



the Bold View

Low Vision Services Implementation Group Newsletter

'Involvement of people will be essential'

'Dan the LV man'.

It is all too easy for the agencies and professional groups that are involved in low vision service provision to feel that the services belong to them. The Low Vision Services Report begins by outlining the purpose of the report and emphasises the importance of involving people who use low vision services. Wakefield Low Vision Services Committee (LVSC) has encouraged several service users to join the committee. One big achievement is the involvement of a younger service user in the process.

Dan is a 17 year old student who has been using low vision services for several years. Dan feels that there are many ways that people with low vision can be excluded from day to day activities. He hopes that the committee will enable everyone, not just young people, to participate more easily in activities such as going to the cinema, travelling on the bus and generally finding out about things. He thinks the main strength of the committee will be in providing information. His commitment is clear as he has to miss crucial 'A' level lessons to attend, but he is keen to ensure that the committee really does listen to service users.

He points out the irony of attending a low vision meeting where he is unable to read any of the notes or reports as they have not been produced in a suitable format. These are thoughtful and dedicated comments from someone who when asked why he was attending at the first meeting answered "I was promised a free lunch!"

The hunger of



LV Dan for info

Inside: News from Solihull and activities in the Midlands

What's the new view?

There are now 36 LVSC's. In alphabetical order these are: Barking, Bedford, Bexley, Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bucks, Cambridge, Camden, Cheshire, Coventry, Croydon, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Forest of Dean, Gateshead, Hillingdon, Kensington, Kent, Leeds, Merseyside, Merton, Northamptonshire, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Sheffield, Solihull, Suffolk, Surrey, Tameside, Wakefield, Warwickshire, Wirral and Wolverhampton.

Solihull sets its goals

Various people and agencies (including health, social services and the voluntary sector) have for a long time met as the Solihull Visual Impairment Forum. After members of the Forum had read the details and heard about the Implementation Project they decided to set up an LVSC as a sub-committee of this Forum.

One of the strengths of the committee is that there are service users and professionals who have had previous experience of low vision projects. This meant they were able to identify in the early stages of their discussions clear goals for local services development.

The group has already managed to secure part funding for an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO). This means that there will be someone based in the Eye Department who will be able to support and advise people who have been seen by the eye specialists. People can then be directed to appropriate services. Most importantly there will be someone around who can spend time listening.

Another of their goals was to develop



Guiding hand

Happy sight

a service specifically designed to meet the needs of children and young people. At present most children travel into Birmingham for services. Very shortly a new service is to be developed as a collaboration between health and education. Children will attend Solihull Eye Hospital with their teacher. As well as a comprehensive optometric assessment, and supply of LV devices, they will see an LV therapist who will look at different methods aimed at enhancing vision. Educational staff in the child's school environment will follow up these techniques.

When asked about the aims of the committee at one of the first meetings **Mary Barr of the local Macular Disease Society** said, "I want to end this feeling of being diagnosed and dumped". Now she feels that the links created mean that many more people in Solihull will know where to get help.

Low vision language

In the last 'Bold View' we began what will be a series of articles about the different professionals involved in low vision. In the next issue there will be a piece about the role of rehabilitation workers. We will be accompanying these articles with a series that explains some of the jargon used by professionals and heard at meetings.

Health service terminology

PCT - Primary Care Trust. These new organisations were introduced by the Government and aim to give more say to members of the public and people that actually work within the NHS. There are now over 300 PCT's in England and each is responsible for developing primary care (GP, optical, pharmaceutical, dental and community services) as well as directly purchasing hospital services.

Commissioning - this refers to the process of defining health needs, deciding priorities and then organising and evaluating appropriate services.

Care Trust - this is the new level of PCT that will incorporate social services. They will have authorisation from local government to commission services.

Audit - this is the means by which health professionals evaluate and measure the standards that they are achieving. For example - how many people see well after a cataract operation.

Clinical Governance - this is a system used in and by the NHS for maintaining and developing high quality services. This includes sharing good practice and generating improvements in clinical care. It ensures that risks are assessed and any adverse affects are rapidly and openly investigated.

Baseline Assessment - when used by health professionals this term usually refers to the taking stock of the existing activities or services in order to identify priority areas for development. For example research into existing low vision services.

LVSC activity

- ✓ Coventry are probing local services with a mystery shopper exercise.
- ✓ Croydon are using data recorded by GP's to try and assess the number of people that have low vision.
- ✓ Northampton are thinking of having a 'Creative day' when they will get together to plan their ideal service.
- ✓ Hampshire is hoping to develop services designed to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.
- ✓ Hillingdon and Wolverhampton have like Solihull set up an LVSC as part of a larger group.

Almost there

At a recent introductory meeting there was unanimous support for an LVSC in Worcester. In addition similar meetings are planned in Newcastle, Leicester and Dudley.

Local low vision directories

One of the first tasks that most of the committees undertake is investigating what services are available locally. Some areas have already recorded this information in a service directory that is available to service users.

Services in Sheffield have a user-friendly document called 'The Ever Open Door'. An important advantage is that the hospital pays for copies so that all people with low vision can have a copy as soon as required.

Camden & Islington began this task about the same time they were developing the new service at Judd Street. One of the biggest problems they faced was the constant need to ensure that information is up-to-date.

The LVSC in Birmingham has identified this difficulty as well. BRIB, a local voluntary agency for people who have a visual impairment, funded a researcher at Aston University to investigate local services and produce an up-to-date document. Dr Frank Eperjesi completed this work earlier in the year and is keen to find another

sponsor to pay for print copies to be produced. In the meantime, in order that people can have access to this information, he hopes that electronic versions will be made widely available. Local hospitals, social workers and other agencies can then print out any copies they need.

There are other areas that have produced this type of directory. If you want other readers to know about one produced in your area let us know.

The 2nd LV Conference

The number of people wishing to attend the London conference overwhelmed our office, with some people being disappointed. However, Chris Smith worked hard to cope with all enquiries while carrying out all the administration the event required. So



Hectic Chris

he had an excuse for looking exhausted on the day!

We will have a feature on the conference in the forthcoming Winter edition.

'Bold View' is a quarterly newsletter written and edited by Mary Bairstow for the LVSIG. It is distributed to people and organisations with an interest in low vision. The aim is to inform people of the progress of LV Implementation. Articles about specific projects are reviewed by local contacts. Comments and contributions are welcome. Copy date for inclusion in the Winter issue is December 7th 2002.



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