

## **Sight Centre Cymru briefing note.**

The Sight Centre Cymru (SCC) is a new Big Lottery funded project that helps signpost people newly diagnosed with sight loss into services that can help them remain independent, retain their quality of life and reduce the risk of isolation and depression. It's also been referred to as the e-CVI Hub and it helps reinforce statutory and voluntary sector provision providing a safety net for service users, whilst capturing a Wales-wide overview that can aid service planning in the eye care sector.

The objective of this project is to put the service user at the centre of the process. They retain control and choice, and are able to remain independent despite the devastation that many experience when first diagnosed with sight loss. They will experience fast, easy and accessible signposting to the many excellent services for people with sight loss available in Wales.

It will ensure people know about the provision of good welfare rights, eye clinic and helpline services as well as the smaller social and activity clubs, telephone support and befriending services. There will be capacity to signpost into Talking Newspapers and counselling and emotional support services.

The project also helps independent local clubs and societies who may otherwise get limited exposure. It will help them develop new services as geographic and sight loss specific planning information will be available.

It will also help the larger national agencies who will be able to receive referrals and have access to planning, strategic and sight loss prevalence statistics that will be able to inform planning and resources.

## **Outline of project**

This project brings together three strands of work - the roll out of an electronic Certificate of Visual Impairment to replace the current paper copy; the development of Open Eyes, a new ophthalmologists' patient reporting tool; and a Services Database that builds on work developed by Wales Council for the Blind.

These three projects combine to provide a system that allows a seamless transfer of the patient from the hospital setting into social care and the voluntary sector. It speeds up the process, offering greater security, reducing

errors and enables the voluntary sector – whether large national agencies or smaller local agencies – to help support statutory provision. It also enables planning and preventative information to be analysed, which in turn has the potential to provide more efficient and more targeted interventions in those parts of Wales where provision has been less available in the past.

## **How will it work?**

The process begins when a patient receives a Certificate of Visual Impairment.

- 1) An electronic CVI is generated, with patient consent, by an ophthalmologist at an eye clinic in Wales. This follows the current process in which a CVI is issued. This electronic document will contain all the information from the current CVI(W).
- 2) Subject to the patient consent, the client's CVI is sent via electronic referral to Social Services as before, and Moorfields Eye Hospital where it will be accessed by the project.
- 3) Social Services receive the copy of the eCVI and follow their existing procedures to process the referral.
- 4) Through agreed pathways, Sight Centre Cymru contacts the patient by telephone. SCC checks to ensure that the client is connected to local and national services, providing further information and other sources of help that may not have been taken onboard during the hospital appointment

## **The Project and impact on Eyecare Partners**

### **Social Care**

This process does not replace any existing referral routes in to social care. The CVI still goes directly to the local Social Service team. The relevant Social Services Department will continue to be the primary recipient of the CVI but it will be electronic rather than paper based. This helps those local authorities that are already moving to a paperless environment and provides additional security and quality checking.

### **Optometry**

The project has been designed with the long term goal of offering the future potential of allowing primary care to be integrated into the scheme. From the outset, SCC will accept referrals from Optometrists, allowing them to rapidly plug a patient into services without having to make multiple referrals themselves.

### **Ophthalmology**

The development and introduction of an electronic CVI is a recognised objective in Wales. The software aims to reduce the time to create CVIs and send them to partners, whilst reinforcing the work carried out by Eye Clinic Liaison Officers to make sure that patients leaving clinics will be able to understand how to access local and national services.

## The Third Sector

Sight Centre Cymru is designed to reinforce the role of hospital Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, picking up the support after their interventions have finished. The scheme can be considered a safety net, as it does not replace the local referral processes in place that have been arranged by local societies, but instead supplements them. SCC will refer patients to both local and national agencies, allowing the charitable sector to deliver timely interventions. This project does not provide any direct services – for example, emotional support or telephone befriending, as this work is best left to existing organisations who already do this well.

## Building on existing arrangements

Many Social Services teams and local societies already have good procedures in place, and are rightly proud of their provision. Some Local Societies hold or share the register of visually impaired people on behalf of the local authorities. This system in no way replaces any of those things, simply enhances them. Instead of a paper copy, the CVI will be electronic so allowing a steady progression towards secure paperless working. It allows a more accessible copy so where a service user may not be able to read the current standard 12 point print printed version, the electronic version can be produced in large text or even in audio or other format.

## Wales-wide

This project will develop into a Wales-wide service so that, for the first time, partners can plan services according to centralised dataset that gives a picture of what's happening, and where, in Wales. This data can be used by partners to provide the case for developing new services in funding applications, for example.

## Open and transparent

To ensure that the project is making full and equitable use of all available services we will be regularly contacting service providers to check the services data held by the database is up to date. In addition, the Services Database will be available online. That way, all agencies can check that they are in the system and see how they are represented. This would also make the information available to, say, rehabilitation officers in the course of their work. To be clear, the data about Service Users will not be on a publicly available database. It will continue to be held at its present locations (eg local authorities) in addition to a secure database for use by SCC. But the material

about what services are available (eg who provides welfare rights, where a club meets etc) WILL be available publicly.

As part of the project we will publish statistical data on the number and geographical spread of referrals.

The database, and hence the referral process, will be services-led, not organisation-led. For example, if the client lives in Merthyr Tydfil and requires a telephone befriending service, the database will offer the relevant services; irrespective of which organisation provides them and may therefore offer the service user a choice of several. We feel this is a better approach because it puts the service user at the centre of the process.

### **The service reinforces the role of ECLOs**

Those areas lucky enough to have an Eye Clinic Liaison service value it highly, and having built this project with several ECLOs as part of the team, the project is specifically designed to reinforce the ECLO role.

Firstly, for busy eye clinics there will always be occasions when an ECLO is busy seeing someone else and not available to a newly diagnosed patient. This project will help keep ECLOs in the loop as undoubtedly referrals will flow back to them.

Secondly, it provides ECLOs with a ready-made database of service provision so that they can sit and discuss options with their service users. This is particularly key when some people may not be able to retain the information in those first critical days after diagnosis.

Additionally, the service helps ECLOs with awareness tools they need to ensure the whole eye clinic understands their role and the value the ECLOs provide. With additional planning and eye care concordance opportunities, the project firmly embeds the pivotal role ECLOs occupy.

### **The whole sector will benefit**

Whilst the project is predominately intended to benefit service users, there are additional benefits to be had by other stakeholders.

The statutory sector will benefit from faster, electronic, more accurate data that doesn't require paper handling. The voluntary sector does less 'chasing referrals' and more service provision. And commissioners and funders can have better, more accurate evidence for work planning.

For more information or to get involved in the project please contact Martin Griffiths on 02920 473954 or email [martin.griffiths@sightsupport.org.uk](mailto:martin.griffiths@sightsupport.org.uk)