

# Vision Support Newsletter

Celebrating 150 Years of Supporting  
— People with Sight Loss —



A group shot of our bowls group all standing and waving

# Hello and Thank you!

As we reflect on the past year, we would like to begin with a heartfelt thank you to all our Vision Support volunteers. Your time, dedication and kindness make an extraordinary difference. From supporting groups and activities to helping people try new experiences, you play a vital role in ensuring our services continue to thrive. Simply put — we could not do this without you.

This year has once again been packed with opportunities for people to connect, get active and try something new. Working alongside brilliant partner organisations and members of our local communities, we have delivered a wide range of social groups, activities and day trips across Cheshire, Halton and North Wales.

From music trains, audio-described cinema, singing sessions and comedy shows, to boat trips in Chester and Northwich, seaside visits, pottery workshops, meals out, bowls competitions and sensory walks. There has been something for everyone. We've also continued to grow our gym, swimming, tennis and golf sessions, helping people stay active in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Rachel and Megan standing side by side smiling, holding a banner that reads “Diolch, Gwirfoddolwyr / Thank You, Volunteers,” with colourful star graphics



Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. They give their time, energy and lived experience to support people with vision impairments.

On the following pages, we're proud to share just a few of the inspiring stories from our volunteer community. From running social groups and organising activities, to offering a listening ear and making regular friendship calls, our volunteers make a real difference every day. Each volunteer brings something unique to Vision Support — and we're incredibly grateful for everything they do.

# Andi



My name is Andi (pictured to the left) I live in Wrexham, and I am vision impaired. I have a Guide Dog called Jay who I've had for seven years. I became vision impaired in 2017 when I broke my toe and ended up with sepsis which led to a double detached retina which ultimately has resulted in sight loss.

I have been volunteering for Vision Support for around two years as a Social Group Volunteer. As part of my role I call clients to remind them about upcoming meetings, I arrange trips such as a recent canal boat trip, I have arranged for some interesting speakers and help during the monthly meetings.

I started volunteering for Vision Support whilst I was looking for employment and wanted to gain experience that I can put on my CV. I really enjoy my volunteer role; it keeps me busy and I enjoy helping Vision Support and the members who attend the group by providing hints and tips and useful contacts.

# Meet Vicky

Hi I'm Vicky (pictured to the right)! I am a mum to 7 year old twin boys. I suffered a stroke in 2019 at 34, this left me partially sighted with left sided field vision loss, my Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) referred me to Vision Support.



Through Vision Support I accessed peer support services where I met others who were also vision impaired which, for me was great as I met others who understood which made me feel less alone. I have made a few friends for life. I have also accessed other services such as Welfare Rights advice and guidance.

I decided to become a telephone befriender back in 2021 to give something back and to help people living with a vision impairment who may be experiencing feelings of loneliness. I absolutely love volunteering and by making these calls hoping I am making a difference to people's lives.

Below are some of our brilliant Tuesday Group Volunteers!  
Pictured holding bouquets of flowers and their First Aid at work certificates.



# Fundraising Highlights

From Marathon Miles to Skydiving Skies

What a year it's been for fundraising!

From sponsored swims by Jean and Tony, to marathon finishes by Lewis, Samantha and George — our supporters have pushed themselves to incredible limits to help Vision Support continue our work.

And 2026 is already looking exciting, with skydives, murder mysteries, quiz night and races all planned for this year! We are also launching our exciting Club 150 to celebrate our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary - more details to follow!

Our fundraiser's efforts and your donations mean we can keep delivering vital support across Cheshire, Halton and North Wales. Every mile, Every splash, Every leap, Every pound, Makes a real difference.

Pictured to the right are four of our Skydivers wearing purple Vision Support T-shirts with their arms raised in celebration.



**Fundraise for Vision Support**

# **JOIN OUR RACE TEAM**

**8th March, 2026 - MBNA Chester 10K**

**17th May, 2026 - Essar Chester Half Marathon**

**4th October, 2026 - MBNA Chester Marathon**

**Scan the QR code on the right to register  
your place or contact 07821 649 066 or  
SHarding@VisionSupport.Org.Uk  
to get more information**



**Company Number: 3512340 Registered Charity Number: 1068565 Registered  
Office: Units 1&2 The Ropeworks, Whipcord Lane, Chester CH1 4DZ.**



A photo of Feray delivering one of her colour workshops to fundraise for us!

Three people stood outside during our charity golf day



Matt and Lewis smiling and ready for the Chester charity run



People at our Charity Quiz Night at Ring O' Bells in Christleton



# Club 150

We have an exciting programme of fundraising events taking place this year, and we would love as many people as possible to get involved. Our popular Quiz Night will be held on Thursday 5 March, followed by a thrilling Murder Mystery evening on Friday 13 March. For those looking for an adrenaline-filled challenge, our Skydive takes place on Friday 27 March — a fantastic way to raise vital funds while doing something unforgettable.

Our Triple Running Challenge also returns this year, with the option to take part in one, two or all three events: the 10k on Sunday 8 March, the Chester Half Marathon on 17 May, and the Chester Full Marathon on 11 October.

This year also marks Vision Support's 150th anniversary, and we would love to celebrate this milestone with you!

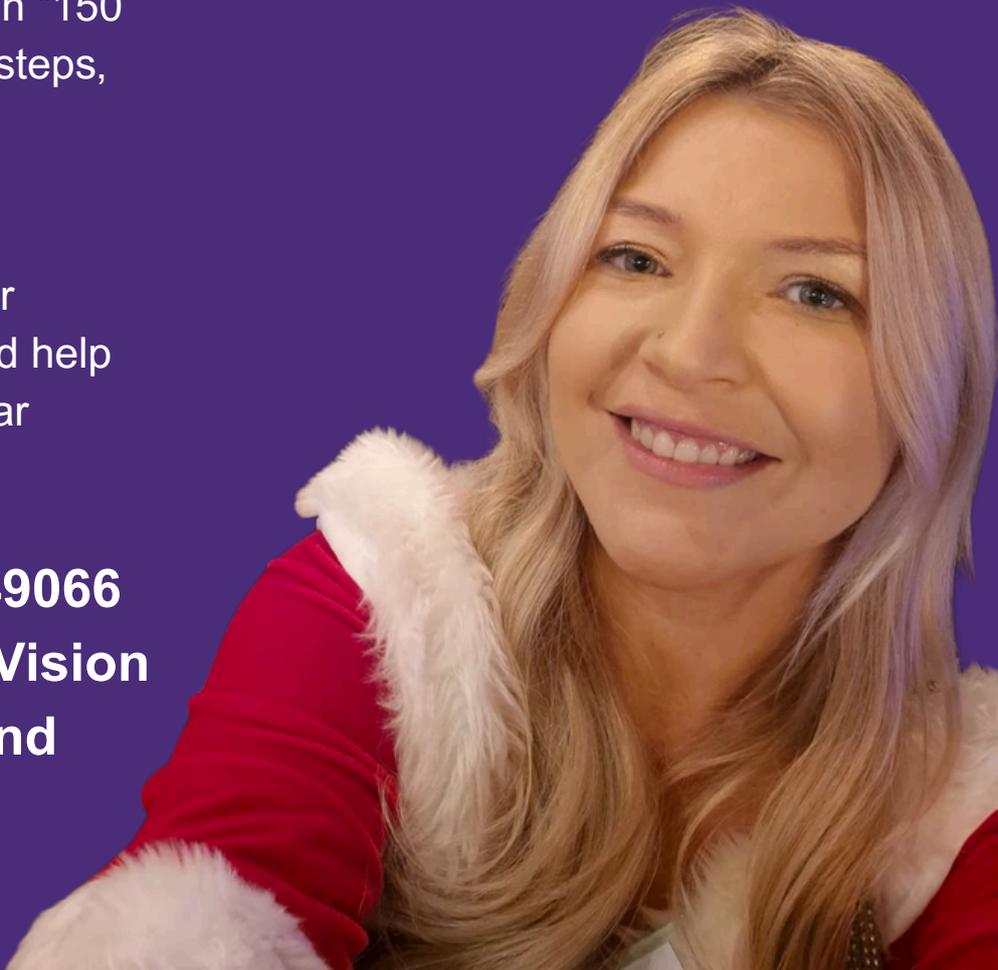
To mark 150 years of supporting people with sight loss, we are inviting supporters to take on "150 of anything" whether that's steps, laps, minutes or personal challenges.

It's a fun and flexible way for everyone to get involved and help us celebrate this special year together.

**Call Stef on 07821649066  
or email [SHarding@VisionSupport.Org.Uk](mailto:SHarding@VisionSupport.Org.Uk) to find out how you could get involved!**

**Hi I'm Stef! If you'd like to fundraise for Vision Support or join Club 150, get in touch**

Pictured below is Stef smiling with long blond hair in a red dress



# Share your Vision Support Memories

As we celebrate 150 years of Vision Support, we'd love to hear your stories. Whether you've been involved as a member, volunteer, supporter, staff member or fundraiser, your memories help bring our history to life.

We're especially keen to learn more about what Vision Support was like "back in the day" from early services and social groups to fundraising events, friendships and moments that made a difference.

Every story, big or small, helps us celebrate how far we've come and the people who made it possible.

If you have a memory you'd like to share, please get in touch. You can call us via the numbers on our back page or email [comms@visionsupport.org.uk](mailto:comms@visionsupport.org.uk) — we'd love to include your stories and any photos you might have as part of our 150th anniversary celebrations.

Pictured to the left is an old CCTV magnifier and to the right is a van shaped cake celebrating the launch of Vision Supports Mobile Unit.



# FALL FOR US!

## Vision Support



**Friday 27th March 2026  
and Friday 19th June 2026**

**Tilstock Airfield,  
Whitchurch, SY13 2HA**

**To learn more about fundraising for Vision  
Support or to sign up, contact Stef!**

**07821 649 066  
sharding@visionsupport.org.uk**

# Sight Loss Information Line

The Sight Loss Information Line (SLIL) has had a very successful year. The team Ash, Hayley, Kate and Tracy were proud to win the Visionary Community Partnership Award 2025, recognising the impact of this National Lottery funded service, which has doubled the number of people supported year on year. We are also grateful to our partners NHS England, East Cheshire Eye Society, Cheshire East Council, and Cheshire West and Chester Council for their ongoing support.

Throughout the year, we hosted welcoming coffee mornings that gave people the chance to connect, learn more about Vision Support services and explore new technology, including the Meta Glasses. We were also delighted to launch our new Resource Centre at The Bluecoat, where people can book appointments to try low vision equipment and discover tools to support confidence and independence.

We are proud of the impact SLIL continues to have and look forward to reaching even more people in the year ahead. To get in touch, call 01244 478910 or email [SightLine@VisionSupport.Org.Uk](mailto:SightLine@VisionSupport.Org.Uk).

Pictured here are Ash  
and Hayley from the  
SLIL





A photo of Hayley, Kate and Ash accepting an award from our CEO Lowri



A photo of Ash smiling at an information stand

A photo of Hayley and Ash at one of their information stands



A group of people seated at the SLIL coffee morning with Hayley to the left and Josh our Cheshire Services Manager speaking at the front

# Cooking with Confidence

Aprons on and air fryers at the ready!  
Following the Aging Well event at Tŷ Pawb, Vision Support teamed up with Groundwork North Wales for a fun, hands-on cooking session in Wrexham — and it was a real hit.

Vision Support's Karla Rogers and James Forfar teamed up with Groundwork for a fun and educational kitchen session all about air fryer cooking featuring the deliciously recipe of cheese, leek and ham pasties.



Everyone got stuck in learning accessible cooking tips, smart kitchen tricks, and safe air fryer skills, all while sharing stories, laughs, and a few delicious cheese, leek and ham pasties! **Pictured to the above are three people wearing aprons prepare food at a table, brushing pastry and adding fillings and below are seven people showing off their finished food.**

A big thank you to Groundwork North Wales for the equipment, ingredients, and brilliant support.

We're pleased to let you know that we have two more sessions coming to the Wellbeing Hub in Wrexham.

**Friday 27 February**  
**Tuesday 31 March**  
**(10am–12pm).**

Places are limited, so get in touch by calling 01244 381515 or book via Eventbrite to join the fun!





# Low Vision Roadshows

We ran a series of Low Vision Roadshows across all three of our areas last year.

Each event was a great success, giving people the chance to find out more about the support available and connect with services in their local community.

There was fantastic attendance and over 30 organisations joining us to showcase what they do and how they can support people with sight loss.

It was wonderful to see so many conversations taking place and such a positive atmosphere throughout the day.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended, exhibited, and helped make these events so successful. We're already looking forward to doing more in the future!

Two photos below show Vision Support staff seated at an information tables, with leaflets, banners, and forms on display, smiling and talking.



# VI Awareness Training

In 2025 we delivered Vision Impairment Awareness Training for different organisations From Hoole Community Centre to Cheshire Disability Access Forum!

Our VI Awareness training has helped provide valuable information about how groups and events can be more inclusive, some top tips for communication, the barriers those with a vision impairment may face, as well as some sighted guide training. **To the right is a photo of Josh and Nia delivering VI Awareness training for Hoole Community Centre.**



“ I thoroughly enjoyed the course - it was so informative and you delivered it so well. I have already had a chat with the powers that be about booking in more courses!”

”

Alongside delivering VI Awareness Training, we continue to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to share lived experience, improve accessibility and promote inclusive practice. This collaborative work includes training sessions, conference attendance and Expert by Experience contributions, where real-life insight helps shape services and remove barriers.

Dawn from our Halton team plays a key role in this work, supporting health services, contributing to accessibility projects and sharing her lived experience at regional events such as the United Utilities Vulnerability Summit.

The photos on the following page show this collaboration in action — from training and conferences to joint activities that build understanding and connection.



A photo to the left of Kate offering digital skills training at the Storyhouse in Chester

A photo below of Nia and Lowri at the Wales Eyecare Conference



A photo below of Dawn at a community event



A photo to the right of members of Vision Support and DRC on a bowling trip together. We learnt how to introduce ourselves and sign our names!



# New Year. New Will?

A Will is a practical way to make sure the people and causes you care about are looked after — whether that's family, friends, or a charity close to your heart.

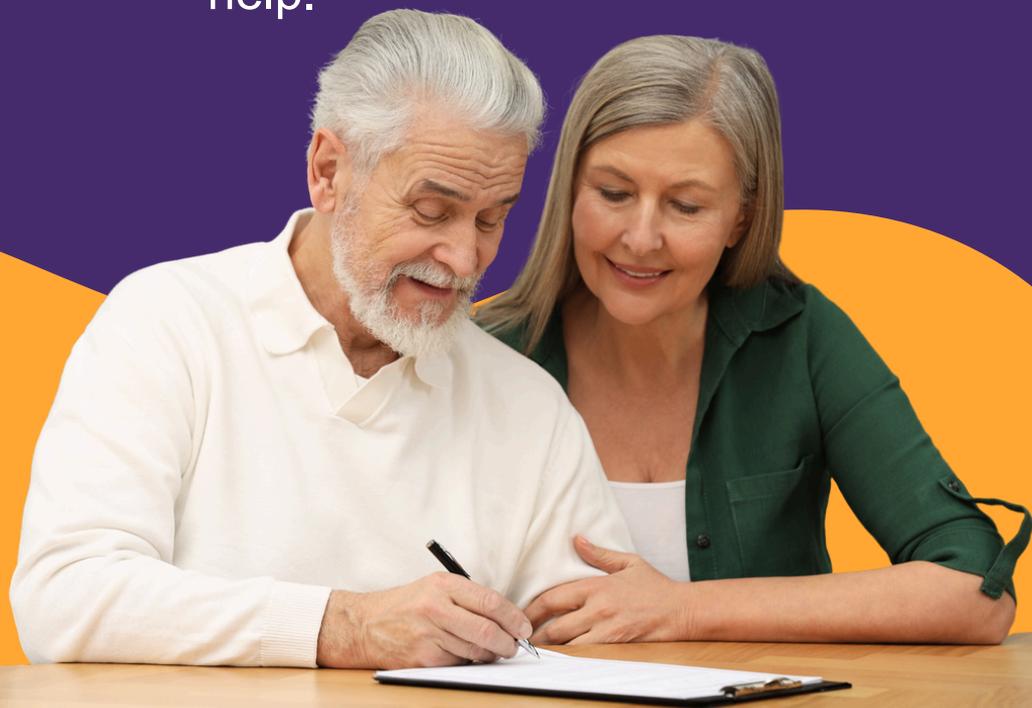
It's something many of us mean to do, but it's easy to put off and think, "I'll get to that another day." For people who are blind or vision impaired, there can be extra worries too — like how a Will can be written accessibly, or whether a solicitor will understand the formats that work best for you.

We want to make the process clearer and more accessible. That's why we're exploring what information and support would be most helpful, whether you're making a Will for the first time or updating an existing one.

Not having a Will can make things much harder for the people you leave behind. It can cause delays, uncertainty, and unnecessary stress at an already difficult time.

The good news is that making a Will doesn't have to be complicated — it can often be done in under an hour, and in some cases online. We'd really like to know what would make this easier for you. Tell us what support or information would help.

Pictured is an older man signing a document at a table with a woman sitting beside him.



# Vision Support



# Swimming Together

Tony and Jean pictured below standing together smiling inside a bright entrance area with large glass windows.

Earlier this year, we launched our VI Swimming Sessions at Brio Leisure, Northwich Memorial Court.

Each week, swimmers come together for a friendly and confidence-building session, enjoying both exercise and social connection.





We would also like to celebrate Jean and Tony, members of the Northwich Swimming Group, who have gone above and beyond by raising over £1,600 for Vision Support — swimming an incredible 34 miles between them. Their commitment and generosity are truly inspiring!

Pictured to the left are Jean and Tony smiling. Both are holding a Vision Support tote bag, and Jean is also holding a white cane.

## Halton Activity Group

The Halton Activity Group pictured standing together below held their AGM and elected a new committee, giving them plenty to celebrate. They were also nominated for a King's Award for Voluntary Service. Which is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK and the equivalent of an MBE recognising the outstanding contribution of volunteers in communities across the country.



The group successfully secured some grants from ASDA. Which are being used to fund trips out for members and provide refreshments at meetings, helping everyone enjoy a welcoming and sociable atmosphere.

# Pottery Taster Sessions

# Vision Support



Pictured above are a group of people seated around a large table in a bright art studio, working with clay. Several participants are shaping pottery by hand while a standing instructor observes and offers guidance.

In October, a visit to Pictoria in Chester offered a hands-on pottery experience. With expert guidance, participants created bowls and cups using both hand-building and pottery wheels. A huge thank you to Chester Lions for helping make this opportunity possible.

In September, we partnered with Sense for a guided sensory walk in Delamere Forest. With expert guides, participants explored quieter paths, learned about local plants, sampled fresh damsons and toasted marshmallows by a warm fire — a day full of discovery and shared enjoyment.

In collaboration with England and Wales Blind Golf, we were thrilled to launch our very first Chester VI Golf Driving Range sessions last year.

Every month, our clients have had the exciting opportunity to head down to Foregolf Driving Range for a safe, supportive, and fun day out. With the incredible dedication of our volunteers and the expertise from England and Wales Blind Golf members, each session has become more than just practice, it's a chance to reconnect, grow in confidence, and rediscover a love for the game!

We've watched clients reconnect with a passion they thought they'd lost, celebrate new milestones, and turn first swings into strong drives. The atmosphere at every session is filled with encouragement and a friendly environment.

What started as a small idea has quickly grown into a highlight of our monthly calendar.



Pictured above are a group of people walking together along a narrow woodland path, viewed from behind. The path is surrounded by trees and greenery

“

**“Through Vision Support, I have met a lot of interesting and lively people. I’ve done things which otherwise wouldn’t be possible, like indoor wall climbing, tennis and golf. Those are my favourites, but also walks in green spaces, coffee events, music trains, and more. Thanks to my good friends at Vision Support!”**

”

# Creativity, Sport and New Skills

Our Ellesmere Port Creative Art Group took part in the Whose Truth Travels project, working with a local artist to decorate a wooden chair made by Men in Sheds. Featuring clay garden animals and colourful plants. The finished piece is pictured to the right and was something the whole group felt proud of.

We also partnered with the Cheshire Lawn Tennis Association to deliver bespoke VI tennis coaching sessions. With expert coaching and plenty of enthusiasm, participants developed skills, confidence and friendships: Pictured below is the coach and 3 participants holding tennis rackets.



I was surprised that I could hit the ball sometimes... it boosted my confidence and made the sessions really enjoyable. — Paul

# Group Highlights

We have a number of in person groups. Here's a little highlight from some of our groups over the past year:

In Halton there were lots of new opportunities for people to get involved in, from Blind Golf to Blind Baseball . We also launched new social groups, from Monday Morning Meet ups to social events in the evenings, bowling and lots of visits to restaurants. In 2026 there will be lots of opportunities to get involved!

Our Wales groups: The Penmaenmawr Visionaires has had many a game of Bingo, Boccia and discussions about the surrounding area.

The Conwy Sight Loss Group have been very busy this year! They have had coffee meet ups, wellbeing walks and listened speakers on many topics including information about the RSPB reserve, library services, transport services to the Great Orme Goats!

The Rhyl Visionaires have enjoyed art sessions, boccia games and quizzes as well as a Christmas party and summer trip to Bodrhyddan Hall.

Pictured below is Dawn and a group of our service users from Halton out for a meal





A photo to the left of two people at our Halton guitar taster

A photo below of a woman trying golf out at an outdoor green



A photo below of a service user and Jess on a tandem bike



A photo to the right of a service user about to roll a bowling ball down a chute



# More Group Highlights

The Prestatyn Visionaires have had a busy and enjoyable year. Highlights included a festive Christmas garden centre trip, a range of guest speakers and activities such as Easter card making and a fire service talk. The group also welcomed the Prestatyn Mayoress for their VE Day celebration.

The Mold Visionaires have settled well into their new venue in Mold and have been pleased to welcome new members. The group also enjoyed trips to Theatr Clwyd, where they attended audio described performances.

The Wrexham Visionaires have settled into a new venue and enjoyed a fantastic Christmas meal and party, organised by new volunteer Andy. Over the summer, the group also took a memorable trip on the horse-drawn canal boats in Llangollen and welcomed a number of guest speakers throughout the year.

If any of our groups have caught your interest and you'd like to come along or find out more, we'd be delighted to hear from you. You can visit our website for the latest information, or get in touch using the contact details on the back page. New faces are always welcome, and we'd love to have you at one of our groups soon.

Group photo of eight people standing together outdoors, several holding white canes.

**They are dressed in winter coats, hats, and scarves, standing in a line and smiling.**



# Annual Wales Eyecare Conference

A piece from Nia Greer our North Wales Services Manager:

Pictured below is Nia smiling with long, wavy brown hair and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a patterned top.



Earlier this year I was asked to speak about the Importance of Counselling and Peer Support at the Annual Eyecare Conference in Cardiff. The topic of this years' conference was 'Mental Health of Patients and the Workforce'.

I was lucky enough to attend the conference last year along with our CEO, Lowri. I left feeling so inspired and this year was no different.

In my speech I spoke about our amazing Counselling service, the positive outcomes that interventions such as this can have upon an individual's life such as coming to terms with sight loss, increasing resilience and wellbeing.

I also spoke about the power of peer support and how speaking to others who understand can help us to feel included, supported and inspired.

Other speakers spoke about the positive impact of sports, how to prevent burnout and patient and workforce mental health. I had a great time and look forward to next year!

Friday 13<sup>th</sup>  
March 2026

# Murder at the Manor

Join Vision Support at  
our latest fundraiser, an  
interactive murder mystery!

Hotel Wrexham, LL13 9SW  
at 7:00pm.

2-course dinner and a  
raffle/ auction in the evening.

Get your tickets via the QR  
code today and get ready to  
solve the mystery at the  
manor!

Company Number: 3512340  
Registered Charity Number:  
1068565 Registered Office:  
Units 1&2 The Ropeworks,  
Whipcord Lane, Chester  
CH1 4DZ.



# Get in touch!



Cheshire 01244 478910

Halton 0151 3292811

North Wales 01244 381515



[www.VisionSupport.org.uk](http://www.VisionSupport.org.uk)



[@VisionSupportCharity](https://www.facebook.com/VisionSupportCharity)



[@\\_VisionSupport](https://www.instagram.com/_VisionSupport)



**General:** [Information@VisionSupport.org.uk](mailto:Information@VisionSupport.org.uk)

**Halton:** [HSSInfo@VisionSupport.org.uk](mailto:HSSInfo@VisionSupport.org.uk)

**Referrals:** [Referrals@VisionSupport.org.uk](mailto:Referrals@VisionSupport.org.uk)

**Sight Line:** [SightLine@VisionSupport.org.uk](mailto:SightLine@VisionSupport.org.uk)

We're delighted to be launching our new website very soon! Alongside a fresh new look, supporters will now be able to give monthly donations as well as one-off gifts — making it even easier to support our work in a way that suits you.

# Welfare Rights

Recently an elderly gentleman who had suddenly lost his sight needed urgent welfare rights advice and guidance. When he was discharged from hospital Helen worked with him and his family by identifying he may be eligible for Attendance Allowance and through working with them was able to complete and submit an Attendance Allowance application form.

Additionally, Helen provided a listening ear, advice and guidance and an opportunity to speak to someone with lived experience and knowledge at a time where they didn't know where to turn to.

The client was awarded the higher rate of Attendance Allowance, which will make a huge difference to their daily lives and allow them to remain independent at home. The family were extremely grateful for the advice and support, especially as there is limited sight loss help available in their area

# Vision Support's Counselling Service

Recently our Counselling and Wellbeing Lead Gemma undertook a review which included exploring data and also identifying key themes. We know the impact that Counselling has upon the lives of individual's, but this report has really highlighted how much Counselling has the ability to change lives.

We have included some key findings whilst retaining client confidentiality. 80% of clients who accessed the service measured at a moderate to severe level of distress but by session 4 or 5 this had decreased to much healthier levels

Some of the key themes that people accessed counselling support included:

- Support to come to terms with sight loss or process their diagnosis
- Change in family diagnosis
- Increased loneliness and isolation
- Anxiety and Depression

The feedback for this service continues to be overwhelmingly positive and the data showcased within the support really demonstrated the power of counselling.

If you would like to access our Vision Support Counselling Service please call 01244 381515. We know it can be hard to take the first steps but we are here to help.

# Our Impact: Digital Skills

Recently our Digital Skills Officer Kate supported Mrs Owen who has not been using her iPhone since her sight began to deteriorate. Mrs Owen is able to read large print but struggles with specific colour backgrounds as well as eye strain worsening throughout the day.

Mrs Owen had previously been reasonably confident with the basics of using her iPhone prior to the deterioration of her eyesight. She wanted to be able to use the phone again to make calls, send messages, search the web, and send emails.

During her visit, Kate was able to demonstrate and teach Mrs Owen how to use the assistive technology available on iPhones such as Zoom and also changed some of the accessibility settings such as colour contrast. Kate also demonstrated how to use Siri to perform a range of tasks using just her voice.

After just one visit Mrs Owen felt confident in using her iPhone again.



Service spotlight – just writing a summary piece about the counselling service and the impact it has had using Gemma's report

Tech Section – Perhaps a piece about META Glasses?