



visibility

Summer 2008

Welcome to Visibility's Summer 2008 Newsletter!

In this bumper edition you can read about our fabulous lottery success and recent awards made to our wonderful volunteers.

You will also learn about our corporate challenge event taking place later this year. This annual fun event raises much needed funds for Visibility services so if you know any companies who might be interested in taking part, please ask them to get in touch.

If you would like to find out more about Visibility or download a copy of this or any of our previous newsletters you can visit our website at www.visibility.org.uk. Our newsletter is available in print, audio or Braille format please contact us on 0141 332 4632 if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

Finally, if after reading about our work and the people we work with, you would like to support us in any way – perhaps by organising a coffee morning, running a 10k or half marathon or simply making a donation, then please contact us on 0141 332 4632 or email info@visibility.org.uk.

Feel good - look good

In response to a number of requests, Visibility is developing a new idea for some events for men and women with a visual impairment, Feel Good - Look Good. We have enlisted the help of a few well known high street stores to work with us in demonstrating how to feel confident about appearance. As the weeks progress, subjects such as make up, clothes and styling will be covered plus much more. If you would like to take part in our first session and help us develop the course, we would like to hear from you. We plan to run one session at a cost of £10 per person - if you are interested please contact Audrey Ward on 0141 332 4632 or email audrey@visibility.org.uk.

Big Lottery Success

Visibility are over the moon with our recent success in securing funding of £427,460 over five years from the Big Lottery's Investing in Communities grant scheme. This fantastic grant will allow us to develop our new Visible Communities project.

Visible Communities will promote inclusive communities throughout the west of Scotland by offering a range of services. We know that there is often a lack of understanding of visual impairment within communities which can lead to barriers to participation and independence for visually impaired residents. By offering awareness raising events and training to local businesses and services, we hope to reduce such barriers by providing a forum for discussion and learning to help dispel some of the myths that exist about visual impairment.

Feedback has highlighted the importance and value of having someone who has the time to listen – ie someone with knowledge of services and support available and who can also direct you appropriately. Often, when first diagnosed with a visual impairment, it can be unclear where to start in terms of accessing support and information. That is why we are delighted to continue offering Visibility's information and advice line on 0141 572 0746. If you would like to access support from the team, please do not hesitate to contact Visibility on this number and we will be happy to discuss this further with you.

Corporate Challenge 2008

Due to high demand our annual Corporate Challenge will again be held at the beautiful Lomond Shores on Friday 12th September. Last years challenge was a great success and saw nine corporate teams representing companies from all over the UK.

This year our base will be 'The Maid of the Loch' and there are several new activities to try out including archery and a treasure hunt. The popular sensory nature trail also returns which allows participants to experience some of the challenges of sight loss and reinforces the message that the event raises money for an important cause.

Last years challenge raised an astounding £10,800. This year the money raised by each team will contribute to a project of the teams choice – they will select from Echolocation, GO! or New View.

Entertainment on the day will be provided by the fantastic Clann an Drumma who will join us at the ‘Maid of the Loch’. Their energising pipes and drums should lift everyone’s spirits over the lunch break and ensure we are all raring to go for the afternoon session.

We are hoping for twelve teams this year and places are already limited. If you know of a company who may be interested please ask them to contact our fundraiser Audrey Ward on 0141 332 4632.

GO! Update

Our weekly classes have gone from strength to strength this year, with old favourites such as Guitar and Banjo and new additions such as Singing, attracting many participants every week, all of whom are enjoying the classes and learning new skills. The Art class remains very popular and we are thrilled to be having a show of work on Monday 30th June to display work from classes from the last year.

Go Active has been a welcome and exciting new addition to the programme for adults. The Active sessions have been taking place in the evenings and weekends and have so far had off-road driving, outdoor activity days and a trip to a classical concert. Over the summer months there will be more interesting walks and a chance to catch an act as part of the International Jazz festival.

We have also started a very successful programme of walks, which are consistently booked out well in advance. The walks are intended for all abilities and offer people a chance to mix with other people in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere whilst getting fitter and enjoying the fresh air and countryside. Previous walks have taken in the gardens of Rouken Glen Park, the beauty of the Falls of Clyde and part of the West Highland Way. Future walks are going to be a bit further afield to take in more of the great Scottish coast and countryside.

Go Youth and Teens have enjoyed trips to the cinema, bowling, ice skating and ten of our over 12's had a superb time in Lochgoilhead earlier this year. The weekend residential was a chance to get away from home and try out some great activities such as kayaking and abseiling. All of our teens said they'd love to do it again, as did the staff – hence preparations are afoot for next year!

At Go! we would like even more people to get involved with our activities, so if you have not yet attended an event or you haven't been in a while or know someone who might like to join in, please pass them this newsletter so they can find out about all the exciting things we do.

Welfare Rights

Scottish War Blinded was founded in 1915 to provide welfare and financial support to ex-servicemen and women who lost their sight in the service of their country. A recent change to the Scottish War Blinded Veterans Constitution now allows financial support to be given to veterans who are registered blind or partially sighted, subsequently to, and unrelated to, their service.

Visibility's Welfare Rights service is working with the Scottish War Blinded to identify people who are veterans and who may benefit. There may well be veterans that you know who can benefit from financial assistance. The criteria for admission to the Scottish War Blinded Roll are:

- Persons resident in Scotland who have served in the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom
- Persons resident in Scotland who have served in the Merchant Navy or Nursing Services of the United Kingdom and who have been involved in active service
- Persons wherever born who served in the Scottish Regiments or in the Armed Forces in Scotland

An application form must be completed by all applicants and all information gathered is held confidentially. In some cases beneficiaries may receive a

discretionary monthly allowance in addition, or alternatively, to the annual Christmas grant which most receive, currently £654. All allowances are paid from charitable funding. Consideration can also be given to applicants from veterans for specific funding e.g. respite breaks, household items, re-decoration grants, education etc.

Further information and assistance on how to access financial assistance can be obtained by contacting Pat Martin at Visibility.

Supporters News

The recent good weather has seen two groups walking long distance footpaths in aid of Visibility. In April Rosemary Cameron, Donna Kerr and Gerry McKenna walked the Great Glen and between them raised a fantastic £306 for Visibility. In May three Glasgow First Bus Drivers, Leo Marsh, John Ramage and Ray Hamilton who are members of First Scotstoun Walking Club walked the Speyside Way, covering the 73 miles from Buckie to Aviemore. If you are interested in undertaking a walk or other sponsored activity on behalf of Visibility then please contact Susan Crombie at Visibility on 0141 332 4632.

In January we were joined by Jenny Jamieson who has a part-time role managing our charitable trust fundraising programme.



The Great Glen Walkers!

Jenny has worked in fundraising for “more years than I care to remember” and came to us from Alcohol Focus Scotland where she was Head of Resource Development. Having heard about Visibility, our innovative work and positive, supportive working culture, she was keen to join our staff team and get a better work/life balance!

Jenny worked, some years ago, for RNIB in a community fundraising role and so had some insight into the issues around visual impairment but says that things have moved on so much, she has been really enjoying meeting

the dedicated Visibility staff and learning about new developments like echolocation and eccentric reading.

Although we continue to receive donations from a number of regular Trust supporters who recognise the value of our work, it is important we continue to research new sources of income. We recently submitted a multi-year application to Children in Need for a Family Support Service based at Yorkhill. Our application is being considered over the next few weeks so fingers crossed.

Fundraising from trusts and foundations has become more competitive, with an increasing number of good causes competing for a reduced amount of funding. However, our work speaks for itself and we have submitted some very well received reports to funders. The Hugh Fraser Foundation were particularly pleased to read about the work done by both GO and the Community Support team in Lanarkshire, and the Primary Club agreed to fund another GO Teens Residential Weekend after hearing how successful the first weekend had been.

Review of Eyecare Services in Scotland

Some of Visibility's staff were involved in the review of Eyecare Services in Scotland and the Report that was published in December 2006. As a result of this report, funding was released from the Scottish Government to the NHS for the development of issues raised in the report. Visibility successfully tendered for work relating to the Eye Care Review and we are working in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway NHS, Lanarkshire NHS and Ayrshire and Arran NHS.

Dumfries and Galloway

NHS Dumfries and Galloway in partnership with Visibility and Dumfries and Galloway Association for the Blind (DGAB) secured funding to cover three inter related areas of work, two of which Visibility has been commissioned to take forward.

The first of these projects is working in partnership with NHS, Council and DGAB, to organise and deliver three low vision workshops to provide

people with a visual impairment, their families and local professionals with information, advice and support. The open days will have a wide range of aids and equipment on display and staff from partner agencies will be on hand to answer any questions. These events are being held on 24th June in Dumfries, 25th June in Stranraer, and 1st July in Annan.

The workshops will also provide the basis for gathering feedback about current service provision in the area. This links with the second project which is a service mapping exercise which will inform future plans to achieve recommendations of the eye care review which seek the development of integrated patients centred eyecare services.

The service mapping exercise will seek to consult with people currently engaged with services and also identify those who may benefit from services but are unaware of the support available. It will also consult with a wide range of professionals working in health and social care such as ophthalmologists, GP's, optometrists, council service such as housing, education, and social work. Again the focus will be to gather their views on the gaps and opportunities to develop services in Dumfries and Galloway.

Shelagh Palmer has now moved from the Community Support Team to the role of Development Co-ordinator with 2 days a week allocated to leading the implementation of the Dumfries and Galloway projects.

Lanarkshire

Visibility's Volunteer Co-ordinator (Rosemary Cameron) has now been seconded onto her new post as Project Manager for Lanarkshire's Low Vision Service Project. Liz Lang will take over the volunteering role until Rosemary's return.

This project was set up in recognition that an integrated approach should be taken in the design and delivery of eyecare services, both for children and adults. Visibility will be working in partnership with the NHS, Community Optometrists, North and South Lanarkshire Social Work Resources and other relevant partners to develop a community based service within North and South Lanarkshire, supporting and signposting individuals with sight loss within their local communities.

This new service means individuals can access a low vision assessment and aids via local partner optometry practices within their own communities. This will promote convenient access and reduce the need for individuals to travel extended distances, to Gartnavel Hospital Low Vision Clinic.

Following a low vision assessment, individuals will have the opportunity to be referred to the project to receive further support with the use of their low vision aids, or signposting as required to other services.

Ayrshire & Arran

In Ayrshire & Arran, the funding is being used to look at integrating services and to involve people with sensory impairment in the planning and development. By capturing the opinions of people who use the services, Community Optometry, Health, Social Work and Voluntary Organisations we will be able to produce a detailed description of the services within Ayrshire and identify where the gaps are.

Valerie Breck has been seconded to Ayrshire as Network Manager for eight months to take this work forward. It has been a busy time gathering people's experiences and opinions of what could be done to improve the communication and support to people living in Ayrshire.

There are currently several focus groups looking at a range of identified themes and proposing how things could be improved. Once this has been agreed by everyone involved, funding will be sought to support developments within Ayrshire. If you would like to have your say, please contact Valerie Breck on 0141 332 4632.

Sealladh

Sealladh (pronounced Shallach) is Scottish Gaelic for 'sight'. Sealladh is a new Visibility service which provides holistic visual rehabilitation therapy for ex service men and woman who have a suspected or diagnosed neurological sight difficulty as a result of a brain injury. Sealladh uses pioneering Neuro Vision Technology developed and designed in Australia to assess visual abilities using a non-invasive training package. Training is delivered within the client's own environment and focuses on outdoor mobility, communication and activities of daily living. Sealladh has been working with ex veterans for five months. This technique and training programme has empowered each individual to maximize their skills and independence.

If you or anyone you know is interested in this holistic rehabilitation programme or you simply require further information regarding this new and exciting project please do not hesitate to contact Laura Campbell at Visibility. Sealladh will support anyone who meets the criteria. Laura looks forward to hearing from you. She would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has referred into Sealladh and for all the support with raising awareness to the need for this pioneering project.



Using Neuro Vision Technology

Volunteering Award!

The Volunteering Project recently achieved a Quality Standard Plus Award from Solve which is a South Lanarkshire based Volunteer Centre in recognition of our achievement in promoting/encouraging, valuing and supporting Volunteers throughout Visibility.

Three representatives from Visibility, Ronnie Anderson (Board Member), Pauline Hart (Volunteer) and Rosemary Cameron (Volunteer C-ordinator) attended the award ceremony held in South Lanarkshire Councils Headquarters at Almada Street on 25th March 2008.

This is a great achievement which highlights Visibility's ongoing commitment to engaging volunteers in the wide and varying activities throughout the organisation and the quality support structure that promotes a positive volunteering experience for all Volunteers.



Rosemary, Pauline and Ronnie with the award!

Big Thank You to Visibility Volunteers!

Visibility recently held a Volunteer Recognition Event in the Quality Central Hotel, Glasgow on 25th April 2008 to celebrate the continued support we receive from all our volunteers. The event was a great success with a total of 18 people present, including volunteers, staff and guest speakers.

Councillor Kenny Mclean from Partick West Ward, the SNP Spokesperson for Development and Regeneration, gave a very interesting and motivational talk on the benefits of volunteering and the impact that it makes on communities throughout Scotland. He thanked all volunteers present for their support and contribution to Visibility and the wider community.

Danny McLauchlan and his two assistants from St Andrew's Ambulance delivered a First-Aid Demonstration updating everyone with new techniques and guidance on some common situations and how to deal with them such as delivering CPR, placing people in the recovery position, treating people with burns, heart attacks, shock, epilepsy, etc. Again this was a very informative session which generated lots of questions.

Meet the Staff!

Alex Campbell has recently joined Visibility. Alex has been involved in our echolocation work and is also working as part of our Community Support Team. This is what he has to say:

“Hi all, Alex Campbell here, the new recruit at Visibility. The words that I have heard most during my first few days at Visibility are “this is a great place to work --- full of good people”, so it was no surprise to find I have been made to feel most welcome, thanks to everyone.

A bit about me - I am a self confessed petrol head and have been racing things with engines since I was 14, and that wasn't yesterday! After losing most of my useful sight I found that boats were fun too, and I have now been causing chaos on the water at every opportunity for about eight years. I must be doing something right because the Royal Yachting Association recruited me last year to develop disabled sailing in Scotland in my spare time.

Shortly after being registered blind I made a call to Visibility and after speaking to the helpful staff, I took up the suggestion that I should return to college. After seriously considering a course in cake design, I decided to go for a degree in politics instead and enjoyed it very much! I only left school with a couple of O levels and thought a degree was what other people did. When I look back at my old school report cards the nicest things my teachers could say about me was "Alex always has sharp pencils." My poor mum!



Alex on his boat!

Well that is a wee bit about me. I love life and try to get all that I can out of it. Losing my sight has been a bit of a tough journey but I think it has opened up lots of opportunities for me and made me into the person I am today. Fabulous, well-rounded and modest of course."

Help wanted!

Robert White, a visually impaired researcher, from the University of Strathclyde is currently looking for visually impaired volunteers to take part in an online questionnaire and a walking task within Glasgow City Centre. The study aims to identify barriers to access within the urban environment.

The short online questionnaire and further information can be accessed at the project website at: www.urbanacuity.co.uk. More details from Robert at robert.white@strath.ac.uk or 07505842815.



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