



Newsletter

Spring 2019



Halton Sensory Services

126 Widnes Road, Widnes Town Centre



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

A WORD FROM MIRIAM WRIGHT

Hello and welcome to another edition of our newsletter.

Two issues have been taking up a great deal of our time over the last couple of months the first of which is the opening of our new service in Halton. As many of you will be aware last summer we were awarded the contract to deliver a 'sensory service' in Halton in partnership with Deafness Resource Centre and Halton Borough Council. We have now moved into a new premises in Widnes town centre along with colleagues from partner organisations. We are developing a joint approach to sensory loss services and the new drop in centre will cater for all enquiries, give access to a range of equipment and provide services for people with sight loss, people who are D/deaf and people with dual sensory loss.

The second issue is I am sad to say that our mobile units have come to the end of their useful lives and we are having to take both of them off the road. They have served us well and have been a flagship service for Vision Support for over 10 years now, the North Wales unit having clocked up a staggering 17 years of service and thousands of miles of travel.

We are in no doubt that we need to replace these units and you have told us as much in our surveys, focus groups and stakeholder events. There is clearly a need for information to be delivered in a timely way, for advice and for opportunities to speak to someone face to face about sight loss. So we need to continue to go to the places that people use such as health centres, supermarkets, GP surgeries, residential facilities, community groups and colleges. We need to have information and advice stands at these and other venues where our staff, partners and volunteers can be there to provide the face to face service that you have told us is so important.

Our new project will be called The Vision Support Community Roadshow. To raise money for our Roadshow we are launching a funding programme, asking for support from a wide range of organisations and individuals. Our fund raising effort has been given a really fantastic head start by way of a generous legacy we received recently which has enabled us to buy one new replacement vehicle to cover Cheshire and Halton, but we need a second vehicle for North Wales. In short we need another £25,000. If you would like to make a donation please go to our Just Giving page, Local Giving page or get in touch with us here in Chester.

Thank you.

FLINTSHIRE SIGHT LOSS STAKEHOLDER EVENT



In February, Vision Support held their second Stakeholder Event, this time in Flintshire, which over 80 people from different sectors attended.

For example, we had a range of attendees from Wales Council of the Blind, North Wales Fire and Rescue

Service and Flintshire Town Council, to name a few. The event was organised in collaboration with Coleg Cambria, and a number of their business students assisted at the event. They provided tea and coffee for the guests, made notes of the ideas produced during group discussions and held a cake stall that raised approximately £75, which they very kindly donated to Vision Support.

The main purpose of the event was to consolidate on the results of our recent Community Empowerment Survey and to come up with solutions to the many problems that individuals with sight loss face. Overall, the event was a success with many of the attendees requesting a day-long event instead of an afternoon. Vision Support will be holding more Stakeholder Events in the future and we look forward to hearing your suggestions.



HALTON

Vision Support is working with Deafness Resource Centre and Halton Borough Council to establish a fully integrated sensory service for people who are blind, partially sighted, D/deaf or deaf blind living in the borough. Halton Sensory Service, as it is now called, has moved into 126 Widnes Road where our team of experienced specialist staff will be on hand to provide a wide range of information, equipment and support for people experiencing sensory loss.



This service is the first of its kind in the region and will reduce the need for people to have to contact different organisations for support and information. The new centre will look and feel very familiar to those who know Vision Support, Linda Bromilow will continue to deliver digital inclusion training from we will be holding demonstration events for the latest equipment. Our team of rehabilitation assistants will be contactable through the centre and will be providing support for people in their own homes. The brand new Vision Support mobile information unit will also be operating across Halton from April so please look out for the schedule of visits, details of which are publicised locally, on our website and through the new centre.

The centre will be open from 10am to 3pm, Monday to Friday so please do drop in and see us. Alternatively if you have any questions you can contact us by phone on **0151 511 8801**



Digital Inclusion with Vision Support

Get connected, get independent, get online



Do you have a vision impairment?

**Are you looking for support with getting online or making
your technology more accessible?**

Get one-to-one support from us to go digital!



For more information please contact us:

Chester

kbrown@visionsupport.org.uk

Halton

lbromilow@visionsupport.org.uk

Denbighshire

kbenn@visionsupport.org.uk

Flintshire & Wrexham

james.forfar@visionsupport.org.uk

THANK YOU

Vision Support would like to say a big thank you to John and Doreen Ford.

When John sadly passed away, the donations at the funeral were kindly given to Vision Support, raising £800 pounds which we were able to put towards funding one of our new mobile units.

John and Doreen were married for 52 years, and have two children Paul and Chris and two grandchildren Jasmine and Archie.

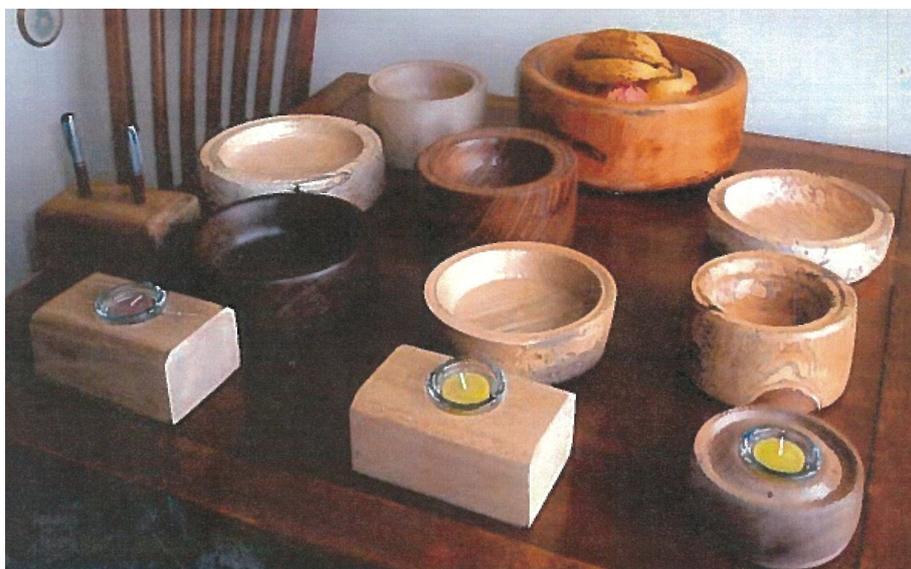
When John was a long distance lorry driver, his family would occasionally travel with him, going to such places as Scotland and Ireland. When his sons were little they loved staying with their dad and going to work with him, and sleeping in the cab inside the lorry.

John did not seem to be a person who liked a lot of attention, preferring to make his contribution to Vision Support through his talent for making beautiful objects out of wood as John was also an avid craftsman.

He created beautiful fruit bowls that many people came to see, they were always amazed with his work and they were sent to places as far as America and Canada. He created many wonderful walking sticks and also made 19 beautiful candle holders for our Vision Support event at St. Asaph Cathedral last year.

John worked on a wood lathe and when John began to lose his sight his son Paul who is a precision engineer put a device on the lathe to make it easier for his dad to continue to use it. John bought all of the wood himself donating the money he made to Vision Support and other various charities.

John continued to enjoy travelling in his later years as John and Doreen went away to places such as Cyprus, Turkey and Spain and they loved going to Llandudno which they visited three times a year.



NORTH WALES MOBILE UNIT & LOCAL GIVING

As some of you may know our mobile unit has been running since 2002 making it 17 years old.

Through our Local Giving page we are raising funds towards a new mobile unit to help us to continue the vital work we do.



Our North Wales mobile information unit enables us to visit local communities giving vital access to our service, especially for people living in rural areas.

Statistics show that as many as 2 out of 3 people with sight loss are not receiving any support. We need to reach as many of these people as possible and we can't do it all by ourselves. Our aim is to engage with local communities across the region raising awareness of the challenges faced by people with vision impairment.

If you would like to donate via Local Giving please visit

<https://localgiving.org/charity/visionsupportcharity/>

or if you would like more information on how to donate online or otherwise please call 01745 472558





Following on from the Guided Tours of the Storyhouse in Chester, we have put together some information below that you will hopefully find useful when using the Storyhouse;



You can sign up to the Access Register either over the phone on 01244 409113 or in person at Storyhouse. This then means that they can contact you with the latest accessible performances taking place, as well as offer you a free companion / guide ticket.

The Storyhouse provide free headsets for the audio description and you just need to ask for a headset when booking or on arrival.

If you would like to come to Vision Supports monthly cinema group which is a more 'relaxed screening' of one of the latest films. There where the Storyhouse provide additional staff to assist with guiding (although guides and companions still go free of charge). For further details contact Gary Morgan on 01244 381515

The next audio described performance taking place in the theatre is their latest Storyhouse production, Little Shop of Horrors. This is taking place on Saturday 1st June at 2.30pm.

The Storyhouse also have a Reading Group for people with a vision impairment – This is a free, monthly group that meets to discuss a Talking Book selected at the previous meeting. The group meet on the last Thursday of the month between 10.30 – 11.30am



North Wales Social Groups

Each of our groups are open to anyone with a sight and hearing impairment and a warm welcome is always extended to new members and volunteers.

Groups meet monthly and include guest speakers, activities, outings and a cup of tea and a chat. We also have additional events throughout the year.

Llandudno

Meets: Last Friday of every month (1.30pm – 3.30pm)

Where: The Trinity Centre, Trinity Ave, Llandudno, Conwy, LL30 2TQ

Rhyl

Meets: Third Tuesday of every month (2pm – 4pm)

Where: Hafan Deg Centre, War Memorial Court, Grange Rd, Rhyl, LL18 4BS

Wrexham

Meets: Second Thursday of every month (10.30am – 12.30pm)

Where: AVOW, Egerton Street, Wrexham, LL11 1ND

For more information please contact Dewi Owen on 07718 125374
or email dewi.owen@deafblind.org.uk

FOND FAREWELLS

In January we said goodbye to a loyal and long standing member of staff, Lynn Melarangi. Lynn was employed as a Rehabilitation Assistant in Runcorn for 15 years; her service was indeed much valued. Good luck and best wishes as you embark on a new challenge.

Recently Anna Usherwood, who has been employed as a Home Visitor in Vale Royal for 13 years, has decided to retire. Anna will be sadly missed by her colleagues and service users who appreciated her hard work, commitment, dedication and enthusiasm. We wish Anna all the best and a happy retirement.

THANK YOU



On the 22nd November 2018 Vision Support was invited to attend a residents meeting at Bridewell Court in Widnes.

Each month residents raise funds to be donated to a worthy charitable cause. Three charities are nominated on a quarterly basis and

a winner is selected by drawing a name from a hat.

It was with great pleasure that Vision Support was nominated as one of the local charities and that our name was pulled out of the hat and a very generous donation of £500 was awarded to us. Vision Support would like to thank all the residents for their generosity. Above Derek Hough (Services Manager) receiving the cheque from resident Mrs Vera Alderton.

MICROSOFT SOUNDSCAPE APP

The Microsoft Soundscape uses 3D audio technology to enhance your awareness of what is around you, and thereby help you get around and explore your surroundings.

Soundscape will place audio cues and labels in 3D space such that they sound like they are coming from the direction of the points of interest. You will need a stereo headset that you feel comfortable wearing outdoors.

Soundscape is designed to live in the background and provide you with effortless ambient awareness. It isn't a navigation AP but can be used in conjunction with other GPS apps.

Key features: As you walk, Soundscape will automatically call out the key points of interest i.e. shops and businesses roads and intersections that you pass. These can be adjusted and turned on and off.

An audio beacon can be placed on a point of interest, and you will hear it as you move around. You can place an audio beacon on a point of interest that you would like to track such as your destination, a point to return to or a landmark you are familiar with.

“My location” describes your current location and the direction you are facing

“Around me” describes nearby points of interest in each of the four cardinal directions, helping with orientation.

“Ahead of me” describes points of interest in front of you.

Please note, the app is designed to be used in tandem with more traditional means of navigation, not replace them.

Microsoft Soundscape is available now for iOS but the company has yet to announce plans for an Android version. If you would like more information please call Keith in Chester on 01244 341885 or Linda in Halton on 0151 511 8801.

CHARLOTTE TANDEMS

Vision Support has been recruiting tandem volunteers and this is our latest pairing!

Anne and her 'pilot' Ian ventured out on their first ride on their loan tandem in February. We went as far as the Meadow Lea Cafe in Mickle Trafford on the delightfully traffic-free Greenway.

We managed to negotiate all but the narrowest of traffic-calming obstructions and we soon settled into a comfortable pedalling rhythm. Although we set out in dry weather it had started to drizzle by the time we returned but Anne is very robust about the prospect of getting wet occasionally and our spirits were not dampened. We have already planned another ride!

If you are interested in riding a tandem bike or volunteering to pilot please get in touch with Gary Morgan on 01244 381515.



SIGHT LOSS FORUMS IN CHESHIRE

Macclesfield – First Wednesday of every month 1.30pm
Macclesfield Eye Society, 15 Queen Victoria St, Macclesfield, SK11 6LP

Congleton Forum – Last Wednesday of every other month, 10.00 – 12.00,
Venue varies.

Chester Forum – First Thursday of every month 11.00 – 1.00pm, Bluecoats office.

East Cheshire Eye Society

We are currently working with East Cheshire Eye Society to deliver one-to-one and group digital inclusion sessions, providing information, support and training on accessible technology.



For more information please call 01625 422602 or email info@eastcheshireeyesociety.org.uk

TACTILE PAVING

A traffic officer in Denbighshire council approached Moz from Vision Support to discuss the council's plans for tactile paving at the new short stay car park in Rhyl. The initial proposal would have put tactile paving in grey next to a grey road and a grey path which would have been poor contrast for a person with vision impairment.



So including input from the Conwy Sight Loss Group the general consensus is that charcoal grey tactile paving would be very hard to see, red tactile paving is better and yellow tactile paving is better still for reasons of contrast to the typical palette of grey on roads and pavements.

The traffic officer spoke to the architects designing the project and stressed the need for strong visual contrast. As a result the architects have had another look at the materials used and are now proposing an alternate material which has better colour contrast.

A charcoal colour would be the tactile paving and both the kerb and the surrounding pavement will be comprised of the light colour to provide a better contrast.

VISION SUPPORT MEMBERSHIP

We would like to thank all of you who have supported Vision Support by paying an annual membership fee or by contributing to the Life Membership Scheme. All of your contributions have enabled us to continue to provide much needed services within the local communities.

Annual membership subscriptions become due for renewal on 1 April. If you would like to renew your annual membership or if you decide that you would like to contribute to the Life Membership Scheme, please complete the relevant section of the application form enclosed and return it to Head Office, together with your payment.

We would like to thank you all once again for your continued support.

SOCIAL GROUPS IN CHESHIRE

Tuesday Club – Meets alternate Tuesday mornings 10.30 - 12.30pm at Head Office, Chester. Call 01244 381515 for more information.

Halton Activities Group – Meets Tuesday mornings 11.00 - 1.00pm at The Mencap Centre, The Laburnum Grove, Runcorn. Call 01928 582946 for more information.

Northwich Society for the Blind – Meets first Wednesday each month 2.00 - 4.00pm at Castle Community Centre on Barbers Lane.

Hazlemere Group – Meets first Friday each month 10.30 - 12.30pm at Hazlemere Extra Care Development, Hambleton Way.

Crown Green Bowlers – Meets every Thursday 11.00 - 1.00pm at St Werburgh's Parish Centre, Brook Street, Chester, CH1 3DZ. Sighted Volunteers required and no experience necessary.

Sandbach Group - Meets every Monday at Oakdene Court, Belle Vue Terrace, Sandbach, 10 am to 12 noon.

Audio Described Cinema Group – Monthly screening at The StoryHouse in Chester, 10.00 – 12.00, exact date varies.

Socialise (18 to 55) – Meets first Saturday of the month 1.00 - 4.00pm. Please contact 01244 381515 for venue information.

SOCIAL & CAMPAIGNING GROUPS IN NORTH WALES

Rhyl Visionaires – Meets on the last Monday of every month 11.00 – 12.30 p.m. at Rhyl Library.

Prestatyn Visionaires – Meets on the first Wednesday of each month. 10.00 – 12.00 noon. Nant Hall Church, Prestatyn.

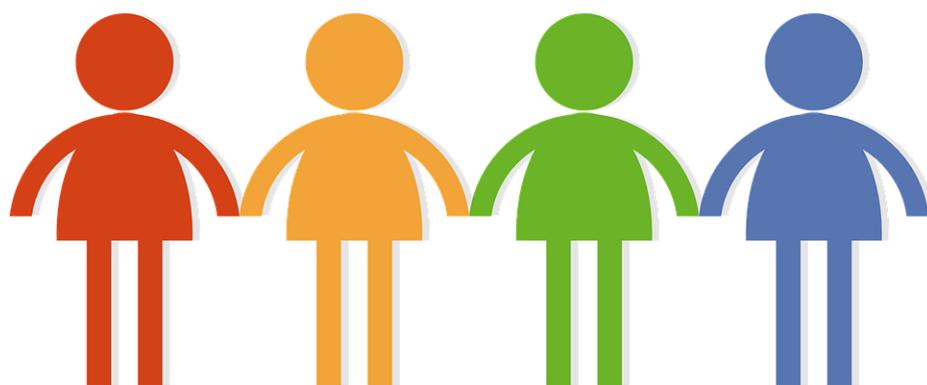
Wrexham Visionaires – Meets on the first Thursday of each month. 11.00 – 1.00 p.m. at AVOW, Wrexham.

Conwy Sight Loss Group – Meets on the first Thursday of each month 11.00 – 1.00 p.m. The Grand Hotel, Happy Valley Rd, Llandudno. (Access through the Main Entrance)

Mold Visionaires – Meets on the third Wednesday of each month 2.00 – 4.00 p.m. Llys Jasmine, Mold.

VI Voices Denbighshire – Meets on the 2nd Monday every other month 2.00 – 4.00 p.m. Prestatyn Library. Call 01745 472558 for details.

VI Voices Wrexham – Meets on the third Monday every other month 2.00 – 4.00 p.m AVOW. Please call 01745 472558 for details.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Chester Head Office

Units 1 & 2 The Ropeworks
Whipcord Lane, Chester, CH1 4DZ
01244 381515

Halton Sensory Services Centre

126 Widnes Road,
Widnes,
WA8 6AX
0151 5118801

Prestatyn Sight Loss Centre

38 High Street, Prestatyn, LL19 9BB
01745 472558
Monday—Thursday
10:00am-3:00pm

Wrexham Resource Centre

AVOW Ty, 21 Egerton Street
Wrexham, LL11 1ND
01978 318813

Bluecoat Vision Centre

Upper Northgate Street
Chester, CH1 4EE
01244 341885
Monday—Wednesday
10:00am-3:00pm

Vision Support Open Line

01244 478910

information@visionsupport.org.uk

www.visionsupport.org.uk

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& Follow us on Twitter @_VisionSupport