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New name compounds Foundation's acute carer shortage

The Senses Foundation Inc is severely short of carers and while a scarcity extends right across the disability sector, Senses bosses believe the Foundation has been harder hit than most other not-for-profit organisations because of its name change from the **Royal West Australian Institute for the Blind**.

Manager Corporate Services, David Snape, says most people were familiar with the Royal Institute with the Blind, which was established more than 100 years ago and was home to the Blind School in Maylands.

But fewer people knew it by its new name – the Senses Foundation, which it was renamed after its amalgamation with the WA Deafblind Association in 2001.

Mr Snape says carers looking for work knew what organisations like the Cerebral Palsy Association and Multiple Sclerosis Society did, but fewer recognised the Senses Foundation, which was having more difficulty attracting new recruits as a result.

The Foundation, now based in Burswood, provides a range of services for people who are deafblind or vision impaired with an additional disability.

It needs carers right across its departments, including accommodation and community services which provide clients and their families with respite, help with recreation and employment options.

Mr Snape says existing carers are picking up many extra hours because they are willing and available to work and no one else was on hand to share the workload.

"I've never heard of those sorts of hours before, so there are real opportunities here right now for people looking for work," Mr Snape says.

"They don't need formal qualifications, in fact we will provide training if it is necessary and since most of our clients have vision and hearing difficulties rather than physical disabilities, heavy lifting is minimal.

"What is essential in a carer is a will to help others, to genuinely want to make a difference in someone's life, as well as maturity and life experience."

For more information or further comment contact Kerry Faulkner, Media Liaison Officer on 0432 098878 or David Snape on 9473 5400.