



visibility

Summer 2007

Welcome to Visibility's Summer 2007 Newsletter!

Visibility is your local charity providing a wide range of services for blind and partially sighted children, young people and adults.

As many of you know we are based in the West End of Glasgow at Queens Crescent – however, we deliver services in many areas throughout the West of Scotland.

Visibility is proud of our history. We were formed in 1859 and for many years we were known as Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for the Blind.

We produce our newsletter a few times throughout the year and circulate it to people who are interested in our work. We want to tell our friends and neighbours about Visibility so that more people can benefit from our excellent services. If you know someone who is blind or partially sighted, why not tell them about Visibility and ask them to get in touch?

We want to become better known in our own community as your local provider of services. If you would be interested in receiving our newsletter on a regular basis we would be pleased to send you a copy. You can email us at info@visibility.org.uk or telephone on 0141 332 4632 – simply ask our friendly staff to be put onto our mailing list and let them know that you read this newsletter.

We would also be delighted if you wanted to know more about Visibility – if you have internet access you can visit our website at www.visibility.org.uk. Finally, if after reading about our work and the people we work with, you would like to support us in any way – perhaps by holding a fundraising event, running a 10k or half marathon or simply making a donation, then please contact us on 0141 332 4632 or email nuala@visibility.org.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Recognition for Visibility Volunteering

Visibility values our volunteers and to celebrate the contribution made by our great team of volunteers, we hosted an informal **Volunteer Recognition Lunch**. The event was held in Massimo's restaurant and both the venue and food was enjoyed by all.

Visibility's volunteer befriending project was nominated to the **Evening Times Local Heroes Award & the Nationwide Awards for Voluntary Endeavour**. The nomination was made in recognition of the ongoing commitment from our Volunteer Befrienders who regularly provide support and companionship to some of our most vulnerable and isolated service users.

The great news is that the group were short listed for the award and several representatives attended the Gala Lunch on 19th April at the City Chambers. Although the group did not win, it was a great achievement for all the volunteer befrienders to be recognised as finalists in the event.

Well done to all Visibility's volunteers and Rosemary Cameron, volunteer co-ordinator.

Finally, the **Nationwide Awards** have acknowledged the nomination for Visibility's Volunteer Befrienders and will release information in July with regards to their chosen regional winners, so watch this space!!!!



Introducing new members of the Visibility team . . .



New Trainer for Visibility

Hi my name is Audrey Ward and I'm Visibility's new trainer. A few years ago I decided to do some voluntary work. I had heard of Visibility through a friend from college who was a Visibility service user. He told me that Visibility was a great organisation and that the staff were very helpful and understanding. Through first hand experience, I now know that this is most definitely true!

I initially wanted to work with providing support for blind and visually impaired people as I felt that I could identify with this need. However, after my initial meeting at Visibility in April 2006 I was delighted to become involved in delivering visual impairment awareness training, which has led me to a permanent position with Visibility. My background in sales means that I have really good communication skills and Visibility thought that my skills could be utilised in helping sighted people understand and appreciate the issues which visually impaired people face on a daily basis.

My story is that on the 23rd of December 1996 I was told that I had a brain tumour. In January 1997 I lost my sight as a result of an angiogram. This was a very distressing time for not only me but also my family, especially as I still had the operation to go through to remove the tumour.

Many months passed and when I finally realised that I was not going to regain my sight, I picked myself up and dusted myself down and had my second child in August 1998. It was having a second child that gave me the confidence to further my education and make a career change.

I attended Motherwell College for five years - firstly learning to switch on a computer and culminating with me achieving an HND in Social Science in June 2005.

In August 2005 I started to apply for jobs, something along the lines of advocacy or social work. I really did not know what path I was going down, I only knew that I wanted to "give something back". During my journey I had the support of various organisations and individuals who encouraged and empowered me. This is what led me to Visibility.

Ten years have passed and there is light at the end of the tunnel. I hope by sharing my experience, other people can learn that there is hope and it is possible to rebuild your life.

If you know of any organisation who you think would benefit from Visibility's visual impairment training – why not give me a call and we can get in touch with them?

New Go Co-ordinator!

We are delighted to announce that Michelle Thomson has started with us as the new Go! Co-ordinator. Michelle has been working recently in the south side of Glasgow with a young people's project and is really looking forward to her new post with Visibility. She feels that her own personal experience as a visually impaired person plus her working experience to date means that this job is perfect for her. She said she was "watching for the advert in the paper as she knew it was the job for her." After two interview sessions with staff and Go! participants, we agreed! We are really pleased to welcome Michelle to the Visibility team.



A big thank you must also go to Tabassum and Sandra who have kept things going over recent months and we welcome back Sarah who has returned from maternity leave to complete the team.

We hope to give Michelle a few weeks to settle in but we aim to organise two day trips over the course of the next four months and details of these will be sent out to all participants and will be published on our website. The residential trip to Oban that was discussed earlier this year will happen later on in the year and we are also organising a residential weekend for young people.

The classes that are currently running in Visibility will stop for the summer months at the end of June and a new programme will start in September. If anyone has ideas for new classes, then please let us know.

New Administration Worker

We are delighted to welcome Balzinder Bhatti to our admin team. No doubt many of you will meet Balzinder when you next visit us at 2 Queens Crescent.



Partnership Working

Visibility's Community Support Team are delighted that recent developments have provided the opportunity to work in partnership with the Visual Impairment Services in both East and West Dunbartonshire.

East Dunbartonshire's Visual Impairment Service have invited Visibility's Paul McArthur to work alongside them for two days per week and Paul is greatly enjoying working with social work colleagues and providing support to the visually impaired residents of East Dunbartonshire.

Initially for three months, Paul's post involves conducting comprehensive assessments for visually impaired, hearing impaired and dual sensory impaired people. Together with the emotional support side of the role, there is a more practical approach with a large array of aids and equipment being installed in individuals homes together with general trouble shooting should any equipment be faulty or need replaced. The wider remit of the post is to assess any other social work involvement if required and to refer to the appropriate department. Anne Harkins and the sensory impairment team have been extremely welcoming to Visibility and the partnership working relationship has benefited both parties and the individuals we have been supporting.

Should anyone need their phone to be interfaced for a speech plus unit or need a liquid level indicator, please see Paul!!

West Dunbartonshire Council has provided members of the Community Support Team with the opportunity to provide similar support within the West Dunbartonshire area. These are exciting developments for Visibility and we hope that this, and similar developments will continue into the future.

Glasgow City Council and West Dunbartonshire Council have continued to provide financial support to Visibility. Both councils recognise the value of our specialist welfare rights service and given generous grants to support our work.

Out and about!

Peer support

Visibility's Community Support Team have recently provided a series of successful information evenings within East Dunbartonshire and would like to extend this service by offering residents of East Ayrshire the opportunity to access useful information and advice.

We are currently in the planning stages of this development and we hope to hold the first session in late June/early July. We would greatly welcome ideas and suggestions for possible venues and topics to be discussed and would really like to hear from you.

If you would like to discuss the sessions or would like to be notified when further information becomes available, please contact the team on 0141 572 0746.

Families

Visibility is continuing to hold information sessions for families with visually impaired children who live in North and South Lanarkshire.

These sessions always receive positive feedback and seem to be very useful for those who come along. The next session will be held on 12th June and will once again take place from 7-8.30 pm in Knowetop Primary School in Motherwell.

The theme of this session will be 'Mobility and Independent Living', and our speaker will be leading a general discussion and answering individual questions from parents.

Childcare will be provided by staff from Mobile Play in Action. During the last session, one 4-year-old boy told Visibility staff that he had been waiting far too long to come to the creche again, so the service is obviously popular with the children! If any parents are interested in joining us, please contact Kerrie Brown at Visibility.

Young People

Visibility's most recent development within the Lanarkshire Family Support Project has been the formation of a youth group for young people aged

12 to 18. This group is run in conjunction with Visibility's Go! Project, and offers social and recreational activities as well as opportunities to build self esteem and confidence.

The group met for the first time in March for a social evening at Pizza Hut, and everyone is looking forward to our second session in May which will be a workshop on image and style. So far we have eleven participants in the Lanarkshire youth group who are keen to become involved in all of our upcoming activities such as a trip to Cumbernauld Outdoor Centre for an off-road driving experience.

Any 12 to 18 year-olds who live in Lanarkshire are welcome to join the group and should contact either Kerrie Brown or Tabassum Sarfraz at Visibility.

Fundraising News

Trust success!

Visibility has achieved great success in attracting donations from Charitable Trusts over the past few months. For example, we have received funding support to organise our first Go! Teen residential weekend which will be a fantastic opportunity for teenagers to mix and mingle and take part in outdoor activities. We also attracted funds to help buy equipment and to help train people for our New View project. Charitable Trusts are an important source of income for Visibility and we thank all the Trusts who have kindly supported us.

Seeking company support!

Over the course of the year, Visibility wants to encourage support from the private sector and get companies more involved in our activities. With this in mind, we are organising our first Corporate **£1k Challenge** event which will take place on Friday 14th September at Lomond Shores, Balloch. We are looking for companies (between four and six participants in each team) to compete in a one-day outdoor challenge involving canoeing, raft building, Highland Games and a blindfolded sensory trail.

This is a fantastic team building event which will help raise staff morale and get them involved in the community. Each team is being asked to raise at least £1,000 for Visibility. If you know of any companies who might be interested in participating, contact Nuala our Fundraising Manager for further information.

Visibility stars!

Jacqueline Clougherty, Visibility Visual Support Worker arranged a charity night for Visibility at the Good Year Club in Glasgow and raised over £1,000.

Many of our readers will know that Jacqueline's son Ryan is one of our youngest service users. Ryan (age 8) was recently featured in the Herald and the Evening Times displaying his talent for wall climbing at the Xscape centre. Ryan wanted to raise money for Visibility and he undertook a sponsored climb which not only brought great publicity to Visibility but raised the fantastic sum of £400.

Well done to Jacqueline and her son Ryan for all their hard work and their contributions to Visibility!



image courtesy of the Herald

Visibility Service Update

End of Welfare Rights Contract

As many people will be aware Visibility was fortunate to attract financial support from the Department of Work and Pensions for two years. This grant allowed us to work with people over the age of 60 in specific local authorities.

The two year pilot partnership contract between the Department of Work and Pension and Visibility is due to end on 31st July 2007 as the funding has come to an end.

This joint partnership has resulted in a very successful outcome for service users aged 60 years and over who live in North and South Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde catchment areas. The partnership has also resulted in Visibility and The Pension Service having a greater understanding of how each organisation works, which can only be beneficial to visually impaired service users.

Unfortunately, due to the end of grant funding, as from May 2007, Visibility are no longer available to offer welfare rights services to new service users who reside in any local authority area other than Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire. However, people who live in other authorities and are currently receiving an ongoing Visibility service will be assisted to the finalisation of their current case.

Any person, not living in Glasgow or West Dunbartonshire, who wishes assistance with welfare benefits after May 2007, should contact their nearest CAB or local authority Social Work Department.

Visibility will continue to provide a Welfare Rights service in Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire. This service is jointly funded by the local authorities and Visibility.

Good news for Welfare Rights

On a brighter note in May of this year our welfare rights department successfully assisted a registered blind East Dunbartonshire service user at appeal to obtain a reduction in his council tax benefit through the Council Tax Disabled Person's Reduction Scheme. The Council Tax (Reduction for Disabilities) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 states that there must be, within the sole or main residence of the disabled person, at least one of the following:

- an additional bathroom;
- an additional kitchen;
- the use of a wheelchair inside the house;
- a room, other than a bathroom, kitchen, lavatory, which is used predominantly (whether for providing therapy or otherwise) by the disabled person

The Local Valuation Panel for Argyll & Bute, Dunbartonshire and Glasgow Committee unanimously agreed to allow the appeal on the grounds that the room was required for meeting the needs of the gentleman.

This appeal was the first successful case to be brought before East Dunbartonshire Council and only the second appeal to be successfully challenged at the Valuations Appeal since 2003. On both occasions Visibility Welfare Rights represented the Tax Payers at the Valuations Appeal. Well done to our Welfare Rights team!

Positive Feedback!

North Lanarkshire Council recently inspected our Home Support Service and we are delighted to report that feedback was all positive. We were pleased to pass on a letter to the council received from the daughter of one of our service users. The letter praised Visibility's Visual Support Worker, Stephanie McLean for the dedicated support Stephanie provided to her mum and also for the professional conduct of Visibility. This was great to receive as it demonstrated the appreciation and importance the home support service has on not only our service users but their families too.

Handy Hints

Easier Zips

If you find difficulty using a zip on a hand bag, shopping bag or purse, why not try fixing a ring such as the type found on key rings and attach it to the small metal tag that opens the zip. The ring is easier to locate and makes opening the zip easier, especially if you have trouble with your fingers. If you are unable to fix one yourself, ask a friend or neighbour to fix one for you.

Labelling

Even the simplest everyday object can be made into a label that can distinguish apparently identical items for someone with a visual impairment. An elastic band around a jar of marmalade can distinguish it from a jar of jam; a small piece of elastoplast on the handle of a toothbrush when its colour cannot be seen; a safety pin discreetly placed inside the cuff of a jacket or coat ensures that it can easily be distinguished from others. A paperclip can be an invaluable marker –some people use one to distinguish a return ticket from the outgoing one on a journey.

Ready Bread

You can place a couple of slices of bread into freezer bags, and store in the freezer. When you need the bread for something, place the bag into the microwave for twenty seconds on medium power. If you need additional time, just add 10 seconds on medium power until it is to the desired temperature. It should be perfect when you remove it

Sweet Enough

If you normally add sweeteners to your tea or coffee, try dropping the sweetener into your hand first, rather than straight into the cup. That way you can tell if one actually comes out!

Magnifier Safety

If you use a magnifier of any description, do not leave it lying in direct sunlight. The lens can magnify the sun's rays and has been known to start fires. Keep the magnifier in its case when you are not using it or try covering it with a soft cloth, you can also use the cloth to keep the magnifier spotless.

In the Garden

The tops of canes can be a hazard in the garden. One way of making them safer is to make a little ball with some old tights. You then push this on to the top of the cane. Corks or the lids of some soft drinks bottles can be used for the same purpose.

New Area on Visibility website!

Visibility is launching a new area on our web site called 'Perspective'. We hope this microsite will provide a place for visually impaired people and their families to share views and useful information, publicise events and work towards developing an online community.

If you have access to the internet then please take a look at the new pages. You can access Perspective from our home page www.visibility.org.uk.

We would like the microsite to develop based on ideas provided by the people who use it, please send suggestions on ways to improve the content or the design, ideas for new areas or general feedback to perspective@visibility.org.uk.

In order for Perspective to become a success Visibility needs your input!

- Have you attended an event recently, joined a group or come across a helpful piece of equipment? Why not let others know about it by writing a piece for our news section.
- Why not brighten up this new area of our web site by sending in a picture to go with your article?
- Have you struggled to find the answer to a particular question which you think would be relevant to visually impaired people or their families? Why not post it to our FAQ page and we will see if we can answer it for you.
- Have you been somewhere recently and were impressed by the service or accessibility? Why not have a go at writing a review.
- Do you know of an event happening in the near future, or would you like to announce a new group or group meeting? Why not send the information for us to include on our message board.

We look forward to hearing about your experiences and what is going on in your communities. Visit the website and get writing now!

For more details on any aspect of Visibility please contact 0141 332 4632 or write to Visibility, 2 Queens Crescent, Glasgow G4 9BW

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: SCO 09738