

Wales Council of the Blind Roundup

Winter 2015

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Wales Council of the Blind News

Know Your Rights, Use Your Rights, Live Your Rights

Pembrokeshire Access Group, in collaboration with Disability Wales and WCB, is running a 'Planning Together' training event on Disability Rights on Thursday 22nd January at the Johnston Institute, Johnston near Haverfordwest SA62 3HE. It runs from 11am until 3.30pm. This will be a free, fun and informative day with lunch provided. To reserve a place please contact Julie Bilton on julie.bilton@disabilitywales.org or call 02920 887325.

Your Views: A Shared Vision

As part of WCB's role in representing the views of people with sight loss, we are establishing regional groups to act as fora for individuals to share experiences and concerns so that WCB gains a fuller picture of what the issues are for blind and partially sighted people throughout Wales. Where groups exist already, we would like to work with our members to avoid duplication and to build upon their success.

On 24th September last year we met with a group in West Wales to gather their views on what works well, and not so well, in their counties. We talked about the health service, public transport and social services and of ways in which amenities such as shops and banks make reasonable adjustments for blind and partially sighted people.

People came from Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. We are pleased that individuals from Ceredigion will also be attending the next meeting (see below).

The group felt that links with Social Services are good. In Pembrokeshire service users are able to contact the team directly.

Bank statements were being produced in accessible formats and some cash machines have an audio facility.

On the down side, it was noted that there were no audio announcements on buses and no information desk at the bus station in Carmarthen; there is too much street furniture and parking on pavements; and a lack of awareness from staff in some shops and libraries. It was suggested that medical professionals need to give out information on social care and third sector services to patients; that there is a lack of volunteer drivers and that, alarmingly, people with sight loss are being told by a community transport provider that they do not qualify for transport support because they are 'not disabled'.

Much more was discussed on the day and the group has decided to continue to meet regularly. The next meeting will be on 28th January at CAVS (Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services). Contact Rebecca on 029 20 473954 if you would like to attend.

WCB and Visionary.

At WCB's 2013/14 AGM, held on 4th December, Director Owen Williams outlined a reciprocal membership arrangement with Visionary, the UK umbrella agency for local VI societies.

Visionary believes that local organisations are best placed to offer local help and support. They have lots of information and advice and practical solutions to living with sight loss.

Visionary would like to make its services available to organisations in Wales and sees WCB as the proper agency to provide this link. For our part, WCB is keen to see its member societies benefit from support such as weekly updates, the Development Fund and shared purchasing arrangements. Also, Visionary aims to hold its conference in 2015 or 2016 in Wales.

The arrangement will include offering a page of this newsletter to Visionary so that everyone is kept up-to-date with its work. But as well as information exchanges and promotion of each other's work, the reciprocal arrangement would extend WCB's voice – and the voices of its members – into the UK-wide debates.

WCB will shortly be writing out to its members to renew WCB membership and part of this would offer to eligible societies the opportunity to become members of Visionary at no extra charge. Eligible members, being local and regional societies, can, as part of their membership with WCB, benefit from these additional services.

If you represent a local society and would like to know more about how this arrangement may affect you, please ring Owen Williams on 029 20 473954.

MPs say that Access to Work (AtW) scheme must improve

In the Summer 2014 edition of Roundup, WCB Director, Owen Williams raised concerns about the way that the AtW scheme is operating for blind and partially sighted people, in particular the 'lack of empathy and understanding' shown to people with sight loss. Now a committee of MPs has raised a very similar range of issues about the scheme, and is critical of the 'unacceptable lack of disability awareness' shown by the staff administering the scheme. It has called for the Government to take urgent steps to address the scheme's ineffectiveness.

Mark Harper, Minister for Disabled People, has unveiled a series of improvement measures, including setting up specialist AtW teams for specific disability groups, including vision impaired people.

Please let us know if you have any views on how AtW is working.

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- Provide special help, if needed, through the RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) or British Red Cross.
- Ring and tell you about planned interruptions to your electricity supply.
- Keep you as informed as possible in the event of an unplanned power cut.

To join, call **0800 9177 953**, or visit our website **www.westernpower.co.uk**

Politics and Political engagement

With the UK General Election 2015 approaching, and the Welsh Assembly Elections following in 2016, the theme for this edition is politics. We have information on your rights as a voter, current campaigns which aim to ensure that the voices of disabled people are heard, examples of successful campaigning, and details of how to contact your representative.

However, we start by asking two vision impaired politicians to tell us about their experiences. We are very grateful to David Blunkett MP and Councillor Ryan Watkins for taking the time to tell us about standing for public office.

David Blunkett MP on politics and visual impairment

The Right Honourable David Blunkett has been a Member of Parliament since 1987, and held the posts of Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Home Secretary, and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the Labour government. WCB asked him to reflect on his life in politics and visual impairment.

What advice would you give to a person with a vision impairment who wants to stand for election?

My first advice would be to think twice. Have you got a life, have you got good support systems including good friends, and if you have, then go for it!

You will need, therefore to have thought things through, in terms of the practicalities, the time commitment, the sapping sometimes of energy and the mind-blowing boredom of going through the political process. But if you make it, it really is worth it in terms of transforming the lives of others, making a difference and of course setting an example.

You will need to decide which political party, if any you are closest to. You need support systems and people who are prepared to help you do the hard work of trying to reach the electorate either on the doorstep (and leaflets) or through the new media. This really does mean choosing a political party because trying it on your own would be mind-blowing. There is of course the little matter of funding!

Is there more that political parties could do to encourage disabled people to get involved in politics?

The answer is yes. All the political parties have been remiss in giving the necessary support. This is understandable given the lack of funding within our democracy for our political parties. Yet with goodwill, with the use of volunteers (supported and trained) so much could be done.

In 2009/2010 I took part in the Speakers Commission in political engagement. This lasted for fifteen months and was effectively chaired (because we changed speakers and the speaker is very busy) by Anne Begg MP (from Aberdeen) who herself is in a wheelchair.

The commission was about all forms of engagement by those who have been disadvantaged or who face inequality. Initially it was going to be about gender and race. I got lumbered with being on the commission because understandably I raised the issue of why an earth we weren't talking about different forms of disability and special need! Anne joined me in this regard.

It would therefore be possible to take greater steps to make available in different formats the material they produce. The internet has made this easier as material can be put online very easily but there are all sorts of reasons why other formats including Braille should be available. As we will see some of the recommendations of the Speaker's Commission were accepted and this might help in the future.

Some of us are doing our best to make sure political parties think about these issues in the build up to the general election.

The fund (which is due to run out in 2015) established to help people with different forms of disability to be able to have some extra cash to help with the process of getting selected, and getting elected, is a real step forward. I want all three political parties to commit to renewing this fund (designed to provide access) and to extend it. This in itself will encourage people to have a go, in other words if you know there is help available it may give you the confidence to go for it.

And so to the next question. How has being blind affected your work as a constituency MP and as a minister?

Well, it's pluses and minuses. As a constituency MP I was always and will remain close to the community I grew up in. I care deeply about the constituency and the city of Sheffield. The greatest strength has come from being back at the weekends and listening to and drawing on both the challenges and the terrific support which local people have given me. They may not always agree but as long as I'm there arguing the case, giving them a voice, they have always been prepared to give me backing, give me critical appraisal and then to give me a hug (metaphorically). It was obviously a challenge at the beginning because people (hopefully less so now) were concerned as to whether someone who couldn't see could do the job on equal terms. I had to prove that I could.

As a minister, you obviously get additional support systems. Life is funny like that, the higher you climb the more support you get. This is going to be one of the challenges of the future for me as for many years I have lived in a world where support from additional staff (reading material to me or on cassette) has been available, and I have had some support towards transport, although I do pay in quite a lot to make it possible for me to be mobile. I fought so hard alongside everyone to make the higher component of mobility allowance available to blind people. I am so sorry it is being eroded by the so called Personal Independence Payment.

So, what did it mean for me as a cabinet minister for eight years? Well the quid quo pro was always that I had to put the extra time in. Late at night, at weekends, at times when other people were doing other things, I had to put the time to be on top of the detail and never to be caught out. That would not have been “this politician isn’t up to the job” but rather “this blind person can’t hack it”. I was never going to allow that to happen.

So to the final question... Do you think your own career has influenced attitudes towards disabled people in public life?

I would like to believe so. In fact I am on record as saying that despite the fact that I am so proud of what I have done both in local government and in Parliament, I think the most lasting impact will be a change in attitude: attitudes of parents who otherwise would be traumatised by the birth of or the disability occurring to their youngster; attitudes of employers thinking of taking someone on with a disability; attitudes of society generally so that can people can live on equal terms in their social as well as economic life. I really do hope that will be a lasting change.

The Mayor of Tredegar

Councillor Ryan Watkins was inaugurated as Mayor of Tredegar in May 2014. WCB asked him to tell us about how he came to be involved in local politics, and how his work has been affected by his vision impairment.

I got involved in politics after many years living across the UK in London, and Birmingham amongst others before returning to my hometown of Tredegar, a small mining town in South East Wales, with a population of about 20,000. I had tried my hand at care, and music production, but found that my eyesight was getting in the way so was looking for a new challenge. Having expanded my awareness of the different layers and social groups that build society, and being one of those who is resourceful I thought I’d try my hand at advisory with the CAB, although on hearing a position had opened up on my local civic council I knew my next step!

I quickly made my peers aware of my eyesight, I always make light humour out of it, point out the elephant in the room you could say. The clerk to the council was great and helped me with adaptations, such as larger notes and emailing me our paperwork in advance. As a back-bench councillor, my eyesight didn't really come into play, but last May I was elected as the Town Mayor, the Chairman of the council, then we had to look at things again!

As far as getting around the place and getting my chain on, I have a fellow councillor, who is also a friend, that tends to come to functions with me, also all the other councillors that are drivers, tend to help out if I have to go further afield. In the chambers, because I am sat at a distance from the benches, I tend to rely on my Deputy Mayor, and my clerk, who will instruct me when councillors have raised their hand. On the occasion that I have neither, we have had situations, when I've let councillors in, during debate, that only raised their hand to scratch their heads! It's all good fun!

During my term, I have chosen to raise funds and awareness of the RNIB as my Mayor's Charity. So far I have zip lined 1000ft down the side of Snowdon, and lead a group of 20 people, all given simulation specs, around our local park. In 2015 we are hoping to hold a blind-dining evening, as well as some other events. So far we have reached around £3000.

If anything, being in politics has reminded me that we live in a democratic society that many people have worked hard to achieve. This is still not the situation in some countries, therefore we must value the opportunity we have to get our voice heard. I also realized how easy it is to communicate with our local government, our Councillors, Assembly Members and Members of Parliament, to get issues highlighted, to lobby for issues that we feel strongly about, and at the end of the day they are there working hard for us, society!

Access to Elected Office Fund

The Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund was launched in 2012, following a UK Government consultation on additional support for disabled people in politics. The fund helps meet the additional costs a disabled candidate may face in standing for election as police and crime commissioners or Members of Parliament, such as extra transport, or technology such as a screen reader. Elections to local authorities in Wales or to the European Parliament are not covered by this scheme. The scheme currently runs until March 2015, although, as mentioned above (in David Blunkett's article), it is hoped that it will be extended beyond this date.

The funding covers a range of activities which are essential to standing for selection as a candidate, and standing for election, such as attending meetings and canvassing. You can apply in connection with any political party registered with the Electoral Commission, however, the Fund does not cover general living costs and cannot provide money for 'reasonable adjustments' the party should be making to support you, in line with the Equality Act 2010. To find out more about the fund, visit their website, www.access-to-elected-office-fund.org.uk or telephone 01457 869 714.

Disabled People's Manifesto for Wales

Miranda French, Policy and Public Affairs Manager for Disability Wales, tells us about the organisation's plans for a Disabled Person's Manifesto.

The Welsh National Assembly elections will be here before we know it! They will take place on **Thursday, 5th May 2016**.

You may think that's a while yet and we have plenty of time to influence political party thinking but no we need to act now, in order to make our voices heard and for firm commitments to be taken forward in party manifestos in relation to disabled people.

Work is already underway and those in power – members of political parties, Assembly Members (local/regional), Members of Parliament, Ministers, Councillors and others - are discussing now what it is they want to take forward in Wales following the 2016 Welsh Assembly elections. Future Welsh policy and legislation are being considered now and we/disabled people **MUST** make our voices heard and become part of those discussions. Work with us and help us create a Disabled Peoples' Manifesto for Wales, a high level strategic manifesto with clear demands from government.

The manifesto campaign includes:

- International Day of Disabled People event (3rd Dec 2014), launch of development process – initial engagement / discussion with disabled people and their organisations
- Development and launch of a national online survey – gathering views from those across the country
- Three regional manifesto workshops -
Thursday 29th January – Taibach Community Centre, Port Talbot
Thursday 12th February – Conwy Business Centre
Thursday 5th March – Aberystwyth Park Lodge Hotel
- Disabled people's broadcast/short film working in partnership with All Wales People First

We will arrange meetings with Assembly Members and party policy leads leading up to the Assembly elections in May 2016, highlighting our *Disabled Peoples Manifesto* and calling for action to be taken forward by the next Government in Wales.

A campaign pack will be produced, supporting disabled people and their organisations to get involved and lobby at grass roots level. Holding up our Disabled People's Manifesto will help them to make their local / regional AMs, MPs, and Councillors aware of calls for action and encourage them to adopt our policy proposals in the run up to the election.

How you can help and get involved:

- Promote the development of a Disabled Peoples' manifesto through your networks: organisations, members, friends, family and more.
- Help us promote the regional workshops and encourage disabled people and their organisations to get involved.
- Circulate and promote the link to our online survey (available from January 2015 via Disability Website).
- Drum up interest online through social media – facebook, twitter using hashtag: **#dpmanifestowales**, like/follow Disability Wales pages and re-post our status updates.
- Engage, lobby, become part of the process and help create an 'Enabling Wales' where disabled people experience their 'rights', 'equality' and 'independence' along with non-disabled people.

For further information and to get involved please contact Miranda French, Policy and Public Affairs Manager Disability Wales on telephone: 029 20887325 or email: miranda.french@disabilitywales.org

What I want from my MP

Catrin Edwards, Policy and Campaigns Officer for Sense Cymru, tells us about their latest campaign.

In the run up to the general election Sense Cymru is supporting deafblind people and their families to tell their prospective Parliamentary candidates (PPCs) what they're looking for in an MP. We think it's really important that PPCs understand that they will be representing deafblind people if they are elected and have launched our survey and campaign 'What I want from my MP'.

Sense is collecting testimonies from deafblind people, their friends and families and Sense supporters across the UK about what they want and expect from their MP and will be sharing them with PPCs. Jane Plant, a mother of a deafblind young person in Wrexham told Sense that she wants candidates in her area to remember that "The biggest challenges facing the deafblind child I care for are lack of appropriate and qualified support, lack of access to facilities/activities."

Why not complete our survey to tell your local candidates what you want from your MP? You can do this on the Sense website, <http://www.sense.org.uk/content/take-action-0>, or if you prefer, contact catrin.edwards@sense.org.uk. Catrin would be happy to meet with people face to face to capture testimonies. Sense will publish a selection of submissions on our website and the best three responses will also feature in an upcoming issue of our magazine, *Talking Sense*.

This is only the first of a series of campaigns Sense is running up to the general election. We want to make sure that deafblindness and sensory loss is on your local candidates' agendas and that they hear from you about the issues that matter. Keep up to date with our campaigns by signing up for our Campaigns Alerts here: <http://www.sense.org.uk/content/take-action-0>.

Disabled people's voting rights

The following information has been taken from the website of the Electoral Commission (www.electoralcommission.org.uk).

Local authorities have to take proactive steps to ensure that polling stations don't disadvantage disabled people. All voters have a right to vote independently and in secret. A person who is registered to vote or who has been officially appointed as a proxy voter cannot be refused a ballot paper or the opportunity to vote on the grounds of mental or physical incapacity.

Polling station staff must ensure that disabled voters are not offered a lower standard of service than other voters and should be able to explain what assistance is available to disabled voters wishing to vote in person at a polling station.

Disabled voters are also entitled to:

- The right to request assistance to mark the ballot paper. Disabled voters may request the assistance of the Presiding Officer to mark the ballot paper for them. Alternatively, they can bring someone with them to help them vote (this person must be an immediate family member over 18 years old or a qualified elector).
- Tactile voting device. This is a plastic device that is fixed onto the ballot paper so visually impaired people or those with limited dexterity can mark their ballot paper in secret.
- Large-print version of the ballot paper. A large-print version of the ballot paper should be clearly displayed inside the polling station and a copy can be given to voters to take with them into the polling booth. A voter can't vote on the large-print version, but it can be used for reference.

It is the responsibility of the relevant council to designate polling places within their area and to keep these under review. In designating polling places, the council must have regard to accessibility for disabled voters. If an elector is unable to enter the

polling station because of physical disability, the Presiding Officer may take the ballot paper to the elector.

If you have any problems on Election Day, you should call your local authority to try to resolve this. You can also call the Electoral Commission on 020 7271 0592 or 020 7271 0728 for further guidance.

RNIB Campaign for accessible voting

RNIB's Campaigns team tells us about their work to improve access.

RNIB want voting to be accessible. Before the May 2014 European elections we were asked to provide information about the challenges faced by blind and partially sighted people when it comes to voting. Hugh Huddy, Policy and Planning Manager at RNIB provided evidence to the parliamentary Political and Constitutional Reform Committee. We conducted a survey asking blind and partially sighted people about voting, worryingly 69 per cent of respondents had to give up their right to secrecy in order to cast their vote. Understandably 82% of those interviewed wanted a new accessible way to vote.

In the New Year RNIB plan to ask people to contact their MP and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) in their area about the voting situation for blind and partially sighted people. We want MPs and PPCs to write to their local council to ensure that provisions are made for constituents who have sight loss.

We'll keep you posted on our progress, and keep an eye on www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning for more information.

Campaigning

In this section, we look at three case studies which demonstrate how disabled people and the organisations which represent them can campaign to address issues which affect them.

Guide Dogs campaign: Pavement parking

Nathan Foy, Engagement Officer for Guide Dogs Cymru, describes how the organisation is working at several different levels to make streets safer for vision impaired people.

Where cars are parked on pavements people who are blind and partially sighted may have to risk their lives by walking into the road just to get by. This is an issue that also impacts parents with prams, wheelchair users, older people and many others.

Guide Dogs are supporting the Pavement Parking Bill which would introduce a nationwide law prohibiting pavement parking across England and Wales, unless specifically permitted. A standardised law across the country would make it clear that pavement parking should be the exception, not the norm for motorists, and give local authorities real power to properly tackle this problem. We want a clear law where drivers cannot park on the pavement unless in a specifically designated area, in line with Greater London.

At the beginning of January the next stage of the Pavement Parking Bill sponsored by Martin Horwood MP takes place. The bill calls for a law covering Wales and England which would ban pavement parking in all except specially designated streets. The Second Reading of the Bill is the first opportunity where it can be debated in full, and include responses from the Government and the opposition front-benches, as well as other backbench MPs.

For Wales this gives a firm backing to the rest of the work we have done in this area in 2014 to raise awareness of irresponsible parking including parking on pavements.

Last year Guide Dogs Cymru successfully worked with Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who were overseeing projects which involved school children informing people who parked irresponsibly in and around their school sites that their actions were dangerous. In some places this was called Junior PCSO scheme and children would issue a ticket which acted as a warning, and in other schools it was called Junior Road Safety Officer scheme and the children would point out why it was dangerous to the drivers. The schemes have raised awareness that irresponsible parking is dangerous for blind and partially sighted people, including guide dog owners. This has been particularly useful in tackling people who park across drop kerbs with tactile paving.

Guide Dogs Cymru will continue to support these schemes and visit with school children in assemblies in 2015.

As well as working with PCSOs, Guide Dogs Cymru also worked with Local Authority Road Safety Officers to ensure that issues of road safety for blind and partially sighted people are included in the messages and learning that they take into schools and throughout their other work.

This work will continue in 2015 where Guide Dogs will look to address all Road safety officers in Wales including the road safety officers for each Welsh Police Force.

Lastly, Guide Dogs Cymru delivered training to over 100 Police Officers in 2014, some were PCSOs and some were warranted Officers. As part of this training the issues of parking on pavements was discussed with explanation given of the particular issues and how the officers could help. For example even in areas where Local Councils have taken responsibility for irresponsible parking, anyone parking on a drop kerb with tactile paving is contravening the road traffic act and therefore can be issued a fixed penalty notice by a PCSO or a Police Officer.

Also anyone parking on the pavement without good reason can be issued a fixed penalty notice for an unnecessary obstruction by an officer.

Some officers were unaware that they could take these actions in areas where councils had responsibility for enforcing responsible parking.

In 2015 Guide Dogs Cymru plans to work with all Police Forces in Wales to replicate work done in the West Midlands where PCSOs issued warnings to all motorists parked on the pavement in a specific area in a targeted approach. This can then be accompanied by letters through all doors in the area to say that PCSOs will patrol this area and in future the tickets will not be a warning.

2015 could be the year of good change with regards to parking on pavements in Wales.

Aberystwyth Bus Station, the story so far

Andrea Gordon, Engagement Manager at Guide Dogs Cymru, outlines how organisations can effect change in the built environment, and gives her tips for successful campaigning .

In late 2012, Guide Dogs Cymru was contacted by vision impaired people in Aberystwyth about the new Bus station and how difficult it was for them to find their way around it. When I visited, I completely understood their concerns: The design was very confusing, with no clear means of finding the islands in the road where most of the bus stops were located. Walking along the pavement opposite the islands, there was no means of knowing how to line yourself up to cross in the right place. For sighted pedestrians, the scheme designers laid a pattern of paving in the road which was meant to indicate the route to each bus stop. It

hardly stood out visually and was not tactile, and, most peculiar of all, it invited pedestrians to wander around in the road.

In addition, there was no tactile blister paving on the kerbs and the signs on the bus shelters were not appropriately colour contrasted, some were even obscured by big planters. The point of this story, however, is essentially about how we tackled the situation.

You will only have a vague understanding from my description of how very difficult and dangerous the bus station is, but you can imagine that without a logical layout and any of the normal orientation clues, it is very difficult for anyone with sight loss to use it. I was asked to write this article to inspire you to believe that there is always the possibility of achieving change, and so this is the story of what we did next:

Most campaigns start with a group of people who care passionately about something, and so in Aberystwyth Guide Dogs Cymru and RNIB Cymru ran one of our campaigns training courses to help those who wanted to complain about the Bus Station to learn some golden rules of campaigning. They got off to a good start as they already had a burning issue to unite them, and they called themselves the VI Action Group.

One of the other secrets to successful campaigning is to have a plan: It was clear that the group needed to engage with the relevant Ceredigion Council Officers to communicate their concerns. Through site visits and discussions, they told the Officers why the design of the Bus Station was so difficult, but, even though their views were listened to, nothing changed.

Another of the rules for campaigning is to get evidence, so Guide Dogs arranged for our Access Auditor to visit and provide the group with a formal report which went to the council, so that the group's complaints had real substance. In order to add more weight, Guide Dogs and RNIB wrote to elected members, the local MP and Assembly Member for Ceredigion stressing the real danger to blind and partially sighted people, and pointing out that they had

failed in their legal duty to engage with blind and partially sighted people from the outset.

Winning allies strengthens any campaign and in this case, Disabled People Together proved to be very helpful. As a recognised local group representing people with a variety of access requirements, they were equally concerned about the Bus Station and were strong in their support of the VI Action Group. They put the Bus Station on their meeting agendas so that the campaign kept its momentum, and eventually, in July 2014, we had the great news that the council had agreed to change the design.

It is to the credit of everyone involved that at the subsequent site visit to pin down what changes were needed, the summer sunshine of beautiful West Wales smiled down on an enthusiastic group and an amicable discussion. Council officers with plans and pens, wheelchair users defying the traffic, Guide Dogs attracting all sorts of people to come and find out what was going on, it was one of those great experiences which I will treasure. The final design will be informed by what was agreed, and it will therefore represent real and meaningful engagement.

However, the title of this article is the story so far, because the work to re-design the Bus Station has not yet started. We are assured that this is due to a delay in the tendering process, and I have no reason to believe otherwise, but what I know for certain is that we will all be delighted when it does begin, and ready to celebrate when it's done. In the meantime, blind and partially sighted people continue to be at risk, and we are well into extra time!

Sadly, local authorities often fail to understand the value of engaging with people with sight loss, and other disabilities. They have a duty under the Equality Act to do so, and inclusive design which supports access for everyone should always be the aim. I suspect though that you will all have examples of streets which are difficult to navigate, supermarkets which are fronted by huge car parks with no safe routes in for pedestrians, and rail stations which

have no nearby bus stops. I hope that the Aberystwyth example shows that determined campaigning can, with a little help from your friends, pay off. The story might not be finished, but after putting in so much effort over so long, I am sure that the VI Action Group will see to it that it ends in just the way they want it to.

Car parking charges in Bridgend

Julie Thomas, Chair of Bridgevis, gives an example of how they organised with other groups to oppose their local council's plans.

Bridgend Council wanted to introduce car parking charges in council car parks for disabled people who have Blue Badges. They said that they would only carry out informal consultation about this change, claiming that they did not need to do any other kind of consultation.

The Chair of Bridgevis wrote to the local Assembly Member, listing the reasons why car parking charges for Blue Badge holders should not be introduced:

- Under the 2010 Equality Act, councils are required to consult and find out how changes they want to make will affect people with 'protected characteristics', but an Equality Impact Assessment had not been conducted about the proposal.
- The Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take forward equality of opportunity by removing or minimising the disadvantages experienced by those who share a 'protected characteristic' were being ignored
- The proposal would make it harder for disabled people to take part in social activities
- There are many disabled people living in poverty (a point supported by evidence from recent research) and they would struggle to pay the parking charges.
- Public transport remains only partly accessible to disabled people and despite efforts by the vision impairment group,

there have been no efforts made by bus companies to adapt the service for vision impaired users.

- Isolation is a huge problem for people with a vision impairment as mobility is a real issue and transport is a very big challenge.
- Travelling by car is often the only way that people with vision impairments can get about. The introduction of charges for Blue Badge holders may mean that they have to make fewer journeys.

Bridgevis contacted other disability organisations, asking them to support their opposition to the proposed charges. The proposal was dropped but subsequently, charging was reintroduced for a second time. A letter writing campaign was introduced, WCB wrote a letter of support, as well as many local disability organisations. The Chair of Bridgevis wrote to the local paper and also addressed the Cabinet office and insisted on a full equality impact assessment that included the impact of the welfare reforms. As a result, the proposal was dropped.

For more information about campaigning, Disability Wales has produced a useful document 'Know your Rights' which can be found on their website.

Campaigning Toolkit

If these case studies have inspired you to start campaigning, or if you just want to get in touch with your local representative or candidate, we have provided some information on who to contact.

Welsh Assembly Government

Headed by the First Minister of Wales, the Welsh Government is responsible for areas such as health, education, language and culture and public services. A total of 60 Assembly Members (AMs) are elected to represent the people of Wales at regional and national levels.

You can find your Assembly Member by going to the Welsh Assembly website <http://www.assembly.wales/en/memhome>, and searching by postcode or region. The website also includes details of the roles and responsibilities of an AM.

UK Parliament

The British Government retains responsibility for UK-wide areas such as tax, defence, foreign policy and benefits. There are currently 40 Members of Parliament representing Wales. You can find your MP by visiting the website <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/> and searching by postcode, constituency or MP's name.

Local Government

Visit the Welsh Local Government Association website, <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/authorities>, which has links to the websites of all Welsh Local Councils, where you can find contact details for your local councillors.

Political Parties

Contact details for the main political parties in Wales are given below:

Welsh Conservative Party

Rhymney House, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park,
Cardiff CF23 8RB
Telephone 02920 736562, Email: info@welshconservatives.com

Wales Green Party

Email Contact@WalesGreenParty.com

Welsh Labour Party

1 Cathedral Road , Cardiff , CF11 9HA
Telephone 02920 877700; Email wales@labour.org.uk

Welsh Liberal Democrats,

38 The Parade, Cardiff, CF24 3AD
Telephone 029 2031 3400; Email enquiries@welshlibdems.org.uk

Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru, Tŷ Gwynfor, Anson Court, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff,
CF10 4AL
Phone: 029 2047 2272; email: post@plaidcymru.org

UKIP Wales

Please visit the website <http://www.ukipwales.org.uk/> for information.

We are very grateful to all of the individuals and organisations which have contributed to this section. We hope that readers have found it interesting and welcome any comments which you may have.

Sight Problems and Learning Disabilities

Peter Jones, Wales Policy Officer, Guide Dogs Cymru and ex-Project Coordinator at Learning Disability Wales for the Accessible Information Project, explains why it is so important that people with learning disabilities have regular eye tests.

Disabilities

The Wales Vision Strategy Implementation Plan was launched in October 2014 by The National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Vision Group. A key outcome in the plan is that everyone in Wales looks after their eyes and their sight. One of the targets in the plan is to “produce information for Learning Disability Wales to distribute through their networks”. The reason for this is that studies have found that around 1 in 3 people with a learning disability have a sight problem, much of which is correctable. The National Health Service, charities and private sector partners in Wales all have an important role to play in making sure everyone with an eye condition receives timely treatment. The plan recognises this and emphasises the importance of raising awareness and understanding of eye health, particularly focusing on people most at risk of eye disease. Sight is very important to all of us. It helps us to communicate and to develop and maintain relationships with others. It helps us to move around safely and make sense of the world. It makes it easier for us to take part in leisure activities. Learning new skills and working would be very hard without sight. Most importantly sight helps us to maintain our independence.

Studies.

Studies have found that 1 in 3 people with a learning disability has a sight problem, much of which might be correctable.

It has been suggested that up to 90% of people with Downs Syndrome have significant sight impairments. It is estimated that 70% of people with cerebral palsy and learning difficulties have a significant impairment of vision. There are at least 1.5 million

people with a learning disability in the UK – about 2% of the population.

Not knowing if you have a sight problem

Many people may have lived for a very long time, even their whole lives and not known that they have a sight problem. Alongside this many carers and supporters do not know how to recognise if someone has a sight problem. This means that many people with unrecognised or uncorrected sight problems may be reluctant to learn new skills or to do things they used to enjoy. People and carers may put this down to learning disability rather than a correctable sight problem such as a cataract or someone's eyesight getting worse.

Possible impacts of not knowing if you have a sight problem

If you do not know that you have a sight problem you can become distressed and angry. It can make you feel anxious and frustrated. In turn this can lead you to become withdrawn and frightened. You might not be able to do things you used to enjoy. In some cases things can become so difficult that self-harming (for example eye poking, selfinjury to head and eyes) might happen. Accessible information and skilled support from others can prevent these negative things from happening and can help people access quality eye care.

Noticing if a person has a sight problem

By observing someone, you might notice signs that they might be developing a sight problem:-

- A person's eyes might be looking sore or blood-shot, or their eyes might look cloudy.
- A person might start squinting or moving their head in 'odd' positions when looking at, or looking for things.
- A person might become tentative or fearful in twilight or in shadows, or upset in bright sunlight.

No one is too disabled to have an eye test

- Everyone can have their eyes tested.

- People can visit an optometrist (person who tests your eyes) in all parts of Wales. If they find this difficult they can be visited, for the test, in their own home.
- Eye tests are free to many people who are on benefits and often there is help available with the cost of glasses.
- It is sensible to take as much information about the person to the optometrist before they attend their appointment. This will help with the eye test.

You need an eye test every two years or more often if your optometrist says it is necessary

It is very important to attend your appointment and to keep information about eye tests and prescriptions for spectacles or lenses in a safe place like a care plan. If you have diabetes you will have to have regular diabetic eye screening tests. If your family members, such as your Mum or Dad, have eye diseases you will need to visit the optometrist more regularly. Eye diseases have long names like glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa or cataracts. Do not worry about this. Just tell the person who is testing your eyes if one your family has a problem with their sight. Sight gets worse with age – almost everyone will need glasses at some time in their life.

Eye tests are about health checks, not just about getting glasses

Eye tests can identify other health conditions that might otherwise go unnoticed by others.

Heart disease, blood pressure, anaemia and diabetes are some of the conditions that can be identified through an eye test.

People with visual impairments, or who may be blind, still benefit from eye health checks.

You don't need to be able to read or talk to have an eye test

An optometrist can find out a lot about a person's eyes from looking at the eye and observing how a person looks at objects.

There are eyesight tests that use pictures and matching cards to test how well a person sees – there are tests which find out how much detail a person can see.

Lots of people with learning disabilities have to get used to wearing glasses

It can be a strange experience wearing glasses for the first time. People may need encouragement and positive feedback. Some people may prefer to wear their glasses for just a few minutes at first – they may prefer to do so when looking at their favourite TV show or mobile phone. People need to wear the right glasses for the right job. For example reading glasses are not for looking at things far away. If people have different glasses make sure their glasses do not get confused – use labels on the glasses-case to make sure the right glasses are used.

People with learning disabilities need the same help as everyone else with a sight problem

Everybody with a sight problem is entitled to help and support. This includes people with learning disabilities. If a person is diagnosed as having a sight problem they can choose to be registered. Depending on their sight problem they could be registered as Severely Sight Impaired (Blind) or Sight Impaired (Partially sighted). Being registered entitles people to benefits and services. People cannot be denied these benefits because they are learning disabled.

REMEMBER

It is very important to have your eyes tested, at least, every two years.

(Source: Llais 113, Winter 2014, Learning Disability Wales)

Have Your Say!

Welsh Government Consultations

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

- Health Standards Framework (closes 26 January)
- Revised Child Poverty Strategy for Wales (closes 29 Jan)
- Implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 - four separate consultations on different aspects of this act (all closing 2 February)
- NHS Healthcare travel costs scheme (closes 24 February)
- Draft National Transport Plan 2015 (closes 11 March).

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

Survey on leisure services

The Wales Audit Office is conducting a survey on the current state of sport and leisure services run by Welsh councils. They want to know how changes in these services as a result of budget cuts are affecting local people.

Although none of the questions refer specifically to the needs of disabled people, the survey is a good opportunity to comment on the accessibility of sport and leisure facilities. Even if you do not use these services, you can use the survey to say why this is the case. For more information, and to complete the survey, go to <http://www.wao.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-leisure-services-wales>. Responses must be received by 31st January.

Views of disabled sports fans wanted

The UK Government has commissioned a survey of disabled sports fans, following research which suggested that disabled people who attend sports events as spectators are being treated as second class citizens. Mark Harper, Minister for Disabled People has said that "We know the situation in football is unacceptable and it's not only wheelchair access that falls short, but adjustments for people with all kinds of impairments. We encourage all sports fans with a disability to tell us of their experiences at sporting venues, so we can get a clear picture of whether disabled sports fans are being treated fairly."

They are looking for opinions on everything from wheelchair access and disabled parking to accessible toilets, hearing loops and treatment by other supporters at live sporting fixtures. Organisers want to hear from fans of all sports - and in particular rugby, cricket, football, hockey, basketball, cycling and motor-racing.

You can read more and find a link to the survey on the 'Level Playing Field' website,
<http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/news/government-seeking-views-disabled-sports-fans-have-your-say>.

Level Playing Field is an organisation which promotes good access to sports events for disabled fans, and its website includes details of access arrangements at sporting venues in the UK.

Responses to the survey must be received by 28th February.

Events

Nystagmus Training Day

The Nystagmus Network is organising a training day for medical staff with an interest in the condition on 30th January at the City Centre Marriott Hotel in Bristol - and the event has received accreditation from BIOS (the British and Irish Orthoptists society).

It is intended for ophthalmologists, orthoptists, ECLOs, electrophysiologists, hospital based optometrists, rehab officers (ROVIs) and any other professionals who regularly work with people who have nystagmus. It will equip delegates to offer these patients the most up-to-date service in terms of diagnosis, treatment, information and support. Topics to be covered will include early onset nystagmus and its diagnosis, electrophysiology, clinical assessment, treatment and management, plus quality of life for patients. To find out more and book a place, visit the Nystagmus Network website, www.nystagmusnet.org. For further information, send an email to john.sanders@nystagmusnet.org or phone him on 029 2045 4242.

Glaucoma Support Group meetings

The International Glaucoma Association (IGA) is organising support group meetings at Abergele Hospital on 16th February, 16th March and 20th April. All meetings are held from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm.

Details of all IGA's support group meetings are on their website, www.glaucoma-association.com – click the 'support groups' option towards the top of the screen.

North Wales Mobile Information Unit

The schedule for Vision Support's mobile unit for the remainder of the first quarter of 2015 is:

January

- Monday 19th Amlwch Medical Centre 10:30am – 3:00pm
- Friday 23rd Corwen Car Park 10:00am – 3:30pm
- Monday 26th Rhos on Sea Prom by TIC 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Friday 30th Dolgellau Marian Car Park 11:00am – 2:30pm

February

- Monday 2nd Holyhead Town Centre Car Park 10:30am – 3:30pm
- Friday 6th Rhyl Town Hall 9:00am – 4:00pm
- Monday 16th Gwrych Medical Centre Abergele 9:00am – 4:00pm
- Friday 20th Fairbourne Car Park 11:00am – 2:30pm
- Monday 23rd Menai Bridge Car Park 10:00am – 12:30pm
- Monday 23rd Beaumaris Car Park 1.30pm - 3.30pm

March

- Monday 2nd Llandudno North Shore 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Friday 6th Porthmadog High Street 10:30am – 3:00pm
- Monday 16th Llangefni Town Hall 10:00am – 3:30pm
- Friday 20th Ruthin Craft Centre 9:30am – 3:30pm
- Monday 23rd Abergele Eye Hospital 9:00am – 4:00pm
- Friday 27th Caernarfon Y Maes 10:00am – 3:30pm
- Monday 30th Rhosneigr Car Park 10:30am – 3:30pm

Please ring 01745 338914 to confirm details before travelling.

Royal National College for the Blind

The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) in Hereford is organising two Professional Development Days. The event on 4th February is suitable for professionals working with those aged 12 to 25 with vision impairment, and on 25th February, the focus will be on professionals working with vision impaired adults. Both events offer delegates the chance to find out about the facilities at the College, and the support which they can offer to students.

On 11th March, the College hosts 'Your Futures Fair'. The event is suitable for anyone from the age of 12 with a vision impairment who is looking at further education, higher education, employment or self-employment. Friends, family and professionals who work with these young people are also welcome. There will be workshops, speakers and a range of stands from relevant organisations, including Careers Wales

RNC also has a free 'Have a Go' weekend on 28th to 29th March for young vision impaired people aged 13-16 who are considering going to college. Parents can also stay at the college free of charge during the weekend.

For more information on any of these events, and to book a place, visit the website www.rncb.ac.uk and click on the 'News and events' link, or telephone 01432 376 621.

A chance to try surfing

Surfability UK CIC is a community interest company that provides surfing lessons and experiences for people with disabilities. They are based at Caswell Bay on the Gower, but also provide lessons on the indoor surf simulator at Swansea's LC Leisure Centre. Their aim is to make surfing as fun and inclusive as possible, and the company now wants to start sessions for young people with a vision impairment.

Surfability has recently been working with a vision impaired young person, and has seen how her confidence, balance and co-ordination have improved - and she really loves surfing. They are now keen to build on this work and make the benefits of surfing available to other young people with sight loss.

You can find out more about Surfability on their website, www.surfabilityukcic.org. If you are interested in getting involved in these sessions, please use the 'Pen Portraits' section of the website to register your interest, or telephone 07517 230 427.

New College Worcester

New College, the national residential college for blind or partially sighted young people aged 11 to 19, has several events planned for the next few months:

- 2nd February, Developing kitchen skills. Parents of vision impaired children can learn how to encourage their children to become more independent in the kitchen. The free course will focus on basic skills such as chopping, peeling, and making making hot and cold drinks.
- 25th-26th March, Preparing to Apply to University, A chance for vision impaired young people who are hoping to go to university this autumn to explore the issues involved. The free residential course covers topics such as choosing a course and a university, student finance and writing a personal statement. The event is free, thanks to funding from VICTA.
- 22nd April, Outreach Open Day. An event for educational professionals working with VI young people, and for the parents of VI children. Attendees will have the chance to meet subject teachers, get hands-on experience of specialist equipment, and get practical support and advice on specific curriculum areas of your choice.

Places on these events are likely to be popular and must be booked in advance. To find out more telephone 01905 763933 or book on-line at www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk.

Activity camp for vi young people in Hereford

Action for Blind People would like to invite 14-17 year olds with sight loss to a 3 night residential held in Hereford from 20th to 23rd February. This event is supported by the Big Lottery Fund and will include workshops on various aspects of your transition into adulthood, including employment, further education opportunities and gaining independence. We will also be doing lots of other activities, going out in the evening and have plenty of time to chill out and get to know each other. The cost of this residential is just £50 which covers all your accommodation, food and activities. However, if you have previously attended a Big Lottery Fund residential then you will not be eligible for this event.

Please contact Jeanne Allen for details and a booking form:

Phone: 020 7391 2151

Email: Jeanne.Allen@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Specialist workers meeting in Cardiff

Sight Cymru is organising a meeting for specialist workers at the Masonic Hall in Cardiff on Friday 27th March. The event is free and includes lunch.

The programme includes Dr Anne Williams talking on Stargardt Disease, Dr Margaret Woodhouse on Visual Development in Children with learning disabilities and Helen Thouless talking on a new stroke programme. There will also be opportunities for networking. To book a place, please send an email to lissa.gomer@sightcymru.org.uk

News and Information

Report highlights problems faced by bus users

'Destination Unknown', a new report from Guide Dogs, provides shocking evidence of the problems faced by bus passengers with sight loss, with 65% of these passengers missing their stop at least once in the last six months. Whilst the use of audio 'next stop' announcements would be of huge benefit, only 19% of buses have these on board, with the majority of these in London. The report is based on responses to the annual survey carried out by Guide Dogs, and it is particularly worrying that, in some aspects measured by the survey, the performance of bus companies has deteriorated since 2013. Guide Dogs has called on the government to legislate for all new buses to be fitted with audio visual technology (AV), and to make disability awareness training mandatory for bus drivers. You can find out more and read the full report on the Guide Dogs website, www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/talkingbuses/destination-unknown/ .

The 'campaigns' section of the Guide Dogs website now includes a map of the UK showing where talking buses are in operation, and also has a link to a MSWord document which contains a list of locations with AV announcements.

Guide dog owner awarded BEM

WCB would like to congratulate David Chaffey, a guide dog owner from Gwent, who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Years Honours List 2015. The award was given for David's voluntary work for several organisations in Wales, including Wales Council of the Blind, where he helped us with website accessibility testing and awareness training.

‘Being there’: No-one should face sight loss alone

Only 30 per cent of eye clinics in the UK currently have some kind of qualified support in place, and many of these posts are under threat. Without this support, people can face an incredibly challenging time when being told they are losing, or have lost, their sight. People like Hayley, who is 46. She used to manage several chains of a well known pub before she lost her sight in both eyes. When she was diagnosed there was no support available. “It was awful; I was told I just had to accept it. I cried all the way home, and I slunk down the wall when I got home. I really feel that it would have helped if there had been somebody with me or an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) to sit down, talk things through, and advise me about the support out there. I needed a huge amount of support and it wasn’t there. I felt isolated, I couldn’t work. That was a huge thing as well, I had been in hospitality all my working life, it was just like what? This just can’t be the rest of life, it just can’t be.”

Across the UK, ECLOs help patients, like Hayley, and their families to understand their diagnosis, provide quality information and support, and can refer on to relevant services. Unfortunately, complex funding arrangements mean that many of these essential services are at risk.

The RNIB campaigns team are working hard to address this serious issue. They held a Parliamentary reception in Westminster, attended by over 70 MPs, and now they are asking people to contact their MP to request their support for the call for sight loss advisers. You can do this on the RNIB website, it’s very simple and takes two minutes, just go to www.rnib.org.uk/beingthere or call 020 7391 2123. Please also share this campaign on your social networks using #beingthere.

Welsh Ambulance Service improves access for assistance dog users

The Welsh Ambulance Service Trust has been working with Guide Dogs Cymru to ensure that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, assistance dogs such as guide dogs and hearing dogs for deaf people will be able to stay with their owners and travel with them in an ambulance. The Trust realised that there was a need for new guidance following some occasions when guide dogs had been prevented from accompanying their owners when they needed to travel by ambulance or other Trust vehicle.

A report in the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust's 'Network News' magazine explains that Guide Dogs Cymru helped the Trust to engage with guide dog owners at a series of focus group meetings, where ambulance staff gained a much better appreciation of their needs. The Trust will also be working with other organisations across Wales, such as Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, so that they can continue to engage with, and listen to, assistance dog owners.

Useful Publications

Disability Cricket Pathway published

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), the governing body for all cricket in England and Wales, has produced a guide which gives disabled people information on how to get involved in the sport. 'The Disability Cricket Pathway' is aimed at young disabled people who aspire to play cricket at national level, and will also be of interest to parents, guardians and older cricketers. The document outlines the pathways for various disabilities, including vision impairment, and describes the different categories of player within the vision impairment pathway.

You can download the document and listen to an audio version on the ECB's website <http://www.ecb.co.uk/development/disability-cricket>, or send an email to disabilitycricket@ecb.co.uk for more information.

Driving when you have glaucoma

Loss of one's driving licence is a major concern for people diagnosed with glaucoma. Now the International Glaucoma Association (IGA) has produced a new leaflet which gives information on this topic for both individuals and professionals.

The leaflet is free, and orders can be placed via the website, www.glaucoma-association.com, by ringing 01233 648164, or sending an email to info@iga.org.uk.

Focus on: The Family Fund

Helping families throughout Wales

George needs 24-hour care and cannot be left to sit alone and play with toys as he has Polymicrogyria and limited vision. Because of his poor vision George can be very anxious, and needs reassurance from his mum, Abigail, for all aspects of his care. But George does take delight in music and therapeutic play. Abigail wanted George to have more opportunities to play, but affording suitable equipment was difficult. Then she found out about the Family Fund through a friend.

The Family Fund is a UK-wide charity, giving grants to families on a low income raising a disabled or seriously ill child aged 17 and under. In 2013/14, the Fund supported over 68,000 families across the UK, including almost 5,000 in Wales.

It can be a struggle financially, emotionally and physically for families raising a disabled or seriously ill child. Families tell the Fund that a grant can often be a lifeline, changing lives significantly. Grants can include items such as computers, clothing, white goods and, of course, play equipment.

Abigail asked if we could consider helping with a specialist indoor swing. With the help of Learning Space, the Family Fund was able to help George with a doorway swing, providing him with his own safe space. He now feels more secure as the swing provides him with full body contact aiding his extra support needs. Abigail said “The swing has been a safe haven for George, my life has been transformed. He relaxes in it, he is calm and happy. If he is having a bad day he will go in his swing and instantly calm down. Without the swing he would still be laid on the floor. Thank you.”

The Family Fund wants to reach more families who are facing hardship in Wales, To find out more and apply to the Family Fund please visit our website www.familyfund.org.uk.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of WCB, and as much of the material is submitted by third parties, we cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information therein. We reserve the right to edit for publication.

The focus for the next edition of Roundup will be **Cardiff Institute for the Blind (CIB)** which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2015.

Advertise in WCB Roundup.

WCB Roundup is sent to more than 600 people, in a variety of formats, and the download version is publicised via our website and Twitter. We are a not-for-profit organisation that hopes to recoup its costs. We seek advertisers for our newsletter so that we can continue to produce this valued journal. Our rates are as follows (per edition):

Full A4 page: £150 (black and white) £250 (colour)

1/2 A4 page: £100 (black and white)

1/3 A4 page: £50 (black and white)

Enclosures: single sheet A4 600 copies, supplied in a ready-to-go format: £125. Enclosures (such as booklets): please ask for quote. To advertise in many editions, please contact us for discounts. If you are interested, please contact Ann via ann@wcb-ccd.org.uk or telephone 02920 473954 to find out more.

Roundup is published quarterly by Wales Council of the Blind. It is also available in audio CD format. Further copies can be requested from Richard Bowers (Wales Council of the Blind), 2nd Floor, Hallinans House, 22 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DB. Telephone 029 2047 3954.

SMELL GAS?



**WALES & WEST
UTILITIES**

WORKING TO KEEP
OUR CUSTOMERS SAFE



Clive says... Follow these 5 steps to safety:

- 1 Switch off all gas appliances, and if possible turn off gas at the mains
- 2 Open windows and doors to ventilate
- 3 Don't use electrical appliances or switch lights on or off
- 4 Don't smoke or use any naked flames
- 5 Remember to call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**
Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

For more information, log on to: wwutilities.co.uk



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