



# the Bold View

Low Vision Services Implementation Group Newsletter

## 'The key is local integration'

**Bringing people together to implement change.**

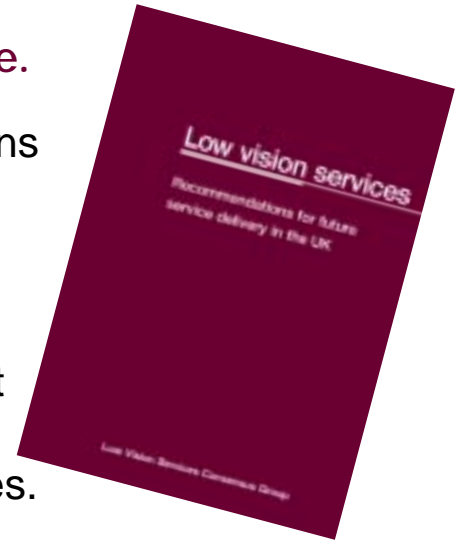
In 1998 people from a wide variety of organisations met to consider the state of low vision services in the UK. Following this meeting the Low Vision Consensus Group was formed.

The group agreed to produce, within a year, a set of recommendations. These recommendations formed a national framework of low vision services.

The Low Vision Services Report was produced in July 1999. The report emphasises the need for people to work together to provide services.

To put their words into action the Consensus Group then became an Implementation Group. Their aim is to increase the number of low vision services and ensure that services in the UK are comprehensive, flexible, serve local needs, and are focused on the service user.

To initiate this Mary Bairstow was appointed as Implementation Officer, with the help of voluntary agency and Department of Health Section 64 funding. Under the guidance of the Chair, Robin Birch and with the help of administration assistant, Chris Smith, she is working to help set up a network of Low Vision Service Committees.



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**1 Mary Bairstow**

**2 Robin Birch**

**3 Chris Smith**

## **Why Bold View?**

The newsletter, starting with this first issue, is part of a strategy to publicise information about low vision and to encourage local groups. It has been produced to spread the word about Low Vision Service Committees and provide information about service developments.

## **Where are we now?**

One of the first assignments of the Implementation Officer was to develop a database of Low Vision Service Committees (LVSC's).

After the launch of the report in 1999 RNIB collated, on behalf of the Implementation Group, a list of people and areas that had expressed an interest in forming LVSC's.

Support for the task was keen, but rather optimistically the word spread that this list of 35 interested areas represented 35 actual Committees.

What a daunting job for Mary Bairstow, at her first meeting of the Implementation Group, to report that of the 35 interested areas only 11 had formed Committees!

Fortunately things have not stood still. There are now 24 LVSC's following the recommendations made in the report.

## **What is an LVSC area?**

Originally the Consensus Group thought that the areas would follow Health Authority boundaries. However, developments in the NHS mean that these will no longer exist.

One of the newest areas to form a Committee is the Forest of Dean. This area was chosen because of the need to look at services in a well defined locality.

**Jane Rothery, at the Forge who initiated the setting up of the LVSC in the Forest of Dean** gives her view about the area chosen. "I have been trying to get more funding to develop



**Activity at the Forest of Dean**

## **The locations of the LVSC's**

Check the following list to see if there is a Committee in your area. Barking, Bedford, Bexley, Bradford, Birmingham, Bucks, Cambridge, Camden & Islington, Cheshire, Cumbria, Derby, Devon, Forest of Dean, Kensington & Westminster, Kent, Merseyside, Merton, Sutton & Wandsworth, Northamptonshire, Oxford, Sheffield, Solihull, Surrey, Tameside and Warwickshire.

low vision services at the Forge for sometime. People in the Forest of Dean associate themselves with a defined geographical area. Although the main hospital is in Gloucester people do not see this as within their area and are therefore far less relaxed when accessing services. To be able to deliver a service more locally would really enable clients to receive low vision therapy as an essential part of a wider more holistic service. To link with the local Primary Care Trusts which serve a similar geographical area would seem a useful way to progress this”.

**Dreaming about numbers**

In 1999 Moorfields Hospital and RNIB identified in the report ‘Fragmented Vision’ the wide range of opinions influencing low vision services. In reflecting this most of the Committees have between 15 and 20 members. The National Group has 25 regularly attending members!

48 new areas have enquired about forming local Committees. If these become LVSC’s, then with the present 24, there would be a total of 72 Committees. If each Committee has 20 members, and each member affects 20 people, this means  $72 \times 20 \times 20 = 28,800$  people with low vision could be reached. (Estimation only!)

**Who is involved in LVSC’s?**

- 9 local societies were crucial in the setting up of a Committee.
- 8 meetings take place within local voluntary organisation buildings.
- 2 are held in hospitals and 2 in Social Services buildings.
- 5 meetings are chaired by people who are service users.

**Spice Committees?**

- A.Kent (Baby). Youngest Committee.
- B.Surrey (Posh). Upmarket venue.
- C.Birmingham (Spice). Curry heaven.
- D.Sheffield (Sporty). A visionary goal beside Bramall Lane football ground.
- E.Camden (Scary). Nervy relocation.

Most LVSC’s appreciate being part of a wider network. Grouping together Committees that have similar sets of circumstances has been found to be useful. Maybe though, the girl band link is taking the idea a bit too far!



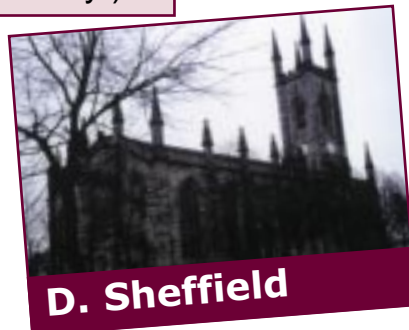
**A. Kent**



**B. Surrey**



**C. Birmingham**



**D. Sheffield**



**E. Camden**

## What are the LVSC's up to?

Most Committees (LVSC's) begin by investigating local services.

- ✓ Buckinghamshire arranged a local services 'ideas session'.
- ✓ Cheshire, Kensington and Merton used a questionnaire to look at local needs.
- ✓ Birmingham has secured a grant from BRIB and paid for an Aston University Researcher.
- ✓ In Surrey the Voluntary Society paid for a consultant to undertake six weeks work writing a report on local service provision.
- ✓ Northamptonshire sent out to local optical practices a questionnaire. Another goes out shortly to service users about 'emotional support'.
- ✓ Bedford, Camden and Tameside have planned services and secured funding for new services.

**This issue we speak to Marianda Twydell, Director of Sight Concern Bedfordshire who chairs Bedford's LVSC.** "We managed to change things locally quite soon after the Committee was formed: by listening to service users we knew the Low Vision Service in Bedford had a waiting list of nine to twelve months, for a twenty minute

appointment. Now our service users can come to have an assessment with an optometrist in the relaxed setting of Sight Concern Bedfordshire's resource centre. In the forty minute session, brief advice is given on colour contrast, lighting, and useful vision as well as a magnifying aid being dispensed. In addition, volunteers go through a list of other services available to people with low vision, resulting in many more referrals being made. Sight Concern Bedfordshire has just produced a report on the first nine months of the service, which the funders, the Primary Care Trust, have found very useful in underlining their interest in transferring services to the community. It was extremely useful for the LVSC to have a practical area to concentrate on in the early stages, and very positive to have a constructive 'win' early on. We are awaiting the National Standards, presently being drafted, on all aspects of services for blind and partially sighted people - that will give the LVSC a new, targeted area to work on. I would thoroughly recommend setting up such a Committee, especially as partnership working is very positive".

**In our next issue (Summer) we will be featuring developments in Camden & Islington and Tameside.**

'Bold View' is a quarterly newsletter written and edited by Mary Bairstow for the Low Vision Services Implementation Group. Comments and contributions are welcome. Copy date for inclusion in the Summer issue is June 30th 2002.



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