



# IN TOUCH

Autumn Edition: September 2022

Welcome to our autumn edition of “In Touch”. With the hottest summer on record, we faced a few challenges in our office with two broken air conditioning units and a tiny fridge. We managed to cope with copious fans, throwing open all our doors and windows and eating lots of ice cream. Our CEO drew the line at a paddling pool in the office – spoilsport!

For the first time in a few years, we managed to gather together all Southend in Sight staff for a strategy and planning day. We spent our time putting ideas forward on what the charity should look like in the future and what services we can offer local visually impaired people. We also talked about our values and the whole ethos of Southend in Sight. What came across during our day together was the passion we all have for our work and our drive and determination to offer the best service possible. The photo right shows the whole team arranged around a conference table – one big happy family!



We have also been consulting with our volunteers, trustees and members and encouraging them to “have their say” on what we do well and what they think the charity should offer in the future. These thoughts and ideas will all form part of our strategy for the next five years. After two years of COVID and plans put on hold we think it is vital that we review our services to ensure we continue to develop and grow in the right direction. We hope to present an outline of our plans in the next newsletter – exciting times!

# Team Talk

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.**

Our Centre team are busier than ever, with phone and face to face appointments back in full swing. Sight Loss Advisor Coralie and Centre Administrator Claire have been calling everybody on their waiting list to book them in as soon as can be arranged. Over the past 3 months, the pair have supported 136 individuals with equipment, advice and information.

Frontline staff received low vision training with Ben from Optelec last month. They were joined by our colleagues at BASIS for the informative session, pictured right, held at our Centre. Staff were able to develop and enhance their low vision rehabilitation knowledge, especially around lighting and magnification. This means we are better equipped to offer the best service we can to anyone visiting us for sight loss advice.



Our “Tech Team” are available to offer I.T advice through a pre-booked appointment. We have seen a rise in the number using this volunteer service as more and more people turn to smartphones and tablets to help them navigate everyday life. Please do call us and book in to see Paul or Steve if you need help in this area.

Our fabulous Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Tracey is continuing her great work at the busiest eye clinic in Essex. There are changes afoot in the NHS with the new “Integrated Care System” being introduced. This should mean that patients receive more joined up care and spend less time waiting to be referred to other departments. Tracey will continue to offer her top notch service for anyone referred to Southend Hospital Eye Clinic and can be reached on **01702 435 555 extension 7025**.

Our Community Engagement Officer has had a busy summer. Her coffee mornings are more popular than ever. Word has spread that cake and chat are on offer, which is obviously a major draw for everyone! The coffee mornings are held on the first Friday of every month at the Ekco Club, Thornford Gardens, SS2 6PU from 11am to 12:30pm. There is no need to book, just turn up: friends/family/neighbours are welcome too. The next dates are: **7 October, 4 November, 2 December.**

As well as a creative arts session, Georgie also organised a picnic in the park on Shoebury Common for local visually impaired children and their families. And if that wasn't enough, the Southend in Sight team came second overall in the Mid Summer Sports Day and Fun Festival for Disabled People a few weeks ago, organised by the Lions Club of South East Essex. In disciplines such as javelin, discus, shot put, archery and golf, to name a few, Qandagha, Coral and Lee won 19 gold, 13 silver and 4 bronze medals between them. The champion trio are pictured right showing off their medal haul. Well done team Southend in Sight – you should be very proud of your success.



We have a full article on the bowling team on page 9, but couldn't resist a chance to thank Captain Anne for all her hard work in keeping the team together. Despite a change of venue, COVID and a new league to join, Anne has persevered in encouraging the bowlers to stick with it. Anne's determination has paid off and we have been able to purchase an iPhone for her to send texts and make calls to her team, all thanks to a donation of £500 from Southend Lions. Anne has been using an old "Doro" phone and decided to have some coaching from the Tech Team to help her use voice-over on an iPhone. There is no stopping her now!

We do have spaces for anyone who would like to join our visually impaired bowling team. They meet every Thursday afternoon at CJs in Hockley. For more information, please call Georgie or Anne on **01702 34 21 31**. Come join our friendly group and be part of an award winning team!

# Essex Police Update

## **Essex Police Visual Impairment Procedure.**

The Visual Impairment Procedure helps safeguard visually impaired members of the community who need to confirm if a person at their door is a police officer.

Use of the procedure is optional, but it does add a layer of security and assurance when visual identification of a police officer by their uniform or warrant card is impractical.

Depending upon the reason for calling at your address, the officer may not need to come into your property. If it's appropriate, they may be able to discuss matters at the door, but you still have the option to use the Visual Impairment Procedure to verify their identity.

## **Who can use this service?**

The procedure can be used by anyone with a visual impairment, to any degree, and regardless of whether they have a guide dog or not. Other eligible service users would include anyone who cares for or supports someone who is visually impaired. Those members of the community living with dual sensory loss can also use the protocol.

## **How does the procedure work?**

You are safeguarded by verifying the identity of a police officer that has called at your address, before you let them into the premises. This verification is facilitated by the Police Contact Centre, either over the phone or by the attending officer using an agreed password.

## **When can the procedure be used?**

There are two scenarios when the protocol can be used.

Firstly, when you or someone calling on your behalf, calls 101 or 999, you can ask the Police Contact Centre to use the procedure. In this scenario, a memorable one-time-password is chosen, and this is shared with the officer that is dispatched to your address. When the officer arrives, they will be expected to state the password to the person answering the door. If the officer cannot give the password, they should not be allowed into the property.

The procedure can also be applied in a second scenario where you have not initially called the police. In this case the officer's attendance could

be planned, for example a pre-arranged appointment, or unplanned, such as spontaneous house-to-house enquiries. In either case, you would call 101 and confirm the identity of the officer by verifying their collar number, purpose for the visit, and a log number if this is available. If this information cannot be verified, the person at the door should not be allowed into the property.

### **Calling 101.**

The Police Contact Centre will answer 101 calls as soon as possible. Please keep your door closed and locked whilst making the call. The officer may say that they will return in a few minutes to give you time to make the call. You should not feel pressured to hurry the process, the officer understands, and they will attend to other duties nearby.

### **Some notes on safety and security.**

It is always best to be cautious when answering the door to someone you don't know. Use a door chain or bar if one is fitted and never let anyone into your property if you are unsure of their identity.

All Essex Police officers have been briefed on the Visual Impairment Procedure and will understand when you ask them to wait outside while you use the protocol. An officer will never tell you that you don't need to verify their identity. If you wish to use the procedure, they will support you in doing this but will not offer you their own phone for you to make the necessary call.

The officer may ask for some time while they call the Police Contact Centre to check information. Please allow them to do this as they may have been asked to attend your address at short notice. If something doesn't feel right though, and you are worried that the person at the door is not really a police officer, call 999.

### **Using police powers to enter your property.**

It is a police officer's duty to protect life. In an emergency, they may need to enter the premises without delay to achieve this. An officer may also exercise police powers under very specific circumstances to enter your property.

Should any police officer have to enter your property without waiting for you to use the Visual Impairment Procedure, they will give clear instructions to you and anyone else in the property. The officer will describe events and ensure you are fully informed of what is happening.

# A day in the life of...

## **Georgie Haynes, Community Engagement Officer.**

My day starts with some shopping on the way into the office. It sounds glamorous but I'm not looking for designer shoes, just some yummy cakes for our coffee morning this Friday and some individually wrapped snacks for the children's activity day I have planned for this afternoon.

Every Wednesday at about the same time I make a call to Maureen. I have been doing this since the beginning of lockdown and look forward to my weekly catch up, which usually involves a quiz and a sing along. Maureen is severely sight impaired and has lived in a care home for many years. As she has no local family to visit her, I also arrange to meet Maureen in her care home next week. I have been making home visits to some of our most isolated clients for about a year now, since COVID restrictions were lifted. I have really got to know some of them well and find this very rewarding. It's so lovely to be able to spread some joy as part of my job. I wish I could do more but there are only so many hours in the day!

After my call, I catch up on my emails and update some information on our database. Every week I have a team of volunteers making calls, like mine to Maureen, as part of our "Talk and Support" service. Between 2 staff members and 7 volunteers we keep in touch with 90 people on a regular basis, making around 170 calls a month. That's a lot of chatting!

Before I leave for my event, I have a meeting with Catherine, our Community Fundraiser, about diary dates and possible press on activities I have coming up. I am now remembering to take photos when I am out and about so that we can tell everyone about the work that we do.

I eat an early lunch at my desk while I update my list for my event at the local Chinese next month - Zen City. I only sent the poster invites out to everyone a few days ago, but the calls to book places are coming in already. After so many months of not being able to meet socially, everyone wants to join in the fun. I also check I have everything for my coffee morning this Friday – this is a busy week with a lot to remember!

I take a call from a local group that would like sight loss awareness training. This is a new part of my community engagement role. We want more people to be aware of what it is like to live with sight loss and to be armed with a few tips on helping someone who is visually impaired. The picture right shows me in action at a recent training session I ran for our colleagues at The Haven Community Centre.



I arrive early for my seaside themed Children's Activity session and help Allan from the Art Ministry set up the tables with different arts and crafts. We are joined by one of our shop volunteers Jean who happens to be part of The Thames Estuary Art Society. The group has very kindly funded the session for our visually impaired children and their families.

The event is a great success with the children asking when they can do it again! They have painted stones, created sea creatures using stickers, coloured and painted and generally got messy. It was lovely to see families with siblings joining in, all ages chatting together. I even remembered to capture the moment with a photo, shown right, of a small group working hard at a table together, all absorbed in creating their own masterpiece.



We are so lucky to have Georgie as part of our team. She is such a bright and sunny person with the capacity to make everyone feel welcome at her events. We look forward to seeing what exciting activities Georgie has planned for us over the coming months.

# Time to Celebrate

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.**

For the first time in 3 years we were able to meet up and celebrate with our wonderful volunteers. Volunteers' Week takes place every June and we always take the time to reflect on the difference our volunteers make to the charity and the work that we carry out in the local community.

We are fortunate to have over 70 volunteers, some of whom have been with us for over 20 years, many for 5, 10 or more. It never ceases to amaze us how generous they are with their time and their commitment to the cause, often going above and beyond the call of duty. Our volunteers support local visually impaired people in a number of ways – through chatting on the phone, helping out at events, offering I.T and benefits advice, to manning our shop which helps bring in the funds to keep the charity running. We really do appreciate all that they do.

This year's celebration was Jubilee themed, with volunteers dressing in red, white and blue. Staff served fish and chips and fizz washed down with a cup of tea and a slice of cake. Dancing was encouraged to burn off the calories!

We were fortunate to be entertained by live band "Open Road", who volunteered their services for free for the afternoon. They played tunes from the 50s, 60s and 70s, finishing with a lively Beatles number to rapturous applause.

As the pictures above show, our volunteers really know how to enjoy themselves! Our thanks to all our volunteers for their continued support – we really couldn't do it without you.





# Bowling for Ron

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.**

Our visually impaired bowling group decided to honour one of their members Ron Gent, who sadly passed away a few months ago. CJ's Bowling staff helped the team set up a "5 pin event", as Ron's favourite phrase was "no-one misses a 5 pin!" How wrong he was...only Captain Anne managed to knock down the elusive middle pin in the friendly competition. The team are pictured right kneeling at the top of the bowling alley smiling for the camera.



Ron's 3 sons and wife Sharon thanked us for all our support over the years, by raising close to £250 in his memory. They also offered a few anecdotes about Ron and his love of bowling!

Ron began bowling 20 years ago, forming a team with his 3 sons named "The Gentlemen". The family enjoyed bowling together and improved enough to move up the league. Unfortunately Ron suffered a heart attack and found himself less mobile with his sight deteriorating. Determined to continue, his wife Sharon contacted Southend in Sight and Ron joined our bowling team.



Even when Ron suffered a stroke, he told doctors he needed to be discharged to take part in the bowling finals in Wigan! Defying all the odds, Ron learnt to bowl with his left hand from his wheelchair in order to continue playing the sport he loved. He also loved the social aspect of the bowling group and is pictured above with Captain Anne at one of the bowling Christmas parties. Ron will be sorely missed by his fellow bowlers – a true Gent!

# What's On

Written by Catherine Hodgson, Community Fundraiser.

**NEW! We have a separate one page yellow flier with this newsletter - our events diary – with 6 new activities to try out!**

## **Centre Drop-in Days.**

From 7 September, every Wednesday morning from **10:30am to 12:30pm**, our Centre at 117 Hamlet Court Road will be open for people to drop in for general advice.

Volunteers Jackie and Clare will be available to chat and talk to about living with sight loss.

On the last Wednesday of every month at the same time, we will be holding a “tech” drop in for I.T advice with volunteers Steve and Paul. We hope you can join us!

## **In Your Pocket Session.**

We have the latest model of the “In Your Pocket” voice controlled device to demonstrate. This talking phone has been designed specifically for people living with sight loss.

If you would like to find out more about this phone and even try it for yourself, please join us at our Centre on **Tuesday 4 October** from **2:00pm-3:30pm**. Places are limited so please call our office to book yourself in.

## **Orcam Read.**

We have been given an Orcam Read on loan from one of our suppliers. This hand-held reading pen is suitable for people with mild low vision and reading difficulties.

We will be holding a small workshop at our Centre to demonstrate this reading device on **Monday 17 October** from **2:00pm-3:30pm**. Please call ahead to book your place.

## **Exhibition.**

Our annual exhibition will take place on **Friday 28 October 2022** at the **Holiday Inn, Southend Airport, SS2 6XG**. This popular event gives local

visually impaired people the chance to try out equipment before making a purchase and meet with suppliers face to face. To minimise numbers at any given time, we are asking anyone that is thinking of attending to book an hour time slot: **10am-11am, 11am-12pm, 12pm-1pm, 1pm-2pm**. Please call our office on **01702 34 21 31** to register your booking. We found this system worked well last year and allowed our suppliers to spend more time demonstrating equipment to attendees.

As we go to print, we have the following suppliers confirmed to attend:

**Associated Optical**  
**Cobolt**  
**Humanware**  
**Optelec/Enhanced Vision**  
**Professional Vision**  
**Sight and Sound**

We once again welcome representatives from the **Southend Talking Newspaper, Rayleigh Rochford, Castle Point Talking Newspaper and The Macular Society**, along with the **Rehabilitation Team from Southend City Council**.

Our exhibition is a popular event, as shown in the photo right, so please do remember to call and book your place.



### **AGM.**

We will also be holding the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Southend Blind Welfare Organisation after the exhibition from **2:45pm** onwards. Anyone is welcome to attend, but only official members have voting rights. Please call to let us know you are planning on attending so we can ensure we have enough space.

### **Elkington House Care Home Update.**

Elkington House Care Home now has a buyer and contracts have been exchanged. The sale is progressing as planned and a completion date is imminent.



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