



IN TOUCH

Spring Edition: March 2022

Welcome to the spring edition of “In Touch”. The days are getting longer, the weather warmer and the end of COVID restrictions are in sight. We can put the experiences of the last two years behind us and move forward, tentatively and with caution, but still looking to the future.

We have been reflecting on what we have learnt from the pandemic and how we have adapted our services to better serve the needs of the local visually impaired community. We have all improved in how we record the support that we give and this in turn is helping us to meet the needs of those living with sight loss.

During 2021 our Community Services Team (pictured right) supported 518 individuals through 3,448 phone calls, appointments, deliveries and collections, home visits, coffee mornings and events. Some impressive stats from a hard-working team.



We must not forget the sterling work of our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Tracey who has helped almost 700 patients in over 1,200 sessions of support. Tracey is on hand when people need her most, providing practical advice and guidance as well as that all important emotional support.

In this issue we are focusing on getting back to some sort of normality. We have a full diary of events planned with staff refreshed and ready to spring into action. We look forward to greeting as many of you as possible in person this year!

Team Talk

Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.

Alongside our impressive stats, the team has been working hard behind the scenes updating our database and creating our Sight Loss MOT booklet. Sight Loss Advisor Coralie has been training up our new member of staff Claire to help share her workload. There is still a backlog of people waiting for appointments, but Coralie is providing immediate advice over the phone where she can. Please do call us and we will do our best to support you however we can.

Our tech team are back in the building again and proving very popular as always. Last year they supported 47 people over 115 sessions – not bad for a team of 2 volunteers! They can help you get to grips with your smartphone, laptop or tablet and make a real difference to how you use technology. Why not call and arrange an appointment to find out more?

We were thrilled to finally celebrate with our marathon men – Mike and Gary. They are pictured right being congratulated by our Chairman Russell for their huge effort in running/walking the 26.2 miles and helping to raise £1,000 for Southend in Sight. Mike and Gary are proudly wearing the orange London Marathon “finisher” t shirt and medal, which Mike pointed out has “We Run Together” written in braille on the reverse. Thank you to both for all you have done, you should be very proud of your achievement.

It's not just the visually impaired adults who have been hitting new heights with their achievements. 6 year old Leo designed the Southend in Sight



Christmas card this year. The card, pictured bottom left features a snowman, Father Christmas of course and an elf, with a beautiful snowy backdrop. Well done and thank you Leo!

We were able to join with the Rotary Club of Leigh at their presentation to the Friends of Leigh Library Gardens with a cheque for £365, (the group photo is featured right) to help fund the overhaul of the sensory garden. Southend in Sight volunteers have been offering advice and guidance on appropriate planting for the area. Work to clear the space has already taken place along with Autumn planting. Phase 2 will happen next Spring when the garden will be in full bloom and ready to be enjoyed by local visually impaired people.



There are challenges up ahead for our bowling group as the league they currently play in will be disbanded in May of this year. The bowlers have plans to join another national league as they enjoy the competitions. Like the pins they knock down at the bowling alley, we are sure they will dust themselves off and get back up again, led by Captain Anne, featured right with fellow bowler Jackie at their Christmas meet up.



We are pleased to say that our monthly coffee mornings are returning in time for the warmer weather. They will take place at the Ecko Club on the first Friday of every month from 10:30am to 12pm. The confirmed dates are: 3 March, 1 April and 6 May. All are welcome and there is no need to book, just turn up! Remember to bring £1 for tea, coffee and biscuits or cake.

Take on 250

Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.

This January the Southend in Sight team decided to join with 28 other sight loss charities around the country to Take on 250. The challenge aims to help spread awareness, as every day in the UK 250 people begin to lose their sight.

The idea is that people can take part individually or as a team, raising funds through sponsorship. Participants can choose any activity, whether it be baking, knitting, running, walking, or dancing and complete 250 minutes, 250 laps, or 250 repetitions – the choice is up to the individual or team.

The Southend in Sight staff team set themselves the challenge of walking a total of 250km in one week, starting on Sunday 16 January. The team would track their progress through an app, with each staff member needing to average 5km a day to reach the total target of 250km in a week - no mean feat!

Georgie, pictured right, with her Ihasapoo Cookie was going to do plenty of dog walking, while others planned to walk to and from work, get up early to see the sunrise or keep walking up and down the stairs at home – anything to make up the miles! Our colleagues at other sight loss charities were taking on bike rides and even 250 games of Connect 4 across the month with their children. It's amazing how inventive people become while helping to raise awareness of and funds for those living with sight loss.



Our challenge started the week strongly with a couple of members of staff completing twice what they needed to in one day. We also discovered how competitive we were, sometimes going out after dark just to complete more miles than a colleague that day! Our Sight Loss Advisor Coralie (pictured right with Southend pier in the background) walked a half marathon on her day off as her car was being repaired and she had errands to run. It was only when she arrived home with tired feet and aching legs, that she realised just how far she had walked.



We were blessed with beautiful weather and witnessed frosty mornings, glorious pink sunrises and glowing orange sunsets. After spending too long on the sofa over Christmas, we all said it felt good to be outside appreciating our surroundings. It also made us think about how difficult it is for someone who is losing their sight, and how we can be supportive of their situation.

We were flagging towards the end of the week but finished on a high on the Saturday. We absolutely smashed our target, reaching a total of 431km (268 miles) between 9 of us. Thanks to the generosity of our families, friends and supporters, we also managed to raise £500 for our lovely charity.

We don't know how she did it, but our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Tracey managed to clock up 82km (51 miles) on her own. She is amazing and still manages to work full time giving advice and support at Southend Hospital. Tracey sent us some gorgeous photos of her early morning walks, our favourite being the white horse featured right, cosily wrapped in a purple coat. We look forward to taking on a new challenge next year. Please join us if you can and Take on 250 for the sight loss community.



A day in the life of...

A Community Fundraiser, by Catherine Hodgson!

My day starts with a phone call from one of our community supporters, Linda Catling, the crocheting superstar. She has delivered 3 talks to local groups and collected donations for us. I am arranging when she will pop in to drop her collection pots off and take some more away. We are so lucky to be supported in this way by local people living with sight loss. And everything we collect in this way can be gift aided, adding an extra 25% to the total, which all helps.

Next port of call is a catch up with our Sight Loss Advisor Coralie to discuss possible articles for the next newsletter. We like to include news and information that is both helpful and topical. Coralie is always a good sounding board as she is best placed to know what the sight loss community are in need of.

I manage to grab 5 minutes with our Shop Manager Lois. We are discussing dates for our Easter pop up shop and a new event – the Spring Fashion Launch. Our shop is supported by fantastic regular customers and with Lois' creativity we have a winning formula. We feel confident that both of these events will bring in some much-needed funds for the charity.

During one of my online fundraising forums I came across a new grant that might be of interest to us. I have a few ideas in my head of how we can shape our work into a project but need to chat to our Community Engagement Officer Georgie first. After an hour of idea swapping, we have come up with a plan for our Jubilee Celebrations next June. We need to run it past the CEO first but we hope we are on to a winner. Georgie will gather the costs for the various events we have in mind, while I write a convincing application. Fingers crossed for a positive outcome...

I eat my lunch at my desk while preparing for a podcast with SAVS. They are interviewing local charities about their work in the local community for a new initiative and asked me to be one of their first "victims"! I only have to walk to the Haven Community Hub on Hamlet Court Road, so not too far to travel. My two interviewees are very relaxed and tell me they will record everything, including our tea slurping, and edit it down afterwards. It does

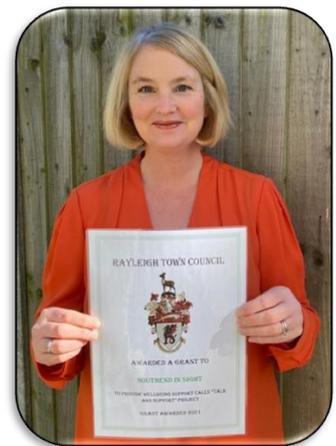
make for a relaxing environment with natural laughter and anecdotes. I hope I have done justice to our charity - it is sometimes difficult to get across to an outsider the type of work that we do.

While I remember, I send an email to the team asking them to take photos for our Take on 250 challenge while they are out and about (my own photo is featured right). I am always nagging them to do this, but it does seem to pay off as we regularly feature in the local papers and have seen an increase in followers on social media. A good story accompanied by a great photo goes a long way!



Last meeting of the day is with CEO Lucy. We have been working together for about 9 years now and seem to understand each other well. She is very supportive of new ideas and gives sound advice. We are discussing the fundraising strategy for next financial year and how we are going to raise the £215K needed to keep our services running. We are lucky to have some 3-year grants in place and our charity shop continues to do well. Somehow we always manage to meet our target!

I have been in my role at Southend in Sight for almost 6 years, with my duties evolving during that time to reflect my skillset. I have always been an organiser and a planner (of large-scale events in a previous life) and good with budgets, so fundraising does seem a natural fit. The grant writing and communications part of my job is a dream for me as I enjoy writing. I am lucky enough to witness on a day-to-day basis the great work that the Community Services Team carry out, which makes it all the more easy for me. And I do love collecting a cheque from a local group, like the one featured right from Rayleigh Town Council.



CEO Lucy comments: "Catherine is an asset to the team and we are extremely grateful that she brings her wealth of experience to the charity. She has a very busy and varied job, wearing many hats, but her dedication and passion shines through. We are lucky to have her!"

Putting on a brave face

Make-up application can be a minefield for many people, including those who are blind or partially sighted. The following tips have been taken from the RNIB website:

Products, tools and preparation.

- Use a headband when applying make-up to pull your hair away from your face and use products that don't need blending.
- Keep a wet washcloth, wet wipes or paper towels nearby to remove make-up from your fingertips, along with a wastebasket for their disposal.
- Protect your clothing by placing a towel in your lap, wearing a make-up cape or an oversized shirt for additional protection.
- Keep a small bowl or container nearby to hold applicators, tops and lids. This also prevents them from rolling off tables.
- Use a magnifying make-up mirror, either with or without lights. A mirror with a flexible arm can also be helpful.
- Storing your make-up in the fridge can provide a temperature difference making application easier.
- Make sure your skin is cleansed and dry before applying make-up.

Using sense of touch and following a pattern.

- Explore the contours of your face with your fingertips, the shape of your lips and your own unique bone structure.
- Most make-up looks best when applied sparingly and with a light touch - you can always add more colour to your face. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance or confirmation from a family member or friend.
- It helps to steady your hand against your face or with your other hand when applying cosmetics, such as mascara, eyeliner or lipstick, which require precision and control.
- When applying cleansing cream, moisturiser or foundation, try to follow a systematic pattern to ensure that you cover your entire face and neck.
- Counting the number of brush strokes (as in eye shadow or blush) or drops of foundation or moisturiser is a good way to be consistent in your application routine.

Shaving is another grooming task that can be tricky for many people, including those with sight loss. Here are some more tips from the RNIB:

How to prepare.

- Use your sense of touch to determine the areas to shave.
- If you've had sight previously and like to stand in front of a mirror when you shave, you can continue to do so.
- You can also use a magnifying mirror with an adjustable arm to enlarge the image of your face and head.
- Have your basic shaving supplies such as a razor, shaving cream or lotion, aftershave, a washcloth and a towel all to hand before you begin.
- Wash the area to be shaved with soap and water and pat dry. This will soften the hair making it easier to achieve a clean and safe shave.
- If you use a safety razor, use shaving cream or lotion. It will protect your skin and help you better locate the areas you've already shaved.

Selecting your razor.

- An electric shaver is a good option if you have sight loss.
- Some individuals prefer a wet/dry electric razor because it combines the qualities of a safety razor and an electric razor. You can also easily rinse it clean under the tap.
- Generally, a safety razor provides a closer shave. Always use a sharp, or new blade to help avoid nicks, scratches and cuts.

Techniques and adaptations.

- First, take time to feel and explore the contours of your face. Practice first with an empty razor or with the electric razor turned off.
- Use your hand that is not holding the razor as a "guide hand" to explore the area you're about to shave.
- The guide hand can also draw the skin tight: this allows the hairs to stand up straight for a closer shave.
- You can also use your free hand as a guide for repositioning the razor when you make a new stroke.

Please call our offices for advice on equipment purchases such as magnifying mirrors. And there are plenty of "You Tube" videos on personal grooming for the partially sighted, including Lucy Edwards, the blind broadcaster and Vlogger.

Valiant Volunteers

Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.

Every year at Christmas we like to celebrate with our volunteers. Despite the best efforts of COVID we still managed to meet and congratulate all the recipients of our long service awards for 2021 in person.

Elaine Street, who helps in our shop and at our events has been with us for 5 years, as have David and Maureen Regan. The husband and wife team both make calls as part of our talk and support scheme, while David also helps with benefit form filling and Maureen volunteers in our shop. The final recipient of our 5 year award is Barbara Southward, our admin volunteer and decluttering angel, who appears when we most need help!

Heidi Browne is a popular shop volunteer who has been with us for 10 years, filling in at our events and in our Centre when we are thin on the ground. Sarah Bickell has also been supporting us for 10 years, mostly at the Eye Clinic, now making calls from home to support local visually impaired people.

Our last two awards are for a pair of very special ladies - Maureen Tyson and Jackie Blackledge, pictured right receiving flowers. After 15 years, Maureen is stepping down from volunteering duties but will continue to support the charity.

Jackie has been with us for a record breaking 25 years and is looking forward to starting on our Sight Loss MOT project later this year.



The dynamic duo has volunteered together for 15 years giving advice and support to local visually impaired people through appointments in our Centre. It is the selfless attitude demonstrated by Maureen and Jackie, and that of all our volunteers, that helps to keep a small charity such as ours running. Our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers for their continued commitment.

And finally...

Diary Dates

We have booked in the following demonstration days at our Centre in Hamlet Court Road:

Professional Vision Services.

Friday 22 April, from 10am to 3pm.

An information focus day with low vision equipment and the latest specialist technology available to try.

Entry is by appointment only.

Please call: **01462 420 751** to book your timed slot.

Sight and Sound Technology.

Friday 13 May, from 10am to 3pm.

A good chance to try out video magnifiers, screen readers and a range of other low vision equipment.

Entry is by appointment only.

Please call: **01604 798 070** to book your timed slot.

And we have a date for our annual exhibition and AGM, once again to be held at the Holiday Inn, Southend Airport:

Friday 28 October, from 10am to 2pm.

Elkington House Care Home Update

You will remember that in the last newsletter, the Board of Trustees sadly announced the closure of Elkington House Care Home.

As we go to print, Elkington House is up for sale. The property is being sold on the open market and Sorrells, Chartered Surveyors, are acting for the charity in this connection. Rest assured, the Board of Trustees will keep everyone informed of any developments and are mindful of the charity's ongoing promise to support local people living with sight loss.

There will be a chance later this year for local visually impaired people to put forward their thoughts and ideas on how to best implement a strategy to take the charity forward.



***Southend in Sight is the
Community Services Division of
Southend Blind Welfare Organisation.
Registered Charity No. 1069765***



**117 Hamlet Court Road
Westcliff-on-Sea
SS0 7ES**



01702 342131



www.southendinsight.org.uk



info@southendinsight.org.uk