the University of South Wales in 2015, Angharad, 27 from Port Talbot has been successful in gaining a variety of roles relating to her qualifications.

Angharad, who is registered blind says “My degree was in journalism and this led me to undertake some additional courses in digital marketing. I really enjoy working in marketing and I’m passionate about progressing my career within the industry”.

Due to the economic downturn, Angharad was made redundant in July 2020 from her role as account executive where she was involved in digital marketing and paid search activity for large UK companies.

Getting support from Working Wales

Following her redundancy, Angharad was advised to contact Working Wales by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) as they were aware of the redundancy support available.

Working with careers adviser, John Parke, from the Swansea Careers Wales team the pair discussed Angharad’s work aspirations. It was identified that some additional training would enhance Angharad’s work portfolio and support her in her job search.

John suggested a leadership and management course with a local training provider and funding through the ReAct programme* would allow Angharad to undertake the course.

Angharad says, “The course was great! It has extended my knowledge and has the potential to help me diversify into other marketing roles.

“I’m applying for jobs and it’s good to be able to include the new course on my CV and application forms. It shows that I’m keen to carry on learning to further my career”.

If, like Angharad, you’ve been affected by redundancy or have a disability and need specialist support please go to for contact details <https://workingwales.gov.wales/contact-us>.

Finding a job is challenging but Working Wales can help

Whatever is stopping you getting a job, Working Wales can provide free expert careers advice and guidance that is specifically tailored to you.

- Perhaps you’re worried that a health problem or disability could hold you back.

- You may have been out of work for some time and need help with your confidence and getting the right skills.
- Maybe a redundancy means a change in focus and you're looking to retrain and learn new skills.
- You might need support with childcare to allow you to get back to the career you once had.
- Or it could be that you simply don't know where to start or what to do next.

Whatever your situation, Working Wales can help.

Visit: <https://workingwales.gov.wales/> Call: 0800 028 4844

Working Wales is delivered by Careers Wales and funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund.

* <https://careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/funding-your-studies/redundancy-funding>

Preparing for job interviews over phone or video

*This advice has been sourced from **Scope** via <https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/job-interviews-over-phone-or-video/>*

Remote interviews are when you are not in the same place as the people interviewing you. This can be a voice call or a video call.

You might be invited to a remote interview because it's

- the first of several interview stages
- cheaper and easier for employers

Remote interviews have become more common during coronavirus. Many employers are following social distancing guidelines when they recruit new staff.

Find out about the interview

Get advance information about the remote interview format, including clear instructions about how to access video calls. This will help you to

prepare and work out if you need reasonable adjustments to make the interview accessible.

Types of remote interview

Voice calls

Where you have a conversation with the interviewers. This is often a telephone call.

Video calls

Where you have a conversation on camera. The interviewers will be able to see you. Some employers use free apps that you will need to download like Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp. If the employer uses Microsoft Teams, you can sign in as a guest using the link in the meeting invitation. You can ask for a test meeting in advance if that would help.

Remote assessments

Some employers use assessments during remote interviews to test an applicant's skills. Assessment tasks vary. These will depend on the skills needed for the job.

Tasks can include:

- role plays
- presentations
- case study exercises
- email inbox exercises
- using spreadsheets

Preparing for a remote interview

The employer should give you the information you need when they invite you for a remote interview. Ask for more details if you're not sure.

Know the interview arrangements

Make sure you know:

- the date and time of the interview
- whether it is a telephone or video call
- how to access the interview
- if you need to prepare anything before your interview, like a presentation

You could also ask who is going to be interviewing you.

Set up the room for a video call

Try to make the room as quiet and private as you can. This may mean talking to the people you live with or helping children to play somewhere else. Shut the doors and windows.

Make sure that you have a reliable internet connection. This could mean checking that no one else in your home is using the internet for anything that might slow it down, such as video streaming. Also, try to have:

- a stable surface to keep your device still
- a comfortable chair
- good lighting
- a neutral and tidy background
- smart interview clothes
- a drink nearby

If you cannot find a space with a neutral or tidy background, you may be able to blur your background or use a background image.

Get to know the technology

Before a video call, get to know the technology you will be using. If you can:

- install the video call platform to your device
- check how to switch on your camera and audio
- have a practice call with a family member or friend
- share your screen if you need to do a presentation

If you cannot use the same video call platform as the interviewer, use a different one so you can test your microphone and camera.

Prepare what you're going to say

Prepare the same as you would for any interview. Even though you will not be meeting the interviewers, this is still a formal conversation. You will want to present yourself positively and professionally.

- Think about the skills and experience you would like to discuss.
- Research the employer online.

Asking for reasonable adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010 (GOV.UK), employers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants. This means you have the right to ask for changes that will enable you to access the remote interview process.

Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

- extra time to complete assessment tasks
- another person to assist you with setting up technology
- changing the interview time
- having a personal assistant (PA) or friend there to support you.

Scope (www.scope.org.uk) offers a Support to Work programme - a free online and telephone support programme for disabled people in England and Wales, who are looking for paid work.

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Email: helpline@scope.org.uk

JobSense offering pre-employment and in-work support to adults with sensory loss.

JobSense is a three-year project and ELITE works with partners Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and the Centre of Sign-Sight-Sound (COS), to support individuals with Sensory Loss to access employability opportunities. It is supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. We cover the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire and South Powys. (See end of article for contact details for Wrexham, Flintshire and North Powys).

We aim to enhance and upskill people over 25 who are blind or visually impaired, economically inactive and/or long term unemployed, providing specialist support to enable them to enter employment, or move closer to the labour market through appropriate training.

Our number one priority has been to keep our current participants on track, by ensuring they are fully informed of the latest updates around Covid-19. We have aimed to keep everyone connected to each other and motivated. We knew how important it was to make ourselves accessible to everyone for support, information, and advice. The priority

was to ensure we kept in touch with the multiple services available so we could continue signposting and engaging, and to reach other people who may benefit from our help.

Our team are friendly and encouraging, helping our participants to stay motivated and ready for when the restrictions are lifted, giving them the confidence and skills to find suitable employment.

ELITE is continuing to operate its pre-employment support to new and current participants, using a range of technology to maintain accessible contact and provide employability support. We have held a weekly job club on Microsoft Teams and / or a telekit conference call depending on individual preference and have used this as an opportunity for participants to meet in a group and share concerns. To date we have held interactive sessions alongside accredited courses. These have included Creating Online Profiles, Customer Service, Promoting Safe Practice during Covid-19, Wellbeing and Exercise, Equality and Diversity, Confidence building and many more topics.

Participant feedback on sessions:

“I thought the session was helpful during this time when I have low confidence.”

“It provided me with ways in which to build confidence and help relax with the mindfulness exercises.”

“Training was effective in that it contributed towards health and safety competency for employability and encouraged greater awareness of the kinds of accidents and other causes of ill health.”

ELITE staff are homeworking and make regular individual telephone and video conferences calls to continue building on our participants employment skills and confidence. We also provide support with people’s mental health and wellbeing at this difficult time, providing mindfulness sessions where needed.

Jane McCann from Sight life has referred several participants to the project from the Cardiff area and has seen first-hand how much of an impact the project is making to people’s lives:

“The ELITE programme in Cardiff is hugely successful and there is a very high demand for it. Our members who are currently working with ELITE speak very highly of it indeed. They appreciate the regular contact; the structure and it is a pleasure to see their confidence grow. Those who have finished on the project say how much they miss it afterwards, but they are noticeably better able to self-advocate than before, as well as more confident to engage in leisure activities too.”

Rob from Cardiff has been on the JobSense project since last year and since then has completed further training to complement his impressive CV, including a First Aid course, and Promoting Safe Practice During Covid-19 and other infectious diseases Through Covid-19 lockdown he has maintained his volunteering, working from home and now has been successful in achieving paid employment which is to start at the end of January.

“Employers are impressed with applicants who have the ability to rise to a challenge and to persevere. Volunteering has improved my communication with colleagues and supervisors and has allowed me to work as part of a team, stay organised and meet deadlines. This has ensured I gained on-the-job experience that I could potentially leverage into a future paid opportunity comprising interests that I’ve never formally pursued before.

When looking for paid work and requiring help with job searching, this scheme has been helpful because of training and volunteering. JobSense has reconnected me with local services and communities through working and educational related routes. This project understands that everyone is unique, with different needs and requirements, impacting on their step into the world of employment, education or training”.

Maxine, Employment Advisor from JobSense says “At first we were like everyone else, unsure of how it was going to work out, whether people would want to stay on programme or if we’d be able to facilitate our support effectively. We have been so pleased to have new participants start on programme whilst in lockdown and also several paid employment starts, which we are over the moon about.”

One Participant advised; “When I came to the JobSense programme sightlessness was a very new experience for me and the simple things

like reading a bank statement or making a cuppa were a challenge. Although I knew I had existing valuable transferable skills, I had no idea how I would be able to use them in the workplace or, indeed, if I would be able to work again and, as a result, my confidence in my employability had disappeared.

“This was exacerbated by Covid19, lockdown and fears that this would impact on my employability. I felt that in the current economic climate opportunities would not exist, I felt no-one would want to employ a person with a Visual Impairment, and I had no confidence in returning to employment.

“My JobSense Employment Advisor supported and continues to support me on the journey to regaining that confidence, through introducing me to assistive technology and new ways of working, by supporting me through my ‘wobbles’, by encouraging me to look for employment and voluntary work, helping me with job applications and carrying out mock interviews.

“The Job club that is part of the programme allowed me to meet other people with a visual impairment and provided a safe arena in which to ask questions. This was done through Video chat and telephone.

“JobSense does try to cater for as wide an audience as possible, and individual’s needs. Overall, I have felt supported and encouraged in a positive environment, which has allowed me to make my way back into full time paid employment.

“I have now been working from home for 5 months. Using Access to Work to provide me with the technology I require to complete the tasks, ongoing support and advice with my Employment Adviser and reasonable adjustments in the workplace, I can achieve all the tasks set and feel confident in the job role I have undertaken.”

Another Participant advised: “You are more than an Employment Advisor, you have kept me on track, given me structure through these unsettled times, provided me with the confidence to learn, explore and move into a different career, given me the time to express my fears and overcome them, and continue to support me in my new role.”

It is important to us to make sure our specialised support is still in place for people who need it. If you are aware of anyone with sensory loss looking to increase their employability skills who would benefit from the JobSense programme, please do get in touch.

We welcome new referrals to our programme and our Employment Advisors are always willing to discuss individual cases to assess eligibility, or signpost to the relevant support.

Contact details:

Newport/Monmouthshire: Tina Hewitt thewitt@elitesea.co.uk
Vale of Glamorgan/Cardiff: Maxine Levett mlevett@elitesea.co.uk
South Powys: Amanda Pearce apearce@elitesea.co.uk
Website: <https://elitesea.co.uk/our-projects/jobsense/>

Jobsense in North Wales.

“JobSense”, funded by the European Social Fund, is a 3-year project supporting individuals with sight loss and/or hearing loss to secure and retain employment. In Wrexham, Flintshire and North Powys, the scheme is operated by The Centre of Sign, Sight, Sound (COS).

Tel: 01492 530013 mobile 07435967326
Email: jobsense@signsightsound.org.uk
Web: <https://www.centreofsignsightsound.org.uk/jobsense>

Help with getting a job.

Disability Rights UK

Careers advice, rights and the Equality Act, disability-friendly employers, employment programmes, apprenticeships and more.

Tel: (General enquiries) 0330 995 0400

Email: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/careers-and-work-disabled-people>

Working Wales

Working Wales is a newly-launched project which aims to provide “inclusive, accessible and comprehensive” support for adults 18+ as well as young people 16-17 from the point they leave education. Their website has sections on work advice, funding for training, help for childcare, redundancy support, courses, learning new skills, and leaving school. The section on specialist support includes employment support and apprenticeships for disabled people.

Web: <https://workingwales.gov.wales/>

Tel: Careers Wales **0800 028 4844**

Even Break

“Disabled jobseekers can be confident that employers who have chosen to place their vacancies on this site are serious about looking beyond their disabilities to identify what skills they have to offer.”

Email: info@evenbreak.co.uk

Tel: 0845 658 5717

Web: www.evenbreak.co.uk

Career Pathways

Career Pathways is an independent careers advice service for young disabled people. Career advisers will work with you to set you on the path to succeed.

You will be offered up to 3 one-hour sessions with a specialist career adviser to:

- make you aware of all the career options and the employment routes open to you;
- develop your career goals and create an action plan to help you achieve them.

(Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, all sessions will be run online and by phone until further notice).

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Email: careerpathways@scope.org.uk

Website: <https://www.scope.org.uk/employment-services/career-pathways/>

The Pocklington Trust

The Pocklington Trust provides a range of services and support for anyone with sight loss wanting to start, restart or progress their careers. This includes:

- A professional coaching service (particularly useful for people facing redundancy due to Covid-19).
- Mock interviews carried out over the phone or via video conference.
- Online resources including hints and tips on subjects such as completing an application form, preparing for an interview, and job hunting.
- Occasional online events where someone with sight loss talks about their experience of employment, with the opportunity to ask questions.

Email: info@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Web: <https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/>

Minds in Sight employment forums

Vision Support, Henshaws and RSBC are currently partners in the 'Minds in Sight' project which aims to give a voice to young VI individuals on a variety of topics. The project's local and national

employment forums, held in November of 2020, provided opportunities for participants to ask questions and discuss their experiences with representatives from organisations such as Careers Wales and ACAS.

More 'Minds in Sight' employment forums are coming in 2021.

Tel: 01244 381 515

Email: kbenn@visionsupport.org.uk

Agoriad Cyf

Agoriad Cyf was established in 1992 with the objectives of developing the employment possibilities for disabled and disadvantaged people. Since this time a great many of our clients have benefited from their experience with Agoriad and are proving to be loyal and effective contributors to their employers. We also offer specialist recruitment services for businesses throughout North Wales.

Agoriad Cyf, Tŷ Gwydr / The Greenhouse, 1 Trevelyan Terrace, High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 1AX.

Tel: 01248 361 392

Email: info@agoriad.org.uk

Web: <https://www.agoriad.org.uk>

Sight Loss Advice Service - employment

RNIB's Sight Loss Advice Service provides information and support for people with sight loss who are working or looking for employment. This includes:

- Information and factsheets on looking for work
- Advice on completing an application form and writing a CV
- Advice on whether and when to disclose that you have a disability
- Preparing for an interview
- Starting in a new job
- What to do if you are employed and there is a change in your level of sight
- Schemes and technology to help you in the workplace
- Information on becoming self-employed

Web: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/equality-rights-employment>
Helpline 0303 123 9999

The Macular Society

The Macular Society and Support4Sight have joined forces to create a series of YouTube videos, exploring the challenges of employment and looking for work as a visually impaired person. Topics covered include writing a CV, disclosing sight loss, and the Access to Work scheme.

Tel: 0300 3030 111

Web: <https://www.macularsociety.org/news/new-series-videos-visually-impaired-workers-and-job-seekers>.

Scope - Working on Wellbeing project

Disability charity Scope's 'Working on Wellbeing' project is an employment training and support programme for disabled people in Wales. Advisors will work with individuals to develop a programme around their career goals and how they can be achieved.

The service, which is available in English and Welsh, is for disabled people aged 16 and over who are currently unemployed.

Tel: 020 76197139

Email: workingonwellbeing@scope.org.uk

Web: <https://www.scope.org.uk/employment-services/working-on-wellbeing/>

Leonard Cheshire Disability - Changing Futures

Changing Futures is an employment programme aimed at individuals with a disability living in the Swansea/Bridgend areas who are struggling to access training, volunteering or employment. The programme, which is run by Leonard Cheshire Disability, provides one-to-one and group training regarding job brokerage, and on-the-job and work-related accredited training tailored to individual needs. It also provides up to 26 weeks of full-time paid employment with local employers.

Tel: 01633 422583 (Wales office)

Email: changingfutures@leonardcheshire.org

Web: <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/what-we-can-do-you/working/employment-support-and-internships/employment-support/employment-support> .

Professional coaching.

For blind and partially-sighted people facing redundancy, TPT offers professional coaching to help you identify career goals and develop a strategy with action steps to achieve those goals.

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Email: employment@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Web: <https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/professional-coaching/>

Mentoring.

Working Wales

Working Wales can support you through these changing times with free advice, guidance and access to training to help you get into work or further your career.

Tel: 0800 028 4844

Email: workingwales@careerswales.gov.uk

<https://workingwales.gov.wales>

Jobsense.

(See article above)

Communities for Work.

Communities for Work is a community based advisory service working to increase the employability of individuals who are not in employment, education or training and who face complex barriers to employment.

Communities for Work can provide support to help to build your confidence, gain some work experience, learn new skills or re-write your CV. Communities for Work will help you as an individual and will meet with you in your local community.

<https://workingwales.gov.wales/how-we-can-help/learning-new-skills/communities-for-work>

Work placements.

Leonard Cheshire Disability – Change 100 scheme

Change 100 is an annual scheme which offers students and recent graduates with disabilities paid summer work placements, professional development and mentoring. It aims to remove barriers experienced by disabled people in the workplace, to allow them to achieve their potential. It is run in partnership with leading employers in the UK who believe disability isn't a barrier to a brilliant career.

The closing date to apply for placements in 2021 has now passed, but applications for 2022 are likely to open in autumn 2021.

Tel: 01633 422583 (Wales)

Email: change100applications@leonardcheshire.org

Web: <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/get-support/working/change-100-internships/applicants>

Support in employment.

Access to work and coronavirus

The changes to Access to Work factsheet gives information on Coronavirus. In brief:

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, you can still get help from Access to Work if you have a disability or a physical or mental health condition that makes it hard for you to do your job.

You may be able to get help with working from home, at your normal workplace, or a combination of both. If you cannot use public transport safely because of your disability, and your doctor or healthcare professional supports this, funding may be available for extra travel costs.

If you employ your own support worker and have additional costs for personal protective equipment (PPE), Access to Work may be able to provide funding.

Access to Work can also provide funding for remote support services, such as video remote interpreting or British Sign Language interpreting.

You cannot claim help from Access to Work if you are no longer working. If you already have an Access to Work award, you can start using it again when you start working.

DWP is prioritising making grants for new claims from critical workers, those in the clinically extremely vulnerable group and people due to start work within 4 weeks.

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers>

Blind in Business

The aim of Blind in Business, which was founded by three vision impaired graduates, is to help blind and partially sighted graduates to compete equally with sighted candidates for good jobs, by providing help, support and training, and by removing barriers to success. They aim to help anyone with sight loss who wants careers advice or support in the workplace, and can also advise employers, the families of vision impaired people, and university disability support staff.

Tel: 020 7588 1885

Email: info@blindinbusiness.org.uk

Web: <https://blindinbusiness.org.uk/>

Rights and regulations.

ACAS Wales - the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

ACAS is an independent public body that receives funding from the government. They provide “free and impartial advice to employers, employees and their representatives on employment rights, best practice and policies.”

For their recent training and information on employment during the Covid-19 pandemic, go to:

<https://archive.acas.org.uk/wales>

Their advice for employers and employees concerning Covid is at

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Tel: 0300 123 1150

Coronavirus: your rights at work

UNISON gives advice on rights in the workplace under Coronavirus restrictions.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>

Employee rights and Coronavirus

<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/employee-rights-coronavirus/>

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Email: helpline@scope.org.uk

Health and safety when working at home

The Health and Safety Executive gives advice to employers on health and safety. This is particularly useful now that many workers are now home-working. Aimed at employers, it is helpful for workers to know their rights and what to look out for.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

Your rights in employment

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a guide to reasonable adjustments in the workplace, including who is responsible for meeting the costs:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/multipage-guide/employment-workplace-adjustments>

Tel: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084