Devon in Sight
Your local sight loss charity

100 YEARS
1925 - 2025

In Vision

The magazine of Devon in Sight

Winter 2025 Issue 45



A Centenary Message from His Majesty The King

FREE MAGAZINE

Winter 2025 - Issue 45

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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 Winter Edition of In Vision Magazine.

Our little band of staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to provide our existing portfolio of services whilst also trying to innovate and develop new strands of work.

We celebrated our achievements at our **Centenary Celebration Dinner** and the **Third Devon Sight Loss Conference** held in September. You can read more about these events in the coming pages.

One of the highlights of our celebrations was to be able to share, with everyone, the letter I had received from **His Majesty The King.** We have reproduced it over the page for you.

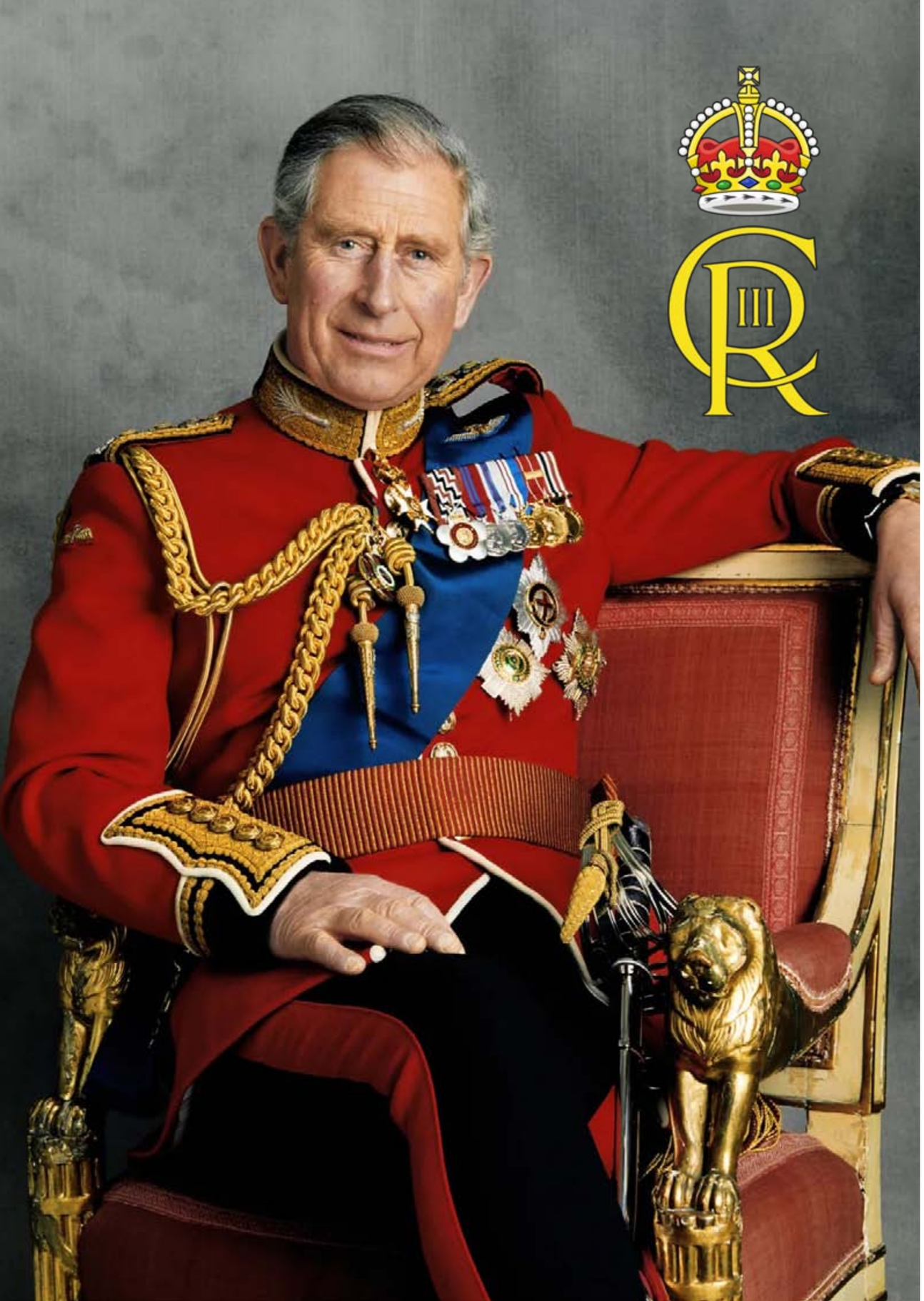
Our achievements over the last century were also celebrated when our key note speaker **Steve Darling MP** presented us with a framed copy of his Early Day Motion for Devon in Sight. It was incredibly touching to read, so again, we have reproduced the document in the pages of this magazine.

In late September we attended the National Visionary Conference in Birmingham where we had been shortlisted for the National Customer Excellence Award for our Counselling Service. Did we win? Read on to find out more.

Brimming with pride, I would like to thank everyone at Devon in Sight, past and present for their dedication over the last century in supporting people with little or no sight and their families in Devon.

Thank you!

Grahame Flynn
Chief Executive Officer



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

21st August, 2025

Dear Graham,

The King has asked me to thank you for your kind letter of loyal greetings sent on behalf of Devon in Sight on the occasion of your 100th Anniversary which is being held on 17th September, 2025.

His Majesty appreciated your thoughtfulness in writing as you did and, in return, has asked me to send his heartfelt warm good wishes to all those who will be present for a most memorable event.

Yours sincerely,
James Dawson

James Dawson
Private Secretary's Office

Centenary Celebration Dinner

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



◀ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ Guests gather for the Reception in the Nelson Suite

On Wednesday 17th September 2025 Devon in Sight hosted a Centenary Celebration Dinner at the Exeter Rougemont Hotel.

The evening commenced with a drinks reception in the Nelson Suite before moving to the Victorian splendour of the Cavendish Ballroom.

Our patron **Lady Diana Devon** welcomed everyone to our centenary celebration. She explained that the principle aim was to host an enjoyable evening of good food and company whilst highlighting the outstanding work being conducted by Devon in Sight's team.



▲ Lady Devon

Master of Ceremonies, Devon in Sight's CEO **Grahame Flynn** gave an overview of the history of the charity from its formation in 1925 to the present day.

Many guests didn't appreciate that County Associations for the Blind were born out of adversity, further compounded by the horrors of World War One. The Blind People's March of 1920 led to the Blind Persons Act of 1920, the first disability-specific legislation in the world, compelling local authorities to ensure the welfare of blind persons and reduced the pension age for blind men.



▲ Grahame Flynn

Grahame then gave an overview of the impact of sight loss and the extensive portfolio of services available to people with little of no sight in Devon in the 21st Century.

Devon in Sight's long term client and Sight Loss Ambassador **Steve Darling MP** gave an empowering speech highlighting the benefits of Devon in Sights award-winning work.

He concluded his talk by presenting Grahame with a framed Early Day Motion.

The Early Day Motion is reproduced on pages 18-21.



▲ Steve Darling MP

Centenary Celebration Dinner

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

Freemasons have supported local charities like Devon in Sight for many years.

Following the main course **Dr Leo Clarke** the Past Worshipful Master of St. George's Lodge, Exeter read the letter from His Majesty The King before giving **The Loyal Toast.**

St. George's Lodge recently helped us fund The Fearnside Counselling Room at Splatford Barton.



▲ Dr Leo Clarke

A **Centenary Toast** to Devon in Sight was given by **Mr Adrian Garrity** the Worshipful Master of All Souls Lodge, Tiverton.

Adrian made Devon in Sight his Charity of the Year during his term of office holding many fundraising events including a Burns Night Supper where our CEO Grahame Flynn was guest speaker.

Adrian then presented Grahame with a cheque for £3,300 from the All Souls Lodge and the Province of Devonshire 300 Club.



▲ Adrian Garrity

Our **Centenary Raffle** included some very generous prizes including a Love to Shop Gift Card, meal vouchers for the Babbacombe Inn, The Bedford Hotel and The Cary Arms and Spa, and family tickets for The Dartmouth Steam Railway, The National Aquarium and the gardens at RHS Rosemoor.

We would like to thank everyone who supported our raffle with donations.

Our **Community Champion Awards** highlight the excellent service given to our clients by individuals and organisations.



▲ Raffle Prize

It was very fitting that Lady Devon should present our **Centenary Community Champion Award** to Brandon Hulcoop of All Things Dotty.

All Things Dotty is a multi-award-winning business specialising in all thing's braille and accessible.

They offer a thoughtful and ever-growing range of braille gifts and accessible products designed to bring joy, independence, and creativity to people with visual impairments.

Brandon is an inspiration to other young blind entrepreneurs.



▲ Brandon Hulcoop with Lady Devon

Centenary Celebration Dinner

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

Our Centenary Auction benefited from some outstanding lots.

These included some House of Lords Premier Cru Champagne kindly donated by Steve Darling MP, tickets to the Exeter Chiefs, a Handcrafted Chacuterie Board and wooden bowls crafted by Dr Adrian Jacobs, and a number of signed books by Sir Michael Morpurgo OBE.

Other lots included an Exeter Racecourse Voucher, a framed photographic print of Dartmoor by Robert Excell Photography and a Golfing Experience for four people at Warren Golf Club.

Our Treasurer Steve Muncer and his wife Jan, kindly donated a seven night stay in their holiday cottage in the Willingcott Valley, Woolacombe.

Bidding was fierce and over £1,500 was raised.

We would like to thank all those people who donated lots for the auction thereby supporting Devon in Sight's work.



▲ Champagne



▲ Sir Michael Morpurgo OBE



The evening closed with the hugely talented **Singing Pianist, Henry Newbury.**

Henry is a multi- instrumentalist and vocalist with over four million views on YouTube and seven years professional gigging experience from the UK to Mexico!

Devon Sight Loss Conference Review

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



◀ Photo Credit: Sarah Small (Devon in Sight)

▲ (L-R) Grahame Flynn, Steve Darling MP and Mandy Darling

The Third Devon Sight Loss Conference took place at the Exeter Rougemont Hotel in central Exeter on Thursday 18th September 2025. This has become the premier event for the people affected by sight loss and professionals working in the field of vision impairment in Devon.

Grahame Flynn, Devon in Sight's Chief Executive Officer welcomed the 97 delegates to the Conference introducing the theme '100 Years of Devon in Sight: Building a Better Future'.

He said, "This conference is designed not only for people affected by sight loss, but also all those people who provide sight loss support services locally. We have therefore planned a busy programme of inspirational speakers and seminars, consultation rooms and a comprehensive Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition of partners who can all help you build a better future."

The programme of events commenced with a fireside interview with Steve Darling MP and his wife Devon in Sight's Mandy Darling. The inspirational interview hosted by Grahame covered their early lives, education, the challenges of living and working with visual impairment, family life and their roles in local politics. Mandy talked about becoming the Mayor of Torbay in 2018. Steve was able to share some interesting stories about the 2024 election and his experiences as a new Member of Parliament.

The interview concluded with a raffle which included a hamper of kindly donated goodies and a Ruby Handheld Magnifier donated by Sight and Sound Technology.

After the raffle we launched into our 100th Annual General Meeting which is summarised on pages 14 & 15.

Our Living Well with Sight Loss Exhibition sported 24 stands this year making it the biggest exhibition of its type outside of London. Our friends at Devon and Torbay Sensory Teams and the Retina Clinic London providing consultation rooms again this year where delegates could have one to one time with specialists in rehabilitation and clinical research and trials.

Our conference was only made possible by the generous support of our sponsors The Retina Clinic London, Sight and Sound Technology Ltd. and SpaMedica Exeter.

News Feature

100th Annual General Meeting

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



◀ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ Annual General Meeting Audience

Devon in Sight's 100th Annual General Meeting was the main business meeting of the day where the minutes of last year's meeting were approved by the Voting Membership and reports were received from our Chair Dr Adrian Jacobs, CEO Grahame Flynn and Treasurer Steve Muncer.

Adrian said, "This is a special year, marking 100 years of Devon in Sight's service to the sight loss community in Devon. I would like to thank the staff team for their hard work, dedication, and professionalism in delivering our services.

May I express my sincere appreciation for the invaluable contribution that volunteers make to our organisation, particularly my fellow Trustees and our Assistant Treasurer Linda Garaway who dedicate their time and skills freely.

I would particularly like to acknowledge those people who have undertaken a fundraising event for us, make a regular gift through 'The Friends of Devon in Sight' and those who have left us legacies. The charity's success relies on the continued support and engagement from all our stakeholders. May I thank donors and supporters for their generosity and commitment to the charity's cause.

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the courage and resilience of people living with sight loss who inspire the charity's work. We appreciate those who have shared their lived experience of sight loss for the benefit of others through our Sight Loss Forum, as Sight Loss Ambassadors, Peer Support Groups, through the Client Satisfaction Survey and sharing their personal stories in the form of case studies.

Finally, I would also like to commend the significant contribution that our Chief Executive Officer Grahame Flynn has made in driving forward change for the benefit of people living with sight loss locally, regionally and nationally.

I wish my successor Scott Bailey every success as your new Chair following his inauguration today. It has been an honour to serve as Chair, and I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me."

At the conclusion of the meeting our Voting Members unanimously agreed the special resolution that Dr Adrian Jacobs should be made a Life Member of Devon in Sight.

The full Annual Report and Accounts can be found on our website under ABOUT US. You can also request a printed copy through the Helpline.

Seminars Review

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

Sight and Sound Technology, Devon in Sight’s Assistive Technology Partner provided the first seminar of the conference.

Development and Partnerships Manager **Iain Kennedy** introduced delegates to the latest innovations in assistive technology including the NOA mobility vest and the Luna Glasses.

Sight & Sound are your one-stop-shop for all your assistive technology needs.



▲ Iain Kennedy

Professor Paulo Eduardo Stanga is the Founder & Director, and Lead Consultant Vitreoretinal & Cataract Surgeon at The Retina Clinic London and Professor of Ophthalmology at the Institute of Ophthalmology, University College London (UCL).

Professor Stanga gave an insightful presentation about Gene Therapy and it’s applications for sight loss and the latest clinical research and trails.



▲ Prof. Paulo Eduardo Stanga

Alyson Badnell, Sensory Team Manager, Visual Impairment, Devon County Council gave an overview of the role of a Rehabilitation Officer Visual Impairment (ROVI).

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.



▲ Alyson Badnell

The final seminar was hosted by **Amba Steen,** Hospital Manager for SpaMedica Hospital Exeter.

SpaMedica is one of the leading providers of NHS eye patient services. Delegates were able to learn more about their NHS ophthalmology services and what is involved in modern cataract surgery.

We would like to thank all our speakers at conference.



▲ Amba Sheen

News Feature

An Early Day Motion for Devon in Sight

Parliamentary support for our work in Devon for people living with little or no sight.



◀ Photo Credit: Devon in Sight

▲ (L-R) Grahame Flynn, outgoing chair Dr Adrian Jacobs, Steve Darling MP, Jennie the Guide Dog & incoming Chair Mr Scott Bailey.

As part of our Centenary Dinner Celebration and Sight Loss Conference we were delighted to be presented with a framed Early Day Motion (EDM) by our special guest Steve Darling MP.

Early Day Motions (EDMs) are motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons for which no day has been fixed.

As there is no specific time allocated to EDMs very few are debated. However, many attract a great deal of public interest and media coverage. EDMs are used to put on record the views of individual MPs or to draw attention to specific events or campaigns. Topics covered by EDMs vary widely.

By attracting the signatures of other MPs, they can be used to demonstrate the level of parliamentary support for a particular cause or point of view.

We have presented the original document over the page but the words are reproduced here in large print. The document is printed on House of Commons headed note paper and reads...

100th Anniversary of Devon in Sight
Early Day Motion 1790
Tabled at the House of Commons on 1st September 2025

That this House congratulates Devon in Sight in its centenary year, marking 100 years of dedicated service to those living with the challenges of sight loss across Devon.

It notes the charity's proud history since its foundation in 1925 as the Devon County Association for the Welfare of the Blind, recognises the profound impact it has made in supporting numerous people living with a visual impairment to live life to the full.

It commends the commitment and leadership of the charity's Chair, Dr Adrian Jacobs, the Trustees and Chief Executive Officer, Grahame Flynn, whose passion and vision have continued to drive the charity forward in an ever-changing health and social care landscape.

It pays tribute to the invaluable work of the charity's dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters, past and present, whose tireless efforts have underpinned a century of life-changing support and advocacy.

The House recognises the charity's person-centred approach and its pioneering work in providing information, advice and guidance, promoting health and wellbeing, independent living and influencing change locally, regionally and nationally.

It also acknowledges the vital partnerships Devon in Sight has built with local authorities, health and social care professionals, charities and community groups to ensure the needs of those with visual impairments are properly met.

It calls on the Government to continue to recognise the critical role played by charities such as Devon in Sight in building inclusive, supportive communities and ensuring that no one living with sight loss in Devon is left behind.

The Early Day Motion was signed by Steve Darling MP for Torbay, Ian Roome MP for North Devon, Rachel Gilmour MP for Tiverton and Minehead, Caroline Voaden MP for South Devon, Martin Wrigley MP for Newton Abbot and Richard Foorde MP for Honiton and Sidmouth.

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn said, "To have our centenary commemorated in this way was really rather special. I would like to thank Steve Darling for recognising our work with an Early Day Motion.

It was so important to highlight all the staff, volunteers and supporters who have provided support over the last century and the charity's ongoing impact locally, regionally and nationally.

It was rather fitting to be able to present our outgoing Chair Dr Adrian Jacobs with his own copy of the Early Day Motion as a momento of his decade of service to Devon in Sight."

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

100th anniversary of Devon in Sight

Early Day Motion 1790: tabled on 01 September 2025

Tabled in the 2024-26 session.

That this House congratulates Devon in Sight in its centenary year, marking 100 years of dedicated service to those living with the challenges of sight loss across Devon; notes the charity's proud history since its foundation in 1925 as the Devon County Association for the Welfare of the Blind, recognises the profound impact it has made in supporting numerous people living with a visual impairment to live life to the full; commends the commitment and leadership of the charity's Chair, Dr Adrian Jacobs, the Trustees and Chief Executive Officer, Grahame Flynn, whose passion and vision have continued to drive the charity forward in an ever-changing health and social care landscape; pays tribute to the invaluable work of the charity's dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters, past and present, whose tireless efforts have underpinned a century of life-changing support and advocacy; recognises the charity's person-centred approach and its pioneering work in providing information, advice and guidance, promoting health and wellbeing, independent living and influencing change locally, regionally and nationally; acknowledges the vital partnerships Devon in Sight has built with local authorities, health and social care professionals, charities and community groups to ensure the needs of those with visual impairments are properly met; and calls on the Government to continue to recognise the critical role played by charities such as Devon in Sight in building inclusive, supportive communities and ensuring that no one living with sight loss in Devon is left behind.

Steve Darling MP for Torbay

Caroline Voaden MP for South Devon

Ian Roome MP for North Devon

Martin Wrigley MP for Newton Abbot

Rachel Gilmour MP for Tiverton and Minehead

Richard Foord MP for Honiton and Sidmouth

A Game of Musical Chairs

Understanding the role that our Trustees play in the work of Devon in Sight



▲ Photo Credit: Grahame Flynn (Devon in Sight)

▲ Outgoing Chair Dr Adrian Jacobs at our Splatford office

Our Trustees are recruited to support our Chief Executive Officer with the leadership of the organisation. They are enlisted for their skills and experience to ensure that charity has the best people in place to oversee and ensure the future direction of our services and the implementation of our strategic objectives.

In essence, the Board of Trustees oversee the strategic direction of the charity, fundraising strategy and resource development, business and financial planning, quality and performance standards, legal compliance within Charity and Company Law and promotion of the service.

Dr Adrian Jacobs

At our Annual General Meeting we bid a fond farewell to our long standing Trustee and Chair **Dr Adrian Jacobs.** Adrian joined Devon in Sight in 2015 and became Chair in March 2017.

In recognition of his sterling service to the governance of the charity it was unanimously agreed to make Adrian a Life Member of Devon in Sight. This is the highest honour we can bestow.

Mr Scott Bailey



Our new Chair, Scott Bailey joined the Board in 2018. He is a Senior Procurement Manager for the South, Central and West NHS Commissioning Support Unit.
He has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the private and public sectors. He was previously Business Development Manager of the Medical Eye Clinic in Exeter and has over a decade of experience in the NHS across a variety of roles, including as a lead for Ophthalmology.

Alvis Merrall-Spiers



Alvis is the newest addition to the Devon in Sight team having had a successful career in Social Care.

She has a profound understanding of sight loss, having been registered as blind due to Macular Degeneration.

Alvis often feels she has experienced “life from both sides now” which has given her a uniquely empathetic and comprehensive perspective on the challenges and difficulties associated with sight loss, making her an extremely valued member in our board of trustees.

Matrix Standard Accreditation Maintained

Devon in Sight has maintained its Matrix Standard Accreditation for another year.



◀ Photo: Devon in Sight

▲ The Centenary Staff Team at Conference in September

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.

Matrix Standard Accreditation is an international quality standard for organisations that deliver information, advice, and guidance (IAG) services. It is owned by the UK's Department for Education.

Achieving this standard demonstrates a commitment to high-quality service delivery, continuous improvement, and helps us meet mandatory requirements for certain government-funded contracts.

The accreditation is awarded after an independent assessor verifies that the organisation meets the standard's criteria, which cover areas like leadership, resources, service delivery, and continuous quality improvement.

Devon in Sight first attained the Matrix Standard in 2023. Following comprehensive reporting on all our front-line services, in August we had our formal Annual Continuous Improvement Check with a Matrix Standard Accreditation Inspector. **We are pleased to announce that Devon in Sight has maintained its Matrix Standard for another year.**

Holding the Matrix Standard offers organisations several advantages:

- **Improved quality and performance:** It provides a framework for reviewing and developing services to ensure they meet best practices.
- **Competitive advantage:** It serves as a quality mark that demonstrates a commitment to excellence, which can attract more clients and be a requirement for contracts and funding.
- **Enhanced reputation**: Independent validation builds trust with service users, partners, and stakeholders.
- **Continuous improvement:** Accreditation lasts for three years, with annual "Continuous Improvement Checks" to ensure standards are maintained and services continue to develop.

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn said, "This is of great credit for us all, but I would like to thank Tessa Barrett our Head of Services for taking the lead on completing the evaluation process."

Supporting You Feature

An Overview of Our Services

Helping You Navigate Your Sight Loss Journey!

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 designed to help you navigate your sight loss journey.

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 as a PDF and audio file through our website at **www.devoninsight.org.uk** under NEWS.

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 Third Sector.

We have a unique **Assistive Technology Partnership** with **Sight and Sound Technology Ltd.**, the UK's leading provider of equipment, software and services for people who are blind and partially sighted. We provide an **Employment Hub** in partnership with **Thomas Pocklington Trust** to support people into work or change careers.

Our **Living Well with Sight Loss Events** take place across the county where you can meet partners in Health & Social care, the Third Sector and Community Groups.

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** which take place every first and third Wednesday of the month. **A schedule of events and joining instructions can be found on pages 28 and 29.**

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 30 and 31.**

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. **If you would like to support the charity to make Devon a Sight Loss Friendly County give us a call.**

To receive our latest Welcome Pack please ring:

Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

Telephone Chit-Chat Call Service

"The Chit-Chat Call really lifts my mood for the day!"



◀ Photo Credit: Devon in Sight

▲ Tessa Barrett (Head of Services)

Anyone affected by sight loss, including family, friends and carers can join our regular Telephone Chit-Chat Calls from the comfort of their own homes.

This service is usually facilitated by Tessa Barrett our Head of Services providing a safe space for callers to air thoughts, share experiences and ask questions. **The calls are free from landline and mobile telephones.**

Chit-Chat Calls provide a welcoming and compassionate place where callers can support one another and build confidence. They help break down feelings of isolation giving our clients the opportunity to meet others experiencing sight loss.

One client summed it up nicely when she said, "The Chit-Chat Call really lifts my mood for the day".

Chit-Chat Call Schedule

November 2025

- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 5 November 2025
- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 19 November 2025

December 2025

- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 3 December 2025
- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 17 December 2025

January 2026

- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 7 January 2026
- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 21 January 2026

February 2026

- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 4 February 2026
- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 18 February 2026

March 2026

- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 4 March 2026
- 10.30 - 11.30am Wednesday 18 March 2026

There is no requirement for you to speak during a Chit-Chat Call. You can just listen if you want to. We look forward to you joining us.

To access our Chit-Chat Call Service for FREE please ring:

FREEPHONE 0808 169 79 30

Calls start at 10.30am prompt and finish at 11.30am

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 & Navilens code opposite on your smart phone.

SCAN ME

Tuesday 9 December 2025

'The National Trust and Navilens'

Last year National Trust Saltram House in Plymouth became the first outdoor cultural site in the UK to trial the use of a pioneering navigational app for partially sighted visitors called Navilens.

Devon in Sight was pleased to be part of the pilot with a view to increasing access to nature and heritage for blind and partially sighted people.

Our Guest Speaker is **Cat Richards, Senior Project Coordinator from The National Trust.**

National Trust

NaviLens

Tuesday 13 January 2026

'The Role of an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer'

Hospital based Eye Care Liaison Officers (ECLOs) provide information, emotional support and advice if you have a condition which affects your sight. ECLOs provide a listening ear for everyone with any condition affecting their sight, helping you move forward with confidence.

Our Guest Speaker is **Tessa Williams ECLO, Sight Support Services, Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.**



▲ Tessa Williams

Tuesday 10 February 2026

'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 provider in the UK.

Learn more about their NHS Ophthalmology services and hopes for the future.

Our Guest Speaker is **Dan Lewis, Senior Service Promotions Executive, SpaMedica Exeter.**



▲ Dan Lewis

SpaMedica

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

Tel: 0808 169 79 30

Calls from your home telephone or mobile are FREE

ECOE (Exeter Community Energy) Advice

Working together to create a healthier, happier home for you.



◀ Photo Credit: Imageegaml (iStock)

▲ Older lady adjusting her heating thermostat

Living in a cold, damp home can seriously impact your health, especially if you're older, have young children, or live with long-term health conditions. Whether you're worried about your utility bills, damp and mould, or simply need support to make your home more comfortable or more carbon friendly, ECOE (Exeter Community Energy) Advice are here for you.

Our Guest Speaker for September's Sight Loss Speaker Event was **Jess Hayward from ECOE Advice.**

The ECOE Advice team offer expert advice to help you stay warm, safe, and well. They support households in Exeter, Mid Devon, East Devon, Teignbridge, and Torbay Council areas.

ECOE Advice can help you with:

- Practical advice on reducing your energy bills, and improving comfort
- Support accessing grants and financial help
- Energy-saving tips and simple fixes
- Help with meter/supplier issues
- Technical surveys to help you make informed choices
- Advocacy - they can liaise with landlords, councils, and suppliers on your behalf.

They can also offer FREE home visits, subject to terms and conditions. Their fully trained expert home energy advisers will visit your home and provide:

- Practical energy-saving advice tailored to your home
- Installation of free energy-saving measures, such as LED light bulbs, draught-proofing, and radiator reflectors
- Support switching energy supplier or tariff, and help applying for discounts
- Referrals for benefits and debt advice
- Information on available grants for insulation and heating improvements
- Help signing up for the Priority Services Register
- Referrals for Fire Safety Checks and Facilities Grants
- Practical energy-saving advice tailored to your home
- Guidance and support with using Smart Meters, Heat Pumps and Solar PV.

To access help from ECOE Advice please ring:

ECOE Advice on 0800 772 36 17

www.ecoeadvice.org.uk

National Visionary Conference



◀ Photo Credit: Devon in Sight

▲ Fiona Hess, Mandy Darling and Guide Dog Pepsi

Visionary is the national membership organisation for local sight loss charities.

Through the Visionary Network of over 110 local member organisations and 28 national partners, they connect organisations with each other, develop their skills and organisational health and share information and best practice from across the network.

Devon in Sight's CEO Grahame Flynn explains, "The Visionary Conference was held over 24th and 25th September in Birmingham. It is the key sight loss event for networking, learning, and peer support. It was lovely to give Louise Millington, Mandy Darling and Fiona Hess the experience of attending their first one as part of their personnal development."

Devon in Sight: Influencing change locally, regionally and nationally!

Louise said, "As a Helpline Advisor, attached to a telephone and desk, I don't get out much! So, when Gray invited me to go to the Visionary Conference this year in his place, I was both nervous but excited. To have the opportunity to meet peers working in the same field as myself, share good practice and learn from others was something I really wanted to engage with. The setting, as part of Aston University, Birmingham, was buzzing. I was able to attend four training workshops that would equip me with new knowledge as well as promote new ways of thinking to bring back to the team. My workshops included 'Cracking the Code of Health Sector Speak' followed by 'Starting and Sustaining Services for Children' which was really helpful - we heard case studies that will inform us going forward with our children and young people services. On day two I attended 'Building Safe Spaces for lived experience' and another on Unlocking the Potential of AI Wearable Technology' with lots of positives for the future.

Mandy added, "I participated in a number of useful and interesting workshops. The first explored what makes good collaboration, including building trust and the sharing of ideas. The second session focused on what funders require when receiving grant applications. It provided excellent guidance on what to include in funding bids. I found this session extremely helpful as it allowed direct insight from funders. Another workshop focused on the practical lessons for Artificial intelligence (AI) for the Third Sector. It was exciting and innovative. Presenters emphasised adopting AI as a valuable tool for charities, but stressed the importance of proper training on various models. My favourite workshop and the most beneficial examined various types of popular and effective fundraising and provided several leads for me to follow up."

Devon in Sight would like to thank the team at Visionary for yet another inspiring conference.

National Customer Excellence Award

Celebrating outstanding dedication to service, support and care!



◀ Photo Credit: Visionary Conference 2025

▲ Andrew Lennox (CEO Guide Dogs), Fiona, Mandy & Louise

At the Visionary Conference Awards Dinner in September Devon in Sight won the National Customer Excellence Award, sponsored by Guide Dogs UK, which celebrated outstanding dedication to service, support and care within the Visionary network.

This award invited nominations which showcased the exceptional commitment of the Visionary Membership to meeting client need, creating accessible experiences, and delivering support with empathy and professionalism.

Our **Sight Loss Counselling Service** was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide more in-depth emotional support. Our success stems from strong collaborations. We receive essential referrals from organisations such as Guide Dogs, RNIB, Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, Social Prescribers, and Rehabilitation Officers from the Sensory Team.

We work with highly experienced counsellors who specialise in supporting people with health issues and disabilities. They have also received RNIB accredited training around sight loss awareness and counselling people with sight loss.

The impact of our counselling service has been phenomenal. In the pilot, 100% of the people who completed the six closed sessions demonstrated a clinically significant change evidencing recovery or improvement.

Beneficiaries of our Counselling Service have subsequently entered our Employment Support Service called ‘Works for Me’ in partnership with Thomas Pocklington Trust. Designed for young and working aged people they receive support into volunteering, further education and work.

Devon in Sight marked its centenary by expanding our services to include a new Children and Young People’s Counselling Service. The new service empowers young people affected by sight loss to take ownership of their emotions and find balance, allowing them, when they are ready, to share their feelings with others in a way that feels safe and authentic.

Louise said, “As the presenter began to talk about the winning Charity having four pillars of support, I just knew it was us.

I felt very proud to go up, with Mandy, Fiona and Guide Dog Pepsi, to collect our award – what an honour!”

The Chief Executive Officer of Guide Dogs Andrew Lennox presented the award and a £550 prize.

Fundraising News

Order your Christmas Cards now!

Our Community supporting people living with sight loss in Devon!



▲ Photo Credit: Barrie Goodfellow

This year, make your Christmas greetings extra special and spread even more joy by sending a Devon in Sight Christmas card to your loved ones.

Each pack contains ten festive cards based on original paintings by our very own Sight Loss Ambassador, the talented blind artist, Barrie Goodfellow. The five designs are 'Silent Night', 'The Visually Impaired Snowman', 'I Saw Three Ships', 'Bring Out the Figgy Pudding and 'Christmas Trees Galore'.

A pack of ten cards is yours for just £7.50. The postage and packing cost is £4 although Registered Visually Impaired Clients can have them posted out Articles for the Blind.

Your purchase directly supports our work, helping us continue to making a difference to lives of those affected by sight loss.



Only £7.50 for 10 A5 Size Cards

If you would like to purchase some **Christmas Cards** please call:

Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

How you can support our work?

Our community supporting people living with sight loss in Devon



◀ Photo Credit: Monkeybusinessimages (iStock)

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

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.

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.**

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.**

Ways you can support us financially include:

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. **Please ask for more information.**

Donate by Cheque

If you prefer you can also make a one off donation by cheque made payable to **'Devon in Sight'** and send it to **Devon in Sight, Splatford Barton, Kennford, Exeter EX6 7XY.**

Donate by Bank Card

We can take bank card donations over the telephone.

Donate by BACS

Name:	**The Devon County Association for the Blind**
Sort Code:	**30-80-37**
Account No:	**62326768**

Make a Lasting Legacy

If you would like more information about making a gift in your will we can send you a copy of our **'Making a Lasting Legacy Pack'.**

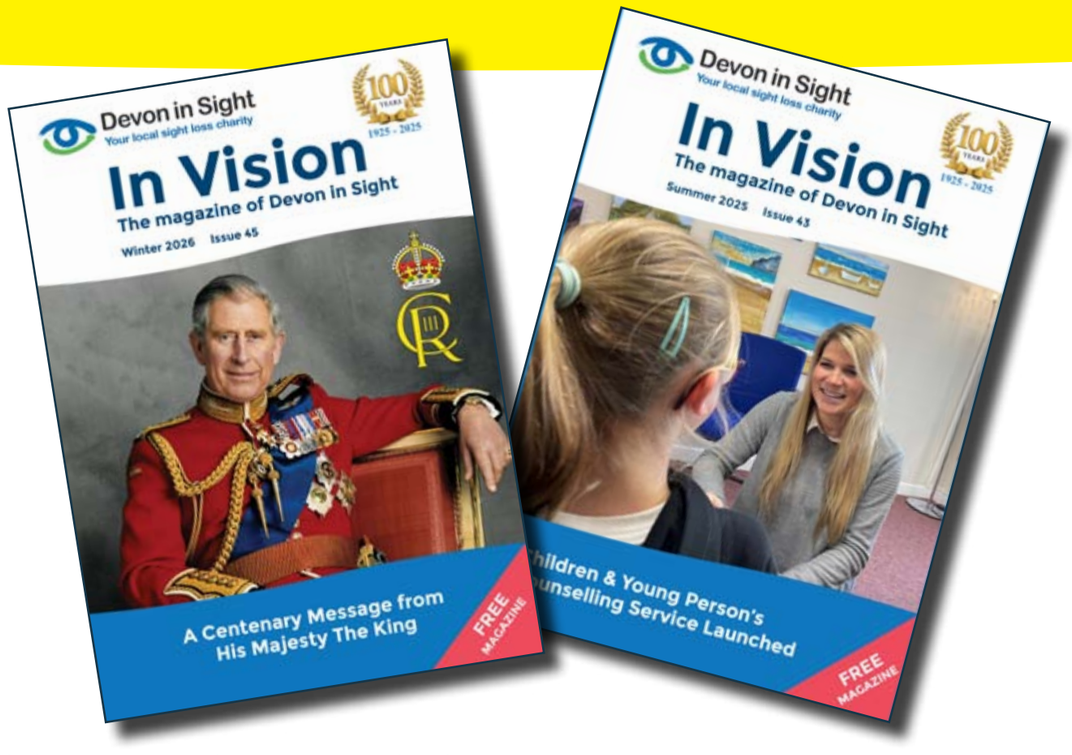
For more **information about how you can help us** please call:

Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

Subscriptions & Xmas Opening Hours

Helping you navigate your sight loss journey



In Vision Magazine Subscriptions

Our quarterly In Vision Magazine is available for FREE to anyone affected by sight loss. It is made available in a range of accessible formats including full colour large print, digitally via email or as audio files on a USB data stick.

You can also access the whole archive of magazines as PDFs or audio files through the Devon in Sight Website under NEWS.

If you would like to change the format that you receive the magazine, are moving home or decided that you no longer want to receive it just give the Sight Loss Helpline a call.

For **In Vision Magazine Subscriptions** please call:

Sight Loss Helpline 01392 876 666

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

Christmas Opening Hours



The Devon in Sight Helpline will close at 2pm on Tuesday 23rd December 2025 and re-open on Friday 2nd January 2026.

Please remember: If you experience a sudden change in your vision please contact the NHS for advice immediately.

Helpful Telephone Number Directory

Emergency Eye Services

NHS Direct	**111**
Emergency	**999**

Hospital Eye Units

West of England Eye Unit	**01392 411611 (Switch Board)**
Glaucoma Unit	**01392 406045**
Macular Office	**01392 406052**
Torbay Eye Clinic	**01803 655088**
North Devon Ophthalmology	**01271 322577**
Plymouth Royal Eye Infirmary	**01752 431648**

Social Care

Sensory Team (Devon)	**0345 155 1007 (Care Direct)**
Sensory Team (Torbay)	**01803 219800**

General Advice

CAB	**0800 144 8848** www.cabdevon.org.uk

Emotional Distress

Samaritans (24/7)	**116 123 FREE** www.samaritans.org

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
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Exeter, EX6 7XY

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