Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity

100 YEARS
1925 - 2025

# In Vision

## The magazine of Devon in Sight

Autumn 2025 Issue 44




Booking Now!

## Devon Sight Loss Conference 2025:

*'100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'*

FREE MAGAZINE

Autumn 2025 - Issue 44

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Devon in Sight is a Member of **the Helpline Partnership**

**Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666**

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

Chief Executive Officer's

# Welcome



**Welcome to the Autumn Edition of In Vision Magazine.**

**When I was writing my introduction to the summer edition of In Vision Magazine we were all moaning about the grey, wet weather! Here we are now, moaning about the heat and endless sunshine! How very British!**

Despite the weather, it has been lovely meeting so many of you at our Living Well with Sight Loss Events across Devon. It is very humbling hearing from so many of you about the impact that our services have made to your lives. Looking to the future, work has already commenced planning events and securing accessible venues for 2026 and 2027!

I'm delighted to announce that bookings are now open for the **3rd Devon Sight Loss Conference** which takes place at the Exeter Rougemont Hotel on Thursday 18th September 2025. This has become the premier event for the people affected by sight loss and professionals working the field of low vision in Devon. **The theme this year is '100 Years of Devon in Sight - Building a Better Future'.**

We are also pleased to open bookings for our **Centenary Celebration Dinner** to be held the day before the conference at the same venue. Our patron Lady Diana Devon will be our guest of honour. We are yet to finalise all the details, but places at both of these events are limited so register your interest through the helpline number as soon as possible.

Onwards and Upwards!

**Grahame Flynn**
Chief Executive Officer

# Jump for Sight Shock Cancellation

*Our Community supporting people living with sight loss in Devon!*



◀ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Skydive Buzz)

**As part of our Centenary Fundraising Programme, Devon in Sight had arranged a series of tandem skydives at Dunkeswell Airfield over a three-day period. A total of twelve participants were scheduled to complete their skydives, with significant sponsorship pledged in support of our services for people with sight loss across Devon.**

On 13th June 2025, a tragic accident occurred during an independent tandem skydive, where two individuals (not connected to Devon in Sight), lost their lives.

Considering our duty of care to our volunteers, we took the decision that Devon in Sight branded events would not take place **until the accident has been investigated fully and the cause of the accident established.**

Veteran skydiver and Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn said, "This incident has had a profound impact on all involved, including our organisation, Skydive Buzz, participants, supporters, and the wider skydiving community.

I am pleased to report that our volunteers have spoken to their sponsors who have unanimously agreed that all sponsorship monies received will still go to Devon in Sight.

The British Parachuting Association categorised the incident as 'isolated' allowed Skydive Buzz to resume operations pending the full investigation.

However, on Thursday 24th July we recieved formal notification that the directors of SkyDive Buzz Limited had ceased operations and that the company will be placed into Compulsory Liquidation in due course.

Therefore, our events scheduled for 2025 and 2026 are cancelled and we will be looking for a new 'land-based' challenge moving forward."

**The team at Devon in Sight would like to extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of Belinda Taylor and Adam Harrison who lost their lives during this tragic accident and everyone at Skydive Buzz.**

If you would like to **make a card donation to Devon in Sight** call:

## Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

# Centenary Cream Tea





◀ Photo Credit: Sarah Small Devon in Sight

▲ Guests gather at Devon in Sight's Splatford Barton Office.

**On Thursday 19th June 2025 the Devon in Sight team hosted a Centenary Cream Tea in partnership with Kenn and Kennford Women's Institute at our office in Exeter.**

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn welcomed the Civic Mayor of Torbay Council, Councillor Barbara Lewis, and her consort Cllr. Chris Lewis and the Chair of Teignbridge District Council, Councillor Robert Steemson to Splatford Barton.

The Board of Trustees was represented by our Chair Dr Adrian Jacobs and Marilyn Minter-Newson who took the time to mix with our visitors. Grahame thanked the trustee board for their ongoing support with the governance of the charity.

Grahame went on to introduce the staff team and our long serving volunteer Linda Garaway who celebrated 22 years with the charity earlier this year.

Grahame said, "I'm delighted to welcome a number of our clients, and their partners today. All of them are beneficiaries of our services, some sit on the Devon Sight Loss Forum and others have undertaken fundraising challenges for us."



▲ Simulator Demonstration

Guests were given the opportunity to tour the building including the new counselling suite and were given a demonstration of the innovative EYESReality Sight Loss Simulator. This cutting edge technology gives sighted people the experience of living with various sight loss conditions.

We were blessed with a very hot sunny day and I would like to like to thank those people who donated raffle prizes.

The ladies of Kenn and Kennford Women's Institute were incredible and we would like to thank them for their support with this event."

**The Centenary Cream Tea raised over £300 for the charity.**

**Information, Advice and Guidance** Feature

# The Devon Sight Loss Helpline

*A day in the life of our Sight Loss Adviser Louise Millington.*



◀ Photo: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ Sight Loss Adviser Louise Millington

**Devon in Sight is committed to providing accurate and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance to people who are affected by sight loss and other stakeholders such as professionals working in Health & Social Care and the Third Sector.**

Our Sight Loss Adviser Louise Millington joined Devon in Sight **in July 2022. She is the single point of contact for all our incoming communications.**

With 17 years' experience supporting pupils with sight loss in education and some time as a 999/101 call handler with the Devon & Cornwall Police she has strong skills enabling her to undertake her role of Sight Loss Advisor with great professionalism and sensitivity.

**Louise explains a typical day at the helm of Devon in Sight's Sight Loss Helpline.**

"On leaving my car in the car park, the short walk to the office gives me a chance to enjoy the birdsong, bleating of sheep, and the distant hum of the morning commute. It's a world away from the usual hustle and bustle, and it sets a peaceful tone for the day ahead.

Once inside, lunch is tucked away in the fridge, the kettle on for that essential first coffee. Then, it's down to business, starting with a carefully crafted to-do list from the previous afternoon's efforts to get ahead.

The digital world calls next. Emails, both to myself and those directed to our enquiries inbox, demand attention. Each one is assessed, flagged, and prioritised, ensuring that urgent matters are addressed before our team briefing. This briefing is an important part of our day, a moment to raise any pressing issues gleaned from the morning's initial correspondence or any calls from yesterday. It is also a time for us to plan our busy schedule as a group.

While waiting for the phone lines to open at 10am, I dive into responding to those prioritised emails. Often, initial enquiries involve requests for information. While a written response is sometimes sufficient, I often find a phone call allows for a more personal connection and opportunity to understand their needs – and perhaps welcome a new client into our community. Referrals from professionals are treated with particular care, each one must recorded on our CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system before I reach out for an initial triage call.

Building trust and ensuring clarity are very important so we always seek client consent to securely store their information on our database.

This system is invaluable, allowing us to track interactions, advice, and guidance provided, ensuring future support is tailored and relevant. Beyond record-keeping, our CRM enables us to facilitate regular donations, manage magazine subscriptions, promote our events, and handle ticket bookings.

When the phone lines finally open, the day truly begins. Calls come in from all directions: existing clients seeking support, new individuals reaching out for the first time for themselves or a loved one, professionals collaborating with us, and, of course, the occasional cold caller!

During the triage process, having instant access to a client's record is essential. It allows me to see their history, understand their current situation, and follow up on any outstanding actions. Depending on the client's needs, I might provide immediate information, make a referral to a specialist agency, or offer a listening ear during what we sometimes call a low-level emotional support call. Every call is followed by detailed notes, and often, the creation of a tailored information pack to send out – a Welcome Pack filled with resources for our new clients.

The work extends beyond phone calls. Between conversations, I manage the return of yellow Articles for the Blind pouches for our audio magazine, carefully preparing them for the next distribution. With events often on the horizon, I might be found assembling resources, packing boxes ready for transport to the venue – events for which I've likely been managing bookings for the past week or so.

Our CEO, Grahame, occasionally requests articles for the upcoming magazine, and I dedicate time each week to creating new fact sheets, updating our information, advice, and guidance resources.



Several days a week, our office transforms as we welcome clients for counselling sessions in our dedicated suite. My role then shifts to providing a warm welcome and liaising with our counsellors.

Often, clients arrive with family members, offering an opportunity to offer a comforting drink and a friendly chat, understanding their perspective and needs. It's also a chance to introduce them to our Equipment Bursary and Sim Specs, powerful tools that allow them to experience firsthand the specific challenges their loved one faces due to sight loss.

After the phone lines close it is essential to attend to administration tasks. This is when I make my to-do list for the next day and a trip to the main post office to send the promised information, equipment or magazines.

It's a day filled with connection, support, and the satisfaction of making a real difference in people's lives, all set against the tranquil backdrop of rural Devon."

**Key Statistics for 1st April 2024 and 31 March 2025**

- **5,310** Helpline calls were received
- **118** New client registrations were made
- **1,281** Enquires led to ongoing casework

**Louise would like to remind everyone that when the answerphone cuts in it is because she is dealing with another caller. Please leave a message and she will get back to you as soon as possible.**

To access our **Information, Advice and Guidance Service** ring:

## Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

# Brandon meets HRH King Charles

*Making the world a better, more accessible place for visually impaired people.*



◀ Photo Credit: All Things Dotty

▲ (L-R) Brandon Hulcoop, Fern Cotton and HRH King Charles

**From a very young age Brandon Hulcoop, knew that he couldn't read and write print, meaning that he couldn't get hold of important information in the same way as sighted people.**

During COVID-19 lockdown, he decided that the world needed to change for visually impaired people so he started trying to do just that. In April 2023, The Prince's Trust helped him launch his business idea 'All Things Dotty'.

Brandon explains, "All Things Dotty is a multifaceted gem; we provide accessible (braille and large print) greetings cards, tactile Artwork and colouring books to visually impaired people and their families. Not being able to read your own Birthday or Christmas cards can be quite upsetting for anybody. Imagine if that happened to you?"

Brandon has exhibited his extensive range of products at Devon in Sight's recent Living Well with Sight Loss Events and will be joining us at the Devon Sight Loss Conference in September.

We were delighted to hear that Brandon was recently awarded **The King's Trust and TK Maxx and Homesense Award** which honours the success of people helped by The Trust, and those who support them, in the UK and worldwide.

Brandon recounted his recent meeting with HRH King Charles at Buckingham Palace. The King had arranged for his invitation to be sent in braille. We understand that this is the first time this has happened. During a group photo the photographer shouted "Look at the camera, if you can't see the camera, the camera can't see you!" Brandon pointed out that the couldn't see anything! The King responded, "Good point, well made. I'll tell him off next time!"

**For more information please visit: allthingsdottybraille.co.uk**

***** STOP PRESS*****

**British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF)** has developed and launched a brand-new app for listeners "Speech Talking Newspapers & Magazines."

This new app is designed to provide you with an even better, more accessible experience when listening to your favourite audio content, including the audio version of this very magazine. To ensure you don't miss out, download the app today!

Apple Users

SCAN ME

Android Users

SCAN ME

# Devon Sight Loss Conference 2025

*'100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'*




◀ Photo Credit: Exeter Rougemont Hotel by Sunday

**Bookings are now open for the third Devon Sight Loss Conference which takes place at the Exeter Rougemont Hotel in central Exeter on Thursday 18th September 2025.**

The theme for this year's conference is **"100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'.** This event includes speakers from across the sight loss sector, seminars, a Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition, and incorporates Devon in Sight's 100th Annual General Meeting.

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors we have been able to make tickets available at the heavily subsidised cost of only £12 per person (for people affected by sight loss) and £15 for professionals. This includes access to the Conference, Seminars, Living Well With Sight Loss Exhibition, our AGM, ongoing refreshments and a light sandwich lunch.



**Feedback from previous conferences included...**

*"It was a well presented, absolutely amazing conference and the staff at Devon in Sight should be called, 'The Absolutely Amazing Four'!"*

**June Brandon, Devon in Sight Client**

*"The Devon Sight Loss Conference was amazing. Interacting with all the other organisations and meeting with key people across the sight loss sector was brilliant, especially hearing about the trials being carried out by the Retina Clinic London. I also found the venue was really accessible."*

**Tessa Williams (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer)**
**West of England Eye Unit Sight Support Team**

*"What a great opportunity to network. It's great working together for the benefit of our clients and Visually Impaired listeners!"*

**Gill Laws, Exmouth Talking Newspapers**

*"What a really great networking event! We were introduced to some very interesting organisations, that we will now be working with in the future! We also met with many new clients that we were able to help with their energy needs!"*

**Tara Bowers, Healthy Homes Project Manager**
**from Exeter Community Energy**

*"Congratulations to the Devon in Sight team who by their magnificent effort & cohesion made the conference such a success, in all ways. Many thanks!"*

**The late Ray Doughty, Devon in Sight Client & Trustee**

Devon Sight Loss Conference 2025

# Speakers in the Cavendish Suite

**The Registration Desk opens at 9am where you will register and collect your Delegate Pack.**

**Tea and coffee will served in the Hartington Room with the main auditorium opening to delegates from 9.30am.**



▲ Grahame Flynn

## 10am 'Welcome and Housekeeping'

**Grahame Flynn**, Devon in Sight's Chief Executive Officer welcomes you to the Third Devon Sight Loss Conference.

Grahame is responsible for the overall leadership, strategic direction, and management of the organisation.

## 10.15am 'Our lives in public service with Steve and Mandy Darling!' hosted by Grahame Flynn.



▲ Steve Darling MP

**Steve Darling MP** and his wife Devon in Sight's **Mandy Darling** talk about their lives in public service despite the challenges of sight loss. An inspirational journey over 35 years.



▲ Mandy Darling





▲ Dr Adrian Jacobs

## 11am 'Devon in Sight's 100th AGM'

**Dr Adrian Jacobs** Devon in Sight's Chair hosts our 100th Annual General Meeting.

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.

Adrian has been a Trustee for Devon in Sight since 2015 and became Chair in March 2017.



▲ Steve Muncer

**Steve Muncer (Treasurer)** spent nearly 40 years in the Water Industry where he held several senior roles in operational finance, planning and financial management.

Although now retired he is now responsible for supporting Devon in Sight's financial operations and structures maintaining accurate financial records, policies and procedures.



▲ Tessa Barrett

**Tessa Barrett (Head of Services)** has over 20 years of experience working in the third sector, 13 years of which have been supporting people with low vision and their families.

Tessa took the lead on Devon in Sight's Accreditation journey to achieving 'The Matrix Standard' for our Information, Advice and Guidance Service.

# Conference Seminars

*Smaller seminars are beneficial because they give delegates an opportunity to go in-depth with specific subjects.*

## MORNING SEMINARS:

### SEMINAR ONE: Innovations in Assistive Technology

As the UK's leading provider of hardware and software to the blind and visually impaired, Sight and Sound Technology work with you from initial assessment through to lifetime support. Sight and Sound Technology is truly the one-stop-shop for all your assistive technology needs. **Sight and Sound Technology** is Devon in Sight's Assistive Technology Partner.

**Guest Speaker:** Stefanie Davies, Head of Sales and Marketing, Sight & Sound Technology Limited.
**Host:** Sarah Small

**Alternatively...**

### SEMINAR TWO: What is Gene Therapy and it's applications for sight loss? What are the latest clinical trials and research?

Have you ever wondered what Gene Therapy is and it's applications for sight loss? What are latest clinical research and trails?

The Retina Clinic London is dedicated to advancing retinal care through cutting-edge research and clinical innovation.

**Speaker:** Prof. Paulo Eduardo Stanga (T.B.C), The Retina Clinic London
**Host:** Grahame Flynn



## AFTERNOON SEMINARS:

### SEMINAR THREE: What can a ROVI do for me?

A Rehabilitation Officer Visual Impairment (ROVI) is trained and qualified to work with people who have significant visual impairment. ROVIs can carry out assessments to discuss difficulties or needs and identify solutions to help you to stay at home and be as independent as possible. ROVIs can help you learn new skills to offset the effects of visual impairment. ROVIs can help you Register your sight loss.

**Guest Speaker:** Alyson Badnell, Sensory Team Manager, Visual Impairment, Devon County Council.
**Host:** Louise Millington

**Alternatively...**

### SEMINAR FOUR: SpaMedica: NHS Ophthalmology Services

**SpaMedica** is one of the leading providers of NHS eye patient services and, in 2018, they became the largest NHS cataract surgery provider in the UK. Learn more about their NHS ophthalmology services and what is involved in modern cataract surgery. **WARNING: This presentation may include images and descriptions of surgical procedures.**

**Guest Speakers:** Amba Steen, Hospital Manager and Surgeon Hany El-Defrawy.
**Host:** Tessa Barrett

Devon Sight Loss Conference 2025

# AGM & Exhibition

*'100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'*




▲ Photo Credit: Jennie Benham (Devon in Sight)




▲ Photo Credit: Jennie Benham (Devon in Sight)

## Devon in Sight's 100th Annual General Meeting

Our Chair **Dr Adrian Jacobs** invites you to attend our Annual General Meeting. **CEO Grahame Flynn** will give an overview of progress being made against Devon in Sight's Strategic Priorities, highlight achievements over the last financial year and our plans for the future.  Our Treasurer **Steve Muncer** will give an overview of our finances and statutory obligations.

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. You can register in advance over the helpline.

**Questions from Voting Members must be submitted in advance by Friday 5th September 2025.**

## Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition

Our Exhibition area is the largest of its kind in the South West showcasing the many organisations that can support you on your sight loss journey.

Our Assistive Technology Partner, **Sight and Sound Technology Ltd.** will be providing a comprehensive Assistive Technology stand where you can get a taster of the latest technological innovations.

**Confirmed Exhibitors include;** All Things Dotty, Associated Optical, Blind Veterans UK, Devon Carers, Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, ECOE Advice, Living Options Devon, Sight & Sound Technology Ltd., SpaMedica Exeter,  Thomas Pocklington Trust (Works for Me), Community VI Groups and Talking Newspapers and Magazines and many, many more.

# Consultation Rooms

*‘100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future’*



▲ Photo Credit: The Retina Clinic London




▲ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

## Retina Clinic London- Clinical Trials & Research

The Retina Clinic London will be providing a Consultation Room again this year where delegates will have the opportunity to speak to a member of the Clinical Trials Team to find out more about what trials are coming up.

**Please note:** Devon in Sight does not endorse or recommend any product or service and the decision to take part in any research or clinical trial should be taken in consultation with your eye consultant or GP.

THE RETINA CLINIC
LONDON
PROF. STANGA & TEAM
BESPOKE EYE CARE

## Sensory Team (Sight Loss Rehabilitation) Consultations

Our friends at the Devon Sensory Team (Devon County Council) and Torbay Sensory Team are joining us again this year.

The Rehabilitation Officers Visual Impairment (ROVIs) can advise about the Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) and registering as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. They can help you learn new skills to continue with everyday tasks, from how to move around with greater safety and more confidence, to cooking.

NHS
Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care
NHS Trust

Devon County Council

Devon Sight Loss Conference 2025

# Booking Information

*'100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'*

## Guide Dogs

Fresh drinking water will be available at the venue and the 'spending area' is situated in Northernhay Gardens opposite the hotel and directly next to Central Railway Station.

## Tickets & Registration

Due to the generosity of our sponsors we are able to offer subsidised ticket prices again this year.

Tickets for people who are blind or partially sighted and their family and carers are only **£12 per person and must be purchased in advance.** A ticket will be required for all attendees whether visually impaired or not.

**Tickets for Professionals are only £15 per person.**

Your ticket will entitle you to attend the Conference, AGM, Seminars, Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition. It also includes ongoing refreshments and a light sandwich lunch. **You will need to advise us of any special dietary requirements or allergies when you book.**

## Book now!

**There will only be a maximum of 100 places at the conference and the closing date for bookings is Friday 5th September 2025.**

**How to purchase your tickets:**

### Purchase your ticket over the Telephone

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

### Purchase your ticket 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.**

**Please include your name and address, the names of all those attending, and dietary requirements with your cheque. We will ring you to discuss which seminars you wish to attend.**

### Purchase your tickets by Bank Transfer

You can purchase tickets through Online Banking to:
**'Devon County Association for the Blind'**
**Sort Code: 30-80-37  Account Number: 62326768**
**Please mark your payment: 'Your Surname AGM'**

Joining Instructions will be sent to you in advance of the Conference. Your ticket and Delegate Pack will be at the welcome Desk when you come to the conference.

You will need your ticket to access the conference, AGM, exhibition, to enter the prize draw and to claim your lunch.

SCAN ME

**We would like to thank the Retina Clinic London, Sight & Sound Technology Limited and SpaMedica for sponsoring this event.**

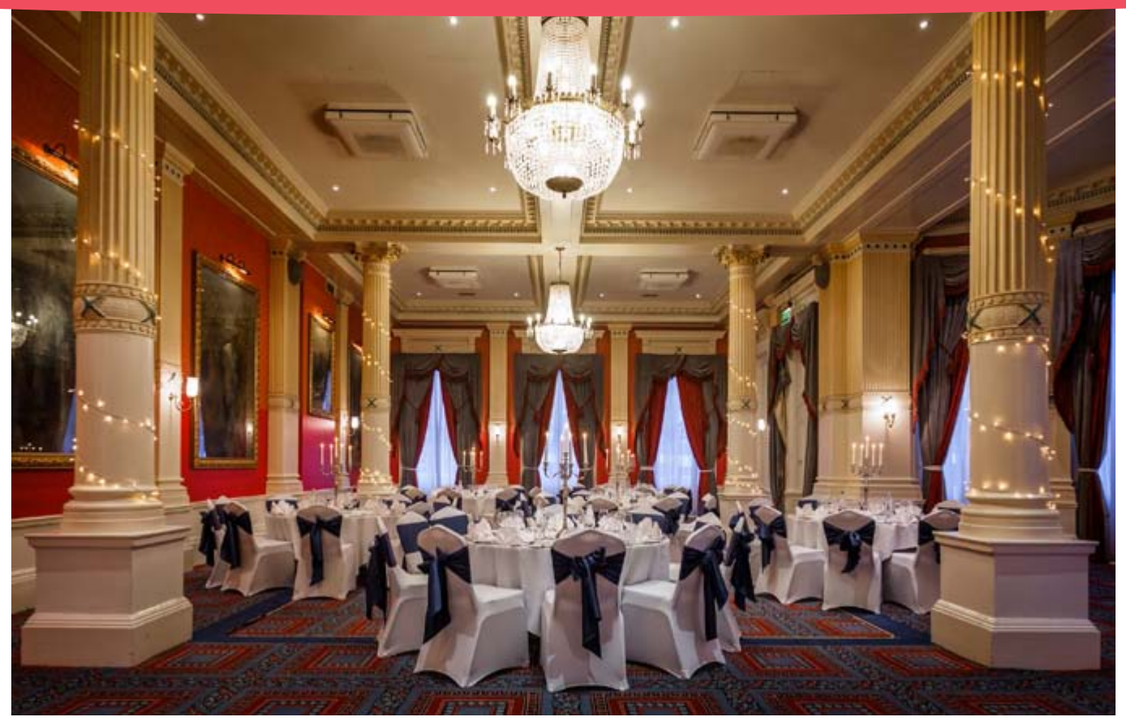
To book your place at **The Devon Sight Loss Conference** ring:

## Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

# Centenary Celebration Dinner

*Celebrating 100 years of service to people living with sight loss in Devon!*



◀ Photo Credit: The Exeter Rougemont Hotel

**On Wednesday 17th September 2025 Devon in Sight will be hosting a Centenary Celebration Dinner at the Exeter Rougemont Hotel.**

This Black Tie (or lounge suit) & Posh Frock event will commence with a drinks reception in the Nelson Suite before moving to the Victorian splendor of the Cavendish Ballroom for an evening of good food, special guests including our patron Lady Devon and entertainment including a charity raffle and auction. A private bar is available and wine can be ordered in advance or on the night.

A special room rate has been agreed with the hotel so you can stay the night if you wish, before attending the Devon Sight Loss Conference on Thursday 18th September.

Our banqueting menu has been created using the best seasonal ingredients with meat, fish, vegetarian (v), vegan (Ve) and gluten free (GF) options.

SCAN ME

## ~Starters~

Chicken liver pate, chutney, ciabatta crisp, pea shoots

~

Watermelon & cucumber salad, sunflower seeds, maple & mint dressing (v) (Ve) (GF)

~

Warm mature cheddar cheese tartlet, picked grapes, walnut and watercress (v)

## ~Mains~

Pan-fried chicken breast, thyme & sea salt roasted new potatoes, port & shallot jus

~

Baked salmon fillet, new potatoes & Hollandaise sauce (GF)

~

Sweet potato, chickpea, spinach & coconut curry, basmati rice (v) (Ve) (GF)

## ~Desserts~

Warm apple & blackberry crumble with vanilla English Custard (v)

~

Roast pineapple, dark rum caramel, vanilla ice cream (v) (Ve) (GF)

~

Selection of British cheese platter, biscuits, celery & chutney (v)

**What better way to support your local independent sight loss charity with tickets costing only £55 per head.**

To reserve your place at **The Centenary Celebration Dinner** ring:

## Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

# Ask the Police & Crime Commissioner

*Ensuring the delivery of an effective and efficient police service within Devon and Cornwall*



◀ Photo Credit: Sarah Small (Devon in Sight)

▲ (L-R) Mandy Darling, Alison Hernandez and Grahame Flynn

**Our Guest Speaker for July's Sight Loss Speaker Event was Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.**

Hosted by Devon in Sight's Grahame Flynn and Mandy Darling, Alison's interview was a very informative and entertaining.

Alison talked about her early life in Torquay, her education and working life, before her election as Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2016.

She described the role of a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to be the voice of the people in policing, and to hold the Chief Constable to account for how they discharge their functions. The aim of all PCCs is to ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient police service.

Alison highlighted the many challenges to policing Devon and Cornwall particularly with the influx of 40 million domestic tourist visits annually.

She gave an overview of the Police and Crime Plan for 2025-29 which hopes to build safe, resilient and connected communities where everyone plays their part to reduce crime. Priorities are antisocial behaviour, drugs & alcohol, serious violence and theft.

Mandy asked questions which Devon in Sight listeners had called in with prior to the interview. These included questions about response times, welfare of officers, streamlining paperwork and knife crime amongst children.

**We would like to thank Alison for taking time out of her busy schedule to take part in this event.**

PCC
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall

**To access useful videos and information to help you understand how every step of the criminal justice process will affect you please visit: bit.ly/cjandyou or scan the QR code opposite.**

SCAN ME

# Sight Loss Speaker Seminars

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

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.

**The full archive of Sight Loss Speaker Events can be accessed through our website at www.devoninsight.org.uk (under Events) or by using the QR code opposite on you smart phone.**

SCAN ME

## Tuesday 9 September 2025

**'Introducing ECOE Advice'**

**Everyone deserves a warm, healthy home.**

Struggling with high energy bills, broken heating or a cold, damp home?

Whether you're worried about your energy or water bills, damp and mould, or simply need support to make your home more comfortable or more carbon friendly, ECOE Advice is here for you.

Our Guest Speaker is Jess Hayward from **ECCO Advice.**

**Website: www.ecoeadvice.org.uk**

## Tuesday 14 October 2025

**'Is Counselling for me?'**

Counselling is a talking therapy that provides a safe and confidential space for individuals to explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours with a trained professional.

This presentation will include a ten minute session of Mindfulness.

Our Guest Speaker is **Rachel Hoare Devon in Sight's Placement Counsellor.**



▲ Rachel Hoare

## Tuesday 11 November 2025

**'Introducing Healthwatch'**

If you use health services or need care, Healthwatch want to hear about your experiences.

They have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and improve standards of care. They can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy advice and information.

Our Guest Speaker is **Dr Kevin Dixon, Chair of Healthwatch Torbay.**



▲ Dr Kevin Dixon

To access **Telephone Sight Loss Speaker Seminars** ring:

**Tel: 0808 169 79 30**

Calls from your home telephone or mobile are FREE

# Telephone Chit-Chat Calls Review

*Peer support can help people feel less isolated, develop coping skills & build confidence*



◀ Photo Credit: LightFieldStudios (iStock)

**Our free telephone based Chit-Chat Call Service was created during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were required to isolate at home.**

Post pandemic we have continued this peer support service on a weekly basis recognising that our regular callers find the social interaction of these calls valuable. Chit-Chat Calls can help people feel less isolated, share information and tips, develop coping skills and build confidence.

However, it has come to our notice that some callers join the call late, missing the introductions and notices about how the call should operate.

Some callers can dominate conversations and don't allow others to speak. This can be quite disconcerting for new callers who are building up the confidence to introduce themselves or contribute for the first time.

Furthermore, we are regularly having to mute callers who have issues with background noise which can be hugely distracting for others on the call, particularly those with hearing impairments.

We have tried to navigate these difficulties subtly over many months. We would like to remind everyone that as a matter of courtesy you join the calls promptly at 10.30am so that everyone can introduce themselves and understand the ground rules. We also ask that callers think about topics they would like to raise in advance. We steer away from conversations around politics and religion and do not give medical or financial advice. Ultimately, everyone must respect the role of the Devon in Sight moderator to manage the call. The call needs to be warm and welcoming for new members not just the 'old hands'.

We are mindful that demand for our services continues to increase with many more people presenting with complex issues. We need to be able to respond to these callers and undertake casework.  We have now reviewed the service in consultation with many regular callers.

Therefore, for the rest of the year Chit-Chat Calls will normally be taking place on the first and third Wednesdays of each month so that the staff team can spend more time on complex case work. **This will be reviewed before the New Year.**

**Calls will now take place on August 6th and 20th, September 3rd and 24th , October 1st and 15th, November 5th and 19th, December 3rd and 17th.**

**To access our Chit-Chat Call Service** please ring:

## FREEPHONE  0808 169 79 30

Calls start at 10.30am prompt and finish at 11.30am

# Devon Local Optical Committee



▲ Photo Credit: Devon in Sight

▲ (L-R) Grahame Flynn, Sebastian Stanga and Tessa Barrett

**The Devon Local Optical Committee (LOC) represent Optical professionals and contractors delivering NHS eye care across the county.**

The LOC is a statutory Local Representative Committee formed by National Health Service regulation who liaise between clinicians, optical practices, NHS England, the Devon Integrated Care System, all the four acute hospitals in the area and health care professionals across the county. They also work closely with patient representative groups within the area including Devon in Sight.

The LOC work to improve eye health outcomes by supporting local eye care professionals to deliver services and remove inequality in eye care provision for all patients.






Devon in Sight has had a working relationship with the Devon LOC for many years but it was a privilege to be invited to host a seminar at the Annual Study Day held at Buckfast Abbey Conference Centre on Thursday 22 May 2025.

During the planning stages we suggested that our Clinical Research & Trials partner, the Retina Clinic London provide a seminar at the event. We were delighted that Sebastian Stanga was able to attend to raise awareness of their pioneering work.

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn and Tessa Barrett (Head of Services) gave a warmly received presentation about the Adult Eye Health and Sight Loss Pathway and the role that the Third (Charity) Sector plays in supporting people on their sight loss journey.

Louise Millington (Sight Loss Adviser) and Sarah Small (Office Manager) met with nearly 100 enthusiastic delegates at the Devon in Sight exhibition stand. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase our innovative EYESReality Sight Loss Simulator with the sighted audience of professionals.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Luisa Sumo and Sophie Withers from Devon LOC for inviting us. It was a hugely valuable opportunity for us to share our work with the delegates and exhibitors.

**One of the highlights of the day was meeting the team from SpaMedica, the largest NHS cataract surgery provider in the UK. This led to an invitation to visit SpaMedica's Exeter Hospital.**

# SpaMedica Cataract Services

*Did you know you have the right to choose where you have your treatment?*



◀ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ (L-R) Grahame Flynn & Tessa Barrett all scrubbed up!

**Cataract surgery is the most common operation performed in the UK today and has, on average, a 99% success rate. It's currently the only reliable treatment for cataracts.**

On Wednesday 25th June, Devon in Sight's Grahame Flynn and Tessa Barrett were invited to visit SpaMedica's Hospital situated near Exeter Airport.

SpaMedica is one of the leading providers of NHS eye patient services and, in 2018, they became the largest NHS cataract surgery provider in the UK.

Grahame said, "Amba Steen (Hospital Manager), Dan Lewis (Senior Service Promotion Executive) and Kerry Matthews (Sight Support Officer) gave us a very warm welcome.

Kerry is a qualified Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) and spoke about her Sight Support Officer role providing information and emotional support to patients.

Amba was keen to point out that many NHS patients assume they'll be referred to their local hospital for cataract surgery, but you have the right to choose where you have your treatment? You can find a list of cataract surgery providers near you using the NHS website. We were interested to learn that it's usually only a four-week wait from referral to treatment, meaning they can offer shorter waiting times than many NHS hospitals.

Having been given a tour of this 'state of the art' facility we met with a group of nervous patients waiting for their procedures. We chatted about their experiences and shared information about our work.

It came as a complete surprise when our hosts suddenly suggested that we scrub up and observe the surgery in Theatre! Joining Surgeon Mr Hany El-Defrawy to observe the procedure was a fascinating experience and certainly not something for the faint hearted.

Beyond cataract surgery, other NHS ophthalmology services offered include treatments for Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Posterior Capsule Opacification (PCO), which is treated through a procedure known as YAG laser capsulotomy.

**For more information about SpaMedica please visit: www.spamedica.co.uk**

# Artificial Intelligence Briefing

## *Artificial Intelligence & Visual Impairment - What does the Future hold?*



◀ Photo Credit: Devon in Sight

▲ Mandy and Steve Darling MP at the Houses of Parliament

**Devon in Sight was proud to be represented at the 'AI Meets VI – But What Does the Future Hold?' Event held on 29th April 2025 at the Houses of Parliament, London.**

This exclusive, invitation-only gathering hosted by Marsha de Cordova MP, brought together leading voices and innovators in the field of visual impairment, including representatives from Meta, Fight for Sight, Google, and Be My Eyes.

The event shone a spotlight on the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence to enhance the lives of people living with sight loss.

One highlight was the demonstration of cutting-edge technology such as the new Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses, which promise to open up new realms of independence and accessibility for blind and partially sighted users. The glasses now offer access to Be My Eyes services, allowing users to connect with a sighted volunteer in real time–all hands-free.

Mandy Darling, Devon in Sight's Community Engagement Officer said, "This was an incredible opportunity to be at the forefront of innovation and to contribute to shaping the future of accessible technology. Meeting visionaries such as the founder of Be My Eyes and hearing firsthand how AI can further empower those with sight loss was truly inspiring."

Steve Darling MP, who is visually impaired himself, added, "Events like this are essential to ensure that Parliament stays at the cutting edge of technology–technology that can transform the lives of people with visual impairments."

Notably, suggestions from Devon in Sight's own service users were taken forward during the event. These included the call for waterproofing the Meta Smart Glasses, adding facial recognition features, and enabling interactive capabilities during live streaming–all potential upgrades that could significantly improve daily life for those with sight loss.

This event marked a powerful step forward in ensuring lived experience and user voices continue to shape tomorrow's technology.

**Devon in Sight remains committed to advocating for inclusive innovation that places accessibility and dignity at the heart of design.**

# Meet Archie - New Kid on the Block!

## *Investing in the Next Generation!*




◀ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ Archie Plumridge at the CEO Grahame Flynn's Desk!

**On Monday 14th July we were thrilled to welcome 15 year old Archie Plumridge, a bright and enthusiastic young person to Devon in Sight for his student work placement.**

We believe work experience is invaluable for young people like Archie. It offers a chance to explore potential career paths, develop new skills, and understand the day-to-day realities of a professional working environment.

Archie said, "On my first day I was invited to join the staff meeting where everyone introduced themselves and I was able to talk a little about me. I saw how the team schedule their week, share updates and discuss case work.

CEO Grahame Flynn gave me an overview of how the charity is managed, including governance, organisational structure, forward planning and scheduling, corporate identity, the contents of the Annual Report and how he produces In Vision Magazine.

I was given the opportunity to undertake Devon in Sight's Bus Driver Disability Awareness training. I found this very useful building my understanding of how public transport can be improved for people with disabilities. It also helped me understand how to support people with disabilities if needed. I also learned how to be a Sighted Guide for people living with little or no sight. As a sighted person, The EYESReality Sight loss simulator gave me the experience of a number of sight loss conditions. I found this quite scary.

Head of Services Tessa Barrett gave me an overview of the Matrix Standard Accreditation process and invited me to take part in a Chit-Chat Call where I was able to ask some questions of people living with sight loss. It was kind of people to share their experiences of adapting to having little or no sight.

Treasurer Steve Muncer allowed me to run the payroll, pay invoices, and undertake spread sheet work on the budget.

Placement Counsellor Rachel Hoare discussed the counselling process and how she helps people develop coping strategies.

Office Manager Sarah Small showed me how to layout a press release, create a social media post and construct a website news story. We then created an Excel spreadsheet and undertook an inventory of the charity's computers and Daily Living Equipment.

Finally, with Grahame's support I completed this article before recording it for the audio version of the magazine. I would like to thank everyone at Devon in Sight for giving me their time and helping my put my first entry on my CV!"

Supporting us

# Thank you to all our donors!

*Our Community supporting people living with sight loss in Devon*



◀ Photo Credit: FatCamera (iStock)

**Devon in Sight has been supporting people living with sight loss for 100 years. We are your local, independent sight loss charity.**

It may surprise you to know that Devon in Sight is not part of a national charity like the RNIB or Guide Dogs, and we do not receive any statutory funding. We are independent and fundraise ourselves to make all our services free for you.

The team at Devon in Sight would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those of you who have made an individual donation of any kind.

Our centenary is a perfect time to join us in making a tangible difference and help empower people living with visual impairments to live fuller, more independent lives.

## Friends of Devon in Sight

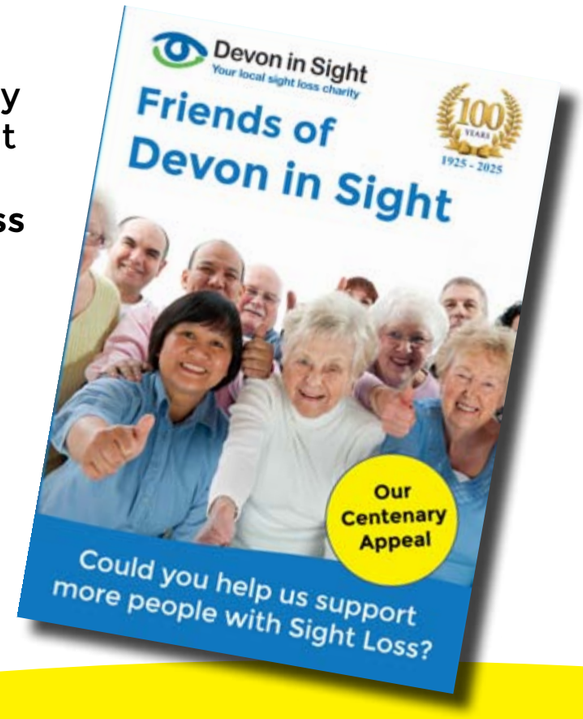
Our Regular Giving Scheme **'Friends of Devon in Sight'** is the best way that you can support your local sight loss charity. You can give as little or as much as you would like with a monthly direct debit.

## Our Friends of Devon in Sight brochure is available now!

**If you prefer you can also make a one off donation by cheque made payable to 'Devon in Sight'.**

Together, we can continue to offer vital services that positively impact on those living with sight loss and ultimately realise our vision to **make Devon a sight loss friendly county.**

**Could you spare the cost of a cup of coffee every month to help us support the next person who contacts us for help?**




For more **information about how you can help us** please call:

## Sight Loss 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

SCAN ME

**Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666**
**enquiries@devoninsight.org.uk**
**www.devoninsight.org.uk**

**Devon in Sight**
Splatford Barton, Kennford,
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