

IMPACT REPORT FOR SOUTHEND IN SIGHT

April 2022 to March 2023.

Introduction.

Russell Cable.

Chairman of Trustees.

Southend in Sight continues to be the only local charity that people can come to if they need support with their visual impairment.

I'm proud of the fact that anyone of any age can be helped by us and we offer consistent and professional support and advice that addresses all areas of someone's life.

Having personal experience of living with sight loss motivates me to lead the team forward, following the last few years of unprecedented events. As we head into a new phase of the charity, we do so with confidence that we make a difference, but also that we still strive to improve, reflect and adapt to the changing needs of the people we support.

Lucy Martin.

Chief Executive.

I look back over the past year with a real sense of achievement. The team at Southend in Sight have moved on from an unstable few years and have come through stronger and more resilient to deal with unprecedented events.

We have continued to listen to the people we support as we know that times are challenging for many. We have increased our social activities on offer as we know that sight loss can be isolating and coming together with others reduces feelings of loneliness. Our professional advice both at Southend Hospital Eye Clinic and our Centre gives comfort to those who are feeling lost as they try to navigate this new world they find themselves in.

We continue to offer compassionate, inclusive and tailor made support for individuals and as the charity moves into a new era, my staff and I feel privileged helping those in their hour of need.

Our achievements.

The charity has continued to offer high quality and professional advice to those needing support managing sight loss. This year, at our Centre, we have:

provided 1,286 sessions of support at our Centre and supported 457 individuals on their sight loss journey.

welcomed 231 new individuals to the charity.

helped 24 people with form filling over 40 sessions and supported 61 individuals with over 100 sessions of Tech support.

carried out 44 Sight Loss MOTs and held 26 drop in advice sessions with peer support.

At Southend Hospital Eye Clinic our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer has supported those in the early days of their diagnosis with emotional and practical advice. During the year we have:

helped 1,020 patients with support and guidance and held 1,739 sessions of support.

supported 617 relatives / carers and processed 214 Certificates of Visual Impairment.

For those who could be feeling isolated we have expanded our activities to include bowling, book club, choir, line dancing, coffee mornings and Fun Fridays. Our Talk and Support service also continued supported by 11 volunteers and our engagement with children and families has improved. During the year we have:

provided 54 activities for adults and held 38 bowling sessions.

offered 6 children's events including a trip to the Pantomime at the Cliffs Pavilion.

carried out 43 home visits to those who are housebound and made 1,998 Talk and Support calls to offer a lifeline to those who are feeling isolated.

The difference we make.

The people we have supported this year have told us that:

“Before moving into the area, I was lost and struggling to cope. Giving up driving and my loss of independence when first diagnosed was daunting. Moving here a friend told me about you and I have not looked back. Receiving the symbol cane and lanyard has made a huge difference using community transport. I no longer have to guess buses as people offer help, bus drivers help and people have more patience if they can see the visible cues. This made a big difference post covid. At the very first social activity, I was made to feel welcome and felt relaxed immediately, and have made many friends.”

“Always helpful, I don't have to wait long for a response. All staff and volunteers I have spoken to are efficient and knowledgeable.”

"Talking books are a lifeline and mum could not do without them. We are very grateful that you were able to replace her faulty player so quickly, so mum was not without her stories."

“You bring sunshine to my day when I speak to you, when I receive something in the post and come to your events.”

“I find it very helpful to speak to people in the same boat as me at our different socials.”

“Wished we had found you sooner. Mum loves Fun Friday and meeting lovely people. A comfort to know you are there if we need you.”

“Knowing we are on the end of the phone and knowledge for tech has been especially helpful.”

“Without your help and support, I'm not sure we would be coping as well as we are. It's a comfort to know you are here.”

“Many thanks for your help today. It really has made a huge impression on my daughter and I can only hope that improves over time. You really have been a wonderful help and I appreciate your warm welcome today. Look forward to liaising with you again.”

The support we have received.

Volunteers.

Our volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the charity. They have provided on average 115 volunteer hours per week throughout the year.

We are thankful for our 60 active volunteers and the support they bring to the charity. They help in the charity shop, social activities, form filling, IT support, talk and support and cleaning. We also have an active Board of Trustees with over half also taking on front line roles.

We are thrilled to be able to offer our weekly drop-in for general sight loss advice. This is run by two volunteers who have experience of living with a visual impairment and has become a very popular session.

Charity shop.

Despite the challenges facing the retail environment, our charity shop continues to thrive with an income (after expenses) totalling £54,466. Not only does it provide much needed income, it is also the jewel in the crown along Hamlet Court Road with regular positive feedback on the window displays and helpful and welcoming volunteers.

Fundraising and grants.

We have been lucky enough to have received some large national and local funding through a number of different grant programmes.

We have been left a number of gifts in memory and some larger legacies, for which we are extremely grateful. We continue to receive support from local groups, clubs and organisations and have recruited a new Community Coordinator to help us grow our community fundraising.

We have also printed 2,600 newsletters, recorded 300 CDs to help people stay "In Touch" and redesigned our website to make it more accessible for our users.

Our priorities and planning for the future.

Last year we said we would:

Invest in training another sight loss advisor.

We have provided more hours to train our staff and are now able to offer more face to face appointments providing sight loss advice.

Continue our Talk and Support service and expand to visit those most in need in their home.

We have committed to continue with our Talk and Support service but have not had the capacity to expand into homes. We have, however, made some home visits and prioritised those people who are housebound.

Launch a new and varied programme of social activities.

We have increased our activities programme, and we now offer a book club, line dancing, choir and free lunch club.

Open our Sight Loss Centre for weekly drop-in sessions run by people with lived experience.

We offer a weekly drop-in run by two volunteers with personal experience of living with sight loss. 26 sessions have been offered during the year and the peer support has been invaluable.

Work with partners to develop our services for children, young people and their families.

Whilst we have increased the number of families on our database, we have not had the capacity to work with other partners to develop our work. We do, however, offer our sight loss advice to children, young people and their families on an individual basis and we also offer regular activities for families to meet each other.

We also confirmed our charity values.

Excellence, Community, Empowerment, Support and Integrity.

Our priorities for 2023-2024:

1. No one faces sight loss unsupported.

Offer a service that is professional, timely, personalised and a positive experience.

Provide support in all areas of life that have been affected by sight loss through our MOT tool.

Enable people to learn from others, share ideas and gain confidence in using tech and other equipment that supports independence.

2. No one faces sight loss alone.

Offer a range of activities that suit different ages and interests to reduce social isolation.

Provide people with opportunities to mix with peers, talk to volunteers and staff either in person or over the phone.

To use our learning and gain evidence to develop plans for a space to house social activities and other services under one roof.

3. We are inclusive and available to all.

All aspects of our services can be accessed and utilised, regardless of age, gender, social or ethnic background.

We are committed to a positive environment in which users of our service, volunteers, employees and trustees may experience a sense of belonging, respect and worth.

Services are available to adults, children, young people, their families / carers and we are committed to safeguarding people engaging with us.

4. Our finance, resources and infrastructure meet the growing need.

Financial commitments are met with agreed income targets through grant funding, community fundraising and our charity shop.

Our building is maintained and safe.

Risks are managed and mitigated against (new site, IT, health and safety, investments, funding, staffing / volunteer levels etc).

A programme is in place for continued professional development and succession planning.

Growth areas for funding are identified to meet the increase in demand on services.

We can't carry out our work without the help of our volunteers, supporters and staff. We thank them again for their unwavering support this year.