



Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity



Newsletter

Spring 2020 - Issue 21



Supporting blind and partially sighted people in Devon for 95 years!

Celebrating
95
Years
1925 - 2020



Devon County Association for the
Welfare of the Blind.
Registered under the Blind Persons' Act, 1920
and
Affiliated to the Western Counties' Association.

REPORT
AND
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS
for the year 1st April, 1925,
to 31st March, 1926.

S. WOTTON, PRINTER, NEWTON ABBOT.



MINUTE BOOK
1924 - 1928



Chief Executive's Update

Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Devon in Sight Newsletter.



I am writing this introduction whilst in lockdown, at my desk in our temporary headquarters in Teignmouth...my dining room!!!

It's incredible to think that Devon in Sight has been providing support services to people who are blind or partially sighted in Devon since 1925.

Plans were well under way to make this edition of our newsletter a celebration of our 95th birthday! However, as the poet Robert Burns once wrote, 'The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry!'

On 12 March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared the global outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic. Nobody could have foreseen what a huge impact the virus was going to have on all our lives.

The COVID-19 crisis has developed at such a rapid pace that in these days of lock down, social distancing, PPE and contact tracing I was determined that we would continue to support people as much as possible during this crisis.

In order to protect our clients, staff and volunteers we took the difficult decision to suspend all our face-to-face services with immediate effect. All of the staff team are now working from home.

We do continue to provide information and support over the telephone and for those with internet access we have created a comprehensive information resource about COVID 19 and local services available to you on our website.

Whilst we don't have the people to staff a helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week we will respond as soon as we can to answerphone messages.

The middle section of this newsletter is a comprehensive **COVID - 19 Special Supplement**. This is a large print version of the UK Government Guidance with some additional information for blind and partially sighted people.

This is the biggest newsletter that we have ever produced and it has only been made possible by the generous support of our old friends at 'See the Future' and the 'Devon County Council Coronavirus Prompt Action Fund'.

As a nod to the past the cover and flyleaf of this newsletter include some nostalgic photographs from our past that I found in the loft at Station House. But, the content of the newsletter is grounded firmly in the here and now... and the future.

More than ever, we need your support to help people with sight loss across Devon and Torbay impacted by COVID-19. Please consider joining our 'Friends of Devon in Sight Scheme' so we can continue our support. Details of how to make a regular donation can be found on page 22.

During these difficult times it is important to remember that as a charity, and a country we have faced massive challenges over the last 95 years. **We will get through this crisis together.**

Onwards and upwards!

Grahame

Grahame Flynn
Chief Executive Officer

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▲ Grahame & Margaret

▲ Richard & Rebecca

We say goodbye to Marg and Rebecca!

Margaret Vickers joined Devon in Sight in January 2018 as our Support Worker for Mid Devon. Marg left us in October 2019 to re-enter education by taking up a post at South Devon College. Working with young people has always been her passion and we wish her luck with her new role.

Rebecca Springbett was our Community Support Worker for West Devon. It was a very difficult decision for her when she was approached to re-join the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary after 33 years' service to become a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). They will both be missed by us all.



▲ Sue Beschizza & Louise Camies

We say hello to Sue and Louise!

Sue Beschizza originally joined us as a temporary member of staff to help us deal with telephone enquiries and some research. We were delighted to offer her a full time role in December 2019 as our new Information, Advice and Guidance Officer.

Louise Camies joined the staff team on 7th January 2020. She worked as a manager for Specsavers for 15 years and has a solid background within the optical industry.

You will hear more about their roles in the coming pages of this newsletter.

Volunteer Profile - Trustees



The charity sector contributes significantly to the character and wellbeing of our country.

Registered charities are governed by a legal document called The Memorandum and Articles of Association and managed by a team of volunteers called trustees.

Devon in Sight's trustees have independent control over, and legal responsibility for, the charity's management and administration.

They work closely with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure the charity operates in a responsible and lawful way. All our trustees are subjected to a rigorous selection and interview process, Disclosure and Barring (Police) Checks and have skills that bring knowledge and wisdom to the charity.

There are six key responsibilities for trustees laid out by the Charity Commission. They must ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit; comply with our charity's governing document and the law; act in the charity's best interests; manage our charity's resources responsibly; act with reasonable care and skill and ensure our charity is accountable.



▲ Dr Adrian Jacobs

Dr Adrian Jacobs has been volunteering for Devon in Sight since 2015 and became Chair in 2017. Adrian spent 20 years as a General Practitioner followed by 12 years' as a Director of Primary Care for South and West Devon Health Authority and Torbay Care Trust.

He has wide experience in working with practices and practitioners in difficulty and has worked as Medical Director in Leicester, Devon and in the private sector. Adrian also worked for NHS Employers as a member of their Core GP Contract Negotiating Team and led the Quality and Outcomes Framework negotiations. In 2013 Adrian became Medical Director for Serco Health to ensure their readiness for revalidation and later moved to become Medical Director of The Huntercombe Group. Adrian recently retired but hopes that his experience of Commissioning Third Sector Services for the NHS will help Devon in Sight respond to commissioning opportunities in the future.

Adrian says, "I have found being a Trustee for Devon in Sight very rewarding. It's great to see how we can make a real difference to the lives of people with sight loss in Devon."

For an informal chat about volunteering opportunities at Devon in Sight please ring 01392 876 666

Sharing Best Practice



▲ Grahame Flynn & Julian Garner at the Vision UK Awards

Devon in Sight's award winning needs assessment 'The Sight Loss MOT' continues to attract national interest.



The Sight Loss MOT was short-listed for the **Vision UK John Thompson Award for Excellence in Services, Support and Care 2019**. The awards were announced at the Vision UK Forward View Eye Health and Sight Loss Conference which was held in collaboration with the **Royal Society of Medicine (RSM)** in October 2019. Although we didn't win the award, the event provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of our framework with key influencers across health, social care and the third sector.

Visionary's Annual Conference took place over 14-16 November 2019 at Conference Aston in Birmingham. Visionary is the umbrella organisation for Sight Loss Associations across the United Kingdom.

Local and national organisations from across the UK came together to hear inspiring speakers, attend a fantastic range of workshops and discuss and share knowledge and experience with colleagues.

In a workshop facilitated by Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn and Business Development Manager Julian Garner, we shared the ongoing development of the Sight Loss MOT Assessment and Outcome Framework.

The workshop included the 'on the ground' experience of 4Sight Vision Support, Sight Concern Bedfordshire and Vision West of England in using the Sight Loss MOT, the impact it has made for their clients, and how it has started to shape the culture and impact of their organisations.

Recently, the **Thomas Pocklington Trust** have provided us with a grant to support further development of the Sight Loss MOT Framework particularly for children and young people. The grant will also help to underwrite some of the costs of providing training for twenty local sight loss charities that have expressed interest in adopting our model of working.

If you would like to find out more about the Sight Loss MOT contact Julian Garner via email julian@devoninsight.org.uk

Winter 2019

Community Fundraising News

£220
raised!



Bill's donation helps us buy new tech!

North Devon resident Bill Kingham is supported by a Voluntary Befriending Scheme called 'TorrAGE'. His befriender Martin called us to say that Bill was keen to support Devon in Sight with a donation since his late father had been blind.

Grahame Flynn and Jennie Benham visited Bill and showed him the many features of a tablet. Bill had had no experience of computers before. He was thrilled to see images of classic cars and motorcycles that he had owned as a younger man. Grahame said, "Bill's donation has allowed us to purchase an Amazon Echo Show for demonstration purposes. We would like to thank him for his generous donation which will help many others discover the benefits of this technology."

"We are delighted to receive support from our local communities for our work!"



£3000
raised!

Christmas Dinner is a Christmas Cracker!!!

On Friday 6th December 2019 we held our first Charity Gala Christmas Dinner at Sandy Park Conference Centre in Exeter.

The event proved to be an enjoyable evening of good food, good company and highlighted the outstanding work being conducted by Devon in Sight's team across the county.

The Raffle and the Auction were hosted by our celebrity guest auctioneer Grahame Barton from BBC TV's 'Homes under the Hammer'. The lots were hotly contested and the event raised over £3,000 for the work of Devon in Sight. We would like to thank everybody for their support, generous donations and for making the evening a great success.

Community Fundraising News

Waitrose Community Matters

We support good causes.
You decide who gets what.



Waitrose partners with Devon in Sight!

Waitrose & Partners started their green token scheme in 2008 and it's now the longest running community initiative of its kind.

In February we were delighted to hear that the staff at the Exeter branch of Waitrose had elected us one of their Community Matters Charities.

Grahame Flynn Devon in Sight's Chief Executive Officer said, "During March shoppers supported our work with blind and partially sighted people by placing their green tokens in the box allocated to Devon in Sight. We would like to thank the staff for choosing Devon in Sight and those customers who chose to support us with their green tokens. The campaign raised £300".

We have heard that when the coronavirus crisis has passed Waitrose in Sidmouth have elected to support our work too.

"We are delighted to receive support from our local communities for our work!"

Honky Tonk Stompers

The Honky Tonk Stompers held a line dance social at Musbery Village Hall to raise funds for Devon in Sight.

Tracey Agutter was delighted to receive a donation of £260 from Peggy Blackmore on behalf of the Honky Tonk Stompers and we would like to thank them for their support.

For more information please visit:
www.honkytonkstompers.co.uk

Honiton Lions keep on roaring!

The Honiton & District Lions Club have made another hugely generous donation of £300.

We are very grateful for all of their donations and continued support of our services in Honiton.

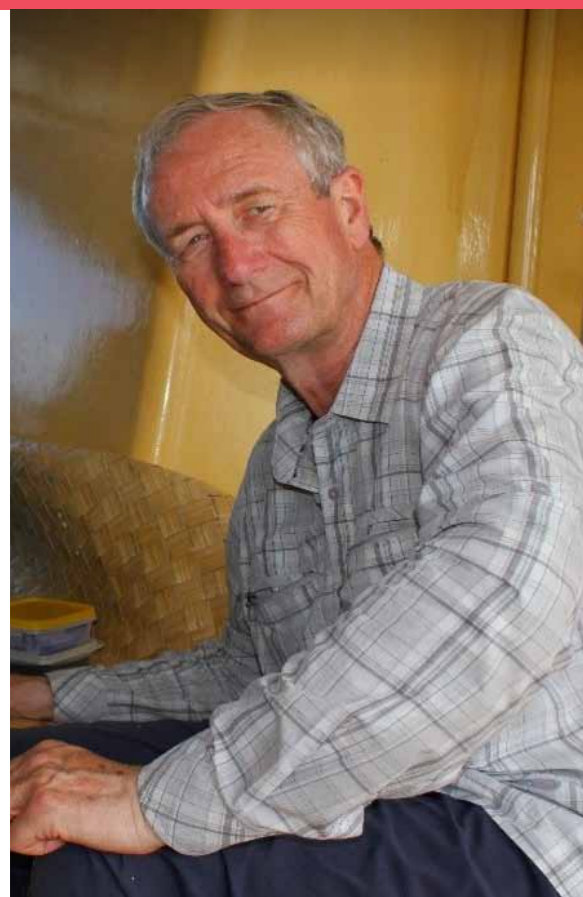
For more information please visit:
www.honitonlions.org.uk



▲ Cheque presentation



Promotional Film Launch



▲ Alex Ledger

Producing promotional films is a highly skilled and expensive luxury that most small charities cannot contemplate.

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn explains more.

“For a number of years I have wanted to produce a promotional film about the work that we do at Devon in Sight.

In the dim and distant past I had produced and art directed a number of stage productions and TV commercials and appeared in

television dramas; but getting a crew together was going to be something beyond the reach of our little charity.

For thirty-six years Topsham resident Alex Ledger was a Producer on the long running BBC TV Children's series 'Blue Peter'. I had read his memoirs but I thought it would be a little cheeky to approach him directly to help.

By chance our Chair Dr Adrian Jacobs had been at school with Alex and he kindly made an introduction. We were therefore delighted when Alex agreed to dust off his camera to help us make a promotional film about Devon in Sight.



▲ Henry Leger (Left) & Alex Leger (Right) filming in Sidmouth

On Monday 18th November 2019 our HQ at Spaltford Barton became our first location.

Interviews were recorded in the Board Room with clients John Smith, Glen Palmer and Georgia White, about their experiences of sight loss and the support given by Devon in Sight.

Moving to the Consultation Room, 'Skills for Seeing' volunteer Lynzee Valentine gave an overview of the training that we provide for people with central vision loss in partnership with Macular Society.



▲ John Smith



▲ Glen Palmer

Promotional Film Launch



Richard Bowman talked powerfully about his transition from client, to volunteer and finally to paid member of staff.

Our Office Manager Jennie Benham provided finely manicured hands to demonstrate some optical equipment for insert shots. It was a long but enjoyable day.

On Tuesday 19th November we undertook our second day of location filming in Sidmouth.

The Sidmouth 'Talk and Support Group' met in Twyford House where they were receiving a talk from Action on Hearing Loss. It was fantastic to get the atmosphere of a group meeting on tape.

The next stop was at Gloria Tanner's cottage where she made us very welcome.

We were joined by Community Support Worker Tracey Agutter. It was important to illustrate some of the one-to-one work that we do with people particularly the Sight Loss MOT.



▲ Richard Bowman



▲ Talk & Support Group



▲ Gloria Tanner



▲ Gloria & Tracey

It was then back to Twyford House to film a Tactile Art Session with our friends from Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Barry Goodfellow MBE.

It was a privilege to join Alex in his editing suite in Topsham which is full of memorabilia of his time on Blue Peter. It was great to create a film from the material we had recorded.

The first edit was ready just in time for our Charity Gala Christmas dinner on Friday 6th December 2019. The film moved a number of people to tears.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Alex and Henry Leger for their help in making the film and all those who shared their stories."

The film is available on our website: devoninsight.org.uk/supporting-us/friends-of-devon-in-sight



▲ Tactile Art Group

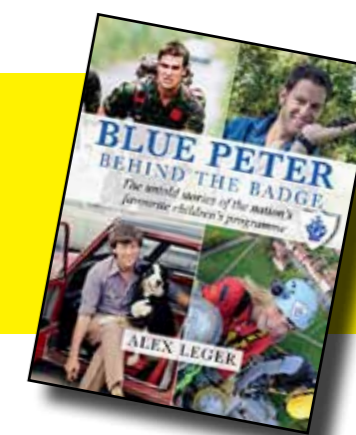


▲ Georgia White



▲ Lynzee Valentine

If you would like to purchase a copy of 'Blue Peter - Behind the Badge' by Alex Leger copies are available online through Amazon and Topsham Bookshop.



Fundraising Feature

500 Friends of Devon in Sight



Devon in Sight has been supporting blind and partially sighted people, their families and carers for 95 years. Last year we launched our 500 Friends of Devon in Sight Campaign.

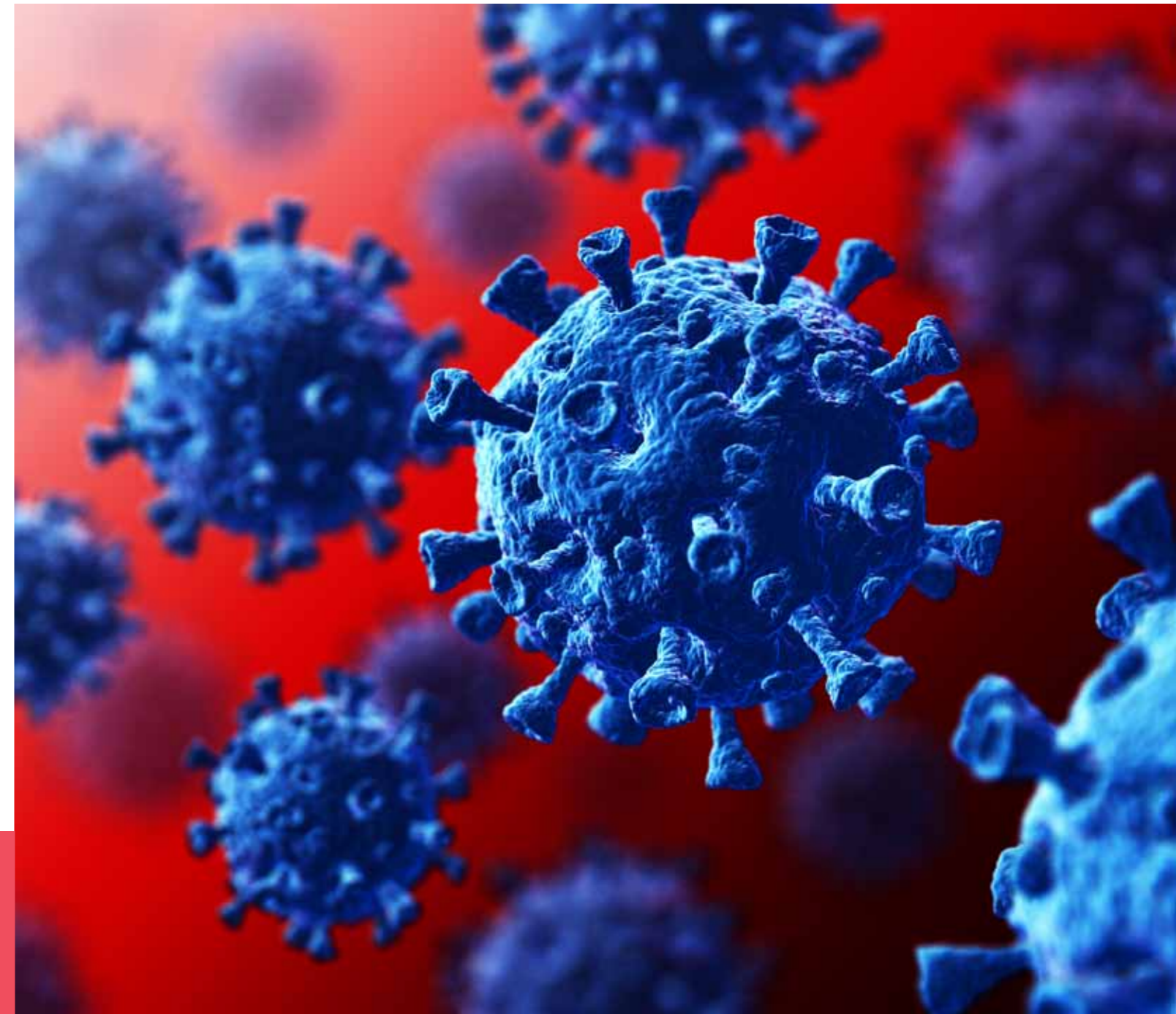
More than ever, we need your support to help people with sight loss across Devon and Torbay impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

You can set up a regular donation by visiting our website at www.devoninsight.org.uk/donate or give us a call on 01392 876 666

 **Devon in Sight**
Your local sight loss charity

Devon
County Council 

Covid-19 Special



**Devon in Sight's - Coronavirus
Emergency Response Service**

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COVID-19 Special

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Editors & Designers
Grahame Flynn
Jennie Benham

This Coronavirus Supplement is a large print version of the **UK Government Guidance** with some additional information for blind and partially sighted people living in Devon.

We would like to thank the **Devon County Council Coronavirus Prompt Action Fund** for their support in covering printing costs at this difficult time.

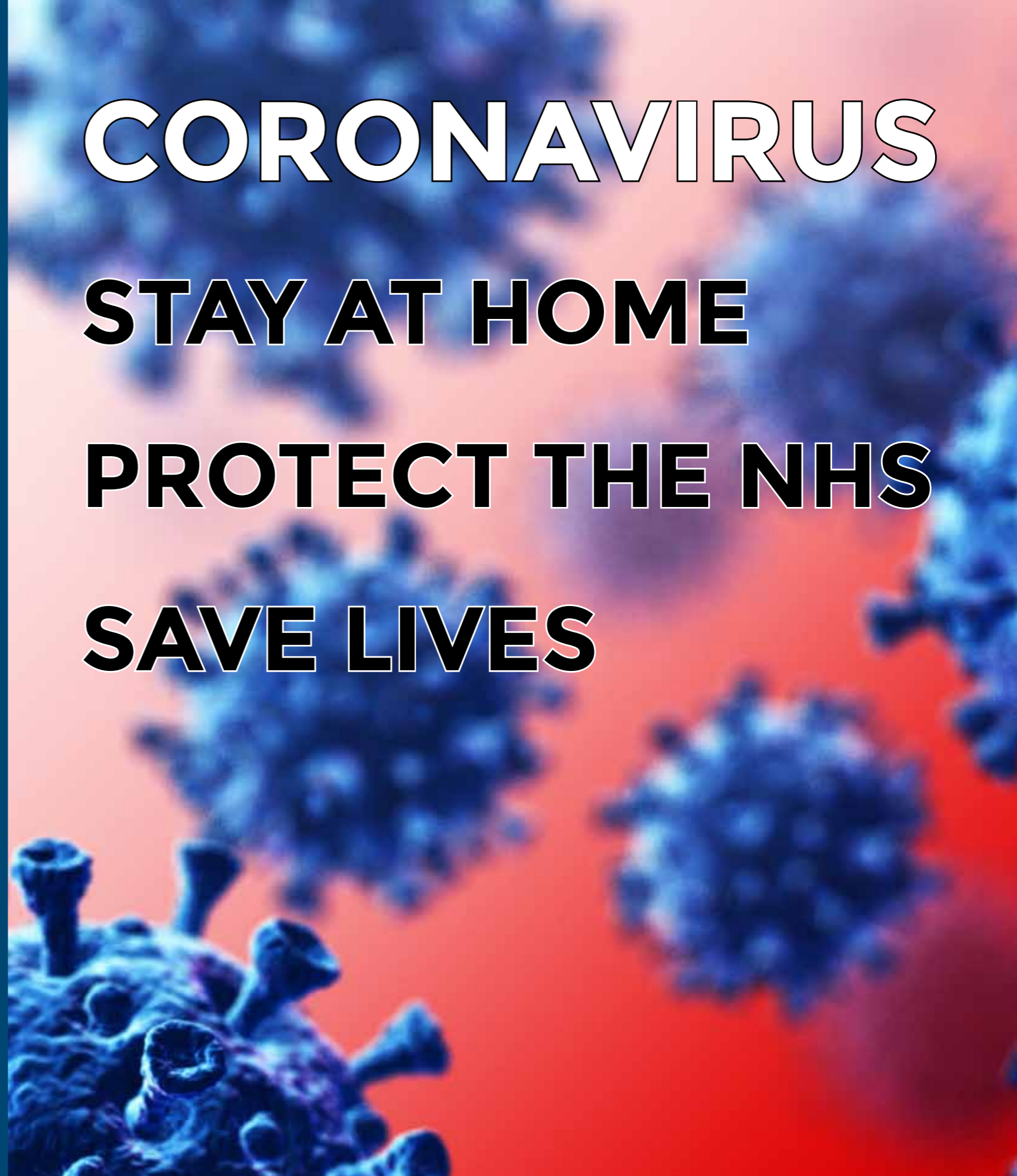
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CORONAVIRUS

STAY AT HOME

PROTECT THE NHS

SAVE LIVES



The information contained in this document was correct at the time of going to press (20 April 2020).

Devon
County Council 
Coronavirus Prompt
Action Fund

 **Devon in Sight**
Your local sight loss charity


HM Government

Chief Executive's Message



Devon in Sight's Emergency Crisis Response to coronavirus was rapid.

We pre-empting the Government's shift from containment into the "delay" phase by taking decisive action to protect our clients, volunteers and staff as much as possible. All our community based 'Talk and Support Groups' were suspended and face-to-face appointments with our Community Support Workers, Sight Loss Adviser and 'Skills for Seeing' Practitioners ceased overnight.



We closed our head office and shifted to home working for the whole team within days. We have therefore had to adapt to the current situation and find a way that we can continue to provide support to blind and partially sighted people in Devon.

Due to the social distancing restrictions currently in place **Devon in Sight's new Coronavirus Emergency Response Service** will be primarily an outreach service on the telephone.

Our staff team are focusing all their efforts on making sure that people with sight loss have support in place for essential daily needs and also having someone to chat to.

Many of the blind and partially sighted people we serve are amongst those most at risk from coronavirus and of course have the additional challenge of vision impairment. We're working with local communities, other charities and Local Authorities in order to reach as many people as we can and provide a coordinated, efficient response across Devon.

If you or a family member have sight loss and need any support at the moment please contact our Helpline on **01392 876 666** or email **enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk** and one of our team will get back to you.

Because we are all home working, messages will initially go to our answer-phone, but they get passed on to our team immediately and we will get back to you as soon as a member of staff is available. For those of you with access to the internet there are some useful sources of advice on the Coronavirus and the impact on local and national eye services on our website, which we will be updating regularly.

Please visit: [devoninsight.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.devoninsight.org.uk/coronavirus)

I sincerely hope that this guide will answer most of your questions but if you can't find the answers you are looking for please give us a call and leave a message.

May I take this opportunity to thank all our staff and volunteers for their on-going commitment to supporting blind and partially sighted people in Devon during this crisis?

Thank you.

The Impact of COVID-19



The impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the lives of people with sight loss.

These are challenging and unprecedented times which are affecting all of us. However, for people with sight loss, the impact on daily life has been even greater.

Lots of us have turned to the internet and social media to carry on as best we can with daily life, but many of our clients do not have access to technology to keep in touch with friends and family, or to try and book a slot for a home shopping delivery.

Issues and concerns that local people have raised with us include:

- How to access the latest public health information on COVID-19 in an accessible format
- Accessing information on changes to local services such as hospital and GP services
- Changes to Community transport to attend appointments
- How to deal with social distancing
- Whether people can still walk their guide dogs
- Help to collect prescriptions
- Help with food deliveries
- Having people to talk to about their concerns when their regular social groups and contact with people in the local community have abruptly stopped
- For people with other health issues, how will they cope with self-isolating for weeks or months
- Issues around Digital Exclusion (Not having a computer)
- Feelings of isolation from family and friends.
- Help with domestic violence

How can we help?



How Devon in Sight might be able to help

We have helped people by:

- Providing information on changes to local health and social care services
- Providing information on changes to services being provided by the hospital eye units and outreach clinics
- Provided information on changes to services being provided by our partners in the sight loss sector
- Providing an opportunity for people to talk through their concerns, and to provide reassurance about the support which is available
- Networking with other local agencies who are providing home deliveries and support for vulnerable groups
- Helping people make best use of their computers, iPads and smart phones to stay in contact with family and to access local information
- Providing guidance to family members living out of the area about how they can help, and what services are available locally
- Providing advice and support to carers of people with sight loss who no longer have regular support at home
- Providing advice and support to people experiencing domestic violence.

If we can't answer a question, we'll find someone that can!

Information from our Local Support Teams

Local communities have been amazing in responding to this situation so quickly, with new initiatives springing up every day.

Our staff are in regular contact with a wide range of local agencies so that we can make sure people with sight loss get the support they need, so do give us a call.

We would remind everyone to be vigilant when strangers offer support. Never give cash or bank card details to someone you do not know.

**Helpline:
01392 876 666**

Please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can.



“At this moment of national emergency, I urge you, please, to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives”. Boris Johnson - The Prime Minister

Stay at home

The single most important action you can take is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

You should only leave the house for very limited reasons:

- **Shopping for basic necessities**, for example food and medicine, as infrequently as possible.
- **One form of exercise a day**, for example a run, walk or cycle – alone or with members of your household.
- **Any medical need**, including to donate blood, avoid risk of harm, provide care or help to a vulnerable person.
- **Travelling for work purposes**, but only where you cannot work from home.

These are exceptions and when doing these activities, you should minimise time spent outside of the home and ensure you are two meters apart from anyone outside of your household.

Critical workers, and parents of vulnerable children, may leave the house to take children to and from school or their childcare provider. More detail is available online. Children can be moved between homes if their parents live separately.

Symptoms

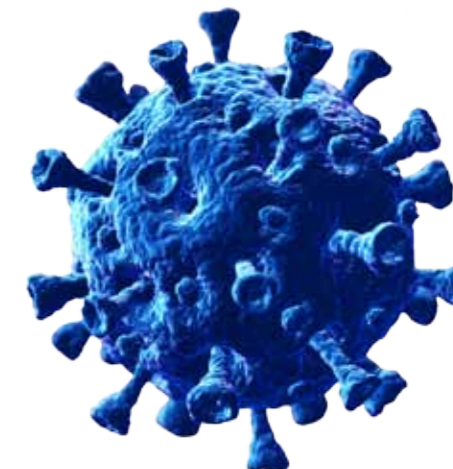
You may have coronavirus if you have either of the following symptoms, however mild:

- **A high temperature (37.8 °C or over)** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature to check this).
- **A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).

Anyone who has these symptoms must stay at home until the symptoms have ended, and in all cases for at least seven days. Everyone else in the house must stay at home for at least 14 days after the first person’s symptoms appear, even if they themselves do not have symptoms.

If anyone else develops symptoms during that time, that individual must stay home for an additional seven days from when they developed symptoms. Once seven days have passed and provided symptoms have ended, they no longer need isolate.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Use NHS online services. Only call 111 if you are not able to get online, you have been instructed to call, or your symptoms worsen. Call 999 if you have a serious or life-threatening emergency, and tell the call adviser if you have coronavirus symptoms.



Treatment

You can usually treat mild coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms at home. If your symptoms are severe, you may need medical care until you recover.

Self-Care

If you have mild symptoms of coronavirus, you should stay at home.

To help yourself stay well:

- drink plenty of water to stay hydrated – drink enough so your pee is pale and clear
- take paracetamol to help ease your symptoms
- stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media, to help you avoid feeling low or lonely
- try to keep yourself busy – you could try activities like cooking, reading, listening to audio books, online learning and watching films
- do light exercise, if you feel well enough to.
- try not to listen to endless news reports about coronavirus

Remember: Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Use NHS online services. Only call 111 if you are not able to get online, you have been instructed to call, or your symptoms worsen.

Medical Treatments

There is currently no specific treatment for coronavirus.

- Antibiotics do not help, as they do not work against viruses.
- Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness.
- You'll need to stay in isolation away from other people until you've recovered.

Out Patient Treatment for Eye Conditions

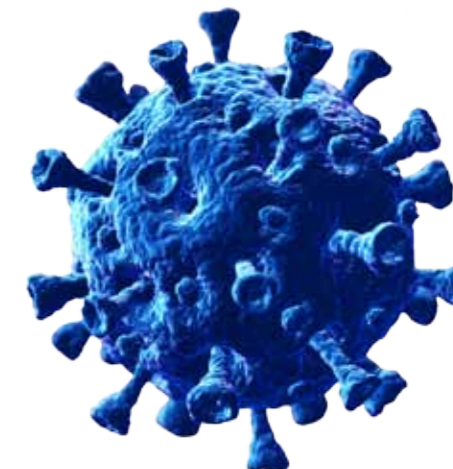
Many people are feeling more anxious than normal at the moment, especially about attending their outpatient appointments at the hospital.

Failing to have treatment for your eye condition could lead to permanent sight loss.

Unless the hospital has contacted you to cancel or rearrange your appointment, please attend as planned.

You must not attend your appointment if you should be self-isolating because you, or somebody close to you, has, or has had, symptoms.

Please remember that coronavirus patients are being treated in isolation wards. If you have any concerns please ring the hospital for advice.



Advice for those who are 70 and over, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant

People who are 70 and over, or those who have an underlying health condition, are likely to be more seriously affected. It is even more important that you protect yourself now by following the advice above.

If you need shopping or medication, ask family, friends or neighbours to drop these at the door, or if possible, order online. Use NHS online services or the NHS App to book appointments or order repeat prescriptions - only phone if this is not possible.

GP consultations should be done over the phone or online, to minimise risk to you and other patients. GP practices may postpone non-urgent health checks or routine appointments.

There is helpful information and advice for pregnant women about coronavirus on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' website.

Support for businesses and workers

The Government knows that all these measures have a huge impact on businesses, households and people across the country and has taken action to protect lives and incomes.

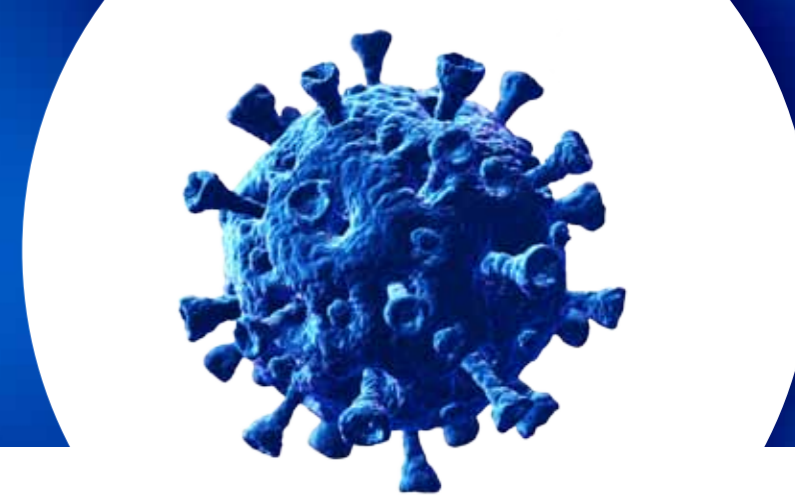
For businesses:

- More than £330bn is being made available in loans and guarantees.
- Another £20bn is being given to businesses through tax relief and cash grants.
- HMRC is deferring VAT payments for the next quarter.

For workers and families:

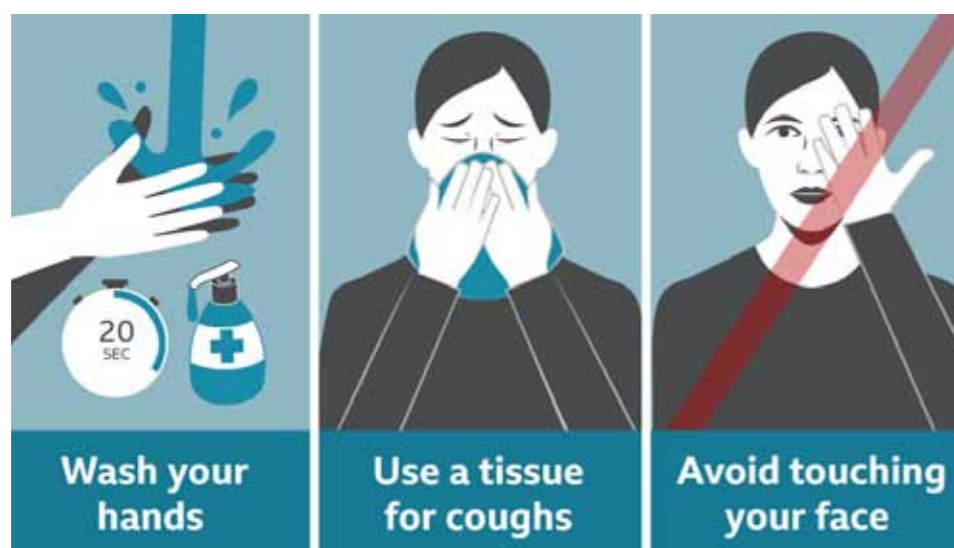
- The **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** means employees can receive 80% of their wages up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.
- The **Coronavirus Self Employed Income Support Scheme** will provide a grant to most self-employed individuals or partnerships, worth 80% of their profits up to a cap of £2,500 per month.
- Extra support for the unemployed and those on low incomes through **Universal Credit and Tax Credits**, worth up to £1,040.
- Nearly £1bn of additional support for renters.
- **Mortgage holidays** of three months for anyone in difficulty due to coronavirus, including owners of buy to let properties.

This is just some of the support available for businesses and workers. Further information is available online.



Help stop the infection spreading and support each other

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often – Do this for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects in your home. Such as door handles, taps and telephones.
- Shop responsibly, follow advice in stores, and only buy what you need for yourself, and your family, and those you're supporting.



Going to work

You may travel for work purposes, but only where you cannot work from home.

Employers and employees should discuss their working arrangements, and employers should take every possible step to facilitate their employees working from home.

Certain jobs require people to travel to their place of work.

If you cannot work from home then you can still travel to work, provided neither you nor any of your household have coronavirus symptoms. This is consistent with advice from the Chief Medical Officer.

Further information on all these areas and more is available online

Go to [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

To receive this information in other languages or alternative formats, please visit [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

If you have difficulties communicating or hearing, you can call **18001 111** on a text phone or access the **NHS 111 British Sign Language (BSL)** interpreter service through www.nhs.uk/111.

Looking after your mental health



“The lock down has been frustrating for many people and pressure, stress and isolation have been building up. If we are going to go forward with more time spent in lock down, then there is going to be an ever-increasing need for people to look after their mental health and take it seriously and also know where to go to get the support they might need.”

Prince William - The Duke of Cambridge

Coronavirus has plunged the world into uncertainty and the constant news about the pandemic can feel relentless. All of this is taking its toll on people’s mental health, particularly those already living with conditions like anxiety and OCD.

So how can we protect our mental health?

Being concerned about the news is understandable, but for many people it can make existing mental health problems worse. The fear of being out of control and unable to tolerate uncertainty are common characteristics of many anxiety disorders. So it’s understandable that many individuals with pre-existing anxiety are facing challenges at the moment.

We know from national research, and from what our clients tell us, that being blind or partially sighted has a significant impact on people’s ability to live independently, to access shops and community facilities, to use public transport and to play an active part in society.

Being told you are losing your sight can be difficult to come to terms with, with common effects being depression, reduced wellbeing and a process similar to bereavement. Research also shows that older people with sight loss are three times more likely to experience depression than people with good vision.

A lot of anxiety is rooted in worrying about the unknown and waiting for something to happen - coronavirus is that on a macro scale.

There are some simple steps you can take to help protect your mental health.

- Limit the amount of time you spend reading or watching things which aren’t making you feel better. Perhaps decide on a specific time to check in with the news
- stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media
- do light exercise at home, or outside once a day
- try to keep yourself busy - you could try activities like cooking, reading, listening to audio books, online learning and watching films
- There is a lot of misinformation swirling around - stay informed by sticking to trusted sources of information such as government and NHS websites.

If you need some advice please ring our helpline 01392 876 666.

CORONAVIRUS STAY AT HOME PROTECT THE NHS SAVE LIVES



01392 876 666

enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk
www.devoninsight.org.uk

Devon in Sight
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Exeter, EX6 7XY.

Registered Charity No. 1140978. Devon in Sight is the working name of Devon County Association for the Blind, a Company Limited by Guarantee. Company Registration No. 07371472

Community Support Service Update

Information, Advice & Guidance



Sue Beschizza

At Devon in Sight we are committed to providing accurate and impartial information, advice and guidance to people who are blind or partially sighted, their family, friends and carers.

Sue Beschizza joined the Devon in Sight team in December 2019 as our new Information, Advice and Guidance Officer. She handles incoming enquiries and registers people with the charity, entering information into our secure database and asking if people would like to receive the Newsletter or become a Voting Member.

Sue can provide general information and advice which is required by the clients regarding their sight loss or local services. Sue is leading our Information, Advice and Guidance Service which aims to improve access to a range of holistic advice and support services for people with sight loss across the county.

Sue can be contacted through our Head Office in Kennford on:

01392 876 666

“I am delighted to have joined the Devon in Sight Team!”

A key part of Sue’s role will be triaging calls to assess whether people should be referred to our Community Support Workers or Sight Loss Adviser for further assessment and support.

She is working on a programme of updating and renewing our portfolio of Information Resources with key partners including the NHS, RNIB and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.

Sue says, “I am delighted to have joined the Devon in Sight team. I know that navigating the Adult Sight Loss and Eye Health Pathway is complex. There are many services available to people who are blind or partially sighted and their families from Health and Social Care, the Third Sector and in local communities. I am enjoying helping people over the phone.”

Devon in Sight has recently joined the **Helplines Partnership**, the national membership body for organisations that provide information, support or advice via phone, email, text or online. We are actively working towards the Helplines Standard a nationally recognised quality standard which defines and accredits best practice in helpline work.

To access our Information, Advice and Guidance Service...

Call our Helpline: 01392 876 666

Community Support Service Update

Sight Loss Adviser



Richard Bowman our Sight Loss Adviser can support you with general information and advice, specialist Daily Living Equipment and Assistive Technology Solutions

Do you or someone you know need some help with Assistive Technology to help you keep in touch with your relatives during the COVID-19 crisis.

Now is the time to ensure that visually impaired people can keep in touch with loved ones and be able to order food online.

But getting the right technology and setting it up can seem an impossible task.

Richard will be able to help you with a number of Assistive Technology Solutions. He can also help you overcome any issues that you are faced with during installation and use.

Richard can be contacted through our Head Office in Kennford on:

01392 876 666

Sight Loss Adviser

Richard can help you with:

Tablets and Smart Phones

- Mobile phones - iPhone/Android
- Tablets - Apple/Android
- Watching TV on your Tablet

Smart Speakers

- Amazon Echo & Google Home

Video Conferencing

- Facetime - Apple to Apple
- Skype - Android
- WhatsApp - over the internet
- Messenger - over the internet
- Zoom Meetings - over the internet

Audio and Large Print Books

- Accessing Audio books and Large Print via your smart phone or tablet
- Joining Devon Libraries

Smart Speakers

Amazon Echo & Google Home are happy to help you!

A smart speaker is a type of speaker and voice command device with an integrated virtual assistant.

With either Amazon Echo or Google Home you can check the news, weather or traffic, sports scores, ask what's on TV, set timers, add items to shopping lists, find recipes and create calendar events and reminders. You can even ask them to call or message your closest family and friends.

With some additional equipment you can use your voice to switch lights on or off.

For further information about Smart Speakers...

Call our Helpline: 01392 876 666



South Devon & Torbay



Cathy can be contacted through our Head Office in Kennford on:

01392 876 666

Our Community Support Service in South Devon & Torbay is run by Cathy Duffy our Senior Community Support Worker.

Firstly, I would like to thank the team for the huge efforts made to minimise disruption to Mid and West Devon whilst we recruited a new Community Support Worker to cover both these areas.

There was a huge commitment to minimise disruption to services and it was great to see how the team went above and beyond to ensure this happened. Although it involved some creative diary management, it also created an opportunity for me to get back into areas I haven't had a chance to visit for a while. It was especially nice to catch up with people at the Talk and Support Groups.

We are delighted to have recruited Louise Camies to the team and she is proving to be a real asset in West and Mid Devon with her skills and enthusiasm.

Serving Dawlish and Teignmouth, Kingsbridge, Newton Abbot, Torbay, Totnes and surrounding districts.

At the request of some of our younger clients we held a Young Persons with Sight Loss Forum. Four of our younger clients wanted an opportunity to share experiences, tips, signpost feedback and gather ideas or plan for activities using a mobile telephone platform such as WhatsApp.

This is still at the formative stage but some exciting ideas were shared about how the platform could work for young adults with sight loss. We are planning to meet again in the near future to look at the next steps.

Coronavirus has hit our services hard. We had prepared a comprehensive programme of guest speakers for our thirteen Talk and Support Groups this year. We were also delighted to launch a new Talk and Support Group in Kingsbridge. Sadly, in early March we were required to cease all our face to face work. We will of course send out invitations to Talk and Support Groups when we are able to meet again.

In response to the crisis we have had to be creative. The next section of the newsletter summarises some of the ways that we are keeping in touch with our clients and how you can meet others over the telephone or internet.

Challenging but exciting times!

Cathy Duffy

Cathy Duffy

Senior Community Support Worker

Support in the Community

With the temporary suspension of the Talk and Support Groups in response to the Covid-19 outbreak we have been working hard to maintain contact with people by telephone, email and text.

Telephone Support Calls (1 - 1 Support)

If you are a client, a family member or supporting somebody with sight loss who may be feeling lonely, anxious or isolated please call our helpline, leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Telephone Conference Calls (Group)

To enable Talk and Support Group members to continue to be there for each other we are also launching a Telephone Conference Calls Service. We are offering this service in partnership with Macular Society.

Joining is easy, call the telephone number listed for your area and when prompted use pin 1.

East Devon

Tuesdays starting from the 5th of May 2020
10.30am - 11.30am - Hosted by Tracey Agutter
Tel: 01264 560 276 using pin 1

Mid Devon

Tuesdays starting from the 5th of May 2020
10.30am - 11.30am - Hosted by Louise Camies
Tel: 01264 560 273 use pin 1



**“I was the happiest I have been in weeks...
thank you for calling me!”**

South Devon

Fridays starting from the 1st May 2020
10.30am to 11.30am Hosted by Cathy Duffy
Tel: 01264 560 276 use pin 1

West Devon

Wednesdays starting from the 6th May 2020
10.30 am - 11.30 am - Hosted by Louise Camies
Tel: 01264 560 273 use pin 1

Video Conference Calls (Group)

If you already use your computer to make video calls to family and friends you may want to join our **Virtual Video Conference Calls**. These aim to connect younger people with sight loss and provide Assistive Technology Support for everyone. We hope to extend it to others as soon as demand increases.



Younger Persons Group (18-50) (On Whatsapp and Zoom)

Tuesdays starting 5th May - Weekly
2pm - Hosted by Cathy Duffy

Devon in Sight Tech-Chat on Zoom

Wednesday 29th April at 2pm - Monthly

**If you are interested in joining, you need help or
want more information about any of these groups**

Call our Helpline: 01392 876 666

George does Thailand!

Severely sight impaired George Jones shares his story of how Devon in Sight's Sight Loss MOT inspired him to travel to Thailand.



“After contacting Devon in Sight I met with Cathy Duffy one of the Community Support Workers and we went through the Sight Loss MOT.

I have been involved with numerous sight loss services over the years so I was amazed at how much we uncovered through the MOT. Cathy introduced me to different types of activities and holidays for people with sight loss. I have travelled abroad with family and friends but I was really keen to travel independently.

Cathy discussed the many different types of activities here and abroad and sourced contact details and brochures for the ones I was interested in. One of which was Travel Eyes and Cathy was able to describe the services they offer to people with sight loss within their holidays.

When I received the information for Travel Eyes, I noted they had a 12 day holiday to Thailand for 18-30 year olds. This was somewhere I was keen to visit. I was able to look at the holiday details online and the itinerary for each day and decided to

“As a Visually Impaired person I felt very much empowered and had some fantastic experiences”

book the holiday. I was a little bit nervous about going on holiday with twelve other people I had never met before. However, I was also very excited to meet and learn from other people with sight loss the same age as me.

The tour guides rotated every day so everyone got time to really get to know each other. They were brilliant and really listened to how we wanted to be guided. For most it was their first time guiding but they were all very good and did an excellent job. I never thought that being in a group of people with sight loss we would experience so much.

At the beach I went jet-skiing with my guide, which was really exhilarating. We were also towed in inflatable donuts from a speedboat. My guide for the day was with me. She is a lot smaller than me so there was a lot of bouncing around and screaming! Afterwards we were able to sit in the speedboat and listen to our friends screaming during their turn on the donuts.

At Chang Mai we went to a tea plantation, picking and making our own tea. Another day we went out on Tuk-Tuks and visited temples. Further immersing ourselves in the culture we had a Thai cooking lesson and also a Thai boxing lesson (I didn't expect that... but it was great). We also went to the set of “Good Morning Vietnam” and had a look at where it was filmed.

The whole holiday felt enabling and the guides treated us as just another person in the group and that I didn't have a disability. I absolutely loved Thailand. The whole experience was amazing and everything was enjoyable for different reasons. I would definitely do it again.”

East Devon



Our Community Support Service in East Devon is run by Tracey Agutter.

Many of the clients I meet on my travels around East Devon, either in their own home when going through a Sight Loss MOT or at one of the four Talk and Support Groups, are not aware of the Registration Process.

If you have a permanent visual impairment you may be eligible to be registered as sight impaired. Being registered often makes it easier to get practical help and may qualify you for certain benefits. It certainly helps support applications for Attendance Allowance.

If you are registered with a Severe Sight Impairment you can apply for an automatic blue badge and if you are a UK tax payer an increase in your personal tax allowance. This allowance can be transferred to your spouse or civil partner if you do not pay tax or earn enough to use all your allowance.

Tracey can be contacted through our Head Office in Kennford on:

01392 876 666

Serving Axminster, Budleigh, Exmouth Honiton, Sidmouth and surrounding districts.

There are two categories of registration: sight impaired and severely sight impaired.

To be registered you need to have your sight examined by a hospital Ophthalmologist. If you have been discharged from the hospital you can ask your GP or optician for a referral. Registration is voluntary.

For further information contact the RNIB on 0303 123 9999.

Tactile Art Sessions

Last year we piloted six tactile art sessions with the Thelma Hulbert Gallery who are based in Honiton.

The sessions were really popular with clients so we managed to raise some additional funding to run a further six artist led sessions at the end of last year at Twyford House, Sidmouth.

Our clients were able to experiment with a number of artistic mediums and techniques including tactile painting, printmaking, lantern making and needle punching. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery as part of their Land to Sea Project will be exhibiting the work done at the sessions at Sidmouth Museum once the coronavirus situation is over.

The sessions provided an opportunity for people to get out, have some fun and make some new friendships.

We are hoping to raise more funding for additional sessions so if you are interested please let us know.



Devon Access Travel Wallets

The Devon Access Wallet scheme is an initiative to help make journeys by bus or train easier for anyone with communication difficulties, people with disabilities, deaf people and those whose first language is not English.

- You can use your wallet on any bus in Devon.
- You can also use your wallet on any First Great Western train.
- You can use your wallet at any time of the day.
- Anyone can have a wallet.

However, your wallet does not give you free or discounted travel on the bus or train.

Avid bus user Joan, was given a Devon Access Wallet by Tracey Agutter of Devon in Sight. She then decided to initiate her own survey by asking the Stagecoach bus drivers if they were aware of it.

Joan explains, “I surveyed fifteen drivers in one week – only four knew about the wallets (but thought they referred to sight loss only) and the others said they would pass the message on. One told me that there is a notice on the board in their staff room in Exeter.”

We would like to send a big thank you to Joan for her survey.

Tracey then passed Joan’s results to Devon County Council and received the following response from Rachel Phillips.

“This is hugely helpful. There is always quite a high turnover of bus drivers, but the access wallet should be included in their induction training! I will follow this up with Stagecoach.”

If you are a resident of Devon and would like a Wallet, or further information on the scheme, please contact Devon County Council:

Telephone: 01392 383 509

Email: accesswallet@devon.gov.uk

Or write to: Devon Access Wallet, Transport Coordination Service, Devon County Council, County Hall, Exeter EX2 4QD

Mid & West Devon



In January we were delighted to welcome Louise Camies as our new Community Support Worker for Mid and West Devon

A Month in the life of a Community Support Worker.

What a whirlwind month!

Being new to the role I was naturally anxious, but I needn't have worried.

From my induction at Head Office, to attending the Talk and Support Groups, to visiting clients at home, every single person I have met and spoken to has been kind and welcoming... so thank you!

I love that every day is different. I may be hosting a Talk and Support Group, undergoing training, rearranging group dates (sorry Tavistock!) talking to new clients about what support we can offer, visiting local Opticians to raise awareness, liaising with speakers or just having a chat with clients.

Louise can be contacted through our Head Office on:

01392 876 666

Serving Crediton, Cullompton, Tiverton and surrounding districts.

During my first week in the role I was invited to attend the Yoga Sessions in Tavistock which had been set up in conjunction with Devon in Sight. This was great fun and although a little stiff the following day I really enjoyed it!

I was also invited to the Macular Group's coffee morning in Holsworthy. This was a great opportunity to meet people and experience the largest raffle I have ever seen!

Judy Pride from the Macular Society came along to the very well attended Cullompton Group with her 'Daily Living Gadgets'. Judy demonstrated that sometimes a simple thing can make such a huge difference to people with sight loss.

We have been lucky to have some fantastic speakers at our Talk and Support Groups such as Age UK, Macular Society, Action on Hearing Loss, RNIB and of course our very own Sight Loss Advisor, Richard Bowman. The feedback from clients has been really positive.

I must also mention the support from the volunteers in both areas. Thank you to Ray, Tina and Jeannette for your invaluable help.

I am excited about the start of my new career with Devon in Sight. It is a wonderful charity and seeing first-hand the difference it makes to people's lives has been extremely rewarding.

Colin's Story

Colin was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration in 2009 but was determined not to let it stop him doing the things that he enjoyed.

For twenty years Colin had enjoyed wood turning as a hobby and was worried that his Macular Degeneration would put an end to his passion. After his diagnosis, during a conversation with former Devon in Sight Support Worker Margaret Vickers he was made aware of Chris Fisher, 'The Blind Wood Turner'. Inspired by Chris, Colin realized that his sight loss didn't have to mean the end of his much loved hobby.

Colin works with oak, elder and cherry amongst others and produces high quality pieces. He has a well-stocked workshop at his home and makes various objects such as bowls, solitaire boards, stools, cheeseboards, side tables and coffee tables. He has also made a prayer box for a local church.

Colin can normally be found in his workshop every morning for three hours and again in the early evening, if it's not his turn to cook the dinner! He is also looking forward to the better weather coming when he will be able to spend more time at his allotment. All this has to work around the eight miles Colin walks daily with his faithful Collie, Archie before spending his evenings listening to his audio books.

Colin's advice to people with sight loss is, "Don't just assume that you can't do things!"

"With perseverance and patience, anything is possible!"

Colin has had to adapt to new ways of doing things and admits that things can take a lot longer than they used to. If he occasionally feels that something is not going well, he reminds himself to 'stop, plan and think of an alternative way.'

Mistakes do happen, it is more of a struggle than before and even with multiple task lights things can go wrong. Colin jokes that he never needs to buy kindling for his fire!

Wood turning is 'therapy' for Colin. He is determined not to let his sight loss control his life and wants others to know that with perseverance and patience, anything is possible.





Don't miss out...

Newsletter Subscription

Our FREE Newsletter is our way of sharing with you what we are doing in the world of Visual Impairment in Devon and beyond.

The Newsletter is available as a high quality, full colour, large print publication, digitally via email and in audio USB format.

Regular content includes:

- The Chief Executive's Update
- Sight Loss Sector Developments
- News in Brief
- What's On
- Community Support Service Updates
- Feature Stories
- Independent Living Equipment
- Specialist Sight Loss Training
- Top Tips
- Fundraising News
- Friends of Devon in Sight
- How to Support Us
- Voting Membership

For further information about Newsletter subscription...

Call our Helpline: 01392 876 666

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