



visibility

Spring 2004

Welcome to our Spring newsletter!

In this edition you will find the latest news about **Visibility** including information on our pioneering **New View** project, an appeal for 10k runners and the latest on our bowling teams. You will hear about **Visibility's** latest research findings and how to get copies of our new information booklet. We are also appealing for skilled directors to join our Board later this year.

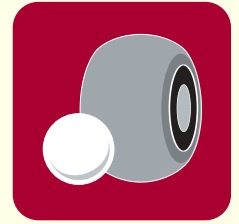
We are interested to know what you think of our newsletters and how we can make them more interesting for you. If you have any ideas about what should be in our newsletter, we would like to hear from you.

We would also like to develop a small group of people to work with us on the newsletter. If you use our services and would like to be involved in production, please get in touch.

It would be useful, but not essential, to have some computer skills, in particular knowledge of Microsoft Word. What is absolutely essential is an interest in Visibility and an understanding of why it is important to communicate with the people who use **Visibility's** services.

For further information, please call Fiona Sandford, CEO on 0141 572 0741 or email fiona@visibility.org.uk.

Go! Bowlers top British League



Two teams from **Visibility** compete in the British Blind Ten Pin Bowling league.

The teams are the first from Scotland to take part in the league and **Visibility's Go!** Development Worker, Sharon Moncrieff is bowled over by their success.

“**Visibility's Go!** project runs a whole variety of activities for visually impaired people and when ten pin bowling was suggested as a new sport, I knew we were on to a winner. When we formed GO! Bowlers and GO! Strikers, the team members decided amongst themselves that they wanted to compete in the British league.”

“The group meet each week to play and enjoy an evening of camaraderie and competition!”

Team member, Collette Vassie from Clarkston, has been playing bowls for fun for years. Colette feels it makes a real difference to be able to compete on a level pegging. “Everyone on the team and everyone we compete against is visually impaired and so the results mean much more to me than when I played with sighted friends. It gives me a real boost that even though we're the new team on the block, we're giving others something to think about.”

We wish the Go! Bowlers luck in the British Blind Bowling league finals in May.

For information on any of our **Go!** activities please call 0141 332 4632. For adults we have guitar and banjo classes (all levels), arts and crafts, creative writing, tai chi, yoga and Braille. We have monthly activities and a summer programme for children – so contact us if you want to know more!

People with central vision loss learn to read again

Over the last six months **Visibility's New View** project has been supporting people with central vision loss to read again. Visibility is one of the first organisations in the UK to deliver reading training in this way. Using a technique known as eccentric reading developed by the academic community in Sweden, **New View** is producing encouraging results.

Out of the twelve people who volunteered to do the reading trials last October, eleven have a good functional reading ability which means they can read their letters and telephone numbers. Some have taken to it so well that they are able to read newspapers and books.

Isobel Haddow couldn't read anything before she started **New View** and now she can read her letters, bills, telephone numbers and watch the television better. Isobel said: "It has brought a new lease of life. Before I was dependent on others to do things for me and I didn't feel in control of what I did. Now, because I can read again, I'm more independent and confident about everything. It just makes every day that more enjoyable."

New View's Co-ordinator, David Logan has seen the participants work hard to achieve the results they have. David says: "When we started training the participants realised that, although the technique is simple enough, it involves a degree of hard work and determination. It takes patience and practice as it involves re-training your brain to read by making use of the peripheral vision that remains. It can be tiring and requires a lot of motivation but all our participants agree the results are worth it."

New View was recently featured on BBC Radio Scotland's Gary Robertson Show and also on Radio 4's In Touch. The project is generating a great deal of interest and if you would like to know more - contact David Logan. **New View** is supported by Glasgow City Council Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

Support for Visibility

Over the last two years **King's Park Parish Church** in Glasgow has held a coffee morning to raise funds for **Visibility**. To date the events have resulted in over £2000 for the organisation and Allan Thomson who coordinates the mornings is delighted that this year they raised more than expected.

He said: " We managed to surpass the £800 we raised last year which was fantastic. Historically we've supported charities, which help visually impaired people and it is a cause close to many of our thousand strong congregation, many of whom are elderly.

"**Visibility** provides services which benefit people with sight loss who live locally so there is an opportunity for us to see first hand the impact of our fundraising."

King's Park has been holding a coffee morning to raise funds for visually impaired people since 1966 and has raised over £31,500 during that time.

Another fundraising event resulted in £250 for **Visibility**. **The Department of Work and Pensions** in Glasgow held a bring and buy sale last month to raise funds which were split between a third world charity and a local one.

Heather Ferrie from the DWP said it was the first year they've held the sale and **Visibility** was her first choice to receive half the proceeds. "I work closely with the **Visibility Welfare Rights** team who offer a very effective and rewarding service to people with a visual impairment so I'm delighted to be able to support their good work."

If you are interested in working with us to raise funds or have any ideas, please contact Sarah Hunter our fundraising manager. Sarah will be pleased to hear from you and be contacted Monday – Friday.

Email sarah@visibility.org.uk or phone 0141 332 4632

10k – Runners wanted!

Visibility's fundraiser Sarah Hunter is capitalising on the success of last year's Glasgow Women's 10k. Margaret Sutherland, pictured left, helped to raise £3000 for **Visibility** and Sarah, who is actively recruiting women to take part in this year's race, is looking forward to exceeding that amount when the event takes place in May 16th.



Sarah is drumming up runners who will join the **Visibility** team for the race in Bellahouston Park. Runners will receive a sponsor pack and a **Visibility** t-shirt and Sarah knows that **Visibility** will be well represented on the day!

If anyone is interested in taking part to help raise funds for children and adults with sight loss living in the West of Scotland please contact Sarah on 0141 332 4632 or email sarah@visibility.org.uk for a sponsor pack.

New booklet supported by HBOS

Visibility are celebrating a grant award from Halifax Bank of Scotland, (HBOS). Following an application procedure and selection process **Visibility** was awarded £4,600 for the publication of a booklet, which outlines our services and activities. (Call 0141 332 4632 for copies.)

The booklet will be used to promote our services more widely through a number of appropriate outlets including, social services, hospitals, libraries and benefit offices. Chris Dwyer, senior manager in HBOS Treasury Services based in Glasgow said: "This award is offered mainly to organisations who provide financial advice to people. As well as being able to do that through it's comprehensive Welfare Rights service, HBOS was impressed that **Visibility** had purposefully designed a booklet for reaching more people.

Visibility's creative writers set to publish anthology

The GO! creative and song writing classes have just sent their poems, stories and songs to the presses. A selection of the material produced at the GO! creative writing workshops is being published in the spring after the group won a Royal Mail Stepping Stone award to produce a book, tape and CD rom of their work.

Go! creative writing tutor Fiona Parrot has compiled the works and is looking forward to seeing the end product. "Everyone has worked really hard to get final pieces together. Each item is very personal, reflecting a whole range of emotions. The work ranges from poems about the power of speech to stories about the strength and support of families. Everyone should be very proud of their achievements."



The **Go!** art group is providing the design for the book's cover, a proposed cover is pictured left, and the award winning novelist Louise Welch (*The Cutting Room*) has written an introduction to the anthology.

She said "Between these pages you'll meet Glasgow bands, talking fairies, battling sailors, half-cut Santas and many more.

You'll find poetry whose images will linger long after you've put the book down and songs that will put a smile on your face and maybe set you thinking while your foots a tapping."

The anthology will be available from Visibility in tape or book form. Please contact the office for further details. If you are interested in joining our writers group our office staff will be delighted to give you details.

Research project shows need for better coordination

Visibility's most recent research project is exploring how many people with serious sight loss are not known to specialist services and why this is the case. National data indicates that up to two thirds of the visually impaired community may not be in touch with specialist health or social care services. Working in the Clydebank area, with West Dunbartonshire Council and Greater Glasgow NHS Board, **Visibility** researcher Susie Campbell has identified and interviewed 33 people with significant sight loss, many of whom were unaware of the range of services which could benefit them. Susie explained: " Although this is a small sample, it is already showing some interesting trends. For example, many of the people interviewed are getting some help, but this help is not specifically related to their sight loss. Although these findings do not support the view that there are large numbers of people with sight loss unknown to services, it is apparent that there are many that would benefit from better coordination of information, support and a wider range of services to improve their quality of life."

Patient Support on the agenda at medical symposium

Visibility's Patient Support Worker, Celia Traynor was recently invited to talk about the success of Visibility's Gartnavel project at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow. The Patient Support Service is a first for Scottish eye clinics and has proved an overwhelming success in our first year providing support and information for over 800 people. Celia said the focus of her talk was to highlight the point where the patient is informed, "*nothing else can be done*" usually when registration is being considered. Whilst this may be true medically, Celia is available to support people and talk through the range of aids, equipment and services available at this difficult time.

Visibility seeks new Directors

Visibility is governed by an elected board of directors, 50% of whom must be visually impaired. This year, a number of our directors retire and we are actively seeking directors who have governance skills and a genuine interest in improving services for people affected by visual impairment. In particular we are looking for directors who have experience of governance in the voluntary sector, with organisations who deliver services on behalf of local authorities and health boards. We would also be interested to hear from people with good strategic business skills. Ideally, directors will also have a visual impairment although this is not essential.

Bobby Simpson who is **Visibility's** chairperson until his retirement later this year says: "It is difficult to grasp that almost 14 years have elapsed since my first direct connection with Visibility and even more so to take on board that nearly 5 years have gone since I was elected as Chairman of the Board. Probably speed of progress over that period contributes to the feeling of almost flying through time, and I wouldn't have it any other way! We now provide more services than most of us would have dreamed of in the earlier years and isn't it grand to realise that we are so well thought of by users and other professional bodies? There is no doubt in my mind that the biggest contributing factor in all of this is the camaraderie and deep team spirit which permeates throughout the organisation, from the board through the staff and all of our volunteers. It has been an absolute pleasure for me to have been associated with such a far seeing and far reaching body that Visibility is."

For an information pack or an informal chat please contact Fiona Sandford, CEO on 0141 572 0741 or email fiona@visibility.org.uk.

Visibility is the trading name of GWSSB (formerly Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for the Blind). GWSSB is a company, registered in Scotland limited by guarantee with its registered office at 2 Queens Crescent, Glasgow, G4 9BW. Registration Number: SC116522 Scottish Charity Number: SCO09738