



## Annual Report 2019 – 2020



**Staff and Volunteers at the 2019 'Dress Bright for Sight' day**

## **Chair and Chief Executive's Report**

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2019-20. It was another busy year for our charity, ensuring that our services reach out to visually impaired people and that we promote the benefits of good eye health to all.

Having re-tendered and been successful in continuing our work with Derbyshire County Council, providing advice, information and support to visually impaired people in Derbyshire, we started delivering the new contract in April 2019. There were a number of changes to the work we had been doing and a greater emphasis on outcome measurement of the services we provide. Following negotiations with the council and some changes to our in-house database and information collection process we have established a way to monitor our work with individuals and collect 'distance travelled' information from the people we provide more in-depth services to. Over the first year of service delivery under the contract we have reported that, without exception, all of the people receiving rehabilitation services have reported an improvement in their overall wellbeing as a direct result of our work.

As a fund raising charity, we rely on the generosity of the public and of grant making trusts and organisations for around two thirds of our income. Without this money, we would have to reduce the amount of work that we do. As a local charity, we have worked hard to promote our cause and reassure all of our donors that every pound given is put to good use, providing much needed services.

Despite a challenging financial climate, we delivered our services to over 4,000 visually impaired people during the year. We could not have done this without the dedicated support from our staff and volunteers. It is their enthusiasm and commitment that ensures we are able to continue in our work, providing high quality services around the county.

Whilst this is a report about the year 2019/20, it would be remiss not to mention in this opening section the events that have unfolded since March 2020. The outbreak of the global coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on our work. We have changed the way our services are delivered and have had to rethink our approach to service development. Our fundraising income has been badly affected, though we have benefited from a number of grants available to help minimise the impact of Covid-19.

Working alongside our service users, volunteers, commissioners and other key stakeholders we are developing our plans to make sure that we can respond to the new challenges we face.

Writing this report for 2019/20 it has been good to look back at the work we have done and remember that we are in a strong position to move forward. This report gives a flavour of our work over the past year. We hope you enjoy reading about our achievements.



Claire Winfield  
Chief Executive Officer



Martin Wilson  
Chair of Trustees

## **Key Achievements 2019-20**

Throughout the year, SSD has continued to provide much needed services across Derbyshire. We have had a number of achievements, too many to mention individually and all of which are down to the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters. Highlights include:

- We have continued to work with our funders to clearly identify the need for our services and what they achieve in terms of positive outcomes for visually impaired people. Due to the impact of Covid-19 in February and March, we were slightly below target on the number of people seen at our information days, but overall we have reported that we have met, or exceeded, targets set.
- We entered into the first year of our new contract with Derbyshire County Council, delivering advice, information and support to visually impaired people. As part of negotiations with the council, we took on the equipment ordering for the contract which has allowed us to streamline and improve the equipment service.
- During the year we had a stable staff team, with very little turnover. We did recruit two further part-time Rehabilitation Support Workers to the team. These new staff were the first to benefit from our new induction process, which now provides a more comprehensive and inclusive approach, building on strengths that new staff come with and developing areas of expertise where needed.
- In June 2019 we bid to the National Lottery Community Fund for a one-year development grant to allow us to explore opportunities for setting up one-to-one paid for services for visually impaired people. We were awarded a grant of £22,523 in September and started the research phase of the project in November 2019. Despite a good start to the project, moving to the 'testing out' stage of the work proved difficult with the impact of coronavirus being felt from late February 2020. The National Lottery

Community Fund were very flexible and were soon in touch to allow us to use the grant to deliver services to vulnerable people throughout the pandemic. Our service has provided a range of telephone information, support and signposting to vulnerable, sight impaired people.

- Our 'Living Well' project was extended for another year and continued to provide an essential service to those who need some additional support in order to make the most of opportunities available to them.
- We completed another successful year in our Children's and Young People's services. This completed year two of the three-year programme. Numbers of children and young people taking part have increased over the year. Our project worker for this service has also been involved in delivering awareness raising sessions with young people in schools. Two primary and one secondary school have been involved and feedback from both pupils and staff has been very positive.
- In January 2020 we updated all of our desktop and laptop computers. Microsoft were 'forcing' the update by stopping providing updates for older versions of Windows. Our old hardware would not have let us run Windows 10 efficiently and so the upgrade was needed. We were lucky with bids to charitable trusts securing around £9,000 towards the total costs of nearly £22,000. The updated hardware and software has improved the speed and ease of use for staff, which given the number of staff working from home since mid-March has been excellent.
- 2019/20 has continued to bring a mixture of success and challenges for our organisation and across the sector. Our services have responded well to changes at a local and national level and we continue to navigate our way around any difficulties, ensuring that we stay well positioned to provide much needed services across Derbyshire.

## **Our Services During the Year**

### **Hospital Service**

During the year, due to a member of staff changing their hours, we recruited a new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO). Having previously volunteered with our ECLO service at Chesterfield, she was well placed to take on the role. Our ECLOs are based at Royal Derby Hospital and Chesterfield Royal Hospital and are supported by a small team of trained volunteers.

The service to hospital patients at the point of diagnosis has proved invaluable over the years. Our hospital staff and volunteers remain the first port of call for many of our members and we regularly get positive feedback about their work:

*“I really thought that my life would be more or less over when I was told that there was no more that could be done to save my sight. I don’t know what I would have done if (ECLO) hadn’t been at the hospital that day. She talked to me and told me that there was a lot of help available. She made sure that I got seen by people who could help me. Sight Support Derbyshire has been a God send!”*

Eye Clinic Patient, July 2019

### **Rehabilitation Service**

Under contract from Derbyshire County Council, our qualified Rehabilitation Officers, and Rehabilitation Support Workers, assist people with sight loss to maintain their independence and live the lifestyle of their choice.

During 2019/20, our Rehabilitation Officers worked with 144 people, who received 573 sessions of rehabilitation. (That is 13 more people, and 113 more sessions than the previous year.) These sessions focused on key areas of mobility, independent living skills and communication.

Our Rehabilitation Support Workers provided support to 498 people in their own homes. (An increase of 151 people seen.) This work included issuing equipment such as talking clocks

and liquid level indicators, help with domestic appliances such as setting or calibrating central heating timers, and signposting to services such as Talking Newspapers.

### **Low Vision Aid Scheme**

During 2019/20 the LVA service has continued to supply equipment such as magnifiers, lamps and shaded spectacles to enable visually impaired people to maximise the use of residual vision. The service is free of charge to users and SSD works alongside optometrists to assess clients in their own homes and to supply equipment.

### **Visually Impaired People's (VIP) Information Days**

These events have continued to improve and develop, with staff using feedback from service users to inform who we invite to give information on these days. Despite having to cancel our March event due to Covid-19, in 2019/20 we saw 383 people at these events, targeting all newly registered people by letter and telephone, to invite them to their nearest event.

The aim of each drop-in session is to introduce visually impaired people to the range of support and assistance available to them, from agencies including County Council Adult Services, Derbyshire Constabulary, the library service, Derbyshire Fire Service, specialist information and technology providers, and charitable organisations who advise on hearing loss, welfare rights and other matters.

### **Sports & Leisure Services**

During 2019/20, SSD were able to continue to run a range of events and activities for blind and visually impaired people. Using a number of smaller grants and our own fundraised income, we have provided events including theatre trips, swimming, bowling, musical entertainment, craft activities and walks. These activities encourage visually impaired people to get 'out and about' and to continue to enjoy a social life. They also provide an opportunity for people to gain peer support, which can be very useful for people newly registered with sight loss:

*“Thank you so much for organising the theatre trip. Going with a group has really helped me to feel more confident. The tour around the set before the performance was a real treat and did help me to understand who was where when the play started.”*

Participant at social group September 2019

### **Mobile Resource Centre**

The Mobile Resource Centre/Pop-Up (MRC) continues to be a success, allowing us to visit a wider range of venues. We have set up in shops, libraries, garden centres, health centres etc. Over the year over 550 people received advice and support from our staff and trained volunteers.

### **Children and Young People’s Services**

Sight Support Derbyshire continues to provide quality services for children and young people with a visual impairment. During 2019/20 we have maintained our regular meetings and have run successful school holiday activities for children and young people from around the county.

The project has worked with 50 children and their families.

During the year, sessions about visual impairment awareness were held in three schools, with positive feedback from them all.

*“Thanks to (The Children and Young People’s Worker). She was excellent and really got the children engaged with activities. They all learned a lot about sight loss and how important it is to look after your eyes.”*

Primary School Classroom Teacher September 2019

### **Resource Centres and Call Helpline**

In 2019/20, our Derby and Chesterfield Resource Centres and telephone helplines continued to see a strong demand for services.

Over the year, we saw, spoke to and helped 3,202 people.



## **Volunteers**

Our volunteers at Sight Support Derbyshire lie at the heart of our service delivery efforts. It is because of their selfless and dedicated service that we are able to reach out to blind and visually impaired people throughout Derbyshire. In 2019/20 we retained 80 volunteers, recruiting 23 in the process. These volunteers work across all areas of the charity, in fundraising, social groups, offices and services.

We do manage to retain many of our volunteers and celebrate their achievements at our annual volunteers' thank you event.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, in March 2020 we took the difficult decision to postpone most volunteer activity across the organisation. This decision was made in order to keep our volunteers safe and well and reduce coronavirus-related risks. We continue to maintain contact with our volunteers who are considered an essential part of our organisation and we will consider their return to volunteering on a role-by-role basis when it safe to do so.

## **Plans for 2020-21**

Despite the financial pressures being felt by all charities we remain strong and determined to continue to provide quality services to the thousands of blind and visually impaired people who depend upon us. To that end, in the coming year we will be focusing on the following:

- Ensuring that our services continue to respond in the most appropriate and safe way as we continue to face the ongoing challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Actively seeking funding to develop a befriending service for visually impaired people in Derbyshire (our previous and very successful service was closed three years ago when funding came to an end and no replacement could be found).

- Taking steps to ensure the continuation of all existing services including seeking funding for those services whose funding is due to end.
- Using lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic to develop service responses, particularly those reliant on technical solutions.
- Building on our links with statutory and community organisations, aiming to ensure that the needs of visually impaired people in Derbyshire are met.
- Maintaining (and where possible increasing) the numbers of visually impaired people we support across the City and County.
- Linking with other visual impairment charities across the region (and where relevant country) to look at new innovation and best practice to inform our future work.
- Updating policies and procedures to ensure they reflect legislation, best practice and our working arrangements.
- Working with the Board to increase Board membership based on a skills analysis.
- Working to secure funding for the purchase of a new head office for the charity and putting plans in place for property search and moves.

## **Finances 2019/20**

For the first time in several years 2019/20 saw us return a deficit of £(51,510). This was mainly the result of loss of income, particularly from fundraising, including legacies.

Total reserves were £638,953, broken down as follows:

Restricted Funds	£ 34,590
Designated Funds	£254,263
General Funds	£350,100 (incl £100 share capital)

The Designated Funds comprises of £2,183 for the depreciation of Fixed Assets and £252,080 towards the purchase of office premises in the future. Trustees reviewed the decision on purchasing a 'head office' property for SSD. They once again agreed that this continued to be the aim.

In the current funding environment, the Trustees believe that holding £350,000 of free reserves is a prudent course of action against such uncertainties.

## Finances 2019/2020

<b>SIGHT SUPPORT DERBYSHIRE FINANCES 2019/2020</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>
All Resource Centres	7,850
Hospital Service	46,106
Living Well at Home Project	27,349
Self funded Services Pilot	6,606
Youth Support	15,233
Sporting Social & Leisure	11,964
County Services	221,302
Low Vision Service	88,811
Purchase of Aids & Equipment	3,407
Support Costs	157,270
<b>Total Cost of Services</b>	<b>585,898</b>
Generating Funds & Publicity	68,998
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>654,896</b>

<b>2019/2020</b>	
<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Donations	33,005
Legacies	49,235
Fundraising Activities & Events	27,257
Grants	134,441
Statutory Contracts	339,180
Sale of Aids & Equipment	8,916
Sporting & Social Contributions	3,738
Interest on Investments	7,035
Other Income	579
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>603,386</b>
<b>Deficit for year</b>	<b>(51,510)</b>

<b>Resources</b>	
General Funds - May be used for any authorised activity	350,100
Designated Funds - Fixed Asset Fund	2,183
Premises Fund	252,080
Restricted Funds - Must be spent in accordance with Donor's wishes	34,590
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>638,953</b>
<b>Represented by</b>	
Tangible Assets	2,183
Investments	5,100
Net Current Assets - Stock, Debtors, Cash & Deposits less Creditors	631,670
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>638,953</b>

## **Acknowledgements for 2019/20**

Our acknowledgements and thanks go to all the groups and individuals who have supported us with funding, services and time over the year. Without this support, we would not be able to provide all the services we do. Listed are some (though by no means all) of the key groups and people we pay thanks to:

BBC Children in Need  
Bolsover District Council (Mayors Charity)  
Chesterfield Royal Hospital Charitable Trust  
Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Talking Newspaper  
Convent of the Holy Name, Derby  
Derby City Council  
Derby Merlin Round Table  
Derby Riverlights Limited  
Derbyshire CCGs  
Enhanced Vision / Optelec Limited  
Erewash Borough Council (Mayors Charity)  
Gem's Cash for Kids  
Lloyds Bank, Irongate, Derby  
Lloyds Bank Foundation  
Lubrizon  
Pentagon Derby  
Real World Fundraising  
Reeve (Derby)  
Royal Derby Hospital  
T C Harrison Ford Derby  
The Earl of Harrington's Angling Club  
The N. Smith Charitable Settlement  
The Primary Club  
The Richardson Brothers Foundation  
The Sobell Foundation  
The Woodroffe Benton Foundation  
Waitrose Limited, Ashbourne

We are also extremely grateful to those who left us a legacy in their Will this year, and to those who donated in memory of a loved one. Many of these gifts are left by people who have benefitted directly from our services and would like other visually impaired people to be able to do the same.

During the year, we added to our Book of Remembrance which was set up for families and friends to record memories of loved ones who had left a gift to the charity.

## **Contact**

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