



Annual Report for year ended 31st March 2021



New Head Office at 2a Wentworth House

Registered charity number: 1080986
Company number: 3920526

Chair and Chief Executive's Report

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2020-21. It was an unprecedented year as the world continued to battle the global pandemic. None of us knew how long government imposed restrictions would continue and Sight Support Derbyshire (SSD) had to change and adapt to ensure that visually impaired people received essential services.

Throughout the year we managed to keep our offices in Chesterfield and Derby open, albeit on a skeleton staff, and we moved to remote working for those not in the offices. Many of our volunteer activities stopped, but we did have some volunteers who continued to help out, keeping our van running, stuffing envelopes when needed and generally helping out when asked.

During periods when the country wasn't in some form of lockdown, we did resume some level of face-to-face activities. Working closely with Public Health and our commissioners, home visits for assessments took place and we even managed to fit in a VIP Information Day in November 2020, before we went into another lockdown.

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. Over the year we were challenged over how we raised funds as many of our usual fundraising activities were cancelled. Fortunately, we were successful in bids for Covid related grants which helped us through the year. Moving forward, as these grants end, finding new sources of income will continue to challenge us.

Our staff and volunteers have been amazing through the year, showing real commitment, flexibility and a determination to make sure that our services continued wherever possible. Sadly, despite making use of the governments furlough scheme, we did have to make five redundancies early on in the year to ensure that we maintained and protected our finances.

For a number of years SSD Trustees have been building a designated reserve, in order to set aside a fund to allow us to buy a new head office. Finally, after much saving and searching, in August 2021 we moved into a new property in Derby. We currently lease the building but are planning to buy it in the near future. Having the property will provide an additional level of stability for the charity.

Whilst this report is mainly about our work in 2020/21, it is important to recognise that the global pandemic continues to affect our work as we move forward. A number of things have changed for us, and for our key stakeholders, and we need to find new and creative ways of planning, funding and delivering our work, ensuring that our services to visually impaired people in Derbyshire continue.

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 2020-21

Throughout the year, SSD has adapted and changed the way it works in order to provide much needed services across Derbyshire. Despite this, 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 worked with our commissioners to agree changes to the services we delivered under our Rehabilitation, Information and Advice contract, and our Low Vision contract. We changed reporting mechanisms and agreed key targets, which we met or exceeded over the year.
- We entered into the second year of our three-year contract with Derbyshire County Council, delivering advice, information and support to visually impaired people. As part of that contract we continued to deliver equipment purchasing for the contract and we strengthened our relationships with specialist equipment providers to ensure that we obtained best value for money.
- During the year we set-up telephone support calls for some of the most isolated and vulnerable people we support. We arranged regular contact to ensure they were getting support available and that they understood what was happening across the country and how government Covid rules and guidelines affected them.
- We piloted facilitated group conference calls for small numbers of service users; providing them with the opportunity to speak to each other and form groups of interest.
- Our 'Living Well' project was extended for another year and continued to provide an essential service to those who needed additional support. Rather than face-to-face support, much of the work was done over the phone. This

included signposting, referring on, and setting-up Covid supports for services such as shopping.

- With support from a small grant from Children in Need, our Children's and Young People's services moved on-line. Two staff ensured that a varied programme of activities kept group members engaged and interacting with SSD and with each other. Treasure hunts, quizzes, talent competitions and home baking were all part of the programme.
- We successfully bid for a number of Covid related grants to support us in delivering our services and covering our overhead costs. Our usual fundraising income was much reduced as we could not run our community based fundraising events.

Our Services During the Year

Hospital Service

During the year, our Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLO's) had to change and adapt the way they worked in order to provide services. The Covid pandemic acutely affected hospitals, and they had some of the most restrictive working practices in order to protect both patients and staff. Royal Derby Hospital and Chesterfield Royal Hospital supported our services to work remotely, providing remote access to their systems and being flexible in the way they referred new patients.

The number of patients going through the eye clinics was much reduced. However, our ECLO's were still able to provide telephone support to those people facing a new diagnosis of sight loss and to those patients experiencing a change in their eye conditions. The service was greatly appreciated by those who used it:

“It (sight loss) happened really quickly and it came as a shock that nothing could be done to save my sight. A nurse in the clinic told me that she would get someone from Sight Support Derbyshire to telephone me. The ECLLO was wonderful! She talked to me about what could be done to help me use what little sight I had left and she arranged for someone to send me some equipment to help. She’s stayed in touch and I know that I can ring her anytime if I need some more help.”

Eye Clinic Patient, October 2020

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 2020/21, the nature of the work changed from being mainly face-to-face delivery to people in their own home, to telephone support and advice. Equipment was being posted out or Covid safe doorstep deliveries made. Using our Covid risk framework we did manage some home visits, and some outdoor rehabilitation support. Staff also provided ongoing telephone support to those service users who were very isolated. They would telephone at regular intervals to check on people’s welfare and to have a chat. With many vulnerable people not going out due to the pandemic, the telephone support was valued by those who received it:

“Having someone ring up just to see how I am is wonderful. It can get lonely with only the TV or radio for company.”

Low Vision Aid Scheme

During 2020/21 the LVA service continued to supply equipment such as magnifiers, lamps and shaded spectacles to enable visually impaired people to maximise the use of residual vision. Similar to our rehabilitation work, the service moved to being mainly based on telephone support. LV assessors would post our reading charts to service users and then telephone to discuss what could be seen. Based on that, equipment was

sent out and a follow-up call made to check on equipment suitability and ongoing need. While this wasn't ideal, it ensured that people got equipment to help them, while they waited for a home assessment.

Visually Impaired People's (VIP) Information Days

This service was particularly impacted by Covid. In previous years the information sessions ran as drop-in events in community venues with up to fifteen stalls/exhibitors in attendance.

Over the year we planned and cancelled several events, but did manage to deliver one event in Chesterfield during November 2020. The session was fully risk assessed, with Covid safety precautions in place, and rather than drop-in, it was organised for pre-booked sessions. Despite reduced capacity for exhibitors, the event was well received, particularly by those who had been registered as sight impaired over the year and got to see what support and equipment was available for them.

Sports & Leisure Services

During 2020/21 all SSD activities and events for blind and visually impaired people were postponed. Leisure centres, pools and venues we had used were closed. Government guidance for most of the year was for groups not to meet.

We did stay in contact with regular group members by telephone. This was mainly on a one-to-one basis, but we did pilot some small group telephone conferencing calls that proved successful.

"It has been good to talk to other people who can't see and share our experiences – good and bad, and sometimes very funny!"

Group call participant, October 2020.

The staff member who coordinated these activities was made redundant and so other staff stepped in to support telephone contacts.

Living Well Service

Our 'Living Well' project grant was once again extended, allowing us to run the project over the year. Funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the main focus in the early part for the year was about ensuring that blind and partially sighted people were supported to access all of the relevant services they needed. As this service supports people who are particularly vulnerable, many were shielding and so staff supported them to access shopping services, ensure prescriptions were delivered and that people had access to relevant information in accessible formats.

Towards the end of the year as the CCG moved its focus to looking at ways of supporting people with general wellbeing as the country emerged from the pandemic. The CCG contributed to the Sight Support Derbyshire newsletter in March 2020, which allowed us to send out a 'bumper edition' focused on wellbeing for visually impaired people.

Mobile Resource Centre

The Mobile Resource Centre/Pop-Up (MRC) was another casualty of the Covid restrictions. Usually setting up in venues such as shops, libraries, garden centres, and health centres, it was not possible to run sessions at all during the year. The MRC Coordinator kept in contact with volunteers (MRC volunteers and those from across the organisation) and also provided telephone support to service users.

Children and Young People's Services

Sight Support Derbyshire continues to provide quality services for children and young people with a visual impairment. During 2020/21 we were unable to maintain our regular meetings due to Covid, and instead moved to on-line sessions.

Support from the Children in Need Covid Booster Fund meant that SSD was able to move its activities for children over to Zoom, with parents on hand to help if needed. The grant paid for equipment, staff training in online safety, a Zoom licence and additional staff time, to ensure two staff members could be present throughout the meetings to ensure safeguarding.

The children enjoyed a range of events including virtual quizzes, held a talent show and made brightly-decorated mug cakes to mark Dress Bright for Sight, which SSD ran during National Eye Health Week.

“The children have been very engaged and are coming up with lots of ideas for future sessions. It has been great to see their smiling faces as they’ve met up with their friends again online. The feedback from parents has been brilliant - they’ve mentioned how all the children are enjoying themselves and interacting well online.”

SSD Children and Young People’s Worker

Resource Centres and Call Helpline

In 2020/21, our Derby and Chesterfield offices dealt with a high number of calls to our telephone helpline. In 2019/20 we saw, spoke to and helped 3,202 people. During the year 2020/21 we spoke to over 4,000 people. We kept a record of the nature of calls, over half were sight loss specific, but the next largest group were about general well-being and Covid related queries.

The calls dealt with were generally more complex than usual as staff dealt with telephone assessments, onward referrals, equipment queries and service users feeling lonely and isolated.

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 we are able to reach out to blind and visually impaired people throughout Derbyshire. Over 2020/21 we suspended most volunteer activity due to Covid restrictions but we stayed in touch with over 80 of our volunteers, letting them

know that they were valued and that we wanted them back just as soon as we were able and when activities they were involved with resumed.

The Volunteer Coordinator was one of the roles made redundant in the year and moving forward we will need to have dedicated resource to fully rebuild our volunteer activity.

Plans for 2021-22

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. The impact that Covid-19 has had on all services cannot be underestimated. However, we have been able to quickly adapt to different ways of working and continue to provide support to people across the county. As restrictions ease and we begin to return to more 'normal' ways of working, we know that there is a demand for more social interaction after so many people have been isolated. To that end, in the coming year we will be focusing on the following:

- Ensuring that our services continue to respond in the most flexible, appropriate and safe way as we continue to face the ongoing challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Actively seeking funding to develop a social befriending service for visually impaired people in Derbyshire (our previous and very successful service was closed four 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.

- Ensuring appropriate technology is in place for our staff and looking to establish support for visually impaired service users who wish to embrace technology.
- 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 when needed, 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 ensure a smooth transition to the new head office.

Finances 2020/21

In comparison to 2019/20, income decreased by £7,907 and expenditure also decreased by £112,088, resulting in an increase in funds of £104,181 on the previous year. This increase was mainly due to the decrease in expenditure following the Covid lockdowns and the resulting savings on project and staff costs.

Whilst there were lockdown losses on our traditional fundraising activities, these were mitigated by our success in sourcing various streams of Covid related grants.

Total reserves were £691,624, broken down as follows:

Restricted Funds	£ 37,026
Designated Funds	£302,993
General Funds	£351, 605 (incl £100 share capital)

The Designated Funds comprises of £346 for the depreciation of Fixed Assets and £302,647 towards the purchase of office premises. Trustees reviewed the decision on purchasing a 'head office' property for SSD. They once again agreed that this continued to be the aim and a property purchase was now in sight.

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

Finances 2020/2021

SIGHT SUPPORT DERBYSHIRE FINANCES 2020/2021	
Expenditure	£
All Resource Centres	6,788
Hospital Service	42,642
Living Well at Home Project	24,231
Self-funded Services Pilot	13,,825
Youth Support	12,562
Sporting Social & Leisure	4,021
County Services	201,783
Low Vision Service	60,137
Purchase of Aids & Equipment	632
Support Costs	134,117
Total Cost of Services	500,738
Generating Funds & Publicity	42,070
Total Expenditure	542,808

2020/2021	
Income	£
Donations	20,027
Legacies	24,618
Fundraising Activities & Events	8,598
Grants	203,187
Statutory Contracts	302,209
Sale of Aids & Equipment	1,440
Sporting & Social Contributions	0
Interest on Investments	2,466
Other Income	32,934
Total Income	595,479
Surplus for year	52,671

Resources	
General Funds - May be used for any authorised activity	351,605
Designated Funds - Fixed Asset Fund Premises Fund	346 302,647
Restricted Funds - Must be spent in accordance with Donor's wishes	37,026
Total Funds	691,624
Represented by	
Tangible Assets	346
Investments	5,100
Net Current Assets - Stock, Debtors, Cash & Deposits less Creditors	686,178
Total Net Assets	691,624

Acknowledgements for 2020/21

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
BBC Children in Need Covid-19 2020 Booster Programme
Chesterfield Royal Hospital Charitable Trust
Denby Pottery
Derbyshire CCGs
Derbyshire County Council
Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc Movement for Good
Independent Age
Kathleen Beryl Sleigh Charitable Trust
National Lottery Community Fund Project ID:0010366775
Neky Foundation
Royal Derby Hospital
Tesco Bags of Help Covid-19 Communities Fund
The Boshier-Hinton Foundation
The Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund
The Gledswood Charitable Trust
The Guy Charitable Foundation
The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust Charity Survival Fund
The Lubrizol Corporation
The Lynn Foundation
The Manson Family Charitable Trust
The Molly Forster Charitable Trust
The N Smith Charitable Settlement
The Postcode Community Trust
The Real World Foundation
The Red Socks Charitable Trust
The Rest-Harrow Trust

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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