

A Vision for a Fairer Future: Priorities for the new Minister Social Care

R N I B

Cymru

Golwg gwahanol
See differently



RNIB Cymru is the largest sight loss charity in Wales. We provide support and services to blind and partially sighted people, as well as their families, friends, and carers, to help improve lives and empower people to live well with sight loss.

There are around 112,000 people living with sight loss in Wales, and this number is predicted to double by 2050. It's crucial that social care meets the current and future needs of blind and partially sighted people.

Under section 15 the Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to provide or arrange for the provision of services designed to prevent, delay, or reduce the need for care and support.



Reablement and rehabilitation services play an essential role in helping to avoid, reduce, or delay the need for care and to maximise functional independence.

However, for many years these services have been left largely unplanned, unmonitored and under-resourced. Without well-planned and resourced reablement and rehabilitation services they can, at best, offer a managed decline of personal independence.

Vision rehabilitation is a vital service which equips blind and partially sighted people with the essential skills and support they need to live

independently. It involves a specialist intervention in which people with sight loss are taught how to carry out practical daily tasks with their new level of vision. White cane training, for example, is often one part of this, as well as providing equipment, assistive technology, and housing adaptations.

Due to increasing demands on adult social care and tighter budgets, the provision of vision rehabilitation is inconsistent across Wales. This means that people experiencing sight loss cannot move quickly from diagnosis to confidence and participate equally in society.

These challenges are compounded by the lack of strategic direction from the Welsh Government in terms of ensuring equitable access to reablement and rehabilitation services. The Expert Panel report "Towards a National Care and Support Service for Wales" made no mention of local authority adult social care targeted reablement and rehabilitation interventions. Likewise, the proposals of the Welsh Government's Rebalancing Care and Support programme lack any specific proposals to ensure equitable access to these essential services.

In your new role as Minister for Social Care, we ask that you take action to ensure people get the rehabilitation they need by:

- Developing a new Code of Practice specifically for reablement and rehabilitation services.
- Requiring Care Inspectorate Wales to monitor and inspect local authority rehabilitation services, including specialist vision rehabilitation services to ensure the same levels of quality and consistency to those expected of needs assessed care and support services.
- Requiring Regional Partnership Boards to plan, resource and provide rehabilitation services, including vision rehabilitation that meet local demand to support individuals in maximising their independence.
- Making rehabilitation an enforceable human right through the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCPRD) into Welsh law.
- Ensuring specialist vision rehabilitation provision is legislated and planned for within the National Care and Support Service, so that that local authorities are incentivised into investing in the workforce.



We have an opportunity to make Wales a place that blind and partially sighted people are proud to call home, that supports their ambitions and allows them to live a full and active life.

We look forward to working with you to make this vision a reality.