

Helping working-age people with sight loss build friendships and confidence

Why our support matters

Working-age adults who are blind or partially sighted may face particular barriers around employment, relationships, parenting and socialising, while also finding that existing sight loss groups do not always reflect their interests or lifestyles.

Many existing social opportunities for people with sight loss take place during the day and are mainly attended by older people. This can leave younger and working-age adults with limited opportunities to meet others who understand their experiences.



“The Virtual Hub is a good place to talk about things in both a positive and real way, and hearing from others who are more accepting or adjusted is very helpful. I tried one of your social groups, but I don’t have anything in common with the older people who attend.”

In our 2025 service-user survey, working-age respondents highlighted the need for more opportunities to meet and socialise with other blind and partially sighted people. **57% said they would like more opportunities to connect, while 43% said maybe.**

Feedback particularly highlighted a preference for informal evening meet-ups and age-appropriate activities.

How we help

Sight Support West of England is developing a Working Age Service for blind and partially sighted adults aged 18–65.

The service will bring people together through informal evening face-to-face meet-ups, online Knowledge Exchange sessions and an ongoing WhatsApp community.

Online sessions will explore topics chosen by participants, such as employment, technology, confidence, relationships, travel and hobbies.

Our aim is to provide flexible opportunities for people to meet others with similar experiences, develop friendships, share practical ideas and build confidence.

The service is being developed with people who have lived experience of sight loss, ensuring activities reflect what working-age adults actually want and need.

What we hope to achieve

58–70 people reached during the first year

10–12 people expected to become regular face-to-face attendees

Three ways to take part: evening meet-ups, online sessions and a WhatsApp community

Shaped by lived experience

Our previous Virtual Hubs project provided valuable learning. While participants valued the opportunity to share experiences, feedback showed that open-ended online discussions could feel intimidating, particularly when people didn't know one another.

Some participants also felt that existing sight loss groups were more focused on providing support than creating opportunities to socialise and build friendships.

“It seems to be more of a support group, which I personally don’t need, I suppose I was hoping it would be a way for me to meet people and socialise.”

We have used this feedback, alongside input from our Lived Experience Advisory Panel, to develop a more flexible approach. Informal evening meet-ups will provide opportunities to build friendships, while topic-focused online sessions will give people a shared interest around which to connect.

Participants will continue to shape the service by suggesting topics, helping choose locations and developing future activities.

Funding our Working Age Service

Creating opportunities for friendship and peer support

For working-age people with sight loss, meeting others with similar experiences can make a significant difference to confidence and wellbeing.

Our service will provide opportunities to build friendships, share experiences and develop supportive relationships outside traditional daytime sight loss groups.

Sight Support staff will initially establish and support activities, with volunteers and participants increasingly helping to shape and organise meet-ups and other opportunities.

What funding supports

Funding will help us establish and develop the Working Age Service, including:

- **Face-to-face meet-ups:** creating informal, accessible opportunities to meet and socialise.
- **Online Knowledge Exchange sessions:** bringing people together around topics that matter to them.
- **Staff and volunteer support:** organising activities, welcoming participants and helping groups develop.
- **Accessible venues and travel:** making it easier for people to take part.
- **Promotion and outreach:** reaching working-age people who may not currently access sight loss support.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** learning from participants and adapting the service as it develops.

The cost of delivering our service

The annual cost of our Working Age Service is approximately **£15,398**, covering staff time, volunteer support, accessible activities, venues and the other costs involved in establishing and delivering the service. We welcome grants of all sizes towards the full service or contributions towards its delivery.

Why your support matters

For someone experiencing sight loss during their working life, having opportunities to meet others who understand can help reduce isolation and build confidence.

The service will give people space to share experiences, develop friendships and support one another through challenges that can be difficult to discuss with people who have not experienced sight loss themselves.

By involving participants in shaping future activities, we hope to develop lasting opportunities for peer support that continue beyond individual sessions.

Our aim is to help working-age people with sight loss build friendships, confidence and a stronger sense of belonging.

To find out more about supporting our Working Age Service, please contact our [Fundraising Team](#)

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