

In Vision

The magazine of Devon in Sight

Summer 2023 Issue 35



**Devon
Sight Loss
Conference
2023 Launch
Pages 4-5**

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Chief Executive Officer's

Welcome



Welcome to the Summer Edition of In Vision Magazine.

It's been ten long years since I joined Devon in Sight in April 2013. Throughout my tenure at the charity honesty, integrity, innovation but above all kindness has underpinned everything that I do. It is an honour to represent people affected by sight loss across Devon.

To business. The COVID-19 pandemic was very challenging but the moment that restrictions were lifted we started to hold events around the county. Our programme of **Living Well with Sight Loss Events** continue across Devon where you can meet partners from Health & Social Care, the voluntary sector and community groups. We look forward to meeting up face-to-face.

I am pleased to announce that we will be hosting **The Devon Sight Loss Conference** incorporating our **Exeter Living Well with Sight Loss Event** and our **Annual General Meeting** on Friday 20th October in central Exeter. We will be sharing our early plans later in this magazine.

Monday 10th July marks the tenth anniversary of Jennie Benham joining Devon in Sight as our Office Manager. She was my first appointment at the charity. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her quite extraordinary loyalty and hard work.

Onwards and upwards.

Grahame
Grahame Flynn
Chief Executive Officer

Devon in Sight is registered with the Helplines Partnership

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Devon Sight Loss Conference



Save
the
Date!

We are pleased to announce that we will be holding our first Devon Sight Loss Conference on Friday 20th October in central Exeter. This event will include a Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition and our 98th Annual General Meeting.

The location will be the **Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel**, a classical Victorian hotel which has recently been refurbished. This is situated close to the cathedral and directly opposite Central Railway Station.

The Devon Sight Loss Conference

We will be inviting a range of guest speakers from across the statutory and voluntary sectors to share news about services and developments. We will be providing a full Conference Programme in the Autumn Edition of In Vision Magazine and registration details. **This will be a ticket only event with a maximum of 150 places.**

“Our 98th Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 20th October in central Exeter this year.”

Devon in Sight's 98th Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the year's most important meeting. It will provide our Voting Membership, stakeholders, and the Board of Trustees an overview of Devon in Sight's current position, including its finances, and confirms its general purpose.

Everyone is welcome to join the Annual General Meeting but in order to vote on a resolution or to submit a question you must be a Registered Voting Member. **If you would like to become a Voting Member see pages 6-7.**

Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition

We are inviting representatives from the sight loss sector such as Blind Veterans UK, Talking Newspapers, Sensory Team Rehabilitation Officers, local Blind Clubs, Lions Clubs, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and community transport.

There will be a comprehensive Assistive Technology stand courtesy of our Assistive Technology Partner, Sight and Sound Technology Ltd.

We would like to thank Sight and Sound Technology Limited for sponsoring this event.



To register your interest in attending the event please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Voting Membership



Devon in Sight promotes a culture of listening and participation at all levels of the charity. Keeping ‘client voice’ at the heart of our charity ensures that we continue to do the very best for people living with sight loss in Devon.

Devon in Sight is the trading name for the Devon County Association for the Blind, and it is constituted as a Membership Charity. Despite introducing Proxy Voting a few years ago our Voting Membership decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are actively seeking to change this.

What is Voting Membership?

Firstly, we want service users and others involved with sight loss services to have a say in how we develop, and to be able to vote on important issues. Secondly, under our constitution, for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be valid, we must have a certain number of Voting Members present or voting by proxy.

Devon in Sight promotes a culture of listening and participation at all levels of the charity

With the announcement that we are bringing back our face-to-face Annual General Meeting we are keen to encourage more of you to become Voting Members. Everyone will be welcome at the AGM, but in order to speak, ask a question or vote you need to be registered as a Voting Member. Please remember, if you are unable to attend the AGM you will still be able to take part using your Proxy Vote.

What does it cost to become a Voting Member?

Voting Membership is FREE. However, you undertake that if Devon in Sight is dissolved while you are a Member you will pay a sum not exceeding £1 (one pound) towards the debts and liabilities of the charity and the costs and expenses of winding it up.

Who can become a Voting Member of Devon in Sight?

Anyone can apply to become a Voting Member, including individuals with sight loss (whether you currently use our services or not), families and friends, professionals and anyone who is committed to supporting and encouraging us in our work. We want you to have a voice and to help us improve what we do.

How do I become a Voting Member?

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.

We can also register you as a Voting Member over the telephone.

To register as a **Voting Member** please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Community Champion Awards

In a world where people are quick to complain, Devon in Sight is keen to recognise outstanding customer service from an individual or organisation for people who are blind or partially sighted in Devon.

We would like to thank those of you who have taken the time to share your positive experiences of customer service.

All nominees will receive a Community Champion Certificate.

The Macular Eye Clinic in Exeter

Devon in Sight client Maggie recently nominated a nurse at the Macular Eye Clinic, Exeter for a Community Champion Award.

We know that many patients get anxious at the prospect of having an injection to the eye as part of their Macular Disease treatment. We are therefore delighted to have received a nomination for Annette Mills an Injecting Nurse at the Royal Devon University Health Care NHS Foundation Trust, Macular Eye Clinic from Maggie.

Maggie says, "Annette has reduced the anxiety I experienced at the thought of have an injection and her kind, gentle way has turned what is not a pleasant experience into one that I no longer worry about".

We would like to thank Annette on behalf of all the clients receiving injections that she cares for - Well done.



Recognising outstanding customer service for people who are blind or partially sighted in Devon

Prestige Taxis of Dartmouth



Accessing transport for some of our clients is difficult.

In promoting our recent **Living Well with Sight Loss Event** in Kingsbridge we asked if anyone needed help to attend.

Thanks to some sponsorship from Devon County Council under the Connecting You Project we were able to arrange a taxi for one of our clients who would normally be prohibited from attending such an event.

Susan, a ninety-five year old client from Dartmouth said, "The taxi driver Beccy Bannister was very pleasant and caring and even checked that it was the right building before guiding me in."

We are delighted to recognise Beccy and Prestige Taxis with a Community Champion Award.



If you would like to nominate someone for a **Devon in Sight Community Champion Award** please ring us...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

UK Emergency Alerts Service



Unexpected emergencies can impact your home or life at any moment and when they do, every second counts. To ensure public safety when it matters most, the Government’s new Emergency Alerts Service is now operational across the UK.

The purpose of the **Emergency Alerts Service** is to enable government agencies and emergency services to warn people about life-threatening situations in their local area, such as severe flooding, fires, and public health crises. The switch-on of the service represents a landmark moment in the UK and follows the successful implementation of similar warning systems in places like Japan and New Zealand.

Customers across all mobile networks with 4G and 5G SIMs are now able to receive alerts with information and advice about how to keep them and their loved ones safe if the worst should happen.

“The Government’s new Emergency Alerts Service is now operational across the UK”

The emergency alerts have been purposely designed to look and sound very different to other types of messages customers may receive, such as SMS text messages. When an alert is sent out, your mobile phone or tablet will vibrate and make a loud siren-like sound (even if it is set to silent) for approximately ten seconds. In the event an emergency alert is sent out, it is important customers read the message carefully and follow the instructions.

Depending on your phone’s features, the alert will work with screen magnification and may also read the message out loud. Importantly, the unique noise emitted by the phone will also be audible for those who use a hearing aid. Emergency alerts will only ever be issued by the government or emergency services.

The system works by using mobile network infrastructure to send the same emergency message to all compatible phones in an area of risk, warning them of any danger and providing steps on how to stay safe. The service does not require your phone number, collect data, or track your location or movements. It also does not require an app to be downloaded and is completely free for everyone.

Your mobile phone or tablet does not have to be connected to mobile data or Wi-Fi to receive the alerts. However, customers currently using non-smartphone devices on legacy 2G and 3G networks – which the Government has committed to see phased out over the coming years – will not be able to receive these notifications.

To help people familiarise themselves with the new system and how it works, the Government sent out the first national test message using the Emergency Alerts Service on Sunday 23rd April. We’ll keep you updated of future developments.

BBC Local Radio Cuts Announced



The BBC has recently announced that local radio faces significant cuts to programming.

All 39 networks in England will keep their current schedule from 6am to 2pm, but after that shows will be shared. There will be 10 local programmes between 6-10pm on weekdays, across the day on Saturday, as well as on Sunday mornings. Live sports programming will not be affected.

Local radio holds politicians, councillors and businesses to account and connects them with what is going on in the local community. The shows put listeners into the heart of the broadcast like no other radio show does at this local level across England. The radio shows keep many people company, including many blind, visually impaired and older people who rely on them as their source of news, entertainment and information throughout the day and at the weekends.

Moving from local to regional shows in the afternoon and at the weekend will change local radio forever and there will be no way back for the much loved presenters, reporters and shows lost forever.

“The BBC has recently announced that local radio faces significant cuts to programming.”

The **National Federation of the Blind of the UK (NFBUK)** asked for the BBCs Equality Impact Assessment and a Public Value Test on the proposed changes to local radio through a Freedom of Information Request but the BBC said it was exempt to providing this information.

The proposed changes will result in the afternoon and weekend shows becoming regional, with many presenters losing their shows and jobs, in essence ripping the heart and soul out of the local public broadcasting service. It is critically important that we fight to keep these shows. This will be the start of the death of local radio and it is critical we stand up and support them, as they have on many occasions given us the opportunity to voice our concerns on issues affecting blind, visually impaired and disabled people in the local community. We understand these changes will be happening in June 2023.

Influencing Change

Devon in Sight is supporting an emergency petition arranged by the National Federation of the Blind of the UK (NFBUK) to the Director General of the BBC to challenge the decision and highlight the impact it will have on many blind and partially sighted people.

The NFBUK handed the petition into the BBC, to Number 10 and to Ofcom at the end of May.

Assistive Technology Partnership



▲ Tony Shrubbs with Alvis and Tony Merrall-Spiers

Since the last edition of In Vision Magazine we have held two Living Well with Sight Loss Events in South Molton and Kingsbridge with the kind support of Devon County Council.

Tessa Barrett, Head of Services said, “Many of you benefited from meeting Tony Shrubbs and Nick Alsbury from Sight and Sound Technology, the largest supplier of low vision equipment in the country. Alvis Merrall-Spiers and her husband were very welcome colourful characters who attended the South Molton Event. Alvis said, “ There was such a lot of information available for us. It was well worth visiting not only for the person living with sight loss but also family members.”

Our programme of Living Well with Sight Loss Events continues around the county. For more information see pages 16-17.

‘Helping maintain your independence with Technology’

Sight and Sound Technology Limited is the exclusive Assistive Technology partner of Devon in Sight.

They are the UK’s leading provider of equipment, software and services for people who are blind and partially sighted.

Sight and Sound Technology Limited has a Technical Support Team who strive to provide the best solution and support to improve the lives of those who have a sensory or age related disability.



We can refer you into this service which includes:

- Braille note takers
- Video magnifiers and scan and read solutions
- Hand picked new technology solutions
- A wide range of Apps and Smart Home Solutions
- Accredited suppliers for students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance and employees in receipt of Access to Work Allowance
- A wide range of supported IT services.

For info about our Assistive Technology Partnership ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Living Well with Sight Loss Events

'We have expanded our events to include more partners from the Sight Loss Sector and local communities'



▲ Tavistock Area Support Service

We are delighted to be bringing our Living Well with Sight Loss Events to Tavistock in June and Tiverton in August this year.

These events are an ideal opportunity for you to meet with the Devon in Sight Team and our Assistive Technology Partner Sight & Sound Technology.

We also invite representatives from the sight loss sector such as Blind Veterans UK, Talking Newspapers, Sensory Team Rehabilitation Officers, local Blind Clubs, Lions Clubs, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and community transport.

Our registered clients who live in the vicinity of each of these events will receive an invitation closer to the dates. Please give us a call to register to attend any of these events and to discuss your needs.

Events Calendar

Tavistock Event

Thursday 29 June 2023

(10am - 2pm)

Tavistock Area Support Service

The Anchorage Centre

Chapel Street

Tavistock

PL19 8AG

Tiverton Event

Thursday 10 August 2023

(10am - 2pm)

Old Heathcoat School

Community Centre

81 King Street

Tiverton

EX16 5JJ.

Exeter Event including AGM

Friday 20 October 2023

(10am - 4pm)

Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel

Queen Street

Exeter

EX4 3SP



▲ Old Heathcoat School



To register for our Living with Sight Loss Events please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday



▲ A Bus Visual Display

Disabled passengers across Great Britain will be able to travel more confidently thanks to new laws that will boost accessibility for everyone.

On 30 March 2023, the Department for Transport announced that it is introducing rules that will require almost every local bus or coach service to provide audible announcements and visual displays identifying the route and direction, each upcoming stop, and the beginning of any diversions.

The government is supporting industry to upgrade their vehicles, with £4.65 million in funding for the smallest bus and coach companies, and the changes will be implemented gradually, with almost all vehicles required to comply by October 2026.

At present, there is patchy provision across the country, with only 30% of buses outside London providing this information, which can be a major barrier for disabled people wanting to travel by bus or coach.

Clear audible and visible information will also benefit non-disabled people, helping those who are travelling on an unfamiliar bus route, and giving passengers confidence that they will not be left stranded at the wrong stop late at night.

Roads and Accessibility Minister Richard Holden said, “Everyone deserves to take the bus with confidence, and this is a massive boost for passenger independence. Simple and effective audible and visible information should be a baked-in feature of a modern bus service to help people reach their destination, wherever they travel in Great Britain.”

To ensure the information provides real-life benefits, the Department for Transport has worked closely with disabled passengers, user groups and the bus and coach sector, whilst giving operators the flexibility to choose solutions suitable for their services.

The Audio Visual Aids will include ensuring audio is available through induction loop systems, and all new vehicles introduced after October 2024 must also include visible information which can be seen by a wheelchair user when travelling in a rearward facing wheelchair space.

This announcement forms part of the government’s commitment to improve disabled people’s experience on our transport system and build stronger communities, including through their Inclusive Transport Strategy, which aims to create accessibly equality on the network by 2030.



It further builds on government's ambition to encourage people back onto buses after the pandemic, following £2 billion in funding to support the bus sector since 2020.

This announcement, and the financial support behind it, will open up opportunities for people with sight loss to live independently.

Grahame Flynn, CEO of Devon in Sight said, "At Devon in Sight we know that being blind or partially sighted has a significant impact on people's independence and emotional wellbeing.

There are around 50,000 people living with sight loss in Devon. And they need to travel to school, work and to the shops just like everyone else. But some people with sight loss can feel very anxious about travelling on public and community transport and even find it hard to leave the house at all.

We have been working with Devon County Council to raise awareness with Public and Community Bus Companies around accessibility issues for people living with disabilities, including sight loss.

Through **Devon County Council's Connecting You Project** we have highlighted that one of the most common complaints we hear from visually impaired passengers is the lack of clear audible and visible information.



We feel that this initiative should go further and include audible announcements and visual displays at bus stops. Many of our clients have complained that they have been left standing at a bus stop for over an hour only to discover that the bus had been cancelled.

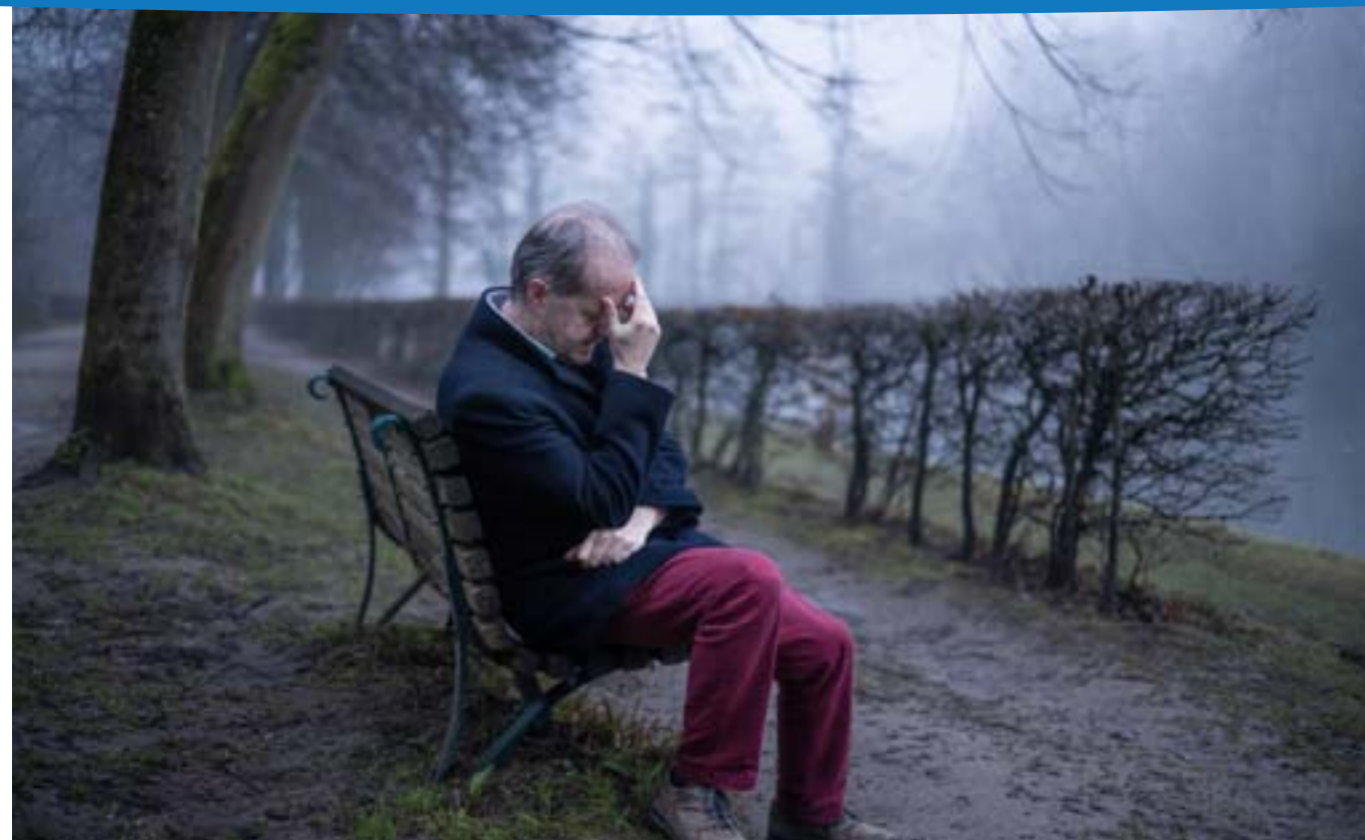
That said, we are delighted that the government has taken this significant step in making bus travel more accessible to people with a visual impairment.

The team at Devon in Sight are still taking an active role in the Driver Awareness Training Programme led by Devon County Council. The training recognises how critical the role of the bus driver is to a passenger's journey experience.

We are currently writing a **Disability Awareness Guide for Bus Drivers** which will be distributed by Devon County Council to all public and community bus operators in Devon later this summer.

Change takes time but the team at Devon in Sight are doing our bit!"

Disability and Suicide Risk



The team at Devon in Sight were very shocked to read about the ‘stark’ face of England and Wales suicide statistics in relation to people living with disabilities.

The **BBC Access All Podcast** reported that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has recently suggested disabled people had the highest rate of dying by suicide compared to other groups.

It found 48 disabled men per 100,000 people and 19 disabled women ended their lives, compared to 16 non-disabled men and five women.

It is the first time the ONS has used a combination of the 2011 Census and death registration data to estimate suicides within the English and Welsh population. It looked at a series of “statuses” including disability, employment, religion and relationship to see how they compared.

The ‘stark’ face of England and Wales suicide statistics

Its statisticians concluded the disabled community was the most likely to die by suicide, while those who had never worked, were long-term unemployed or single and had never been married or in a civil partnership were also highly impacted.

Fazilet Hadi from the leading disability rights charity, Disability Rights UK (DRUK) described the new suicide statistics as the “tragic face of systemic inequality”.

But Ms Hadi, who is herself visually impaired, told the BBC Access All podcast that rather than looking at isolated characteristics, it was often down to a combination of factors.

“For disabled people, a lot of us do find ourselves living alone and a lot of us are unemployed. We know that when you cannot make ends meet, it really does put a pressure on you. It adds to your anxiety and mental health issues.”

She added the “deep cuts in public services” over the years including to mental health services and the current cost of living crisis had made “our lives extremely, extremely difficult”.

Jacqui Morrissey, Assistant Director in policy, practice and influencing at Samaritans said the organisation had similar thoughts to DRUK and found the high rate of deaths “deeply concerning”.

She said, “It is crucially important to remember that suicide is not inevitable. It is preventable, complex, and rarely caused by one single factor.

“We need to work with the disabled community to understand more about this and ensure the Government’s promised **Suicide Prevention Strategy** comes with proper funding in order to tackle the inequalities highlighted.”

Disability and Suicide Risk

The cross-government **Suicide Prevention Strategy** that the Samaritans referred to aims to reduce England's suicide rate and provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide. We understand the strategy will be published later this year.

In a statement, the Department of Health and Social Care said, "We are also investing £57m in suicide prevention through the NHS Long-Term Plan, and all local areas now have a Suicide Prevention Plan that we would expect to consider the needs of people with disabilities."

Disabled activists have been asking the government for years to publish disabled suicide statistics since the austerity measures and cuts to benefits were adopted.

Ms Hadi said, "I feel so pleased that the ONS is surfacing some of these issues because I think they are giving us a very clear indication of the inequalities and injustice being faced by disabled people every day of the week."

The ONS statistics were published as lone figures and did not give insights into why these figures were high or what led people to take their lives. It added that one of the "limitations" to its work was a lack of information around mental health, which it hoped to incorporate in the future.

The Samaritans added that suicidal thoughts and feelings are not permanent, and that sharing how you are feeling can have a life-changing impact.

Whatever you're going through...

Call Samaritans 116 123

A Samaritan will face it with you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

The 'stark' face of England and Wales suicide statistics

Devon in Sight's Response

Tessa Barrett, Head of Services said, "At Devon in Sight we do not shy away from controversial topics.

Suicides and suicide attempts have a ripple effect that impacts on families, friends, colleagues, communities and societies.

While the link between suicide and mental disorders (in particular, depression and alcohol use disorders) is well established, many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis. Further risk factors include experience of loss, loneliness, discrimination, a relationship break-up, financial problems, chronic pain and illness, violence and abuse.

The strongest risk factor for suicide is a previous suicide attempt. Suicides are preventable. Much can be done to prevent suicide at individual, community and national levels.

At Devon in Sight we are acutely aware of the emotional impact of sight loss. Our services are designed to help us keep people physically and mentally fit and safe in their homes.

We can help you make some healthy lifestyle choices such as smoking & alcohol cessation. We provide a number of accessible services such as weekly telephone based Chit-Chat Calls and monthly Sight Loss Speaker Seminars. We can also provide **emotional support** and in some cases **formal counselling.**"

For a confidential chat about how you are feeling ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Health & Wellbeing Service

Chit-Chat Calls



▲ Mark Harper

For fun, friendship and really useful information about living life with sight loss you can join our free telephone based Chit-Chat Calls which take place every Wednesday from 10.30am to 11.30am.

Anyone affected by sight loss, including family, friends and carers can join the calls. They are moderated by a member of the Devon in Sight staff team who has received comprehensive sight loss awareness training.

Regular caller Mark Harper, who is severely visually impaired, recently shared his experiences of the Chit-Chat Call Service.

Mark said, “I have been attending the Chit-Chat Calls since the very beginning. I particularly like the fact that the service is open to anyone and that they are warm and welcoming.

My sight loss journey is different to others but the Chit-Chat Calls are a great opportunity for callers to share their tips for living with sight loss.

Despite my sight loss I am keen to continue travelling and using public transport. There have been many advances in technology in recent years so we often share new equipment ideas and smart phone apps that make life easier to get out and about.

Whilst the calls are primarily about living with sight loss we do talk about other things. However, we try and steer clear of politics and religion.

“Chit-Chat Calls are a great opportunity for callers to share their tips for living with sight loss.”

Having a member of Devon in Sight staff on the call is hugely valuable, particularly if someone is talking too much or going off topic! They raise topics of conversation and fill us in on charity news and developments. As a charity Devon in Sight don't give medical or financial advice but they are able to signpost us to the correct people for this kind of help.

Our lived experience of sight loss is very helpful to the charity. We have often received appeals from the staff to help with campaigns to change things for the better for everyone living with sight loss in Devon.

The emotional support given by the group is very heart warming. The call quite often cheers people up who have been feeling a little lonely or isolated. After all, this is about being nice and friendly and supportive of each other.

I think that we have all grown in confidence since we joined this service. I joined to help others. I sometimes get a buzz out of helping.

New callers are welcome to remain silent and just listen to the call until they have built up the confidence to introduce themselves. I would encourage anyone who hasn't given the calls a go to try.”

Telephone Chit-Chat Calls start every Wednesday at 10.30am

Tel: 0808 169 79 30

Calls from your home telephone or mobile are FREE

Speaker Seminars Summer 2023

Devon in Sight's Telephone-based Sight Loss Seminars are an opportunity for you to hear from our partners across the Health and Social Care and Voluntary sectors, in the comfort of your own home.

These events are far from passive and are structured so that following a formal information sharing presentation; listeners can contribute by asking questions and share their lived experiences of sight loss.

An archive of previous seminars is accessible through the Devon in Sight Website under the Events section.

Sight Loss Speaker Seminars take place every second Tuesday of the month at 10.30am on Freephone 0808 169 79 30. Calls from your home telephone or mobile are FREE.

Tuesday 13 June 2023

'Fire Service Update'

We are delighted to be joined by the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service for an update on their FREE Home Visit Service for people with sensory issues. We will also be looking at the physical and mental health dangers of hoarding.

Our Guest Speaker is Ian Johnston from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.



Tuesday 11 July 2023

'Introducing Blind Veterans UK'

Formally known as St. Dunstan's, Blind Veterans UK has been helping those who have served their country to rebuild their lives after sight loss for over 100 years.

Our Guest Speaker is **Aaron Garratt, Community Team Leader from Blind Veterans UK.**



▲ Aaron Garratt

Tuesday 8 August 2023

'Visual Hallucinations Explained'

Charles Bonnet Syndrome can develop when someone of any age - children are not exempt - has lost over 60% of their sight. It causes vivid, silent, visual hallucinations which range from disturbing to terrifying. What is seen depends on which part of the brain is firing. It is not a mental health condition but caused entirely by loss of sight.

Our Guest Speaker is **Judith Potts the Founder of Esme's Umbrella.**

The archive of Sight Loss Speaker Seminars can be found on our website www.devoninsight.org.uk



▲ Judith Potts



To access Telephone Sight Loss Speaker Seminars ring...

Tel: 0808 169 79 30

Calls from your home telephone or mobile are **FREE**

All you need is sleep!



We know that losing your sight is very traumatic and many of our clients tell us that sleeping can be very difficult particularly when you are first diagnosed with sight loss.

Sleep is an essential function that is interconnected with several other mental and physical health conditions. We know that getting a good night's sleep can make a remarkable difference to your mood and overall well-being.

We asked Annie Ford, who provides a counselling service for Devon in Sight to speak about the benefits of sleep at our May Sight Loss Speaker Seminar. Annie is a British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Registered Counsellor. She has received additional sight loss training through the RNIB.

Annie explained, "We often overlook the potential long term health consequences of insufficient sleep, and the impact that health problems can ultimately have on one's time and productivity.

'Sleep is an essential function that is interconnected with several other mental and physical health conditions.'

So many of us view sleep as a luxury and think the benefits of limiting the hours we spend asleep outweigh the costs.

It is a proven fact that women require more sleep than men and that sleep will impact on women going through the menopause."

What is the effect of insomnia on our Wellbeing?

17 hours of continuous sleeplessness (insomnia) leads to a decrease in our performance that is equivalent to a blood alcohol level of two glasses of wine.

Sleep loss may increase the risk of obesity because chemicals and hormones that play a key role in controlling appetite and weight gain are released during sleep.

So how much sleep do we need?

For good health we need at least 6 hours of Non-Rapid Eye Movement sleep and 1 hour of Rapid Eye Movement (REM).

What are the benefits of sleep?

Sleep helps reduce the risks of weight gain. It reduces the risks of depression due to reduced serotonin production and helps the body repair itself improving life span, memory, happiness and energy.

If you are struggling to get a good night's sleep, what can you do about it?

Annie referred to 'Sleep Hygiene' and explained how to get the best out of a good night's sleep and gave us a list of do's and don'ts.

- Set a sleep schedule that works for you and stick to it!

Your Sleep Hygiene Guide

- Paying attention to sleep hygiene is one of the most straight forward ways that you can set yourself up for better sleep.
- Strong sleep hygiene means having both a calm bedroom environment and daily routines that promote consistent uninterrupted sleep.
- Keeping a stable sleep schedule, making your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions, following a relaxing pre-bed routine, and building healthy habits during the day can all contribute to ideal sleep hygiene.
- Good sleep is important for mental and physical health. If you are having pain issues talk to your doctor. Managing pain is important for good quality sleep.
- If you can't sleep, instead of tossing and turning after 30 minutes, get up, leave the bedroom, do something relaxing and return to bed.
- Avoid caffeine from about 4pm (consider de-decaffeinated drinks instead).
- Don't drink alcohol within 4 hours of going to bed, it causes disruption of deep Rapid Eye Movement sleep.
- Don't take long daytime naps, a short 10-minute nap can help rest the body if needed.
- Don't exercise before going to bed.
- Sleep inducing foods containing tryptophan help sleep, converting them into serotonin and melatonin such as milk, bananas, turkey and leafy green vegetables.
- Avoid heavy spicy foods like chilli and curry's. drinks like tea, coffee, chocolate and cola, foods high in sugar and fat, food that contain high level MSG, smoked meats and soy products.

'Strong sleep hygiene means having both a calm bedroom environment and daily routines that promote consistent uninterrupted sleep.'

Is there anything else you can do to relax?

Annie suggests trying some breathing techniques. These really are very simple exercises and easy to do.

Exercise 1

Breathe in through the nose for a count of 4.
Hold the breath for a count of 7
Exhale through the mouth for a count of 8.

If you find that you are not able to hold your breath for this length of time, try the next exercise.

Exercise 2

Breathe in through the nose for a count of 4.
Hold the breath for a count of 4.
Breathe out through the mouth for a count of 4.

Where can I get more information about sleep?

If you would like a copy of our **Good Sleep Guide** please give us a call on the Helpline.

Alternatively, you can hear the full seminar by visiting our website at www.devoninsight.org.uk and looking under Events and then Sight Loss Speaker Seminars.

We would like to thank Annie Ford for this article.

For more information about **Health & Wellbeing** please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Reminding You Text Alert Service



Do you ever struggle to remember when Devon in Sight is holding a Telephone Chit-Chat Call or Sight Loss Speaker Seminar?

What is the Reminding You Text Alert Service?

Devon in Sight's new Reminding You Text Alert Service is a convenient and flexible way to keep in touch with Devon in Sight, no matter where you are. **This is an opt in service** that allows us to send text messages to your mobile or landline telephone.

Jennie Benham, Office Manager at Devon in Sight said, "This service is available to clients and professionals reminding you of our telephone-based Chit-Chat Calls, Speaker Seminars and community-based Living Well with Sight Loss Events. This is a trial service and will be reviewed in three months."

Keeping people affected by sight loss in Devon informed

Why should I sign up to Reminding You Text Alerts?

Reminding You text alerts from Devon in Sight will be user-friendly and easy to navigate.

If you use your mobile telephone to join the Chit-Chat calls or Sight Loss Speaker Seminars, you can click on the telephone number in the text message to join the event without having to dial the number.

How will I know that the text alert is from Devon in Sight?

When you receive a Reminding You Text Alert from us it will say 'DIS-No Reply' at the beginning of the message.

How many text reminders will I receive in an average month?

You will only receive a limited number of texts a month reminding you of the weekly Chit-Chat Calls and monthly Sight Loss Speaker Seminars. This is an average of 5 texts in a month.

How much will the Reminding You Text Alert Service cost me?

The service will work on your mobile telephone or landline and is FREE.

Can I cancel the Reminding You Text Alert Service?

This is an opt in service and you will be able to stop the text alerts by calling our helpline.



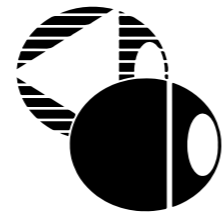
To join the Reminding You Text Alert Service please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Clinical Research & Trials

The Retina Clinic London is the UK's first and only private self-contained dedicated retina clinic.



THE RETINA CLINIC
LONDON

It is located on Harley Street, London, and is led by Professor Paulo-Eduardo Stanga. One of the most qualified vitreoretinal surgeons and specialists in retinal diseases, Director Prof. Stanga, is an expert in his field and international Key Opinion Leader with over 30 years of experience in Ophthalmology.

Prof. Stanga has pioneered many diagnostic technologies, treatments, and clinical trials. Amongst others, he has performed the first gene therapy surgery for Dry Age-related Macular Degeneration (Dry AMD) with Geographic Atrophy (GA) in the UK outside of a teaching hospital and as part of a clinical trial. Therefore, they are keen to make patients aware that there is choice outside of teaching hospitals to access Clinical Trials.

When no approved treatments are available, Prof. Stanga and his dedicated research team have a passion for bringing the most innovative treatments to patients in the form of Clinical Trials.

Clinical Trials can be an option for patients who have previously been told that there is nothing else that can be done for them when there are no approved treatments for their retinal disease, i.e., "Dry" Age-related Macular Degeneration.

"There is a choice outside of teaching hospitals to access clinical trials."

All current Clinical Trials are Industry-sponsored and are therefore at no cost to patients. Patients are reimbursed for travel and accommodation expenses (maximum reimbursement amounts are dependent on each clinical trial).

Professor Stanga and The Retina Clinic London Research Team are pleased to announce that they are now recruiting for several new clinical trials in the following conditions:

- **Dry Age-related Macular Degeneration (Dry AMD) with Geographic Atrophy (GA)**
- **Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration (Wet AMD)**
- **Vitreous Floaters and Opacities (VFO)**

Professor Stanga is Principal Investigator, Examiner, and Surgeon for all Clinical Trials at The Retina Clinic London and is supported by his research team. All diagnostic tests and treatments are carried out on-site at The Retina Clinic London.

The Retina Clinic London's Clinical Trials Coordinators are keen to speak to anyone who thinks they may benefit from participating in one of their clinical trials.

If you, or someone you know, is affected with any of the above conditions, please contact Devon in Sight for more information.

For more information about **Accessing Clinical Trials** ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Community Fundraising

Every Spring and Autumn Freemasons from all around Devon meet to support local organisations who require financial assistance, among which are children's charities, schools, youth centres and locally based charities including hospices, hospital services and cancer charities.

The money is raised through the 'WAKE FUND', a trust conceived by William Alexander Kneel, the Devonshire Provincial Grand Master from 1970 to 1984. He was the late owner of Kneels laundry & dry cleaners (now Johnsons). Since the idea was initiated, the fund has grown through the continued generosity of Devonshire Freemasons and wise investments.

Devon in Sight was supported by Dr Leo Clarke, the incoming Master of Exeter's St. George's Lodge to make an application to the fund the purchase of additional USB data sticks for the audio version of this magazine.

R. W. Bro. Nicholas Ball the Provincial Grand Master for the Province of Devonshire made the presentation to our Chief Executive Officer Grahame Flynn on Friday 2nd June 2023.

Grahame said, "We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the members of St. George's Lodge and the Province of Devonshire for their kind donation of £1,250.



▲ R. W. Bro. Nicholas Ball

Our Community supporting people living with sight loss in Devon

What are Freemasons?

Freemasons are a unique members' organisation which has thrived for over 300 years. Having no political or religious affiliations, they comprise members of all ages, races, religions, cultures and backgrounds.

They meet in their individual Lodges throughout the country where they have ceremonial traditions which encourage their membership both to be more tolerant and respectful and actively to fulfil their civic and charitable responsibilities; they also make time to eat, drink and meet together, and form lifelong friendships.

Freemasons aim to attract members from all backgrounds and walks of life, enabling them to develop into more thoughtful and confident people. To inspire and challenge them to practise the core values they celebrate - Integrity, Friendship, Respect, Charity - in their private and public lives.

For more information about the work of Devon's Freemasons please visit www.devonshirefreemasons.org.uk



For more information about this story please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Supporting us

Friends of Devon in Sight



We know that times are hard for everyone, but if you are able to support us with a small donation, it means we can continue our vital work.

Our Regular Giving Scheme 'Friends of Devon in Sight' is the best way that you can support your local sight loss charity during these very challenging times. You can give as little or as much as you would like with a monthly direct debit.

Could you spare the cost of a cup of coffee to help fund future editions of this magazine, to provide counselling sessions for people in crisis, to keep our telephone support services running?

Everyone who joins our Regular Giving Scheme 'Friends of Devon in Sight' will receive a limited edition, 'I'm a Friend of Devon in Sight' enamel badge.

It has never been more important to do your bit to support your local sight loss charity

There are a number of other ways that you can help Devon in Sight financially to continue supporting people with sight loss across Devon.

Make a One Off Donation by over the Telephone

You can make a card donation over the telephone by ringing the main Helpline number.

Make a One Off Donation by Cheque

Please make cheques payable to 'Devon in Sight' and send to: **The Office Manager, Devon in Sight, Splatford Barton, Kennford, Exeter EX6 7XY.**

Make a One Off Donation by Bank Transfer

You can make a donation through Online Banking to: 'Devon County Association for the Blind'
Sort Code: 30-80-37
Account Number: 62326768

Leave us a gift in your Will

Ask for a copy of our **Ultimate Guide to Leaving a Lasting Legacy to Charity**. This is designed to give an overview of the importance of making a will, a will writing check-list and how legacies have supported our work.

If you would like to speak confidentially about the options available to you please do not hesitate to ring the helpline and have a chat with our Office Manager, Jennie Benham.

To support Devon in Sight with a donation please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

An Overview of Our Services

Devon in Sight offers a range of holistic services for people who are blind or partially sighted, their families, friends and carers who live or work in Devon.

This is a summary of our core services.

Our Information, Advice and Guidance Service

We are committed to providing accurate and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance. You can access our comprehensive information resources through our Helpline on **01392 876 666**. Our website is available at **www.devoninsight.org.uk**

In Vision Magazine is available FREE in a range of accessible formats - large print, digitally via email and in audio. It can also be accessed on your smart phone through the **British Wireless for the Blind App** and your Alexa Smart Speaker through the **Talking Newspaper Skill**.

Our Independent Living Service

We work with you to identify the equipment, support and training that will help you maintain your independence and live life to the full. We undertake this valuable work in partnership with Health and Social Care and the voluntary sector.

We have a unique **Assistive Technology Partnership** with Sight and Sound Ltd., the UK's leading provider of equipment, software and services for people who are blind and partially sighted.

We also offer **Living Well with Sight Loss Events** across the county where you can meet partners in Health & Social care, the voluntary sector and community groups.

Supporting people affected by sight loss in Devon

Our Health & Wellbeing Service

Our Health and Wellbeing Service aims to help keep you physically and mentally fit and safe in your home. We can help you make some healthy lifestyle choices such as smoking cessation or arrange a FREE home safety check with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. We can also provide **emotional support** and in some cases **formal counselling**.

For fun, friendship and really useful information about living life with low vision you can join our free telephone based **Chit-Chat Calls**. To access the calls simply dial **0808 169 79 30** at **10.30am** every **Wednesday morning**.

Our free **Telephone Speaker Seminars** take place monthly with speakers from across the sight loss sector and beyond. These are structured so that following a formal information sharing presentation; listeners can contribute by asking questions and share their lived experiences of sight loss. **A schedule of events and joining instructions can be found on pages 28 and 29.**

Influencing Change

We believe that it is important that people who are blind or partially sighted, their family and carers have a voice in the development of sight loss services and other community services across Devon. We are pleased to hear your thoughts about how services across Devon can be improved.

For more information about our services please ring...

Helpline 01392 876 666

The Helpline is open between 10am and 2pm Monday to Friday

Articles for the Blind

Return Address: Devon in Sight
Splatford Barton, Splatford, Kennford
Exeter, EX6 7XY



Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity

01392 876 666

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

Devon in Sight
Splatford Barton, Kennford,
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