

Summer/Autumn 2022

Visible

Keeping you informed of local sight loss news

Welcome to our latest issue of Visible magazine

Visible magazine is the newsletter for both Sight Support West of England and Wiltshire Sight. We are separate charities, but we work closely together, to ensure people get the best service wherever they are in the region. Writing one magazine for the whole region helps both our charities save time and money.

We are very happy to be back out in the community after a difficult couple of years, we now have sight loss hubs in 30 different locations. Many hubs include a social group – a chance to stop for a drink and meet other blind or partially sighted people.

We have included an updated list of all the places you can find us in this issue. Please call the office for our most up to date venues and times, or to make an appointment to see a Sight Loss Advisor.

This issue includes a special article on taking holidays with sight loss. Our Comms Officer Karen has filled this article with advice and tips that she's found useful, including accessible options, what to think about before you book, and practical advice for when you are away.

As always, we welcome any feedback you have on this magazine. If you would prefer to receive it by email or on a USB stick, please just ask.

Best wishes,
Mike Silvey



Sharing Your stories

Kayvan lives in Bristol and lost his sight due to Retinitis Pigmentosa. He came across Sight Support through a Google search a few years ago. As a result, he signed up for our monthly 'What's On' e-newsletter which details current accessible local events.

This year the Eye Can exhibition caught Kayvan's attention in our guide. He had wanted for some time to attend 'Sight Village', an exhibition organised by another organisation, but this doesn't take place locally so Kayvan decided instead to visit Eye Can Bristol. We are very happy to report that Kayvan was impressed by the event, and our welcoming and knowledgeable staff. He found the diverse and useful advice and information on offer from ourselves and the other exhibitors very helpful.

Following this positive experience Kayvan then visited our sight loss advice hub at Southmead and asked for assistance with the use of his android phone. He met our Senior Sight Loss Advisor, Marc, who was able to quickly identify the problem and assist him with some practical solutions.

Kayvan tells us that the help he received from Sight Support has given him the confidence to tackle technology. Getting past the initial steps has made all the difference. He feels like it's a weight off his shoulders knowing we are here to offer instruction if he needs it or help with any other sight loss related issue.

Having helped Kayvan, he would now like to help us. He has very recently joined our Board of Trustees and will help shape our work by sharing his knowledge and lived experience to ensure that we are a voice for the people we represent.



“The value of having someone in front of you to tell you exactly how to do something rather than reading instructions was so wonderful.”



On March 16th we ran our first ever Eye Can Exhibition at the Memorial Stadium in Bristol. Our aim was to hold a local event where providers of sight loss equipment and services were all under one roof. We hoped that blind and partially sighted people could find solutions to some of the issues faced when living with sight loss.

The event ran from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm and despite the bracing British weather, which featured every kind of rain, we had a fantastic and fun day which exceeded our expectations. Nearly 200 people attended the exhibition, making it wonderfully busy with a great atmosphere. Visitors had the opportunity to speak directly with a diverse range of exhibitors.

We also held a series of talks throughout the day that were incredibly well attended - with some having over 50 people present. The talks provided an opportunity to find out more about specific topics ranging from Fraud Awareness to the work of the Sight Loss Council. Feedback on the talks was positive and our Meet the Expert talk from Amar Shah, our Trustee and leading optometrist, was considered especially interesting and useful.



The event was a resounding success with over 95% of visitors rating the event as good or excellent. So, what's next?

Following the success of Eye Can Bristol we plan to run further exhibitions in the region. Our next event will take place at the Salisbury Guildhall on the 5th of October 2022. Following this, we aim to run two events per year, alternating between Swindon and Bath, and Bristol and Salisbury. We hope these events will bring new opportunities on an ongoing basis to people living with sight loss in the region. With each Eye Can event we hope to learn and improve. As such, we welcome your input at any time, so please feel free to get in touch if you have suggestions and ideas about future exhibitions. To book for our Salisbury exhibition or for further information please call or email us.

“Everyone was friendly, and well done to the Meet and Greet guides who remained cheerful throughout despite the awful weather!”

“I came away buzzing with helpful advice. The whole event was brilliant. The exhibitors were patient, very helpful and had excellent advice.”

We would like to thank all those who attended on the day. We would like to offer a big thank you to our headline sponsors, Optelec, Newmedica, and Irwin Mitchell, without whom this event would not have been possible, as well as partner sponsors Associated Optical and The Fishponds Tap.



Newmedica
Eye Health Clinics + Surgical Centres

enhanced vision

Freedom Scientific

Optelec

SCHWEIZER

IM irwinmitchell

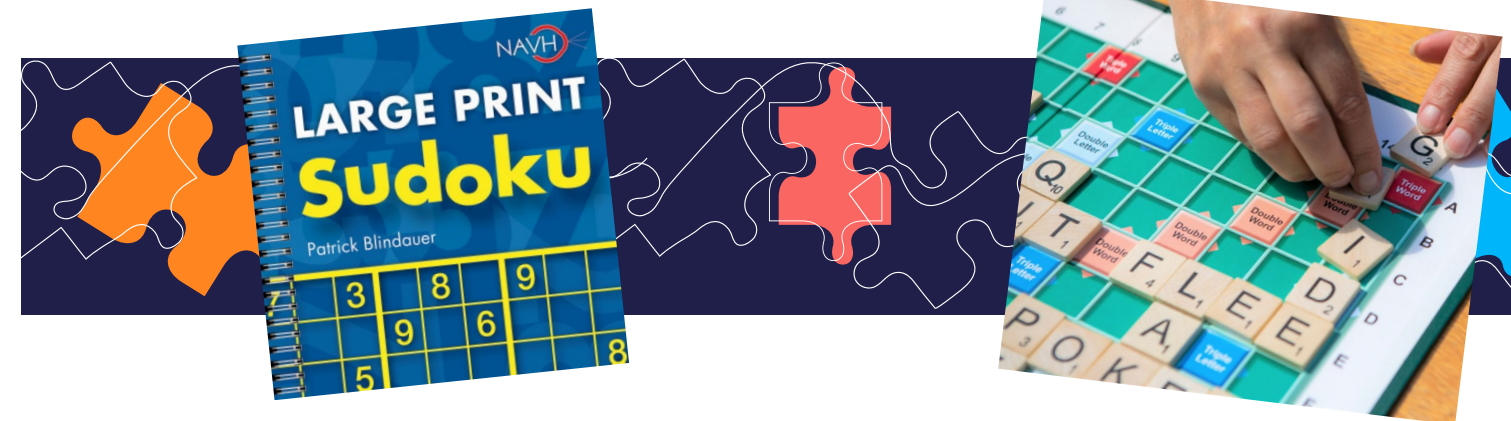
Top Tips – Entertainment

For our Top Tips feature in this edition we would like to share some ways that you can continue to access different types of entertainment. Life is to be enjoyed and sight loss doesn't have to be a barrier to this. So, we hope our tips will be useful and help you to carry on having fun in whatever way you choose.



- 1 A range of adapted puzzles, crosswords, board and card games are available in braille or large print.
- 2 Many cinemas or theatres offer audio-described shows. You can listen to a narration track through headphones that will describe what is happening on the screen or stage. Some theatres also offer a touch tour of the set prior to a performance.
- 3 Museums and galleries often offer audio described tours and many museums have volunteer guides who can really help bring a museum to life.
- 4 Audio description is free on digital TV services. It is available on a selection of programmes on the main channels.
- 5 Some newer TVs and service providers have voice control options and audible TV listing guides. Large print and audible TV listings are also available from RNIB.
- 6 Several audio book services are available: RNIB Talking Books, Calibre Audio Library, Audible, your local library and Sight Support West of England can provide talking books in different formats for playing on a variety of devices.

- 7 Large print books are available from local libraries. RNIB library has a range of digital download, audio and braille books.
- 8 Radio stations can be accessed on a variety of equipment and via your digital TV or Smart speaker.
- 9 If you have a smart speaker (Amazon echo - Alexa, Google dot or Apple home pod for example) it can be used to access talking books, radio, podcasts, quizzes, music and jokes.
- 10 Podcasts are also another way to access entertainment and information of various types.
- 11 Some people find it helpful to listen to a radio commentary while watching a sporting event on the TV as it gives more detailed information.
- 12 Some sporting venues offer priority seating areas and access to commentary.



If you need any further advice on any of these tips or feel you are unable to access the things you once enjoyed doing, please do get in touch with us. Our Sight Loss Advisors have lots of different suggestions and advice on how you can manage any of the barriers sight loss can present.

Life can be enjoyed no matter how much sight you do or don't have.

Are we there yet? Holidaying with sight loss

Having a holiday can be one of life's greatest pleasures. But what about when you are living with sight loss? Are you still able to enjoy a diverse range of holidays and take part in all the experiences holidaying has to offer?

We think so!

Specialist Holidays

One way to access holidays is to book with a specialist holiday company. These companies offer holidays that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of people living with sight loss. This includes offering extra support, such as sighted guides, and adjustments to activities or accommodation.

We spoke to Jenny and Steve, who have had many of these types of holidays. They told us that using specialist companies had proved to be a liberating experience. They have had amazing experiences including: climbing Sydney Harbour Bridge, cycling across Holland, white water rafting, and even an exclusive hands on experience of a Michelangelo statue in Russia (gloves were mandatory of course!).

“Specialist companies have given myself and my partner memories and experiences to last the rest of our lives.”



Specialist themed breaks are also popular and can include wine tasting, poetry, learning a language or local history. If you are feeling adventurous the Calvert Trust provide adapted outdoor activities including sailing and rock climbing.

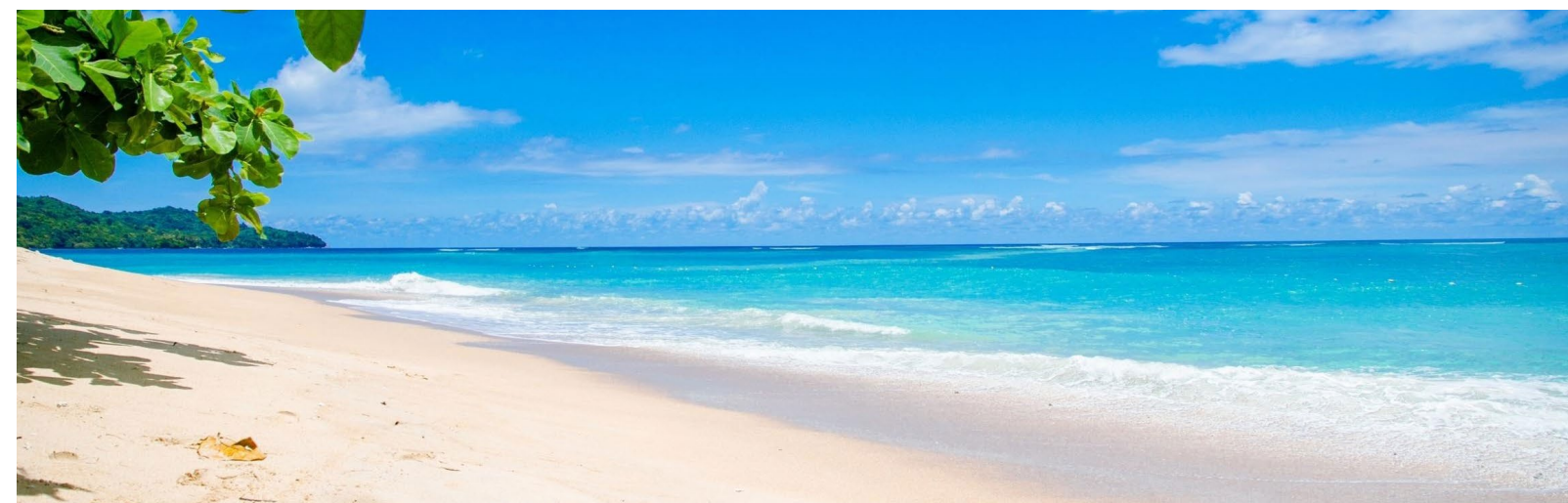
Or perhaps you want a relaxing hotel break. The Windermere Manor Hotel offer accessible hospitality with hotel staff trained to assist people with sight loss.

If you need more support, some residential homes caring for blind and partially sighted people offer short term respite care in beautiful settings.

There are specialist companies for overseas travel too. TravelEyes, (reopening later this year) offer a range of global destinations and experiences. Their group holidays pair sighted guides with people with sight loss. The guides are on a rota, so this creates a great opportunity to meet new people. Other specialist holiday organisations include Seable, Responsible Travel, and Limitless Travel.

There is a great RNIB article detailing lots of these specialist companies mentioned above. You can find it on their website at www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure/holidays

Continued overleaf >>>



Mainstream holidays

Mainstream holidays can also be accessible with planning.



Some considerations are:

- Sighted guiding support can transform a holiday. There are organisations that can help you find a volunteer (ncvo.org.uk) or a paid guide/travel companion (try universalaunts.co.uk).
- Assistance is available at train stations and airports, but these services must be booked in advance.
- Find out in advance about any trips or activities. Print out information or save to your mobile. Plan routes for getting to and from where you will be going.
- Do you have special requirements, e.g. large print menus? Or a hotel orientation? Most tour operators or hotels can accommodate requests if you let them know in advance.
- Think about any equipment you regularly use at home that you could easily take with you, like talking clocks or liquid level indicators.
- Small details can make a big difference, and our wonderful rehabilitation officers have come up with a list of 15 key travel tips www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/resources/tips-and-tricks-for-holidaying/
Please contact us if you would like a copy posting or emailing to you.

Finances

If you have limited funds, it may be worth checking whether a grant towards the cost of a holiday is available (Please note companies and funders listed are for information and not endorsed or supported by us.)

For young people the Family Fund may be able to help www.familyfund.org.uk. For people of all ages it's worth checking the disability grants website www.disability-grants.org. Additionally, RNIB may be able to help you find funding, their helpline number is **0303 123 9999**.

This is just an overview of some of the things to think about when considering a holiday and we encourage you to do your own research.

If you have any more tips, we would love to hear from you.

Lottery

Feeling inspired by our holidays article?
Imagine winning £25,000!
If you play our weekly lottery,
there's a chance to win £25,000 every week.



Your chance to win every week!
Charity lotteries are a popular way to support the causes you care about.

For £1 a week, you have the chance of winning £25,000 EVERY week. And we get 50p in every £1, which we spend on our work supporting local people living with sight loss. To sign up call our Devizes office on 01380 723682 or visit our website: www.sightsupportwest.affinitylottery.org.uk

Lotteries are regulated by the Gambling Commission. Sight Support West of England is registered with Wiltshire Council to operate this lottery under registration number LN/00017168. Full terms and conditions for our lottery are available on our website, or on request in large print.

Our Community Hubs and Social Groups



We believe that sight loss shouldn't stop people being independent and enjoying life. We want to ensure that people with sight loss are aware of and can use the many different helpful resources and technological aids that are available.

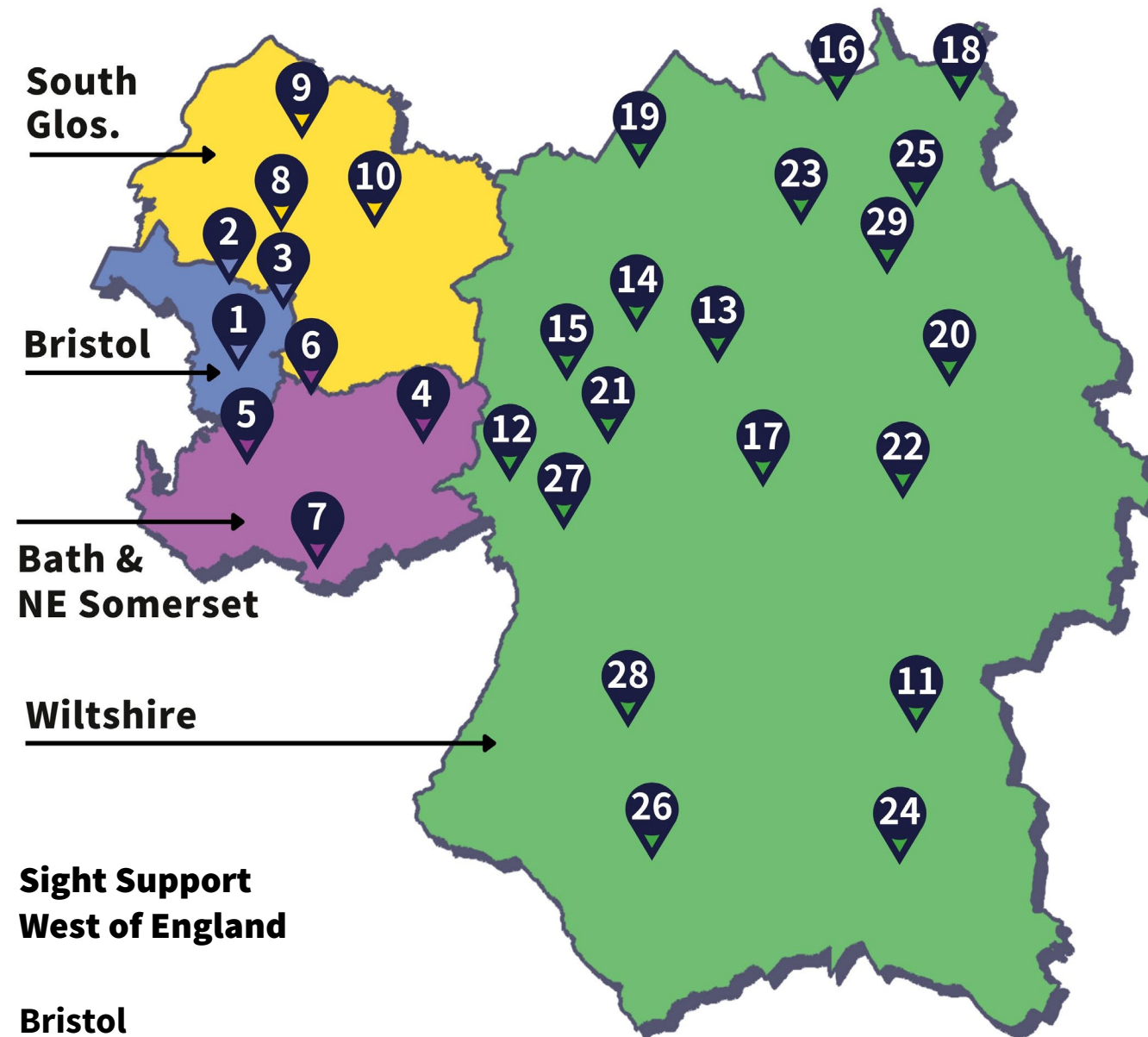
We run local Hubs in many different locations across the region. At one of our Hubs, you will find a Sight Loss Advisor who will be able to assess what resources would be of most use to you. They will have a range of equipment on hand to demonstrate, including talking clocks & watches, talking book players, magnification aids, and lighting. They can also suggest other gadgets or ways of helping.

Our trained advisors have information on a wide range of topics and can offer guidance on all things sight loss related. They are always friendly and willing to help no matter what the issue, so please do come along if you have something you are struggling with.

We understand how sight loss can lead to isolation, which is why many of our hubs have a social group running alongside them. These friendly, volunteer run groups provide an opportunity for those living with sight loss to get together, share experiences, swap tips, and relax.

So, if you feel you would benefit from any of the above, don't hesitate to either pop in to one of our social groups, or see a Sight Loss Advisor by making an appointment.

Sight Support and Wiltshire Sight Hubs >>>>



Sight Support West of England

Bristol

- 1. Bedminster
- 2. Southmead
- 3. Fishponds

Bath & NE Somerset

- 4. Bath
- 5. Chew Valley
- 6. Keynsham
- 7. Midsomer Norton

South Gloucestershire

- 8. Bradley Stoke
- 9. Thornbury
- 10. Yate

Wiltshire Sight Hubs

- 11. Amesbury
- 12. Bradford on Avon
- 13. Calne
- 14. Chippenham
- 15. Corsham
- 16. Cricklade
- 17. Devizes
- 18. Highworth
- 19. Malmesbury
- 20. Marlborough
- 21. Melksham
- 22. Pewsey
- 23. Royal Wootton Bassett
- 24. Salisbury
- 25. Swindon – 3 locations
- 26. Tisbury
- 27. Trowbridge
- 28. Warminster
- 29. Wroughton

The Good, the Bad and the Curious: our shop donations

Our new Salisbury hub has now been open for 6 months and we are so thrilled with the support we have received from the local community and the progress we have made in just these short 6 months. The shop itself is performing well and one of the driving factors of this is the generous donations we receive.

On average, the shop receives 56 large sacks or boxes of donations per week. These often contain a mix of fantastic, quirky and entertaining items, and we thought we would share some of our favourites with you.

Some of the more valuable items we have received include:

A vintage
travel chess set
worth £150,



A pair of designer
Escada boots worth
£150 – fabulous!



We've also had some classics donated.

How about this fish gargle jug which, when poured, produces a sound effect that mimics the creature of the jug shape? Every home should have one!



But what about those more... interesting items?



A pair of make
your own polka-dot
knickers?



Or how about a
Donald Trump
loo brush?



A poop emoji mug?
Enough to put you
off your tea for sure!



A jellybean
pooping unicorn!



How about a bogey
man egg separator?



Some stylish "fish
flops" - summer flip
flops shaped like fish?

We really do get it all!





Don't get us wrong, we thoroughly value every single donation we receive, and we love finding all the weird and wonderful items we can then sell on. In the first 6 months of trading your donations have helped us generate over £45,000, the profit from which will be used to fund our services across the region – a truly fabulous result! Anything we are unable to sell in store is sold on to our textile recyclers, so no items are ever wasted with us.

The shop in Salisbury and our office in Devizes are always accepting donations and every bag helps raise funds to keep our sight loss services running. Do keep them coming!

A Year in Summary

As we move into another financial year, we've been looking back at what we've achieved over the last 12 months to March 2022. We hope you share our sense of pride as we look back over a challenging year.

What We Did

-  3,313 one to one sessions held with clients
-  419 New clients (29% increase on 20/21)
-  28 consultation hubs re-opened across the West of England
-  1 new charity shop – our very first, now open in Salisbury

What people said

“The support has given me so much more confidence. It has opened my eyes to what I can do.”

“The biggest difference has been to my confidence. I will now do things around the house like washing up and making breakfast which I wouldn't have tried before. I am able to go out to the shop and feel confident crossing the road.”

“Connecting to people who are going through the same as me has made all the difference. I feel happier about having sight loss. Sight Support has made me feel equal.”

**"Fantastic!
You're an excellent
model of how a support
service should work."**

Satisfaction – how people feel

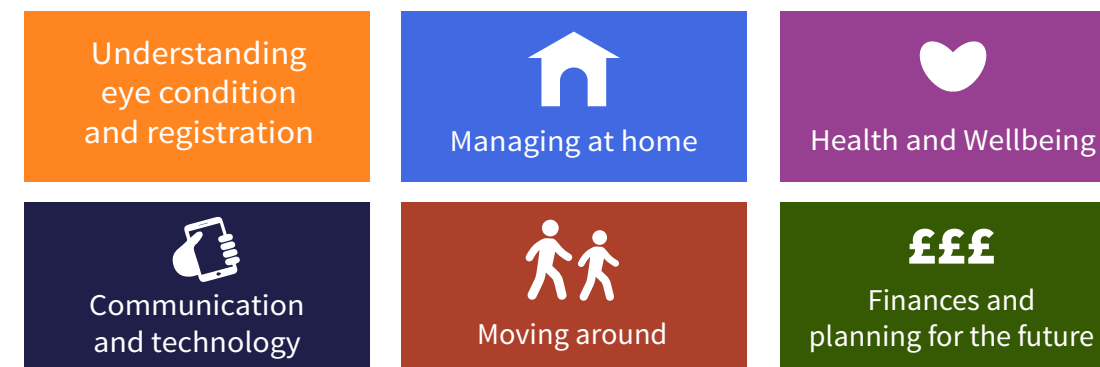
Since we introduced our evaluation measures to enable clients to provide feedback on our services

91%
of clients say they feel more able to cope with day-to-day life with our support

97%
of clients rated our services good, with **90%** rating it as excellent

Outcomes – what people achieved

In 2021 we refined our outcome measurements down to six key outcome areas:



Through our Sight Loss Assessment process, we can show that over the past year **82%** of the clients we have been working with have already recorded significant improvement during the year in at least one of our outcome areas as a result of our support.

Volunteering – what people contributed

68 current volunteers

2200 hours of volunteering time given to supporting clients (75% increase on 20/21)

28% of our volunteers are visually impaired

Finances - what we spent

Sight Loss Support Services **£401,800**
Fundraising costs **£57,700**



Meet the volunteers

Names: Richard & Janice Rapson

Volunteer Role: Social Group Facilitators

Date Started: February 2019

Janice and I live in Yate, South Gloucestershire. We have one daughter, one son, and three granddaughters. We have both been visually impaired from birth and are both registered severely sight impaired.

After having to give up work due to other health issues, we decided we would like to get involved with helping other blind and partially sighted people. We found out about Sight Support West of England via the internet and thought running a social meetup group would be ideal for us. After visiting Sight Support's Coffee & Convo group in Central Bristol, we decided to become volunteers and, in February 2019, we started our social group in Yate.

We now run The Sight Loss Friendship Group on the first Wednesday of each month at Soho Coffee Co. in Yate Leisure Centre. The group meets for a friendly light-hearted chat, to make new friends, and to support each other. Despite the challenges of lockdown, when the social couldn't run, we kept in regular contact with our group via WhatsApp and were available if any member of the group needed help and advice.

We very much enjoy volunteering for Sight Support and find it rewarding to support other people with a visual impairment. We enjoy helping to build friendships and reduce isolation, so blind and partially sighted people don't feel they have to cope with sight loss on their own. We feel that being visually impaired ourselves gives us a better understanding of what people with sight loss are going through and Sight Support are always ready and willing to help in resolving any issues relating to sight loss that we come across.

Outside of our volunteering role, we often meet up with visually impaired friends from our school days at various hotels around the country, as we all live in different areas. We also enjoy pottering around the garden, walking in the countryside, and looking after the grandchildren when needed.



Could you represent us in the community?

We are looking for outgoing and enthusiastic individuals who are passionate about our charity and the work we do and who would love the opportunity to help us raise awareness of our vital services within their local area.

This role is flexible and will vary depending on the area you live in and your own skills/interests. Tasks may include:

- Using your local knowledge to find suitable venues to display our leaflets and posters and ensure these are kept up to date
- Liaising with local parish magazines and newsletters to feature adverts and/or articles about our work
- Helping to find local fundraising opportunities - summer fetes, Christmas carol concerts, local companies
- Attending events to receive cheque donations
- Scouting out accessible local venues for events - such as Hubs, fundraising stalls, social groups and information days and supporting these events when required
- Keeping us up to date with activities in your community which may be of interest to our clients

So, if you have time to spare and are friendly, approachable and comfortable in a public-facing role please do get in touch. We offer an induction, training, expenses as well as support and supervision from the Volunteer Coordinator.





Struggling to read can be one of the biggest impacts of sight loss. It can be frustrating when it is difficult to read a book, a recipe, your post or your phone screen. But there are lots of tools to help you read independently again.

Magnification

The first step is to consider optical magnifiers. These come in a variety of strengths and styles, including ones that have built in lights or stands.



Some people have several different magnifiers for different purposes.

Perhaps one that fits in your pocket or your bag for when you're out and about. And one at home that can sit on your chest or on the tabletop, which lets you hold a book and turn the pages easily.

Magnifiers are simple to use, with a broad range to suit many different needs. They all do a good job at helping people to read.

But, the stronger the lens of a magnifier, the smaller the field of view becomes. This means that whilst the print is readable, you might only see a word or a couple of letters at a time. This can be frustrating.

If you need very strong magnification, we recommend using electronic magnification. These are devices which use a camera to look at the print, which is then viewed on a screen in very high contrast. These machines instantly turn the text into crisp black on white or black on yellow – or any other colour combination that suits your needs. A large screen means you can view more of the reading material at any one time.



Text to speech

If magnification isn't enough, then consider using a text to speech reader. These are suitable for people with severe sight loss, or any condition which leaves you without useful vision. These machines take an image of the text, and then read it aloud. The voice is automated, clear and easy to understand. There are simple buttons to pause, repeat text or adjust the speed. Some readers also have an electronic magnifier.

We know that this equipment can make a huge difference to daily life, but it can be very expensive. Some suppliers offer payment plans or installments. And your Sight Loss Advisor can sometimes recommend organisations to apply to for help with funding – although sadly Sight Support West of England nor Wiltshire Sight offer grants. We do occasionally have used equipment available in return for a suggested donation. Please do visit our resource centres to try out a range of equipment before buying the one that suits you best.

continued overleaf >>>

Reading Independently - continued

Using a smart phone or tablet for help reading independently

Smart phones or tablet computers can provide a way to read independently. There are applications available for both Android and Apple smartphones that use the phone camera to scan, electronically magnify, clean up text and even read text aloud. These apps are usually free. We would be happy to advise on which app might best meet your needs, so do get in touch.

If you don't yet use a smartphone or tablet, then please contact us to arrange to learn more. We have a special training course that we can take you through in your own time, teaching over the telephone or in person. We run through all the basics of using a smart phone or tablet computer. We will help you get used to using the magnification or text to speech apps. You'll learn to make and receive video calls and use everyday apps, such as those used for banking.

In some circumstances, we can lend you a tablet to learn with, so that you can see if this is something that will help you.

No matter what level of sight you have, there are ways in which we can help you to remain an independent reader.

If you would like to find out more about any of these solutions, please contact your local Sight Loss Advisor.



Summer Raffle



Your chance to support our work and win!

**1st
PRIZE
£500**

**2nd
PRIZE
£100**

**4 RUNNERS
UP PRIZES
£25
EACH**

Raffles are a brilliant way for us to raise funds. Last year our raffle made more than **£3,000** to be spent on our work supporting blind and partially sighted people across our area.

**What difference
could £500
make to you?
A weekend away?
A family party?
Or perhaps a new computer?**

**We have included a book of
tickets with your copy of Visible.
If you would like more tickets
to buy or sell, please contact
our Devizes office.**

Closing date – 21st September 2022.

Tickets must be received by this date to be included in our draw.

Raffles are regulated by the Gambling Commission. Sight Support West of England is registered with Wiltshire Council to operate this raffle under registration number LN/00017168. Full terms and conditions for our raffle are available on our website, or on request in large print.

If you or someone you know is losing their sight or living with sight loss, we can help.

Our Sight Loss Advisor team are here to help you adjust to living with sight loss, and to give you the tools you need to live your life the way you want to. Our support includes:

- Information, advice and guidance on living with sight loss, remaining independent and getting the most from life
- Demonstration and training on a range of useful resources to help with daily living, including making the best use of magnification and lighting aids to support reading and writing
- Advice and training in how to use smartphones, tablets and other devices to minimise the impact of your sight loss
- Social activities, sports clubs and opportunities to meet others living with sight loss

Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire

Call us: on 0117 3224885

[Email us: info@sightsupportwest.org.uk](mailto:info@sightsupportwest.org.uk)

The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

www.sightsupportwest.org.uk

Sight Support West of England is registered in England and Wales under charity number 1178384

Wiltshire and Swindon

Call us: 01380 723682

[Email us: info@wiltshiresight.org](mailto:info@wiltshiresight.org)

St. Lucy's Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, SN10 2AT

www.wiltshiresight.org

Wiltshire Sight is registered in England and Wales under charity number 1119462