

Newsletter

March 2021

Welcome to our wellbeing edition

Sight Support Derbyshire have been busy gathering information to help us stay well, both physically and in ourselves. We hope you will find this special edition, dedicated to your wellbeing, useful during the ongoing pandemic.

We would like to thank Derby & Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for helping with the cost of producing this extended newsletter.

Service update

Throughout the pandemic we have been working hard to ensure we continue to provide much-needed support, advice and information to visually impaired people and their families.

However, many of our services have had to change to make sure we follow all the government guidelines to keep you, our staff and volunteers safe. Our community-based activities, such as social groups and information events, have had to be put on hold, but we are still here and taking calls on our help desk.

When you call, we will first try to help you over the phone. We've learnt a lot about what questions to ask to find the best ways to help. Often we can make an assessment about any equipment that might be useful for you and arrange to either post this out, or do a distanced doorstep delivery.

For our low vision service, we may be able to post out a reading chart to help assess if a magnifier would help you and if so, which strength would be best. We can let you know about other agencies and services that may be useful and make referrals on your behalf if needed.

We know all this is far from ideal, and we'd love to be able to come out and do assessments at home, but while this is not possible, we can still achieve quite a lot. So please get in touch if you're struggling. Our contact details are on the back page.



Some of our handheld magnifiers on display

During the pandemic our children and young people's group have been meeting remotely on Zoom (video conferencing by computer). These sessions have proved very popular and we think this, or similar sessions using telephone conferencing, may be one way of providing some social contact and activity for our adult members too. We're planning how this might work best and will let you know how things develop.

Good news about our Living Well service

Our Living Well service, which has been running for over three years, helps people living with sight loss who may be struggling with another health condition.

We aim to make sure they are getting the right support and accessing all the services available to them. It is funded by Derby & Derbyshire CCG.

Recognising the negative effects of the Covid pandemic on many people's mental health, the CCG has agreed a further year's funding for us to use the Living Well project to provide flexible support, to help promote mental wellbeing. This may include help with the Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing programme, featured in this newsletter.

Current restrictions mean our initial work will have to be done by telephone. However, we hope staff will eventually be able to see you at home, or support you to access activities in your local area. It's just a couple of sessions, but we hope that by helping you try something new, and linking you with services you haven't tried before, you will feel better.

We know Living Well makes a difference. One of our previous service users said: "Having used the support of the Living Well service last year, I joined a local lunch club and made some new friends. Over this last year, if it hadn't been for them I don't know what I would have done. We've stayed in touch and been a great support to each other."

Winter Raffle

A huge thank you to everyone who supported our Winter Raffle. You raised £4,821 towards our services, which is actually higher than last year and phenomenal considering we were unable to sell tickets in many of our usual outlets.

Congratulations to Mrs Youd, who won the first prize of £250 cash donated by Lubrizol, and to second prize winner Mrs S Bland, who received a tableware set donated by Denby Pottery. All our winners have been notified.

The Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing



Many of us found the winter lockdown harder than the first, so if you've been struggling, you're not alone. Evidence shows that there are five things you can do to help improve your peace of mind. The NHS website, and the mental health charity Mind, both have suggestions for things that can help. Our ideas below have the needs of visually impaired people in mind, so we hope you will find these useful.

Step 1: Connect with other people

Keeping in touch with family and friends on a regular basis helps your social and mental wellbeing, even if it's just a quick chat on the phone. One effect of the pandemic is that you may now be aware of video call applications like Zoom or Teams even if you've never used them! There is no substitute for meeting face to face, but these apps can be easily installed on your computer or mobile device.

With face-to-face meetings, always follow the current restrictions about how many people you can meet up with and follow social distancing. You can be guided by another person if required. While the preference is for them to be from your household or support bubble, they can be someone else if this isn't possible. Sighted guides don't count towards the number of people meeting up.

You may want to share experiences of sight loss and the impact of the pandemic with others who also have a visual impairment, who will understand how you're feeling.

The **RNIB** offer a talk and support befriending group over the phone or online. The groups meet on weekdays and sessions last up to 55 minutes.

You don't need any special equipment to take part, all you need is access to a phone or computer in a quiet and comfortable place. The groups also support people with a dual sensory impairment / hearing impairments. For more information please call 0303 123 9999.

With the Covid restrictions you may feel isolated, upset and anxious. To help with these feelings, you may benefit from talking to professional counsellors. Telephone counselling services can offer you time and space to express these emotions in the comfort of your own home.

The **RNIB** offers one-to-one telephone and online counselling sessions. For more information, call 0303 123 9999.

The **Macular Society** offers a service to anyone who has been diagnosed with macular disease, as well as their family members. For more information, call 0300 3030 111.



Step 2: Be physically active

As well as keeping you fit, exercise releases the feel good hormone called dopamine, so you really do feel better for it!

This could be something you do from your chair by moving your legs and arms, to going out for a walk. Before engaging in any form of exercise make sure that you are safe, comfortable and feel able to do so. If unsure, contact your GP for advice. You can be more physically active by doing the following:

- Getting up every so often in the day to walk around to make yourself a drink or a snack.
- Walking up and down the staircase (see picture below)
- Going for a walk in your garden
- Having a little jiggle to some music you like!

If you fancy something a little more relaxing, then the RNIB broadcast guided daily yoga sessions at 7am. Find these on RNIB Connect Radio on Freeview TV channel 730, or online at www.live.rnibconnectradio.org.uk.

If you're feeling energetic, **British Blind Sport** have started their Active at Home programme, an online library of accessible, audio-led workouts ranging from HIIT and Cardio classes to Dance and Pilates. Find out more at www.britishblindsport.org.uk/active-at-home/



Step 3: Learn new skills

Learning a new skill also boosts your confidence and self-esteem. Now may be a good time to think about what you would like to be able to do once Covid restrictions start to ease. Perhaps you would be like to cook again, be more independent when going out, or be able to access technology.

Sight Support Derbyshire can help with information, advice, guidance and training to support you with these tasks and many others.

We can provide you with advice and guidance around aids and gadgets that can help with tasks like making yourself a drink, grating, peeling and chopping, using controls on your appliances, hob and oven safety, and organising your kitchen.

We can offer aids such as liquid level indicators, kitchen measuring scales, non-slip mats, talking labelling devices and more to help you become more independent.

Perhaps you would like to walk to the local shops independently, visit a friend or relative, or go into town by yourself when restrictions ease. If you live in Derbyshire county we can help by assessing your mobility needs and providing you with specialist rehabilitation training to achieve your goals. If you live in Derby we can refer you to the City Council's rehabilitation officer.



The liquid level indicator in action!

The national lockdown and the restrictions posed by the pandemic have highlighted how technology can be a great help with providing information, and keeping people in touch with loved ones.

If you would like to learn how to use a tablet device, personal computer, laptop or smartphone, Ability Net can help. They can help with guidance on the most suitable technology for you, and how to use it. To find out more, call them on 0800 048 7642 or email enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk.

RNIB Connect radio hosts discussions around technology that are accessible for blind and partially sighted people, every Tuesday at 1pm.

Accessibility functions have come a long way, and are quite advanced in newer computers and smartphones. There is a lot of information online about how to make the most of them. We've put some of it on our website in our 'Help during the pandemic' section'. Find it by clicking on 'How we can help?' at the top of the website home page. The address is in the contacts section at the end. Alternatively, give us a call.



A little act of kindness

Step 4: Give to others

Acts of giving and kindness can help us feel more positive about ourselves, and feel more connected to others. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture. It could be something like showing others what they mean to us, perhaps by getting in touch with a friend we haven't spoken to for a while.

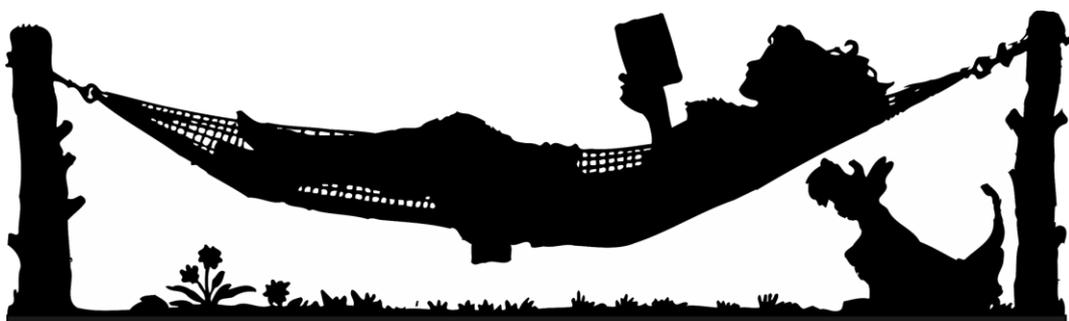
You could make a loved one's day by telling them how much their support has meant throughout the pandemic. Small acts done with care and attention, like stroking and feeding a pet or watering a plant, also count.

Step 5: Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Mindfulness has become something of a buzzword in recent years. It's about making yourself stop and pay attention to what is going on around you, in that moment, to try and find a calmer mind space. An example might be going outside and concentrating on what you can hear, such as the birds singing.

During such challenging times it's sometimes difficult to keep positive and as a result our minds are likely to wander with worry and anxiety. This is normal given the circumstances, but mindfulness can help you give you focus. Try the exercise below, which helps you relax by focusing on your breath.

Mindfulness Breathing: Find a comfortable and relaxed quiet space, which could be any part of your house where you feel at ease. You can keep your eyes open or closed and keep your arms relaxed on your lap with both your feet sitting comfortably on the floor. Bring your attention to your breath and feel the inhalation through your nostrils and how this inflates your chest as you draw air in, and how it feels as the air comes out of your mouth. Do this exercise for 1 or 2 minutes and increase the duration of the exercise as and when it feels comfortable.



...and relax!

Help at the Hospital Eye Clinics

You may have met one of our Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, or 'ECLOs' as they are often known, when you've visited the eye centre at Royal Derby or Chesterfield Royal hospitals. The ECLOs are there to offer advice, information and support about your sight loss and eye conditions.

During the pandemic our ECLO's have mainly been working from home. If you'd like to speak to them, please call us and we'll make sure we put you in touch.

Although the ECLOs aren't in clinic as much as they'd like, both hospital eye clinics are still open. If you do have an appointment for a consultation, screening or treatment, it is important that you attend. The hospitals will let you know what arrangements are in place to help keep you and them safe.

Many routine eye appointments have been delayed, some for quite a long time. If you are waiting for an appointment and struggling with your sight, get in touch and we'll see if there is anything we can do to help until you can be seen at the hospital. Unfortunately we can't help with the actual hospital appointment and bookings, you need to deal directly with the eye clinics for those.

Fundraising News – New 'Little and Often' Campaign

The last 12 months have been tricky for our Fundraising team with no opportunities for the usual fundraising events. One thing that hasn't changed though is the generosity of our supporters, and for that we offer a huge thank you.

A combination of generous donations from individuals, and emergency grants have enabled us to continue helping local blind and partially sighted adults and children throughout the pandemic.

To make it easier for people to donate to us, we are launching a campaign to encourage people to give 'little and often' via a Standing Order or Direct Debit. Just a few pounds every month can make a big difference, providing a regular income to help our services and support to continue. Last year we raised almost £2,800 through these regular gifts and hope to raise even more this year to help see us through these difficult times.

One of our regular givers explains why he and his wife give in this way: "We realise it's important for charities to receive income on a regular basis to help towards planning their activities. For us, setting up a Direct Debit for a monthly donation to Sight Support Derbyshire has taken all the hassle out of supporting the charity, so we feel it's a win-win!"

If you, or anyone you know, would like to support this campaign there is a Standing Order form enclosed which can be completed and returned to Sight Support Derbyshire using the enclosed envelope. Alternatively, a Direct Debit can be set up through our website by clicking on the 'donate' button at the top of the home page. See 'Contact us' for the address.

Census Day is on its way

The Census happens every ten years and counts the population of England and Wales. It asks questions about your household, their ages, occupations and general questions about health, to help with planning services in your community like health, education and transport. It also helps charities like us plan our work and bid for funding. Taking part in the Census is a legal obligation.

Census Day is Sunday 21st March, and this year's count will be 'digital first,' which means everyone will be encouraged to complete their Census questionnaire online. The survey can be completed on any smart device and should only be completed by a trusted person on your behalf. You will receive a unique code by letter to access your personal questionnaire.

If online access does not work for you, there is support available to help you complete the Census. You can ask for a paper questionnaire to complete, and guides for completing the Census are available in large print and Braille. More information can be found online at www.census.gov.uk/accessibility.

You can also call the freephone Census contact line on 0800 141 2021 to ask for a paper questionnaire, to complete your Census over the phone, or to find a Support Centre near you – it is hoped these will be able to open as restrictions ease.

Contact Us:

Our office addresses are below for reference, but please call our Helpdesk number for information and advice.

Derby Office and
Resource Centre
Suite 2.2 – 2.10, 2nd Floor
Litchurch Plaza, Litchurch Lane
Derby DE24 8AA
Open Mon to Thurs,
9am to 5pm

Chesterfield Office and
Resource Centre
1 St Margaret's Drive
Chesterfield
Derbyshire S40 4SY
Open Mon to Thurs,
8am to 4pm

Helpdesk telephone number: 01332 292262.

Email: enquiries@sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk

Website: www.sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk

Search **@SightSupDerbys** to find us on Facebook and Twitter.