



**Devon in Sight**

Your local sight loss charity



LOTTERY FUNDED

# Newsletter

Autumn 2016 Issue 15



**Devon in Sight welcomes its youngest visitor to the Resource Centre in Topsham**

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Grahame Flynn.

Devon in Sight is a member of...



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# A Message from the Chair of Trustees

by Chris Sumner

*“The word ‘business’ is not a dirty word!”*



**My second year as Chairman of Devon in Sight has proved to be a time of challenge, with the recognition that our charity needs to move forward and review its role in providing services to people affected by sight loss in Devon.**

Changes in funding streams and patterns of giving, together with the present financial situation in the country, mean that we, as your Trustees and the Management Team, have had to look closely at our role and at what the future will bring – a process that enables us now to announce some exciting news.

The word “charity” evokes many expectations in people needing access to support, and in the general public. Many still see a Charity as an organisation that gives at no cost to those who benefit. However, unless Charities examine their purpose, financial standing and operation in a businesslike way, they will not survive. At this time many charities in the county live from month to month, and it is almost accepted that many work on less than three months’ worth of financial reserves!

Don’t panic. I am happy to say that Devon in Sight does not fall into this category, due to reserves and capital assets that are well managed. This is where the word ‘business’ comes into play, and the review of our position in supporting people with sight loss is a major part of it. I make no apology when I use the word ‘business’. It is not a dirty word, it is a crucial and essential part of our future, a way of operation that will protect what we have, and secure our future by making full and well-directed use of future income. To be attractive to major grant-making bodies we must be professional and ethical. This will also make us more approachable to colleagues in the Sight Loss Sector, for unless we all start working together, pool resources, stop duplicating, and share costs, we will see the demise of many Sight Charities in the near future.

We also have the increasing challenge of growth in need for services, because of increasing age related sight issues. This is a particular issue in Devon with high inward migration through retirement and people seeking a better quality of life. For the last year Devon in Sight has been focusing on ‘investing for growth’, to help ensure it is putting the foundations in place to extend and enhance its services to support the increasing number of people with sight loss across Devon.

And now to the exciting news (at last, you may be thinking!). I am delighted to announce that we have been awarded £420,000 from the BIG Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. I would like to praise the work of Julian and Grahame in preparing our successful application. The award will be phased over four years to help establish our new service, and one challenge facing us is to ensure we find ourselves financially sound at the end of this time, in order to be able to maintain it. The BIG Lottery Award will enable us to develop four Community Sight Loss Hubs around Devon, that can for the first time take us out into new areas of the county, working with a number of partners. We will be able to offer a realistic ‘Signposting’ service, as well as develop with partners a clearer Eye Health and Sight Loss Pathway for people in the area affected by sight loss. The project is described in more detail on page 10.

This new road that Devon in Sight is travelling must be based in Community Partnership working. No one can work alone any more, and this is an opportunity for the sight loss sector to get on board with us and share resources, share personnel even, to ensure that service delivery to the sight loss community is increased and developed further. There is plenty of work yet to be done and we need your support.

# Chief Executive's Update

by Grahame Flynn

*“Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it”*

Edmund Burke  
(1729 – 1797)



I recently asked Elizabeth Twining our Membership Secretary to dig into Devon in Sight's archives and provide me with a summary of key events for the last ninety-one years! I wanted to get a clearer understanding of how our charity has evolved over the years and responded to change.

When I read Elizabeth's document summarising annual reports since the 1920s I was reminded of a quote by the British statesman, parliamentary orator and political thinker Edmund Burke; *“Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it”*

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I will begin.

Over its more than 90 year history Devon in Sight, formerly the Devon County Association for the Blind (DCAB), has changed and developed, responding to the needs of blind people and the social, political and financial environment.

It was founded, like many other local societies for the blind, soon after the end of World War 1. There was an influx of men blinded as a result of their

war service, which prompted the Blind Persons Act of 1920. This laid a duty of care for blind people on local councils. Many, including Devon, discharged this duty by encouraging the formation of local societies and supported them financially.

The objects of DCAB in those early years included maintaining the register of blind people, providing a 'visitation service', distributing financial assistance and helping to arrange education, training and employment. Demand peaked during World War 2 when the Association was supporting evacuees as well as local people.

After the war however there was an enormous change. Following the National Assistance Act in 1948, Devon County Council assumed direct responsibility for the welfare of blind people. Most of the staff and functions of DCAB transferred to the County Council, and the Association's activities were reduced to serving on committees and administering voluntary funds.

Since 1948 DCAB services have started, changed and closed – and sometimes reappeared. From 1951 there was a residential home, Andrew House. In the 1970s it changed its focus to operate as a holiday hotel and respite centre, but finally closed in 1980.

During the 1970s there was an active programme of 'surgeries' in North Devon and other areas. Holidays, craft competitions, blind clubs and other social activities were also supported as funds permitted. Visiting services have come and gone several times, largely in response to available funds. In 1983-84 the annual report commented that the Voluntary Visiting Service was 'alive, but only just'.

DCAB acquired its own premises in 1996 when it bought the former Station Master's House at Topsham. The adjacent Old Ticket Office was added in 2008, providing space for the current Resource Centre. The two buildings were knocked together and are now known as Station House. 2008 also saw the introduction of the current Volunteer Visiting Service as a pilot.

Our name change to **Devon in Sight** in 2010 was clearly an acknowledgment that our services were not just for blind people but those at the point of diagnosis and with any degree of sight loss.

**Early intervention and teaching new skills are now a key part of our work to maximise people's independence, wellbeing and choice.**

In 2015 we refurbished the Resource Centre and the Consultation Rooms; expanding the range of equipment and training to help people adjust to their sight loss. This was all part of our vision to become a **'centre of excellence'** for people with sight loss in Devon.



Three main factors have shaped DCAB's activities and continue to do so – population change, with increasing numbers of older people for whom sight loss is just one of their problems; the ever-expanding range of products and services which may help people with sight loss; and fluctuating finances, often as a result of the national economic situation.

The annual report for 1948-49 noted that 'the raising of voluntary funds, at a time when the tendency is to imagine that everything is, or should be, provided by the state, is no easy matter'. That could have been repeated every year since. A challenge yet to be surmounted is the size of the county with its poor transport links – one to be tackled in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Our work over the last three years has been to take Devon in Sight into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, responding to national learning and sight loss strategies, to work with; rather than compete with other charities. This has all been against a backdrop of falling donations and legacies, increasing competition for trust and grant funding and massive cuts to Government funding. Our aging population means that demand for sight loss services will continue to rise at a dramatic rate.

Our Business Manager Julian Garner and I have been supported by the Trustees to focus our attention on gathering information, redesigning our services, and spending many months on a funding bid to the **BIG Lottery Reaching Communities Fund**.

We have responded to the comments that people make through our Voting Membership, Advisory Group and customer feedback. I am fortunate to have met huge numbers of people living with sight loss at VI Social Clubs and through Action for Blind People's Living with Sight Loss Course where I have been privileged to speak.

We worked closely on the funding bid with our friends in the Sensory Team, Action for Blind People, Guide Dogs, Blind Veterans UK, Sense, NHS England, the Local Optical Committee and many more. This was no mean feat.



**The good news is that following a two stage process we have been successful. As a result of the funding we will shortly be able to expand our services with a new Community Support Service to more of the county.** This has been our strategic aim for many years. Julian will be giving a brief overview of the project in the coming pages.

One thing is clear. If Devon in Sight is going to survive to celebrate its centenary in 2025 it needs to continue to respond to the challenges of modern times with a collaborative approach to its work and be cost effective. In writing this I am reminded of another Edmund Burke quote...

***"We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature, and the means perhaps of its conservation"***.

# Introducing our new Community Support Service

by Julian Garner (Business Development Manager)

*“Devon in Sight’s new  
Community Support  
Service gets the thumbs  
up from the BIG Lottery!”*



**Devon in Sight is launching a new Community Support Service which will increase the independence, wellbeing and choice of people with sight loss across much of Devon.**

The new Community Support Service will take over from the Volunteer Visiting Service which we have been running in Mid Devon and Torbay for the last eight years. We will still be recruiting volunteers to help people with tasks at home, and to help people get out and about, but we will also be extending the scope of the service to include a wider range of advice and support.

The new service is in direct response to the national **‘Seeing it My Way Framework’** which is an initiative to ensure that every blind and partially sighted person, regardless of age, ethnicity, extent of sight loss, other disabilities, or location across the UK, has access to the same range of information and support.

We are also delighted to be extending the service to other parts of Devon; once we have appointed staff the new service will be available in East Devon, Mid Devon, West Devon and Torbay.

In each area a **Community Support Worker** will work with people with sight loss to identify a whole range of advice and support – not just from Devon in Sight but from a number of charities and partner organisations.

The starting point will be our new **‘Sight Loss MOT’** which will identify what additional support might be helpful – particularly if you have been newly diagnosed with sight loss, or if your condition and support needs have changed.

We will also be able to check that you have the information you need about your sight condition, that you are receiving allowances and entitlements through registering as being sight impaired, and have the opportunity to chat to someone about the emotional impact of living with sight loss.

Our Community Support Workers will also recruit, train and support a group of volunteers in each area who will be able to offer practical support. Sometimes a volunteer will offer time-limited support to help you use a new piece of equipment, carry out a home safety check, accompany you to a local sports or leisure group in your community, or to help you get used to using a community transport service.

Some of you will have been to our Resource Centre in Topsham to look at, or buy, a piece of equipment, or to receive training. **As part of the service we will be offering appointments at the new ‘Sight Loss Hubs’ in community locations in East Devon, Mid Devon, West Devon and Torbay** to make it easier for you to see one of our Sight Loss Advisers. We will keep you posted on when and where these clinics will be taking place.

We will be working with partner organisations to arrange other groups and advice sessions at these Sight Loss Hubs; including Action for Blind People, the RNIB, the Macular Society, Guide Dogs, Blind Veterans UK, Moorvision, Action on Hearing Loss, SENSE for Deafblind people, and the local authority Sensory Team.

Alongside offering support to individuals, we will also be **raising awareness in the community** of the importance of maintaining eye health, and the support which is available to people if they do start to experience sight loss. One of the key messages is that – even if people have experienced sight loss - all of us should be having an eye test at least every two years as regular eye tests can provide an early indication of problems and can also identify possible health issues such as diabetes.

Many towns across Devon have **Blind and Visually Impaired (VI) Clubs** sometimes known as Local Groups which provide local support and activities. One of the challenges facing many local groups is encouraging new membership or getting people to lead the groups. We hope to build on our existing relationships to support these groups more. Providing peer support for younger people is also a challenge that we hope to address.

Each area will have a **Sight Loss Reference Group** to give voice to local stakeholders in an effort to influence policy and commissioning.

**Ultimately, we hope to work with our partners to help as many people affected by sight loss to maximise their independence, wellbeing and choice.**

*“This new service is likely to be a best-practice model of service delivery which should promote meaningful collaboration among partner organisations. Thank you for taking the lead in this impressive way. I hope that your project is successful and we look forward to working together.”*

**Nick Caplin, Chief Executive Officer, Blind Veterans UK**

The new Community Support Service will cost a total of £641,000 over four years and it has only been possible to launch the service with a major grant from the BIG Lottery Fund of £420,000.

**We still need to raise a further £221,000 over the next four years, so we would greatly value your support. If you have benefited from using one of our free services why not pass it on? By making a donation to Devon in Sight you will help us meet our funding needs and enable someone else to benefit from our service.**

# Community Support Service ‘Community Sight Loss Hub’ Model

## Community-based Support:

- Devon in Sight Community Support Service staff and volunteers **supporting clients** to improve independence and wellbeing.
- Support & training for our **volunteers and community volunteers** from partner organisations.

## Devon in Sight - Assessment and Training:

- **Information, advice and signposting.**
- **‘Sight Loss MOT’**
- **Equipment and training** to help people adjust to their sight loss.



## Community Engagement:

- **Peer Support** by supporting local VI and Macular Society Groups and Talking Newspapers.
- **Community Engagement** Raising awareness of Eye Health and Sight Loss in local communities.
- Forming a **Sight Loss Reference Group** to influence policy and commissioning.

## Partnership Services & Clinics:

- Information, training and support from Statutory Organisations (such as the Sensory Teams), other sight loss and community based charities.
- Emotional Support
- NHS/Optima Low Vision Clinics
- Support for work and volunteering
- Screening for hearing loss

# News in Brief

## Exeter Bus Station Development

Planning permission has been granted for the new Exeter Bus Station and Leisure Complex. The views of people with sight loss and other disabilities were considered in the planning process. Guide dog user and former Devon in Sight Trustee Marilyn Lant has been an active participant in meetings.



Grahame Flynn said, "We supplied the architects with some best practice guidelines and contributed to the planning process. It is very gratifying that some of the initial ideas have been changed as a result of a co-ordinated approach by a number of community groups including Devon in Sight".

## Topsham Railway Crossing Victory

Grahame was actively involved in a local campaign to make the small railway crossing next to Topsham Surgery more accessible. He was very diplomatic in a public meeting where he struck the fine balance between Railtrack's safety concerns for train passengers and pedestrians and local concerns regarding accessibility for the elderly. A new crossing is now in situ. Bravo Grahame!



## Paignton Library Vision Zone

Daily Living Aid supplier Optelec hosted an event at Paignton Library on Friday 29 July showcasing equipment, resources and services for people with sight loss. Nanette Bolton and Jennie Benham represented Devon in Sight at the event.



## Eye Health Week Event in Paignton draws the crowds

Torbay Sensory Team hosted a Visual Loss Awareness Day at the Jasmyn House Sight and Hearing Information Centre in Paignton on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> September.

The event was part of **National Eye Health Week** and brought together a number of exhibitors including the Sensory Team, Disability Information Services, Jasmyn House Technology Team, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Action for Blind People and local groups and clubs.

Devon in Sight's Nanette Bolton assisted by Resource Centre Volunteer Ely Moseley exhibited at the event. Nanette gave two workshops during the day on the specialist training she undertakes for people with central vision loss called 'New Skills for Seeing'.



Ely Moseley (left) and Nanette Bolton (right) at Jasmyn House, Paignton.

For more news stories please visit [www.devoninsight.org.uk](http://www.devoninsight.org.uk)

# Exeter Chiefs' Charity supports Devon in Sight



The Exeter Foundation is a 'civic trust' that was born out of the desire of the Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club and a group of local Exeter businessmen to create a focus for the future of the city and its surroundings, for the benefit of all citizens.

The Foundation has two funding sources. The first is designated funds that are raised at the Exeter Chiefs match day games via bucket collections in the grounds and car parking fees. There are 20 charities that assist in co-ordinating and collecting all the monies for the season which are then shared across all those who assisted in the collections.

The second is un-designated funds. This encompasses all funds that are raised by general donations, fundraising by the public and the Foundation holding its own events. The money is then available for both designated charities and local organisations and projects to apply for assistance with capital funding of local projects.

**We were delighted that Devon in Sight was made a designated charity by the Exeter Foundation in 2015.**

On Saturday 28th November 2015 thirty Devon in Sight volunteers attended the Exeter Chiefs V Harlequins rugby match to make a bucket collection for The Exeter Foundation.

Grahame Flynn our CEO said, *"The weather conditions on that cold and wet November afternoon were atrocious but there really was a fantastic team spirit. We knew that it would be many months before we would hear about how much money had been raised"*.

**On Saturday 27th August 2016 the Exeter Chiefs held their 2016 Season Launch Dinner at Sandy Park Stadium. Grahame and our Office Manager Jennie Benham were pleased to represent Devon in Sight at the event.**

The evening celebrated the achievements of the Foundation with the presentation of cheques to a number of organisations including Devon in Sight. Tony Rowe OBE Chairman of the Foundation said, *"This evening we will be championing the hard work of the organisations involved with the Foundation last season with our annual cheque giving"*. **Tony presented Grahame with a cheque for £2050.**

Grahame said, *"We were delighted to be supported by the Foundation last year and I am thrilled to announce that we have been made a designated charity for a second year."*

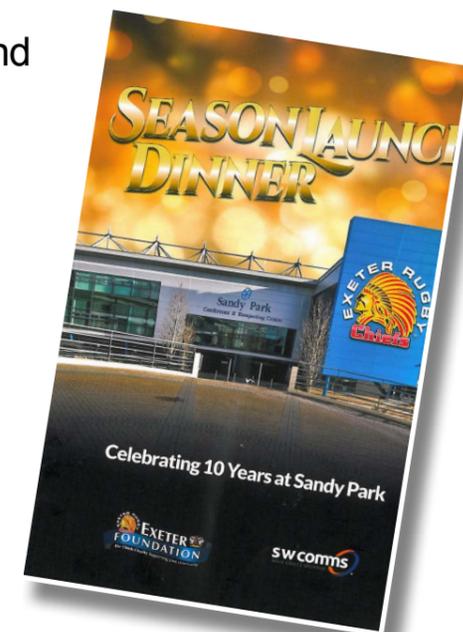


**Left to right:** Tony Rowe, Grahame Flynn (CEO), Jennie Benham and guest speaker, former England and Bath rugby player, David Flatman.

**The next Bucket Collection at Sandy Park it is being held on Saturday 11th February 2017. If you would like to volunteer please contact Jennie.**

**Jennie Benham  
Office Manager**

**01392 878 802  
jennie@devoninsight.org.uk**



# Teignmouth Garden Project

For most of the last decade, an early Victorian walled garden, within the grounds of Teignmouth Community School, lay untouched and neglected. Now, with the help of Foresight Gardening Enterprises, a local community group set up to help visually impaired people, the garden has been cleared.

All the overgrown vegetation has gone and the Foresight team are currently developing a design specification which will restore the garden to its former glory.

**Foresight are encouraging visually impaired people, who like gardening or would like to try gardening for the first time, to get involved.**

Clive Webb, who set up the project, and who is partially sighted himself, said, *“We know that the only thing that holds visually impaired people back is their lack of opportunity. This is a great chance for visually impaired people to get involved at the design stage, and to help us create a major gardening attraction for the local community and those visiting the area”.*

When completed the walled garden will become an accessible, outdoor exhibition space with heritage planting and displays about the history of the site. Clive added, *“Our aim is for a visitor attraction which is fully maintained by visually impaired people. A place where they can volunteer or even train for a career in horticulture”.*

**For more details or to get involved with the project, please see the volunteer page on their website and download an application form.**

Contact: Clive Webb

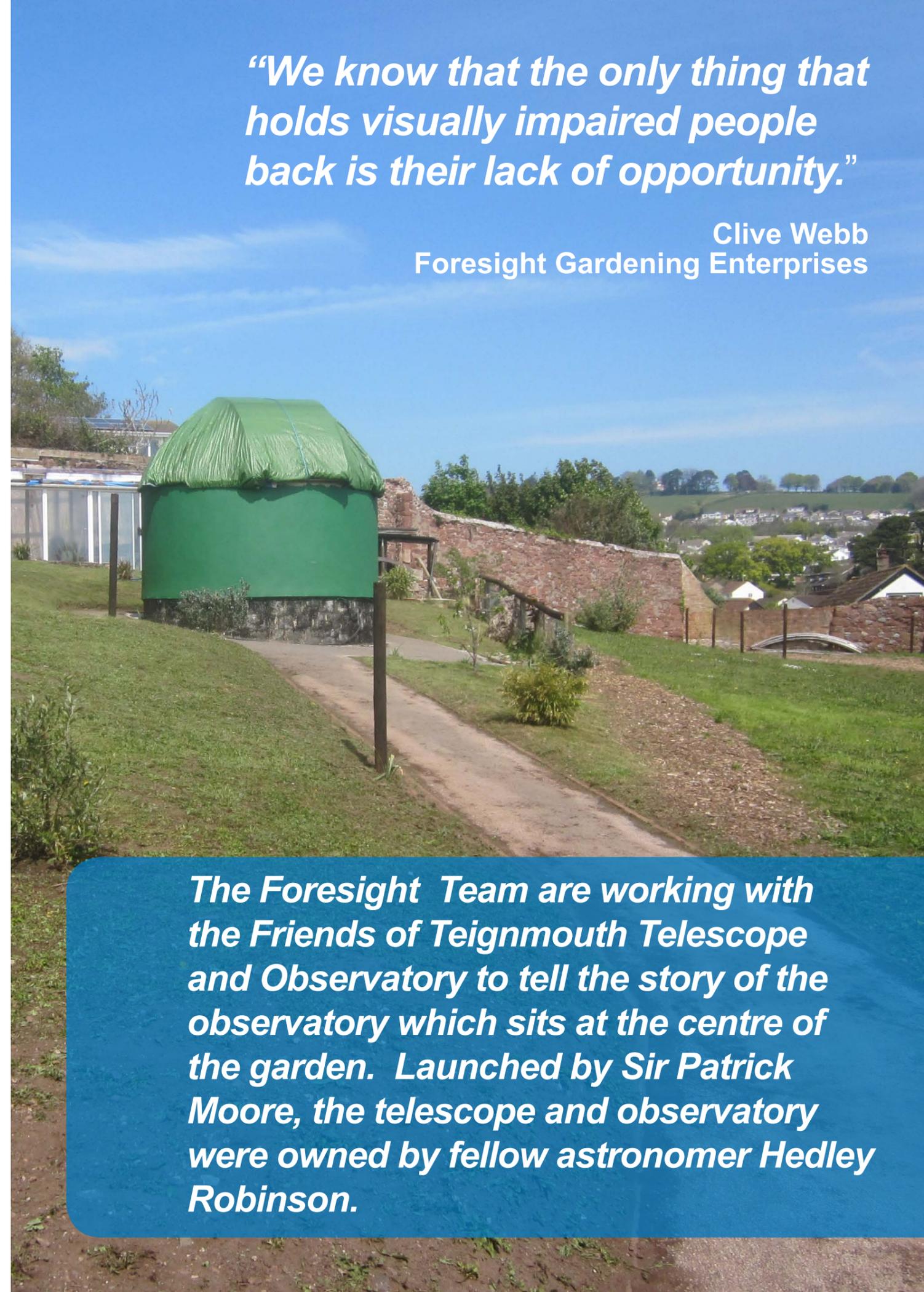
**Tel: 01803 290 704**

**[www.foresightgardening.co.uk](http://www.foresightgardening.co.uk)**



*“We know that the only thing that holds visually impaired people back is their lack of opportunity.”*

Clive Webb  
Foresight Gardening Enterprises



*The Foresight Team are working with the Friends of Teignmouth Telescope and Observatory to tell the story of the observatory which sits at the centre of the garden. Launched by Sir Patrick Moore, the telescope and observatory were owned by fellow astronomer Hedley Robinson.*

# Topsham Resource Centre

**Our Resource Centre offers a range of equipment and training to help people to adjust to their sight loss.**

**In order to provide you with the best possible service you need to make an appointment to attend our Resource Centre.**

During your consultation our Sight Loss Adviser will assess your needs and try to provide you with solutions. We will not provide any equipment without a consultation to ensure that it is the right equipment for your condition.

A number of our services are provided in partnership with other organisations including Optima Low Vision Services Ltd., the Sensory Teams in Devon and Torbay, Action for Blind People and Guide Dogs for the Blind.

**We offer appointments between 10 am and 3pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Specialist training sessions with partner agencies are held on most Mondays and Fridays.**

**To make an appointment to visit our Resource Centre please ring:**

**01392 876 666**



**In order to provide you with the best possible service you need to make an appointment to attend our Resource Centre.**

# Resource Centre Services:

## Equipment includes:

- Task Lighting
- Optical Magnifiers
- Electronic Magnifiers
- Clocks & watches
- Kitchen equipment
- Mobiles & Telephones
- Eye shields
- Large Print Stationery

## Other services include:

- Information & Support
- Low Vision Clinics
- Sensory Team Consultations
- 'New Skills for Seeing' Training
- Employment Hub
- Assistive Technology
- 'Online Today'
- Low Vision Drop-in Days
- Guide Dogs 'MyGuide' Training





# We welcome our youngest visitor to the Topsham Resource Centre

by Nanette Bolton (Sight Loss Adviser)

**On Wednesday 17th August we welcomed eight year old Georgia White; her mother Jenny and 5 year old brother Olly to our Topsham Resource Centre.**

They had already met me at the Vision Zone Event at Paignton Library in July, where Georgia was given an initial short assessment and they learnt more about Devon in Sight.

Georgia is a bright, bubbly, pretty young lady who goes to mainstream school and has embraced technology with ease despite being severely visually impaired. She is confident in using her Tablet, Braille and Embosser but wanted some more help with reading.

Our whole range of Magnifiers was demonstrated to her and we found that a mini electronic magnifier seemed especially suitable for small hands and would enable her to read books in bed. She was also signposted to the Calibre Young Readers Library for Talking Books. We all played with the colour detector comparing shades of our suntans! A small voice recorder to store messages and the audible football also brought a smile to the children's faces.

We wish Georgia all the best for the future and hope that she will visit our Resource Centre again to report on her progress.

**To make an appointment with our Sight Loss Adviser please ring our Topsham Resource Centre on:**

**01392 876 666**

# 'New Skills for Seeing' appointments are available in Topsham and Paignton

'New Skills for Seeing' training can help people with central vision loss make the most of their remaining peripheral vision. Devon in Sight offers this specialist service at our Resource Centre in Topsham and also at the Jasmyrn House Community Hub in Paignton.

Our team can help you learn about:

- How Lighting can help you
- How to use Magnification properly
- Eccentric Viewing to help with recognising faces and reading
- Steady Eye Technique to improve reading speed

Practising these skills can help you with daily activities like reading, watching television, hobbies, personal care and getting about. People often say that they feel more confident and have more control over their lives.

To book an appointment please ring our Topsham Resource Centre on:

**01392 876 666**

This service is provided in partnership with...



# Low Vision Drop-in Day

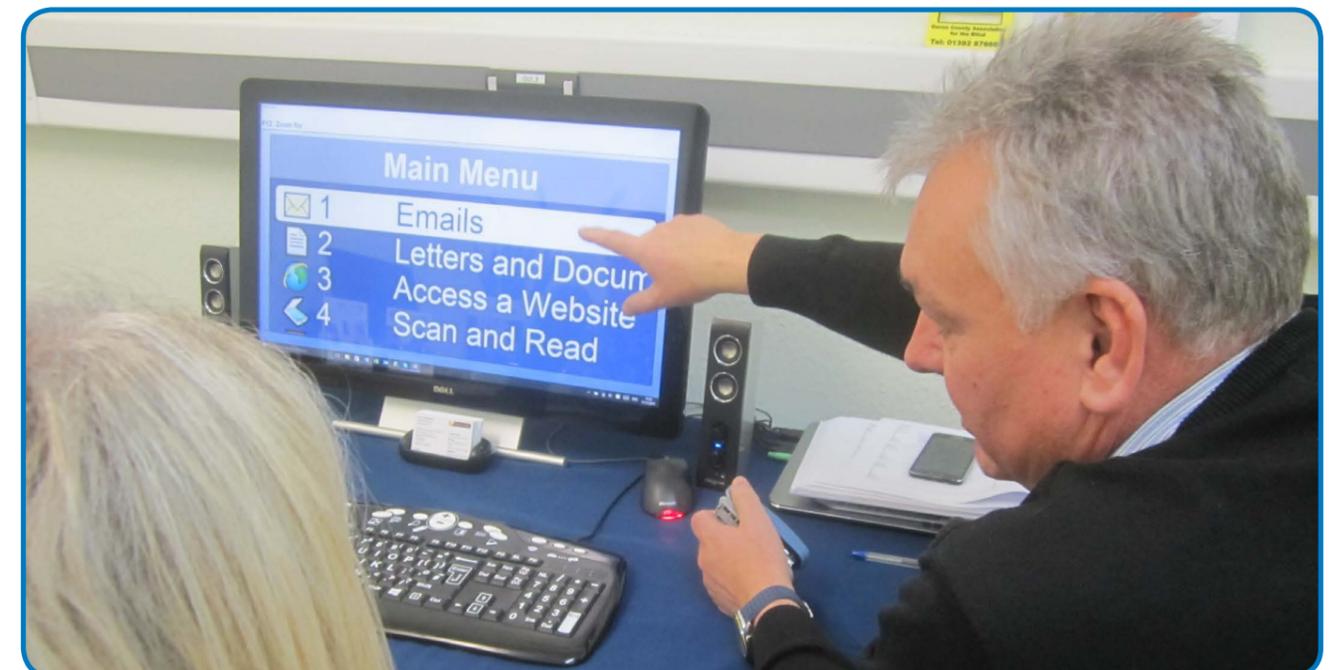
*"Simple solutions for people with sight loss"*

Devon in Sight is dedicated to bringing you the latest innovations in technology. We work closely with our suppliers to update the products available through our Resource Centre.

Our last Low Vision Drop-in Day for 2016 is on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November at the Resource Centre between 10am - 2.30pm.

Come along and explore the latest products and technologies for blind or partially sighted people from Dolphin, Enhanced Vision and Calibre Audio Library. Staff from these companies will be on hand to demonstrate the equipment.

Clients are seen on a first come first served basis. Please note that our Adviser will not be available to deal with Lighting and Magnifier Consultations whilst hosting this event.



# Training at Devon in Sight

Devon in Sight works in partnership with Action for Blind People to provide FREE training. Courses are available for people seeking to move into employment, understand the benefits of modern technology (Assistive Technology) and use the internet.

## Employment Hub

Supporting visually impaired job seekers to use computers for a range of employment specific tasks. This includes CV writing, covering letters, job applications and disability disclosure statements together with an ongoing review of their action plans. Students become more familiar and confident in using computers for this purpose, in a friendly and supportive environment.

## Assistive Technology

Advisers provide advice and training on the use of specialist Assistive Technology such as screen magnifiers, screen readers and speech software. We can also demonstrate the accessibility features already built-in to many computers, tablets and mobile phones, enabling you to either magnify what is on the screen or have the computer or phone read it to you.

## Online Today

We will help you realise the benefits of being online. Demonstrating devices like iPads, tablets, E-readers and smartphones. Online Today is for you if you have little or no experience of using the internet, or if your skills need updating and you'd like to find out more.

**The next 'Online Today' session is taking place at Devon in Sight on Friday 16th December 2016**

To book places on any of this training please contact Action for Blind People on:

**01392 458 060**



**Action for blind people**

Part of **RNIB** Group



*“Many computers and smart phones have built in features for people with sight loss...we can help you understand them”*

Darren Walker - Assistive Technology Coordinator

Action for Blind People

# Volunteer Recruitment

**Our new Community Support Service will expand the opportunities for volunteering to more areas of Devon.**

**Our volunteers help us provide a unique combination of complementary skills and expertise to reach and support an ever increasing number of blind and partially sighted people.**

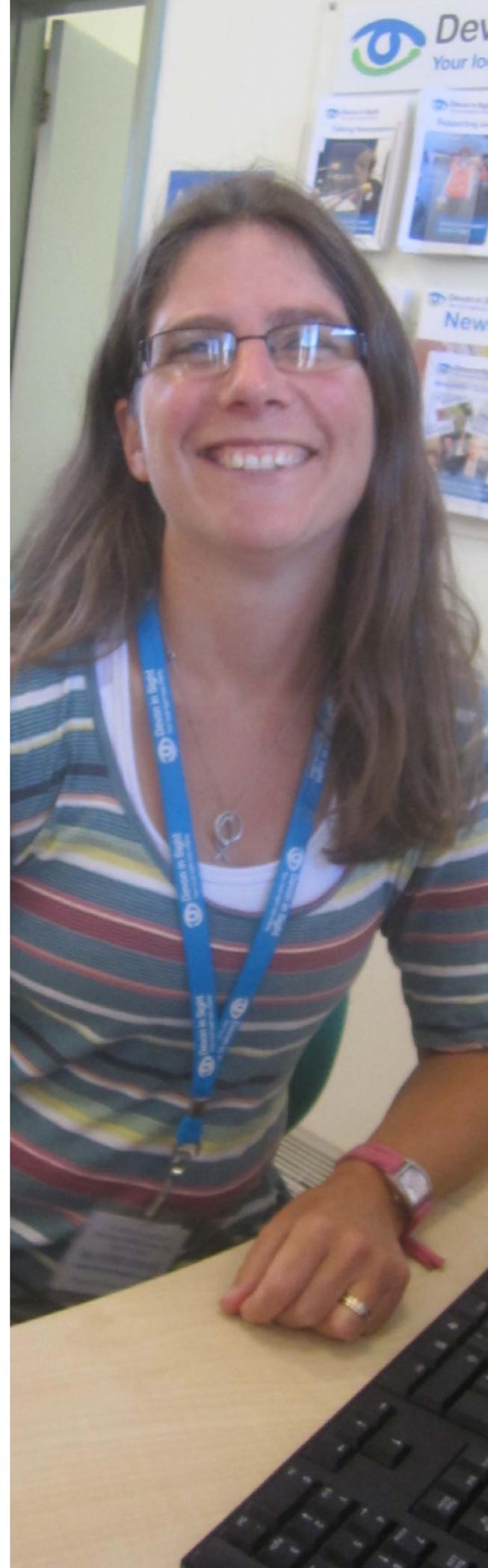
- Could you assist the Community Support Worker by providing a friendly welcome at one of our new Community Sight Loss Hubs?
- Would you like to work with our clients to help them identify ways to stay safe at home, access equipment and training, improve their Health and Wellbeing or get out and about?
- Would you like to receive training to help people with central vision loss make the most of their remaining peripheral vision?
- Would you like to support our Sight Loss Adviser at our Topsham Resource Centre?
- Would you like to join one of the new Sight Loss Reference Groups?
- Are you interested in Community Fund raising?

**All our volunteers are police checked and referenced and all receive Visual Awareness and Sighted Guiding Training at the outset of their volunteering.**

**Volunteers will be required to undertake training about Confidentiality, Safeguarding and Boundaries.**

**To learn more about volunteering please ring Jennie Benham our Office Manager on:**

**01392 878 802**  
[jennie@devoninsight.org.uk](mailto:jennie@devoninsight.org.uk)



# Volunteer Story

**Elly Moseley has been volunteering in our Topsham Resource Centre since December 2015.**

In a recent email to Nanette Bolton our Sight Loss Adviser, Elly expressed what volunteering means to her.

*"I wanted to let you know what helping out at Devon in Sight means to me.*

*I really enjoy coming, being me (rather than a mum) and doing something completely different that is also useful and engages my brain in a different way.*

*I like coming and being part of something and having a chat with the team - basically I get a lot out of it too!*

*Volunteering rather than working means I can do just term time and suitable hours and without the pressure. I'm fortunate enough that at the moment I'm in a position which allows me to do this rather than it being all about money".*

**Devon in Sight relies on the goodwill of its volunteers to provide many of its services.**

**If you would like to know more about volunteering please contact us.**

# Volunteer Visiting Service - Time for change

*“Our existing Volunteer Visiting Service clients will be given the opportunity to pilot our new Community Support Service”*



**For a number of months our current Volunteer Visiting Service has been closed to new referrals. The lack of funding for ‘befriending’ services put us seriously at risk of closure.**

The fact that we have secured some funding for a **new Community Support Service** is fantastic news but we will still need to find money from other sources to make our services sustainable in the long term.

Our existing Volunteer Visiting Service clients and volunteers will continue to receive support but we will be offering everyone the opportunity to pilot our new Community Support Service. Once everyone has transitioned to the new service the old Volunteer Visiting Service will be closed.

The new service is in direct response to the **UK Vision Strategy - ‘Seeing it My Way Framework’** which is an initiative to ensure that every blind and partially sighted person, regardless of age, ethnicity, extent of sight loss, other disabilities, or location across the UK, has access to the same range of information and support.

**‘Seeing it my Way’ works to ensure that blind and partially sighted people can access the support and information services needed for independent living.**

The outcomes of ‘Seeing it my Way’, which are all equal in value, are as follows:

## **That people with sight loss:**

- understand their eye condition and the registration process
- have someone to talk to
- can look after themselves, their health, their home and their family
- receive statutory benefits and information and support that they need
- can make the best use of the sight they have
- can access information making the most of the advantages that technology brings
- can get out and about
- have the tools, skills and confidence to communicate
- have equal access to education and lifelong learning
- can work and volunteer.

This holistic approach responds to the needs identified by visually impaired people as the key factors that make a difference to their lives.

Our limited resources must be used effectively and efficiently. The Devon in Sight team will undertake a **Sight Loss MOT** to help us identify the support our clients already have, and equipment and training that can help.

In the mean time I continue to offer telephone support and advice to existing clients and volunteers to address any pressing issues. I normally work on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you leave me a message I will ring you back as soon as I can.

**Helen Head**  
**Volunteer Visiting Service Co-ordinator**

**07580 787 308**  
[helen@devoninsight.org.uk](mailto:helen@devoninsight.org.uk)

# Health Matters:Smoking

by Elizabeth Twining

**Smokers double their risk of developing Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), one of the UK's leading causes of sight loss.**

## The facts

Smoking doubles your chances of losing your sight:

- Smoking causes harm to the tissues of the eye. Research has confirmed the harmful effects of smoking on eyesight, particularly in the development of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) - one of the UK's leading causes of sight loss - and cataracts.
- Smokers double their risk of developing AMD, and tend to develop it earlier than non-smokers. Treatment options for AMD are limited. Stopping smoking can reduce the risk of macular degeneration developing.
- Smoking is linked to the development of cataracts, and although they are treatable and therefore do not lead to blindness, they remain a major cause of sight loss in the UK.
- Smoking can make diabetes related sight problems worse.
- Smoking increases free radicals, which accelerate ageing, and alter the body's ability to absorb or extract necessary vitamins and minerals from food.
- Passive smoking is almost as harmful as smoking yourself.

**Local stop smoking services are free, friendly and can massively boost your chances of quitting for good.**

Did you know that wherever you live in the UK, you have easy access to a free service proven to help you stop smoking?

Local stop smoking services staffed by expert advisers provide a range of proven methods to help you quit. They will give you accurate information and advice and give you professional support during the first few months of stopping smoking. A combination of support and treatment is proven to give you the best chance of stopping smoking. They also make it easy and affordable for you to get stop smoking treatments.



*“The majority of people who see an adviser will get through the first month after quitting without smoking a cigarette. And overall, you’re up to four times more likely to stop smoking for good if you receive help from an NHS Stop Smoking Service.”*

**Jennifer Percival (Stop Smoking Adviser Trainer)**

## How to contact a stop smoking adviser

Your GP can refer you, or you can phone your local stop smoking service to make an appointment with an adviser.

**The NHS Smokefree website is full of tools and advice to help you quit and stay smoke free.**

**[www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/support](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/support)**

**Call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044**



# Membership Matters

by Elizabeth Twining (Membership Secretary)

*“Providing the best possible service for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.*



**Devon in Sight has reached a crossroads. Over the past year the Trustees and Management Team have been evaluating what we do and reviewing options for providing the best possible service for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Many of the ideas are not new – indeed similar services have often been tried in the past but have proved too expensive to support. Factors influencing the plans include population trends, with more older people needing our support; the size of the county coupled with poor transport links; financial constraints, which have become more severe since the 2008

recession; and the ever wider range of equipment, training and support, especially in information technology, that can benefit people coping with sight loss. Everything we do must be professional, tailored to individual needs, easy to reach and, crucially, financially sustainable.

The plan that has emerged is to establish a number of hubs around the county, bringing services to people near to where they live. These hubs will be in existing community buildings. They will offer training and support services, including a home visiting service, as well as equipment assessments, and advice.

We have received a substantial grant for the BIG Lottery Fund to help support the project for the first four years, during which time we will look for additional funding from both voluntary and statutory sources. In particular we hope to take advantage of changes in the way public spending is managed, such as the commissioning system in the NHS.

## **The AGM - your questions welcome**

This year's Annual General Meeting will focus on this new plan. We hope that many of you will come to find out more and give us your feedback. We are also introducing proxy voting to enable more members to take part.

**The AGM will be held at St Matthias Church Hall Torbay on 30<sup>th</sup> November.** Details of the venue and how to get there are enclosed in this newsletter. Tea and biscuits will be served on arrival and after the formal session.

## **Voting Membership**

All are welcome at the AGM, but to speak or vote you need to be registered as a Voting Member. Becoming a Voting Member is straightforward - there is a simple form to complete and return. Just let us know that you would like one and we will post or email it to you.

You can also register when visiting us in Topsham or at any event, including at the AGM itself.

I can also register you as a Voting Member over the telephone when I am at Station House on a Thursday.

## **Open Days at Topsham**

Feedback from the last AGM suggested that while the exhibition at the AGM can be interesting, many people would appreciate having more time and space to talk to the exhibitors and examine the equipment. So this year instead of an exhibition at the AGM we started a series of Open Days at our Topsham office and across the county. Each Open Day features up to three exhibitors, and the opportunity to meet our Sight Loss Adviser. The ones held so far have been very well attended and we plan to continue this pattern. There will be similar events at the proposed hubs in future. This however means that there will not be an exhibition at this year's AGM.

**Elizabeth Twining**  
Membership Secretary

**01392 878 801**  
[membership@devoninsight.org.uk](mailto:membership@devoninsight.org.uk)

**Elizabeth normally volunteers on Thursdays.**

# Supporting Us

If you have benefited from using one of our free services why not pass it on? By making a donation to Devon in Sight you will help us meet our funding needs and enable someone else to benefit from our service.

We are a small charity trying to help some of the estimated 30,000 people with sight loss in Devon.

We can only do what we do with your ongoing support; whether that is by giving your time as a volunteer, becoming a Voting Member, making a donation, fundraising for us, including a legacy in your will or, if you are a local business, becoming one of our corporate partners.

*giftaid it*

If you are a tax payer we can claim back the tax on your donation through the Gift Aid scheme, which means that every £1 you give is worth 25p more, and at no extra cost to you!

**We will be happy to send you a Gift Aid Form.**

## One-off Donations

### By cheque

If you would like to make a one-off donation towards our work please write a cheque to 'Devon in Sight'.

### Donations can be sent to:

Jennie Benham  
Office Manager  
Devon in Sight  
Station House  
Holman Way  
Topsham  
EX3 0EN

### By Direct Bank Transfer

You can also make a direct bank transfer to:

Sort code: 30-80-37  
Account No: 62326768  
Please add your name as the 'reference'.

### By Telephone

We can take a donation using a Debit Card through our Resource Centre. **Please ring 01392 876 666**

## Online

For those of you with access to a computer you can also make donations through our website.

[www.devoninsight.org.uk/support-us/donate](http://www.devoninsight.org.uk/support-us/donate)

## Regular Giving

Regular giving enables us to plan ahead, and to continue to deliver our core services. Setting up a standing order is an easy and effective way of providing financial support over a longer period. For more information please give our Office Manager a call.

## Legacies

**A gift in your will can help hundreds of people affected by sight loss.**

If you are planning to make or change your will, you will first want to provide for your family and friends. But when you have done that please consider including a legacy to Devon in Sight. This could be a share of what is left over, or a specific amount of money.

However much it is, it will be carefully used for the benefit of people in Devon affected by sight loss.

## How do legacies help?

The enormous improvements to our Resource centre were largely funded by legacy income, and legacies, large or small, remain essential for maintaining our services and reaching more people.

## How can I find out more information?

Our **Legacy Information Pack** gives more detail on how your legacy will support Devon in Sight's plans for the future, on planning your Will, and on wording for different types of legacy.

**For more information please telephone:**

**Jennie Benham  
Office Manager**

**01392 878 802**  
[jennie@devoninsight.org.uk](mailto:jennie@devoninsight.org.uk)



**Devon in Sight**

Your local sight loss charity

**Tel: 01392 876 666**

**[enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk) • [www.devoninsight.org.uk](http://www.devoninsight.org.uk)**

Devon in Sight • Station House • Holman Way • Topsham • Exeter • EX3 0EN

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