

**Wales Council of the Blind**

**R . E . S . E . T .**

## **Social Care & Health**

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# Who's Who and What's What.

## HEALTH

**Local Health Board:** The overall function of a Welsh Local Health Board is to improve the health of the responsible population, develop primary health services, and commission community and secondary care services. A Welsh Local Health Board will, if it so wishes and is capable of doing so, be able to provide directly a range of community health services, creating new opportunities to integrate primary and community health services as well as health and social care provision.

**Primary care:** The part of the NHS where GPs, community nurses and other clinicians work to provide a first point of contact for patients. Community pharmacists, dentists and opticians are also part of Primary Care.

**Secondary care:** Sometimes referred to as 'hospital and community care', can either be planned (elective) care such as a cataract operation, or urgent and emergency care such as treatment for a fracture.

**Eye Health Examination Wales:** Enables patients with sudden onset eye problems and those in at-risk categories for developing eye disease, or those who would find losing their sight particularly difficult, to obtain a free eye examination from an accredited optometrist in the community.

**Ophthalmologist:** diagnoses and treats all eye diseases, performs eye surgery and prescribes and fits eyeglasses and contact lenses to correct vision problems. Many ophthalmologists are also involved in scientific research on the causes and cures for eye diseases and vision disorders.

**Optometrist:** Previously known as ophthalmic opticians, optometrists are primary health care specialists trained to examine the eyes to detect

defects in vision, signs of injury, ocular diseases or abnormality and problems with general health.

**Orthoptist:** Orthoptists are the experts in diagnosing and treating defects in eye movement and problems with how the eyes work together, called binocular vision. These can be caused by issues with the muscles around the eyes or defects in the nerves enabling the brain to communicate with the eyes.

They see patients with a wide range of conditions affecting their vision. They are trained to offer a range of treatments, including eye patches, eye exercises, prisms or glasses. They also commonly work with patients with neurological conditions, such as stroke, brain tumours or multiple sclerosis.

**Ophthalmic nurse:** provides care and guidance to patients and assist ophthalmologists in treating patients. Ophthalmic nurses have to support the patient through the effects of visual loss.

**Dispensing optician:** advises on, fits and supplies the most appropriate spectacles after taking account of each patient's visual, lifestyle and vocational needs. Dispensing opticians also play an important role in advising and dispensing low vision aids to those who are partially sighted as well as advising on and dispensing to children where appropriate. They are also able to fit and provide aftercare for contact lenses after undergoing further specialist training.

**Eye clinic liaison officer (or similar):** ECLOs work closely with medical and nursing staff in the eye clinic, as well as the sensory team in social services, to connect you with the practical and emotional support you need to understand your diagnosis, deal with your sight loss and maintain your independence.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Support Service:**

A hospital-based service that can deal with your concerns:

- listen to your comments, suggestions, compliments and queries and make every effort to resolve issues as quickly as possible;
- offer impartial advice and support to patients, families, friends and carers;
- make contact with our staff and, if appropriate, other organisations to assist you;

- signpost you to other appropriate organisations that can provide information or advice;
- assist service improvement by listening to your feedback and reporting on themes and trends raised by our service users;
- keep your information confidential unless there is an exceptional reason - for example to protect children, yourself or another person.

The Patient Advice and Liaison Support Officers will do their best to resolve issues and problems quickly and directly with the staff concerned.

## **SOCIAL CARE**

**Local Authority front line staff:** you will normally speak to frontline staff before getting through to the service itself. They may ask you specific questions in order to ascertain whom you should speak to. It's important you are clear about what support you are seeking. It may help to speak to a third sector organisation for advice first.

**Assessment:** In social care terminology, the process whereby the needs of an individual are identified alongside their impact on independence, daily functioning and quality of life so that appropriate care, health or other services can be planned. It aims to identify and explore the many issues connected with a person's needs and should include all relevant viewpoints. It should be self-contained and time-limited, culminating in the clear identification of needs and the objectives for how these needs will be met (see care plan below).

**Care plan:** The plan of treatment or actions agreed with a service user following an assessment of need by a health or care agency.

**Direct Payments:** Direct Payments are means-tested payments made to service users in lieu of community care services they have been assessed as needing, and are intended to give users greater choice in their care. The money received should be enough to meet a person's assessed care needs. Direct Payments have been available since 1997 and are made to a wide variety of people, including carers, adult service users and people with short-term needs. Direct Payments are not the only way a person can have control over their care service funding.

Someone else can hold the money for them - a family member or other representative, a trust, an organisation, or a Care Manager.

**Emergency duty team:** Social work service that responds to social care emergencies outside office hours. Also known as the Out of Hours Service.

**Outcomes:** In social care, the term 'outcome' is often used to refer to the positive results of the social care a person has received. They represent changes or improvements that have taken place during the time someone has been receiving support.

**Personal Assistant:** A person employed to help someone with their daily social care in a way that is right for them. A person can employ a Personal Assistant to provide support like: cooking, cleaning, help with personal care like washing and using the toilet, driving or help with getting around, medical tasks, shopping, banking or paying bills.

**Personal Independence Payment (PIP):** Personal Independence Payment replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for disabled people aged 16 to 64. Personal Independence Payment is to help towards some of the extra costs caused by ill health or disability. It's based on how a person's condition affects them, not the condition they have.

**Referral:** In social care, a formal request for an assessment of a person's needs (see Assessment above).

**Rehabilitation officer for visual impairment:** Assists someone to regain skills they may have lost through illness or disability. It helps them re-learn to do things they could previously do for themselves.

**Review:** This can refer to re-assessment of service user's needs and issues, and consideration of the extent to which services are to meet the stated objectives, achieve the desired outcomes and respond to changes in circumstances or service criteria.

**Social workers:** Social workers help protect vulnerable adults and children from abuse and help people to live more successfully within their local communities by helping them find solutions to their problems. To succeed, social workers must work not only with people

who use services, but with their families, neighbours and friends as well as with other organisations such as the police, the NHS and schools.

**Statutory agencies:** Official organisations set up according to written laws of central government.

**Support plan:** A Support Plan says how people will spend their budget to get the life they want. People who use services can get help to make a plan - perhaps from family or friends, or pay someone who specialises in planning. A person's local authority must agree the plan before they get their support money.

## **THIRD SECTOR (Charities and social enterprises)**

Contact **Wales Council of the Blind** to find out your relevant local services on **029 20 473 954**. Alternatively, go to **[www.wcbccd.org.uk/perspectif.php](http://www.wcbccd.org.uk/perspectif.php)**

**Advocacy:** Advocates and advocacy services exist to give independent help to enable people to take control of their lives, explore and express their own needs and access the services and support they need to meet their needs.

**Befriending services:** A scheme whereby an individual is given support in the form of friendship, sometimes helping with shopping or simply being someone to talk to and to ensure the individual is happy and safe.

**Resource centre:** A static or mobile place where technological aids and equipment are available variously to view, try out and purchase.

**Voluntary organisation:** A voluntary organisation is one whose main focus is to deliver social benefit in a variety of forms, rather than to generate profit for distribution to its members. It will usually be governed by volunteers and be independent of government. There are many types of third sector organisation. In the sight loss sector, they include: local/regional society for Vision Impairment; local clubs and groups; National organisations for VI; condition-specific organisations

# Updates on Health and Social Care.

## NHS Wales launches online consulting system

### What is the NHS Wales Video Consulting (VC) Service?

The NHS Wales Video Consulting (VC) Service is being rolled out to offer healthcare services in a safe and secure way to see patients via a video appointment, rather than seeing them in person. The VC Service is delivered via a communication platform called 'Attend Anywhere'.

### What is Attend Anywhere?

- Attend Anywhere is a web-based communication platform that allows video appointments to take place between patients, families and optometrists/opticians.
- These appointments can take place anywhere convenient to the patient, such as at work, school or home.
- Attend Anywhere is accessible via any type of device that has Internet access e.g., smart phone, tablet, laptop or computer with a webcam running Chrome or Safari browsers.

If you book an appointment with an optometrist they will ascertain whether or not a video conference would be suitable.

## Specsavers Remote Care service

### RemoteCare

Sometimes, rather than coming into store, we might suggest that you chat to us by video or phone with our free consultation service, RemoteCare. It's for anyone who needs sight or hearing advice – even if you're not currently a customer.

Just book an appointment in the normal way and we'll be in touch to see if a RemoteCare consultation would be better.

## **How we can help with RemoteCare:**

'I've got a problem with my eyes'

If you have any symptoms, like itchy or red eyes, or you've noticed a change in your vision, we can provide advice and let you know what to do next.

'I need help with my contact lenses'

For any help or tips for contact lens wearers, like reminders on putting them in, taking them out or keeping them clean.

'I think I have some hearing issues'

We can help with any issues to do with your general hearing health or any problems you might be having with your hearing aids.

'I am a home visits customer'

No problem. You can talk to our experts remotely if you'd rather not have a home visit at the moment.

## **Things you'd need to come in for:**

'I need an eye test'

If you need an eye test, it's best to book in and see us in store where your optician can carry out all the checks you need.

'I need a hearing test and have some wax build-up'

Our hearing services are back up and running in store, so you can book in to see our audiologists for a hearing test or earwax removal appointment.

## **Attending the hospital eye clinic.**

As can be read in some of the following updates, there is a clear message about attending eye clinic appointments – and other hospital appointments for that matter. Simply put – if your appointment has not been cancelled, it's because it's important that you should attend! Whilst we recognise that leaving the home to go to a hospital or clinic appointment scares some people, the places where your appointment

take place are kept scrupulously clean and the social distancing measures are adhered to strictly. Your appointment, whether it be for treating glaucoma, macular disease or other condition, is important. If it's not critical, the clinic would delay your appointment.

Please read the following articles for more guidance on how to remain safe during your visits.

## **RNIB: What to do if you are worried about your vision during coronavirus**

If you have vision symptoms that you are worried about the following advice may help you.

You should get the advice of an eye health professional today if you experience sudden onset of any of the following symptoms:

- loss of vision
- blurred vision
- pain with or without discharge
- light sensitivity
- double vision
- flashes of light in your vision
- disturbances in your vision
- new floating bits in your vision.

If you have any of these symptoms you should call a local optician in the first instance and 111 if they are not available. Do not ignore these symptoms or wait until after the coronavirus situation has eased.

Hospital eye clinics are now open again but may only be able to see patients at high risk of sight loss; routine appointments may still be delayed. However, if you are worried about your vision or if you are under the care of the hospital eye service and think you should have been contacted with a new appointment, then please contact your hospital or optometrist to find out what you should do. RNIB Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) are available in many hospitals and they would be able to help you too. (More about ECLOs below.)

If your symptoms have been present for several weeks or months, then call your optician as soon as you can for advice.

If you have profusely watery or red eyes and a persistent dry cough or fever this is potentially a sign of coronavirus and so you should use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do. Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

[Source: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/sight-loss-advice/eye-health/what-do-if-you-are-worried-about-your-vision-during-coronavirus> ]

## **Macular Society: advice on attending eye clinics.**

### **I am receiving hospital treatment for macular disease. Should I attend?**

Yes. As with previous lockdowns in the UK, if you are currently receiving treatment for macular disease, you should continue to attend your appointments as usual – unless your eye clinic tells you otherwise.

While there will be some appointments postponed or moved online, all urgent, sight-threatening and emergency care will continue. The Macular Society has spoken to several eye clinics across the UK, all of which are continuing to see patients at this time.

If you are not receiving injections, or have been told not to attend as your condition is stable and notice any sudden deterioration in your vision, you should contact your eye clinic as soon as possible. A&E departments remain open for true emergencies.

### **Is it safe to visit my local eye clinic?**

Hospitals and eye care professionals are doing everything possible to make sure patients receive their eye injections in a safe environment. If you have any concerns about attending you can contact them directly for further reassurance. Maintaining your sight is critical.

### **Can I visit my local opticians?**

[Go to the section on Optometry Practices below]

[Source: <https://www.macularsociety.org/about/media/news/what-do-latest-coronavirus-restrictions-mean-eye-care-services/>]

# Top tips for travelling to your injections

Are you worried about travelling to your eye clinic for your injection?

Many of you attending regular injections at the hospital have shared concerns about getting to your appointments safely amid the coronavirus outbreak. We've included some tips below, including some alternatives to public transport.

- Firstly, more people are working from home and may have more flexibility to give you a lift to the hospital. If you have a friend, neighbour or family member who can drive you, and who you know has not been exposed to any infection this would be a better option than any type of public transport or community transport service.
- If you would like to be extra cautious you could ask the person transporting you to wear a mask. You also shouldn't be embarrassed or shy in asking about how they are feeling and what measures they've been taking to stay isolated.
- If you are unable to find a friend, neighbour or family member to take you to your appointment then try contacting your local hospital to see if they have a community shuttle service in action.
- You could also try contacting your local blind societies, or organisations such Age Cymru who may know of volunteers offering lifts.

If you have no other choice than to take public transport to your appointment, use the following advice:

- Use anti-bacterial wipes to disinfect your seat and any handles you may need to hold
- Most public transport is quieter than usual at the moment so finding a seat on your own may not be difficult, but be sure to sit away from other passengers if you can.
- Use hand sanitiser regularly.
- Wear latex or similar gloves which you can also cleanse with hand sanitiser if you do not have a sink.

- Once at the clinic, you may be asked to dispose of the gloves and to wash your hands, so make sure you take a second pair for your journey home.

**All hospital visitors are asked to follow the following advice:**

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

*For more information or support from Macular Society, contact our Advice and Information Service on 0300 3030 111.*

[Source: <https://www.macularsociety.org/about/coronavirus/top-tips-travelling-your-injections/> ]

## **How can community transport help me get my vaccination?**

Many people struggle to use mainstream public transport. Maybe the bus stop is too far from your home, or you worry about being able to move from the kerb to the bus itself. Perhaps you live in an area with no/very few buses. Maybe you use a wheelchair and worry about the accessible space already being taken, or perhaps your vision or hearing isn't as good as it used to be and you worry about missing your stop. Or maybe you just can't manage a journey with bus changes and long waits.

Whatever the reason, community transport operators are often able to help, even if you only need assistance to get to your vaccination appointment. **Community transport offers a door-to-door service in a vehicle which has been thoroughly cleaned before picking you**

**up, with staff and volunteers who have been trained to support you, including risk assessments and the right PPE. You can rest assured that your safety and comfort are their top priority and you can get to and from your vaccination appointment safely and in good time.**

By calling your local community transport provider, they can book you a lift in a COVID-19 secure vehicle, with a trained driver. And because community transport is not for profit, journeys can often be significantly cheaper than a taxi, with some operators able to offer vaccination transport free of charge.

*It's important to only travel to your local vaccination centre if you have an appointment.*

The **Community Transport Association (CTA)** have worked with Traveline Cymru to offer a full list of community transport operators across Wales. Call Traveline Cynru on 0800 464 00 00.

[Source: <https://www.traveline.cymru/blog/2021/02/17/how-to-travel-to-your-covid-19-vaccination-appointment-using-community-transport/>]

## **Glaucoma UK: The importance of continuing to apply eye drops.**

COVID-19 may have caused priorities to change, but your eyesight remains vitally important.

If you or a loved one are one of the 64 million people worldwide living with glaucoma, you may be experiencing challenges managing your condition effectively.

If your treatment is paused or stopped it can lead to vision loss and permanent, irreversible blindness.

It's important to continue to apply your eye drops as advised by your ophthalmologist, including attending your appointments and collecting ongoing prescriptions.

[Source: Glaucoma UK <https://glaucoma.uk/care-support/covid-19-advice/> ]

# **RNIB: Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) Service**

## **ECLO Service delivery**

Your ECLOs have continued to work throughout the pandemic. Back in March RNIB put in place rapid arrangements to enable ECLOs to work remotely, but since that time all ECLOs have returned to work from their eye clinic, at least part of the time.

ECLOs are still here to help people with sight loss, and can take self-referrals, referrals from eye clinics, or referrals from primary and statutory sector partners.

ECLOs have provided essential emotional support at what has been a very uncertain and difficult time, along with practical advice to ensure patients had access to shopping, medication, and other essentials. Key concerns of patients throughout this period have changed in some ways because of the pandemic. ECLOs can help patients who may be:

- fearful of attending appointments in hospital
- concerned over delayed and cancelled appointments
- having difficulties finding transport to clinic
- experiencing practical issues such as accessing shopping and medication
- feeling isolated and struggling with the emotional and mental health impact of lockdown and shielding
- in need of certification and registration (through the CVI) as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

ECLO can now see patients face-to-face in clinic, although with many patients understandably wanting to spend as little time as possible in the hospital, much ECLO support is still taking place over the telephone or by email.

All face-to-face contact with patients in clinic is in accordance with UK guidelines on social distancing, and with appropriate PPE being worn. If you need support from your ECLO please be reassured they are still very much available and able to help.

## **Attending appointments**

Early in the pandemic it became clear to ECLOs and others in eye clinics that many patients were extremely anxious about attending for treatment. This is perfectly understandable as so many of the messages we all heard were to stay home, avoid unnecessary travel, and not to overwhelm the NHS.

If you have been given an appointment in the eye clinic, this is because you will have been assessed as needing to attend. This will be to help manage your eye condition and try to avoid sight loss. It is therefore very important to attend.

Lots of things have been put in place for patient safety, with different measures in different clinics depending on local risk assessments. Safety measures can include:

- Masks and hand sanitiser
- Additional cleaning of all equipment
- Social distancing
- One-way systems
- Attending appointments alone (although assistance can be arranged if needed)
- Waiting outside until appointment time

## **Delayed and cancelled appointments**

If your appointment has been cancelled it is because it was not assessed as essential or sight-saving at this time. However, as the patient you are the best person to decide if you feel you need to be seen by your ophthalmologist. Patients must stay alert to changes in their vision, or to new symptoms, and always seek advice if at all concerned.

Optometrists are operating, and emergency eye care is still open. Emergency appointments are available for patients who have experienced a deterioration in their vision, or a sudden sight loss. It is important not to leave it too late to seek advice, so please contact your local optometrists or emergency eye care unit.

Any patients who are concerned their appointment has been cancelled and who don't think it should have been are also encouraged to contact their eye clinic, consultant secretary or ECLO.

Please contact your local ECLO using existing contact numbers and emails, or if these are not known please contact [rebecca.colclough@rnib.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.colclough@rnib.org.uk) or telephone 07767 408388 and you will be put in touch with the ECLO covering your area. ECLOs in Wales are employed by RNIB, Local Health Boards, and Sight Cymru.

## **Fight For Sight: Tips to maintain good eye health during the pandemic**

A recent survey by Fight for Sight of 2,000 people in the UK has found that half of people's screen time has increased since the pandemic began – of these 38% believe their eyesight has been affected as a result. This has led to difficulty reading, migraines and poorer night vision.

### **We've put together a list of top tips for keeping our eyes healthy during the pandemic**

**Tip 1:** Have your eyes tested every two years even if you think your vision is fine. An eye test can spot some eye conditions and other illnesses not related to sight. Regular check-ups are vital even if you have no symptoms. Opticians have remained open for appointments during lockdown.

**Tip 2:** If you find your screen time has increased as a result of the pandemic, try to adopt the '20-20-20' rule which recommends that for every 20 minutes spent using a screen, you should try to look away at something that is 20 feet away from you for a total of 20 seconds. Following the rule should reduce eye strain caused by looking at screens for too long.

**Tip 3:** Wear safety glasses or protective goggles to protect your eyes from injury if you are doing DIY, gardening or setting off fireworks.

**Tip 4:** Being fit and well can help your eyes stay healthy. Maintaining a healthy weight and blood pressure may help with eye health. Protect your eyes when playing sports involving flying balls.

**Tip 5:** Make sure your diet includes nutrients such as Omega-3 fatty acids, zinc and vitamins C and E. These may help to slow progress of age-related vision problems such as macular degeneration. Recommended foods for general good health include green leafy vegetables, oily fish such as salmon and citrus fruits.

[Source: <https://www.fightforsight.org.uk/news-and-articles/articles/news/eye-health-tips/> ]

## **Welsh Ambulance Service.**

The Welsh Ambulance Service is making changes to its NHS Direct Wales service.

They are currently transitioning from NHS Direct Wales to NHS 111 Wales and it will be rolled out across Wales by the end of the year. It is now active to residents living in Hywel Dda Health Board area. Patients will now need to dial 111 instead of the old 0845 4647 number.

In addition to its core function as a non-emergency helpline for advice and guidance, they will also signpost patients to the correct medical support and organise appropriate appointments. This could be with the GP, dentist, nurse, pharmacist or a minor injury unit.

### **Out of hours GP services.**

NHS 111 Wales will replace the GP out-of-hours service. Patients will now need to dial 111 for any out-of-hours queries and to book appointments.

### **Accident and Emergency.**

In order to reduce waiting times at A&E departments, they will soon be adding a service which will enable patients to call 111 to record their need to attend A&E. Rather than turn up at the emergency department, patients will be given a time and a location for their appointment, enabling them to wait at home, in comfort, rather than in the emergency waiting room. They are aware that people may have to travel some distance to access their allocated hospital and this will be taken into account during the initial conversation. They will also link in with the Patient Transport Service to assist those who are eligible.

The Emergency 999 service continues to receive calls for minor medical issues and 111 Wales receive calls which require the emergency

services so they will be working closer together to refer the patient to the relevant assistance.

### **Support for people with hearing loss.**

There is now a system in place for people with hearing loss to report a 999 emergency via text message. In order to sign up to this, send the word 'register' to 999.

### **Further information.**

In addition to the above services, patients can find a health encyclopedia and an online symptom checker at [111.wales.nhs.uk](http://111.wales.nhs.uk). The website is fully accessible for screen readers and they will shortly be incorporating the 'Recite Me' screen reader to assist those who do not have their own assistive technology.

### **How can you help improve and develop the service?**

The Welsh Ambulance Service has set up a community network to help them improve and develop the quality of their services. They aim to include as many members of the public as possible to join the group. For further information, call 01792 776252 ext. 45400 or email: [peci.team@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:peci.team@wales.nhs.uk).

# Welsh Government: What to do if you are due your COVID-19 vaccination and have not been contacted.

At the time of writing a third of people in Wales have received their first vaccination. These would have been largely for people aged over 80, front-line workers in health and social care, and people in high risk categories. Please follow the instructions for your local health board if you think that you should have had an appointment by now.

WCB has been informed by Public Health Wales that you can contact these numbers to obtain accessible formats of letters. Future correspondence will include a contact number in large print at the top of the letter for people to ring.

## **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**

If you are aged 80 or over and have not yet been contacted about your vaccination please contact your GP.

If you are aged 70 to 79, find out how to get in touch on the Aneurin Bevan Health Board website:

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine/aged-72-79-and-not-received-your-invitation/>

## **Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board**

If you are aged 70 or over and have not received an appointment, please call the vaccinations booking centre on **03000 840004**.

## **Cardiff and Vale University Health Board**

Contact our booking centre on **029 2184 1234** if you are:

- aged 70 to 74
- aged 74 and under and clinically extremely vulnerable / shielding
- aged 70 and over and housebound

If you are aged 75 and over, please contact your GP practice.

Frontline Health and Social Care Staff need to email **cvuhb.massimms@wales.nhs.uk**.

## **Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board**

Please complete the form on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board website: <https://forms.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/Web/vaccineappointments/Info>

You will be asked for your name, date of birth, postcode, contact number, and depending which group you are in, your GP practice and address.

## **Hywel Dda University Health Board**

If you are aged 80 and over, please contact your GP practice.

If you are aged 75 to 79, please phone **0300 303 8322** or email **COVIDenquiries.hdd@wales.nhs.uk**.

## **Powys Teaching Health Board**

Find out how to get in touch on the Powys Teaching Health Board website: <https://pthb.nhs.wales/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination/daily-update/>

## **Swansea Bay University Health Board**

If you are aged 80 or over, please contact your GP.

If you're shielding, please contact your GP.

If you're aged between 70 and 79, please phone 01792 530606 10am-3pm Monday to Saturday or email: **SBU.Covidbookingteam@wales.nhs.uk**.

[Source: <https://gov.wales/get-your-covid-19-vaccination-if-you-think-you-have-been-missed>]

# Diabetic Eye Screening to resume in Wales

Diabetic Eye Screening Wales (DESW) has advised that, following the pause in screening services due to the Coronavirus pandemic, they are inviting people for screening again. They have provided the following information:

- We understand you may be worried if you have missed your appointment, are due for screening or your screening invitation has been delayed. Be assured we are working hard to catch up. We are inviting people based on clinical priority and appreciate your patience.
- Due to the pandemic, screening appointments are limited and there are some delays. We may not be able to offer appointments at your normal clinic venue. Health boards are also under a lot of pressure so if you need further investigations there may also be some delay.
- It is really important, now more than ever, that you let us know if you will not be attending your appointment. We might be able to offer your appointment to someone else.

Remember:

- If you are invited for screening you can travel to attend your appointment. It is a medical appointment which is classed as a 'reasonable excuse' to travel during lockdown.
- We understand that people with diabetes are at high risk from Covid and we take your safety very seriously.
- We have made some changes to keep you and our staff safe whilst at your appointment.
- Taking part in screening is something you can do to look after your eye health.
- If you are worried about any changes in your vision please do not wait to be invited for screening. It is very important you speak to an Optometrist even if you have had a previous normal screening test.

To stop the spread of coronavirus do not attend for screening if you have symptoms of coronavirus, have recently tested positive, or have been advised to quarantine or self-isolate. The symptoms of coronavirus are one or more of the following: new continuous cough, high temperature or loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste.

For more information about DESW, go to <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/screening/diabetic-eye-screening-wales/>

# Optometry practices

Sali Davis of Optometry Wales tells us that optometry practices across Wales are now all open, by appointment only. Staff in practices will also have had their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> doses of the vaccine and will be wearing NHS provided PPE. If you require onward referral to the Hospital Eye Service, you will still be referred but you may not be seen in the Hospital as quickly as you would have before lockdown. This is because a lot of routine surgery has been postponed.

Glaucoma UK advise the following:

Your local opticians are taking every precaution to provide a safe and secure environment for their staff and customers during these unsettling times. To ensure maximum safety, they are taking all the steps needed to adhere to the required cleanliness and hygiene standards in all stores. Social distancing measures have also been put in place. All staff will be equipped with PPE, and there should be signage around the store to help guide and direct you safely.

Please help your local store by attending your appointment alone if possible, bringing your own pen, and wearing a face covering or mask.

If you have specific questions about an existing appointment or want to book an eye appointment, you should contact your local opticians directly.

If you have glaucoma and have any concerns, the Glaucoma UK helpline team can be reached on 01233 64 81 70 or **helpline@glaucoma.uk**. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 5:00pm.

[Source: <https://glaucoma.uk/news/opticians-are-remaining-open-and-can-see-you-safely-during-lockdown/>]

# **Low Vision Service Wales (LVSU)**

## **What is it?**

Wales is unique in its provision of a national primary care rehabilitation service for adults and children with impaired vision. This community-based service has been in existence since 2004 and provides a wide range of specialist visual aids and equipment such as magnifiers and lamps free of charge. The service is hosted by Hywel Dda Health Board on behalf of all health boards in Wales and is provided in many optometry practices (opticians) on high streets throughout the country.

## **Who can use the service?**

Anyone struggling to read newspaper print with their strongest lenses or glasses is likely to be eligible for referral. A recent eyesight test that shows a visual acuity (both eyes best corrected) of N6 or worse or 6/12 or worse will confirm this. The service provides for both adults and children with impaired vision, however the majority of the LVSU patients are of advanced age.

## **What does the service do?**

A specially accredited Low Vision Practitioner will test a patient's vision, discuss their eye condition/s with them and provide advice that might help with any activities they may currently find difficult. The practitioner can also direct clients to further help from local Social Services, their GP, pharmacist, voluntary support groups and other resources in their area.

By helping people find the right magnifiers and lighting to suit their particular needs, people with impaired vision can find it becomes easier to do many day-to-day activities such as reading, seeing the controls on a cooker, managing any medication and maintaining independence.

## **How to access the service**

This enhanced NHS service is completely free and referrals are accepted from a wide range of professionals. It is also easy to self-refer simply by contacting a local Low Vision Practitioner, a list of which can be found either on [www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk) or by contacting the service direct.

## **Contact details**

You can access more information about the Low Vision Service Wales and find contact details for optometry practices (opticians) that provide the service in your area at [www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk)

For other enquiries call 01267 248793 or email [low.vision@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:low.vision@wales.nhs.uk)

## **COVID-19 Update on Low Vision Service Wales**

The start of 2021 sees all of us in Wales continuing to live with the restrictions that COVID 19 inflicts on day-to-day life. Happily, since August 2020, Welsh Government has allowed all Low Vision Service Wales (LVSU) Practitioners to once again see low vision patients (both existing and new) in opticians' practices on the high street (and sometimes within a patients home). All LVSU practitioners have appropriate social distancing, infection control processes and safety equipment in place to ensure that the safety of all is the top priority.

Some things however are a little different than in pre-pandemic times. Some parts of the LVSU assessment may now be done remotely (perhaps over the phone). Until we move out of what Welsh Government refer to as the 'amber phase', the service continues to try and keep physical face-to-face consultation time to a minimum in order to keep people as safe as possible. Patients currently also have the option to consent to have prescribed Low Vision Aids sent directly to their home rather than having to collect them from the opticians' practice.

The situation with COVID 19 and the WG response continues to evolve and the LVSU continue to work very hard to safely maintain the quality of service and support for our patients that we have always provided in the past.

Should you have any problems or questions in relation to any aspect of the Low Vision Service Wales please contact [Donna.martin@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Donna.martin@wales.nhs.uk)

# **Rehabilitation Officers for the Visually Impaired (ROVIs)**

## **Have you lost confidence or some of your independence?**

The pandemic has had a huge impact on people with sight loss. We have heard from many people who have lost their confidence and independence.

## **Who can help?**

Have you heard of a ROVI? A Rehabilitation Officer for the Vision Impaired (ROVI) is a specialist who helps people with sight loss to do things for themselves and live safe independent lives.

The role of the ROVI is to:

- build confidence;
- provide emotional support;
- regain lost skills and teach new skills; and
- maintain and promote independence and choice.

When asked the difference having support from a ROVI has made, one Carmarthenshire resident said, “They gave me my life back”. This is echoed across Wales.

## **How to receive support from your ROVI**

Firstly, contact your local authority’s adult social care team and ask for an assessment from a ROVI – it is your right. You will be asked a series of questions about your circumstances and sight loss. If you are struggling to access rehabilitation we would like to hear from you.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact WCB on 029 20473954.

## List of contact numbers:

- 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

# Esme's Umbrella: The Impact of Covid 19 on Charles Bonnet Syndrome

*It appears that, since the start of the pandemic, a greater number of people are reporting hallucinations that are more frightening and realistic. This is probably because stress, isolation and fever cause an upsurge of CBS episodes. Here's a blog entry from Esme's Umbrella website.*

As we slowly emerge from the past twelve weeks of the COVID 19 crisis, it is time to reflect on how the lock-down – though essential to quash the virus – has impacted on those who live with Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS). We have always known that stress, isolation and fever cause an upsurge of CBS episodes and lock-down has confirmed this beyond any doubt. The number of calls to my Helpline have doubled – in stark contrast to the fall in general eye health calls - and my email inbox, plus social media, have been similarly twice as busy.

Louise Gow, Specialist Lead for Eye Health at the RNIB, also confirmed a change which I had detected. She told me that “There are a greater number of people reporting hallucinations that are more frightening and realistic. They are having a difficult time working out that the hallucinations are not real”. Not only is this causing great distress to the person living in a world of vivid, silent, visual hallucinations, but for relatives – unable to visit – it is particularly troubling. Perceived images of people in the house, gushing water or fire have caused many a call to the emergency services and isolation rules have had to be broken by anxious relatives or friends.

As we journeyed through lock-down, I received calls from people who confided their suicidal thoughts. Directing these calls to experienced helplines like Samaritans and The Silver Line, I discovered that I needed, first, to explain CBS. Another successful route I took was to refer people to The Macular Society's group, telephone, counselling service specifically for people living with CBS.

For many years, it was considered that CBS only developed in the elderly but, again, lock-down has confirmed what we already knew - that children and young people are not exempt. Describing the change in his CBS, one young person told me “my hallucinations have gone

berserk". I suspect part of this new development is due to being confined in the house, with none of the usual stimuli available, but I wonder – will the CBS episodes, which have turned from annoying or upsetting to terrifying, retreat back once the stress and isolation is lifted? Or, will those people who developed CBS during lock-down, having never encountered it before, now retain the condition? Who knows? This is yet another factor in the unravelling of this complex condition.

There are still far too many people who are confiding in no one about their hallucinations and far too few GPs, hospital doctors and optometrists who know about CBS. All my calls to patients' GPs during lock-down to explain the condition were met with astonishment – but gratitude too. Dr Dominic ffytche estimates that there are, at least, 1 million people in the UK living with CBS. With the anxiety felt about visiting hospitals or clinics, the number of undetected and late-diagnosed eye conditions will add to this figure. Sometimes, all someone needs is the reassurance that CBS is a recognised side effect of sight loss and not the beginning of a mental health condition. "It is like watching a beautiful gardening documentary", one person told me.

For others, disturbing images require much more support. With great creativity, local low vision charities have morphed their Esme Room Support Group gatherings into 'Esme's Friends', allowing people to chat together, exchanging CBS experiences and coping strategies via video or audio calling. CBS is not 'fanciful' nor caused by an 'overactive imagination' and it is not possible to 'ignore it and it will go away' – some of the suggestions given to patients. For the sake of everyone living with sight loss and those who will develop it, I would urge all healthcare professionals to educate themselves about Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

My plans to mark the 300th birthday of Charles Bonnet in March this year had to be cancelled but I hope that we can re-book the event for next year.

Funded by the National Institute of Health Research, Dr Dominic ffytche's 'SHAPED' study has been published. It looked at visual hallucinations in dementia, Parkinson's Disease and eye disease (Charles Bonnet Syndrome). There are suggestions of possible

medication which can be tried, should the CBS visual hallucinations become too difficult to bear. This is the link to the whole paper – <https://jnnp.bmj.com/content/91/5/512>

I was honoured to be asked to join Women in Vision and am probably the only member without a medical degree! The work of Esme's Umbrella has resulted in a growing interest in CBS amongst the research community in the UK and Ireland. Delayed by COVID 19, these studies and research projects will be announced in the autumn. The door on CBS research is still wide open.

- Judith

*Esme's Umbrella can be contacted via [esmesumbrella@gmail.com](mailto:esmesumbrella@gmail.com)  
Website: <http://www.charlesbonnetsyndrome.uk>*

[Source: <http://www.charlesbonnetsyndrome.uk/judith-updates/> ]

# Sylw bulletin

## WCB News

### WCB supports call for more ROVIs

A rehabilitation officer for vision impairment (ROVI) can transform the life of a person with sight loss, although there currently are not enough people providing this vital service in Wales. WCB estimates that at least 45 ROVIs are needed, but currently only 34 are in post, meaning that access to a ROVI is something of a postcode lottery.

We are supporting RNIB Cymru's Manifesto for the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Election this May. This calls for the next Welsh Government to take action to address five key issues affecting vision impaired people:

- Tackle the postcode lottery of vision rehabilitation services.
- Prioritise ending avoidable sight loss.
- Break down the environmental barriers faced by blind and partially sighted people.
- Embed accessible information practices into the NHS and wider public services.
- Lead the way in UK equality policy by reforming the way the public sector engages people with sight loss and other disabled people.

RNIB Cymru has prepared a template letter which you can use to contact your Senedd representative asking them to commit to these actions. You can complete it online here:

<https://e-activist.com/page/70013/action/1?ea.tracking.id=8ee5e017>

If you need help to complete the form, please call the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999.

If you think a ROVI could help you, you should contact your Local Authority in the first instance. If you're struggling to access rehabilitation we'd like to hear from you. Feel free to contact Wales Council of the Blind on 02920 473 954.

# **WCB West Wales Regional event**

WCB's West Wales Regional forum took place in February with representatives joining us from Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.

The events were held separately by county, via Zoom and we were pleased to be joined by Gareth Thomas from the Welsh Ambulance Service (see above), Donna Martin from Low Vision Service Wales (also above), Bruce Langridge from National Botanic Garden of Wales who attended the Carmarthenshire meeting, and representatives from Pembrokeshire Association for Voluntary Services.

## **Rehabilitation Services.**

Rehabilitation Officers from Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire attended the events and reported that they are dealing with queries by telephone, at present. No home visits are currently being carried out. In the meantime, they have adapted their services to provide as much support as possible over the phone and are able to distribute equipment, such as canes, much quicker.

## **Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services.**

We were pleased to be joined by representatives of PAVS who were keen to find out more about the group and share information about their current project.

They have been funded for a project to loan Alexa Echo Dots and Lenovo tablets to their members to try before they buy. They will also come with a sim card for those who do not have internet access. For further information, contact PAVS on 01437 769422.

The group welcomed this. However, they suggested that PAVS check whether the tablets are accessible for people with sight loss.

## **National Botanic Garden for Wales - Bruce Langridge.**

Bruce is Head of Interpretation at the National Botanic Garden for Wales and he joined the Carmarthenshire group to gather their views and to invite them to visit the site, when it is safe to do so, to advise him on how to ensure it is more accessible for people with sight loss.

Several suggestions were shared such as audio announcements and audio described tours. However, they felt a visit to the site would be the best solution with several members agreeing to take this forward.

# News

## **New treatment for wet AMD approved for NHS patients**

A new treatment for wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), which could see patients receiving as few as four injections a year, has been approved for use in England and Wales.

Brolucizumab (Beovu), which was approved for use in Scotland earlier this year, has been approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the NHS.

The new drug, which has been brought to market by Novartis, could see patients going as much as 12 weeks between eye injections.

The drug could help minimise the treatment burden for many patients, as more than 50% of patients in clinical trials were able to maintain vision on 12-weekly dosing intervals.

NICE's recommendation was based on findings from the Phase III HAWK and HARRIER clinical trials, which showed that in less than a year almost a third of patients were able to see at least 15 more letters in standard eye tests and vision gain was seen as early as four weeks into the trial, with progress sustained for two years.

Cathy Yelf, chief executive of the Macular Society, said: "Eye injections are a source of fear and anxiety for people with wet AMD and in these exceptional times, they are more anxious than ever about hospital visits.

"We are delighted that a new treatment option, which has the potential to maintain vision and help minimise the number of hospital visits for people living with this devastating condition, is now available in England and Wales."

Robin Hamilton, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital and UK chief Investigator for the HARRIER study, said: "Wet

AMD can progress rapidly and cause significant visual loss in as little as 3 months. Wet AMD can be managed with effective, consistent treatment and regular monitoring of fluid in the back of the eye.”

“Today’s recommendation offers patients access to a treatment option that has the potential to minimise the treatment burden and hospital visits, while improving their vision and slowing down the progression of their wet AMD. This should give them more time to do the things that matter most to them.”

Chinmay Bhatt, managing director UK, Ireland & Nordics for Novartis Pharmaceuticals, added: “This decision not only means people with wet AMD have access to a treatment option that has the potential to maintain their vision, but also offers to minimise treatment burden and hospital visits.

“This is more vital than ever to help relieve pressure on healthcare systems. We are working closely with the NHS to ensure eligible patients can start benefiting from brolocizumab as soon as possible.”

[Source: <https://www.macularsociety.org/about/media/news/new-treatment-wet-amd-approved-nhs-patients/> ]

## **Coronation Street storyline raises awareness of Charles Bonnet Syndrome**

A storyline in ITV’s long-running soap Coronation Street is raising vital awareness of visual hallucinations linked to sight loss as a character on the show will admit to seeing things that aren’t there: a condition known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS).

Charles Bonnet hallucinations can range from simple flashes of light, colours or shapes to more disturbing images such as disembodied faces and strange figures. CBS is caused by loss of vision and the way your brain reacts to this loss. Up to half of all people with macular degeneration are thought to experience CBS at some time and it often leaves them unnecessarily worried about their mental health.

‘Esme’s Umbrella’ is the campaign group for everyone working towards a greater awareness of CBS (see article above). They have a telephone helpline, the number is 020 7391 3299. Local ‘Esme’s Friends’ groups are also being established, and the helpline can help you find one. The

Macular Society also has a wide range of information on the condition and their helpline number is 0300 3030 111.

# Consultations and Surveys

## Eye Care Collaborative Groups

Each health board in Wales has an Eye Care Collaborative Group. These groups have been established to monitor the performance of eye care services and aim to listen and learn from patient feedback and outcomes. The Wales Vision Forum, which is made up of local, regional and national sight loss charities in Wales, has representatives on each group. We are keen to hear from people with sight loss on your experiences of accessing eye care services, both good and bad. If you have any questions, have anything you would like to share with us or would like to know who your representative is, please contact Owen on 029 2047 3954 or by email at [owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk](mailto:owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk).

## UK Government Consultation on National Strategy for Disabled People

The UK Government is developing a National Strategy for Disabled People and has launched a survey to get the views of people with disabilities, their families and those working with them. This survey will ask about your life experiences either as a disabled person, a carer or parent or as someone who has an interest in disability issues.

Many people have had big changes in their lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and there will be an opportunity at the end of the survey to state if your life has changed notably due to COVID-19, and in what ways.

The survey takes 20-30 minutes to complete, and this can be done in English or Welsh, and in a wide variety of accessible ways:

- You can request the survey in a different format including braille by sending an email to [ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).
- Online at <https://disabilityunit.citizenspace.com/cabinet-office/ukdisabilitysurvey/>. If you are vision impaired and are having

difficulty filling in the online survey email the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) for advice or support at [campaigns@rnib.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@rnib.org.uk).

- The UK Government Disability Unit's support team can help: you can contact them at [ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).
- If you are unable to complete the survey but would like to contribute your views on the National Strategy, please submit a statement of no more than 250 words to [ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ducitizenspace@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) or post your thoughts to the Disability Unit Cabinet Office, 10 Victoria Street, Westminster SW1H 0NB.

The survey closes on 23rd April 2021.

## **Welsh Government Consultations**

- Strategy for an ageing society: age friendly Wales (closes 15th March)
- Draft Children's Rights Scheme 2021 (closes 26th March)
- The future of the Equality and Inclusion Funding Programme (closes 30th March)
- Improving social care arrangements and partnership working (closes 6<sup>th</sup> April)
- Safer buildings in Wales (closes 12<sup>th</sup> April)
- Changing places toilets and baby nappy changing facilities (closes 28<sup>th</sup> April)

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

# Events

Although the pandemic has inevitably led to the cancellation of face-to-face events, many organisations are now running telephone groups. Some now hold events online, for example via Zoom. You can find the latest information on our website: <http://www.wcbccd.org.uk/news.php#events>

## Glaucoma UK: Digital Support Group

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. Several events are planned for March, details are as follows:

- 8th March, 3 pm to 4 pm: 'My experience of glaucoma surgery'.
- 9th March, 1.30 to 2.30 pm: 'My experience of taking part in glaucoma research'.
- 11th March, 7 pm to 8 pm: 'Who can help with my glaucoma: what support is available between appointments?'.
- 12th March, 6 pm to 7.30 pm: 'Glaucoma self-care: how I look after my eyes'.
- 19th March, 3 pm to 4 pm: 'Glaucoma and eye drops'.

To join these sessions by telephone, dial in at the appropriate start time on 0208 080 6591 or 0208 080 6592. 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 attend the sessions via Zoom. To find how to do this and book a place visit 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.

# Macular Support Group Conference Call meetings

The Macular Society's Telephone Support Groups are an opportunity to share useful information, updates and hear friendly voices. They last for up to an hour and run at different times and frequencies. It's a place to:

- Hear about Macular Society services and other local services.
- Listen to interesting speakers on a variety of subjects such as research, local projects and initiatives.
- Share experiences and hints and tips on living with sight loss.
- Create long lasting friendships.
- Develop confidence and increase your knowledge around macular disease.

Dates for sessions in March for people in North Wales are

- Llandudno Group Call – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 @ 10.30am (Meets first Monday of every month).
- Newtown Group Call – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 @ 2pm (Meets first Monday of every month).
- Ruthin, Wrexham, Mold & Llangollen Combined Group Call – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @ 2pm (Meets first Thursday of every month)
- Abergele Group Call – Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @ 1.30pm (Meets third Monday of every month).
- Holyhead & Cae Garnedd Combined Group Call – Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @ 1pm. (Meets third Tuesday of every month).
- Dolgellau, Pwllheli, Blaenau Ffestiniog & Harlech Combined Group Call – Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @ 1pm. (Meets third Wednesday of every month)
- Aberystwyth Group Call – Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 @10.30am (Meets fourth Wednesday of every month).

For more information about these group calls please contact Marian Williams, Regional Manager for North Wales on 07768362609.

Dates for sessions in March for people in South Wales are:

- Llanelli & Carmarthen Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 10am - 11am
- Royal Glamorgan Llantrisant 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2pm - 3pm
- Milford Haven Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2pm – 3pm
- Bridgend & Neath Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am – 11.30am
- Ystradgynlais, Brecon & Llandrindod Wells Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am – 11.30am
- Lampeter & Cardigan Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2pm – 3pm
- Caerphilly Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am – 11.30am
- Newport Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2pm – 3pm
- Tenby Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2pm - 3pm
- Swansea Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March 11.30am – 12.30pm
- Working Age & Young People IT Group Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am – 11.30am

For more information on these groups, please contact Adele Francis, Senior Regional Manager for Wales on 07494 468 007 or 01639 843236.

# 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](mailto:jane.mccann@sightlife.wales)
- For Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot, Anita on 01792 776 360 or email: [anita.davies@sightlife.wales](mailto:anita.davies@sightlife.wales)

# RNIB Connect Groups

The RNIB Community Connection team in Wales continue to run telephone groups covering a wide range of age groups, interests and regions (including Welsh language groups). Please contact Connect Community Coordinators Eleanor Rothwell, Carol McKinlay or Izzy James if you would like more information:

- Eleanor: 0770 282 1915, email [eleanor.rothwell@rnib.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.rothwell@rnib.org.uk)
- Carol: 0786 496 8859, email [Carol.McKinlay@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Carol.McKinlay@rnib.org.uk)
- Izzy James: 0776 8503050, email [izzy.jones@rnib.org.uk](mailto:izzy.jones@rnib.org.uk)

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