

SHROPSHIRE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Visual Impairment Forum

11th Nov 2009 at Shirehall

PRESENT

Robin Durham (Chair) – Shropshire Voluntary Association for the Blind.

Dave Mills – Shropshire Council Sensory Impairment Team

Celia MacIntyre – Community Council of Shropshire

Will Thornton (Minutes) – RNIB/Action for Blind People, West Midlands

Chris Floyd – Guide Dogs for the Blind, Shropshire

Rowland Brown – GDBA & SVAB Vice-Chair

Jackie Elliot – Community Council of Shropshire, Sensory Impairment Co-ordinator

Richard Elliot – Macular Disease Society

Wendy James – Schools' Sensory Inclusion Service, Shropshire Telford & Wrekin

Ruth Houghton – PCT/SC Joint Commissioner, Shropshire County

Gary Heap – Shropshire Council, Area Manager, Adult Social Care

Sandra Griffiths – Carers' Manager, Shropshire Council

Linda Mottram – Principal Orthoptist, Low Vision Clinic

Stephanie Mackay – Senior Practitioner, Sensory Impairment, Telford & Wrekin Council

1. APOLOGIES

Alan Henderson – is now working full-time and may be unable to attend work time meetings; **Pauline Rose** – Vision Technology & Training; **Sophie Jones** – Regional BWfB; **Julia Meakin** – PCT Telford & Wrekin Commissioner; **Gwyneth Cliffe** – Low Vision Services; **Barbara Shingler**, Market Drayton VIPs; **Jenny Mincher-Lockett** – Shropshire Local Optical Committee; **Stephen**

Chandler; Helen Herrity – Co-ordinator VCS Assembly

2. MINUTES OF MEETING,

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- Links with VCSA Board.

Robin has met with Helen Herrity, Acting VCSA Co-ordinator, to discuss how we link to the Assembly. Feedback this Fol from is working but not as well as it might. Helen will be looking at how this may develop.

Feedback from the Assembly on how decisions are reached is also not clear.

Resources for Fol meetings are not clear but it may be more useful to have a member of the VCA to be present in the meetings. However, we may need resources for future room hire or transcription services. **WT to take this to Assembly again and raise these issues.**

It would also be good to find out what the other disability or related forums are doing within the Assembly. It was noted that there is a Hard of Hearing/Deaf Forum that has been proposed: it would be useful to know what they are doing. There is also a Disability Forum and one for older people. It was suggested that some form of communication strategy or system should be in place between the Assembly Forums and groups.

- See Hear Exhibition 2010 – Date (Wednesday 28th April) and venue (Sundorne Sports Village, Shrewsbury) were confirmed.

Dave Mills requested details of any organisations or companies that may be interested in attending next year. This is the 3rd year the Exhibition has run

and will be the largest yet.

- Update on Project Plan for Low Vision Services

RH reported about the Low Vision Project Group:

- Updating of leaflets
- Updating of participant details and organisations
- Campaigning volunteers from RNIB are also now part of the group
 - o Local visually impaired person is trained to lobby
 - o Developing a campaign related to ECLO provision
 - o The campaign will link to Personalisation, Inclusion, Early Intervention, Transformation outcomes
- ECLO funding – no update on this as yet: various options were being explored
- National funding – ought the funding of ECLO posts to be on a statutory basis?

4 Funding Climate

Telford & Wrekin – JM sent a report as she was not able to attend. Funding for ECLO is not looking positive due to financial pressures on the PCT. Julia feels that we need to look at other funding opportunities.

RH – In Shropshire, the funding round has commenced however, the ECLO bid failed to progress beyond the first round. Ruth is looking at the LSP Health and Well-Being group and the Transformation Grant Scheme as potential new sources of funding.

RNIB has some resources under the Early Reach Programme – Will Thornton to approach RNIB about this.

Overall there are serious cost pressures across the various funding organisations at present. Robin Durham reported that the government has promised to honour commitments for the third year of the current 3 year funding settlement, but beyond March 2011 there were likely to be serious pressures on public services and that may impact on visual impairment services.

RH encouraged members to participate in the Budget Consultation events and represent sight loss services and needs.

5 Support for Carers and their Needs - Shropshire

There are estimated 30,000 carers in Shropshire with around 3,000 known to the council. However, it is not known how many of these have a visual impairment.

Training for carers – various courses have been developed and delivered in the area and these are being well received however, it is noted that there should be more of these. There is also a specific course for sight loss awareness however; take up of this is low.

Various Carers' leaflets were circulated, eg:

- **Emergency Respite for Carers** – in the event that carers are hospitalised etc. This is a new service where carers pre-register with the emergency service, following an assessment from social services. The carer can then request a service within two hours where needed.

Feedback is that this is a very valuable service even where carers do not require it, especially for older carers or people who care for learning disabled people.

It was agreed that a presentation about the Carers' service will take place to the SVAB committee.

Carers are entitled to an assessment in their own right from social services even if the person cared for has an assessment.

"Substantial and critical" care eligibility criteria in this instance relates to the person receiving care or support rather than the carer. So the carer's assessment relates to the level of care they provide and what support they require to continue providing their role as a carer. The service a carer receives will be determined individually and can range from traditional services through to unique individually tailored services – through a one-off direct payment.

The Community Council continues to develop services and awareness of the needs of carers. It was agreed to link with the SVAB groups around the county for this also.

There is an equivalent service in Telford & Wrekin.

6 Round Up of Significant Developments:

- **GDBA** – have recently received a grant that has helped to purchase a braille embosser. CEO in GDBA is moving on and they are recruiting a new person. There is also a programme to develop services to younger people and people with additional disabilities as guide dog users.
- **Celia MacIntyre & Jackie Elliot** - Pilot project looking to see where the Sensory Inclusion Service can be integrated into the Low Vision Service is underway. This is due to be completed by January. It is anticipated that this

will reduce re-referrals back to the hospital services.

CCS are looking at the needs of Carers at present. A new service called Signpost – linking with community organisations & staff eg nurses, fire officers with a telephone number that can refer a service user onto other services.

- **Dave Mills** – Young Adults event was delivered earlier in the year; an event with Thrive has been delivered. Joint services are being developed with the See-Hear vehicle provided by SVAB.

The lease on the building for Sensory Services is coming for renewal and this may mean an office move for the team.

- **Linda Mottram** – Ophthalmology service is being inundated with referrals far in excess than anticipated. Therefore, there may be some delays in assessments with a consultant. This is part of the increase of patients due to Lucentis clinics; the 13 week wait limit and the complications with a number of follow up appointments.

This is obviously having an effect on low vision services. There may be implications for the pilot of the outreach low vision service linked to the See-Hear Bus as fewer people can be seen this way.

- **Stephanie Mackay** – one rehab worker has moved on so this has increased their waiting list for the short-term until recruitment is complete.

- **Will Thornton** – Action for Blind People are undergoing a review and restructure with final decisions about structures and service due in January next year.

- **Richard Elliot** – Eccentric Viewing Programme is on-going but linked to Lottery funding which ends soon. It is hoped that resources can be found within the NHS to continue the service.

- **Wendy James** – no specific updates

- **Gary Heap** – Continues to look for resources for the See-Hear bus

- **Ruth Houghton** – the Transformation Agenda in Adults & Communities is on-going. Ruth agreed to feedback more fully to next meeting.

- **Robin Durham** – Physical & Sensory Disability Partnership Board has been established in Shropshire. Ruth is chairing this Board; Media Trust – Robin will be submitting bid to them for volunteer training; UK Vision Strategy Engagement, Partnership, Information & Communication (EPIC) programme is being developed. Robin will link with them about how they can support the group; SVAB See-Hear bus will be delivered on 19th Nov and there will be an official unveiling on Friday 29th Jan 2010. The meeting congratulated SVAB and Robin for raising such a large sum of money to purchase this.

AOB

- MP Lobbying - RNIB Campaigns Officer, Rebecca Swift, Robin Durham & Ken Witcombe are planning a meeting with local and potential MPs prior to the next election to raise awareness of sight loss. Details to follow if they are delivered.
- Children's Services - Wendy to be invited to the Low Vision Group to discuss Children's Services.

Next meeting: 4 – 6pm on Wed 10th February 2010, venue to be confirmed.