East Sussex
Vision Support
100 YEARS 1921-2021

I wish to make a voluntary donation of **£**……..……which is enclosed. (Please make cheques payable to **ESAB**)

If you wish to pay by Standing Order we will send you a form.

To save our costs, a receipt will not be sent unless you specifically require one.

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate
GIFT AID DECLARATION

In order to **Gift Aid** your donation you must **tick** the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £…….. and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to The East Sussex Association of Blind & Partially Sighted People.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, Change your name or home address or No longer pay sufficient tax on your income/ and or capital gains

t. 01323 832252
e. info@eastsussexvisionsupport.org
w. eastsussexvisionsupport.org
a. 13 Vicarage Field, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 1BD

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NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2021

Welcome to our new look newsletter

We hope you like it, this newsletter is packed with information about the services East Sussex Vision Support (ESVS) has to offer, along with messages from our Chairman, our Chief Executive and our Patron Sir Peter Field. We would also like to invite you to make a small donation towards the work that we do.

Picture shows Rosie the Guide dog

ESAB is now East Sussex Vision Support

Why? - We felt our current branding and name didn't fully represent our services and we wanted to give the charity a fresh and modern feel to appeal to a wider range of members and volunteers.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Spring is in the air and the Vaccine roll out continues to impress. My goodness, we might be nearly through the worst. I can't wait to see East Sussex Vision Support getting back to normal service. Daniel and his team have had a busy lockdown, moving office, changing our name and generally providing as much support to our Members as we've been allowed to do. I think now more than ever it is important to embrace the services and support we provide and re-engage in person with as many of our Members as possible post lockdown to provide the face to face experience that we have all missed so badly. I look forward to a more productive summer together and hope this bulletin finds everyone well and as optimistic as I am.

Picture shows Ian Fletcher-Price

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The picture shows Christine Ward

I can see; bodies, colours, but hard seeing detail/faces etc. I am Liability Insured. I qualified in 2019 as an ETM Level 2 Instructor but COVID happened. I do not have the home facilities to do regular on -line classes, but my video is suitable for VIPs and BLIND participants, and has audio description via funding from Disability Rights UK and the filming was funded by Rother Active.

I am based in Bexhill, East Sussex but can be available in your area (when COVID restrictions allow) if transport can be provided to suitable/accessible venues or privately if you have room/space. I can also work with you to your favourite music to design an ETM session for YOUR needs and abilities.

The past year has been testing and different for everyone. As a VIP myself, I understand the difficulties in trying to keep fit and active.

The **Dance-Ability** video will be available on my website from the **30/4/21**.

If you have difficulties in accessing, please let me know.

Hi/hello, my name is **Christine Ward**,
founder of **Dance-Ability - Exercise to Music.**

I have designed a fun, effective way to help keep you fit and active if you find trying to attend ETM classes difficult for your visual needs. The ETM video session on my website is low to medium impact for 30 minutes, working out to original music by the Fabulous Red Diesel band.

Available on: **CD,** or to download

www.thefabulousreddiesel.com

Please note the pre-health and safety advice before participating.

The past year has been testing and different for everyone. As a VIP myself, I understand the difficulties in trying to keep fit and active.

For a **FREE intro** contact my website:

www.a-2-a.co.uk

For the **Dance-Ability** link/page.

For details how to subscribe for just **£10 per month.**

Then **you can do** when **you want.**

NB: If I get **enough ESVS members, volunteers** *and* **staff participating,** from **ALL genders (not just for females)!** I can make an **annual donation to ESVS if you put ESVS on/in your subscription = promise!**

The picture shows a screenshot of the 100th Birthday Zoom celebration.

ESVS's 100th Birthday Celebration

The 3rd March 2021 was a momentous day for East Sussex Vision Support. We were 100 years old. Before the pandemic we had lots of things planned, a trip to the House of Lords, a Gala Dinner and a members conference were all on the cards. Sadly none of these were to be. So we resorted to Zoom, and what a celebration it turned out to be! 75 people joined us online to say a big Happy Birthday and to raise a glass to ESVS. Members, volunteers, members of the Board, Staff, our Patron Sir Peter Field and Lady Field, numerous Deputy Lieutenants and lots of ESVS supporters all joined in and turned it into a wonderful celebration.

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FUNDRAISING & DONATIONS

Picture shows Thomas Walter in front of his step

We would be most grateful if you might consider making an annual donation to the society to assist us with our work. In particular this year we have had to cancel some vital fundraising activities which have left a hole in our budget. A donation to help us cover this loss and to assist us through this difficult period would be most welcome.

On the back of this newsletter you will find a donation form, please detach it and send it with your donation in the pre-paid envelope provided. Alternatively you can ring our HQ on 01323 832252 and we can take a donation directly over the phone. Thank you.

We would like to extend our thanks to Thomas Walter, an ESVS member, for doing 10,000 steps on his stepper and raising £600 for ESAB. Well done Thomas and thank you very much.

£10.00 will pay for our telephone helpline signposting our members to a wealth of information and advice when they need it most.

£25.00 will pay for our Low Vision Support Worker, to assist someone who is struggling to get essential paperwork finished for a benefits claim

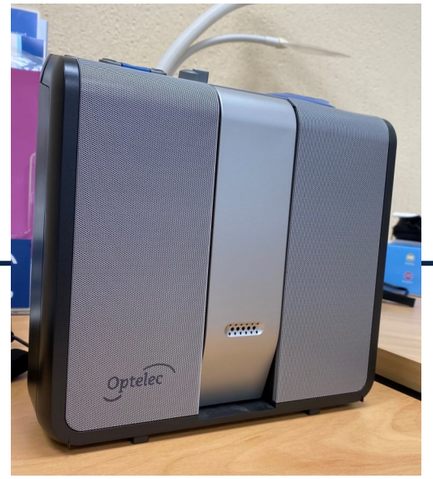
£75.00 will pay for our essential aids and equipment Officer to get vital equipment to members during these challenging times

New technology

Our Aids and Equipment service is always here to help, you can contact us on 01323 832252 and ask for Steve. For those of you who are a bit more technically minded here is a list of useful websites that can provide you with a big range of equipment.

Useful websites

- RNIB: www.rnib.org.uk/shop
- Cobolt: www.cobolt.com
- Synapptic: www.synapptic.com
- IC Visions Ltd/SW retail: www.icswretail.co.uk
- Optima: www.optimalowvision.co.uk



STAY CONNECTED

STAY IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS WITH AN ESVS SOCIAL GROUP

As lockdown begins to ease, we are very pleased to say that the ESVS social groups will begin to re-open. At the time of writing and subject to the government's roadmap to recovery, we are looking at July for the groups to re-start. There are many challenges ahead for our groups, some volunteers will be missing and some meeting places will be different but we are confident that our wonderful band of volunteers will be there to get your local group re-started.

During the time of lockdown many of the groups and volunteers have been keeping in touch with our members and many are ready and waiting to re-start. If you are a member of a social group your committee will be in touch with you as soon as the group re-starts and they will make sure you are able to attend.

If you have any questions about your social group please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

RNIB CONNECT RADIO - Freeview 730

If you also want to stay connected with the latest developments and information on coronavirus (COVID-19) and sight loss, listen to RNIB Connect Radio, the UK's radio station for blind and partially sighted people. It's available on Freeview 730 and online www.rnibconnectradio.org.uk

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Daniel Brookbank

Picture shows Daniel Brookbank

Welcome to our new look newsletter and welcome to the new look ESAB too! Many of you will be wondering why the name change. Simply it's because we want to reflect what our members tell us about wording and modern thinking. We went through a long process of discussion and consideration and feel that East Sussex Vision Support closely reflects who we are, where we are and most importantly what we do. Also, at 100 years old it was time to freshen ourselves up and re-brand us to reflect 21st century thinking.

Along with the new name we are looking to the future with our services, we want to say to our members 'what do you want from us? How can we help you?' It's important to us that we are here to help anyone who is visually impaired across the county and for us to be able to adapt and change to reflect our members needs and wants. So, when you contact us, we will do everything we can to help you to be independent and we will look for ways that work for you.

Further on in this newsletter you will find details of all the services we have to offer, please have a read, or a listen and get in touch with us if we can help you. All our services are free of charge, with the exception of some pieces of equipment.

Over the last year we have all been through a lot, never in my lifetime did I expect to have to deal with a pandemic. ESVS had to adapt to an ever-changing situation and I am in awe of the volunteers and staff who picked up the challenge and continued to make a difference to our members lives.

Once a year we ask you to consider a small donation towards our work, you have always been very generous and we are very grateful for all you give, please would you consider contributing this year?

As we come out of lockdown, we will start to see each other again and I am looking forward to catching up with you all at the social groups and out and about with our Outreach Vehicle.

So, my message to you all is that we are here and how can we help you?

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Are you visually impaired? Or do you know someone who is?

Do you want to get more from your computer?

Do you need a qualification to help you get back into or stay in work?

If the answer is yes, then here at East Sussex College we have specially designed courses for the visually impaired, start at level 1 and go up to level 3. You can start at a level that is appropriate to you and choose the subject areas that you want to learn about.

You will also gain a recognised ITQ qualification at each level to assist you to get into work.

For further information contact:

East Sussex College, Eastbourne

Telephone 030 300 38787

Email viinfo@escg.ac.uk

Or visit www.escg.ac.uk

ESVS OUTREACH SERVICE

Picture to the right shows the ESVS Outreach Vehicle

As the lockdown restrictions ease, and in line with the government's roadmap to recovery, we will be getting our Outreach Vehicle out into the community. We plan to visit as many areas in the county as we can and look to find regular stopping points for it so that our members will be able to easily access our services, equipment and advice.

We will let all our members know where it is going to be, keep a watch out for our future bulletins and mailshots.

TELEPHONE HELPLINE - 01323 832252

Our Telephone Helpline is based locally at our Hailsham HQ. The service is available from Monday to Thursday 9am to 4.30pm. The telephone helpline will assist you with:

General information about East Sussex Vision Support and the services we offer

Information about other services available across the county and nationally

HIGHER INTERVENTION SERVICE

A new Service to East Sussex Vision Support, the Higher Intervention Service is aimed at assisting clients who have more complex needs or are looking to deal with a range of issues that may be affecting their life. The service will be able to:

Provide one to one support from a member of the team who will work with you for as long as is necessary

Be flexible, enabling you in any way you want or need it to

Look to see if a home visiting volunteer could help you and provide one if needed

Look at essential needs like housing, dealing with sight loss and grief, benefits, Aids and Equipment as well as refer onto other essential services

Work with you get back into work or to re-train, including accompanying you to help you gain confidence

Help you to access hobbies and interests by getting you involved in a local group that interests you

See if a specialist volunteer might be able to help you with specific issues

The Higher Intervention Worker will make initial telephone contact with you and then visit you at home to talk about the issues you have and how we can help. They will put together a plan and ensure that you are able to reach your goals. This service is complete free to clients.

This service is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

COMMUNITY FUND

We support people and communities to thrive.

The National Lottery Community Fund

ESVS, formally ESAB, has moved offices.

You can now find us at 13 Vicarage Field, Hailsham, BN27 1BD.

Our telephone number remains the same, 01323 832252.

For the moment our email address is still info@eastsussexblind.org and our website is www.eastsussexblind.org. We are currently working on our new website so at some point you will be automatically re-directed to our new website, www.eastsussexvisionsupport.org

Domestic abuse and sexual violence services are open and here to help.

The greater number of people staying indoors for long periods means instances of domestic abuse may be on the rise. We know that in the current climate, it is more challenging for those suffering abuse. Lines of communication could be severely limited if victims are unable to leave the home. We want to reassure those experiencing abuse that they are not alone.

People in East Sussex needing help, advice or support on domestic abuse and sexual violence can contact The Portal on 0300 323 9985 or visit the Safe In East Sussex webpage https://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/domestic-abuse-help.html

The stay-at-home instruction as a result of COVID-19 does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.

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A message from our Patron,

Sir Peter Field KCVO KStJ JP,

Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex

This will probably be the last time I contribute to the magazine as the county's Lord-Lieutenant so I thought it might be nice to reflect on fulfilling the role as someone with a visual disability. A disability which I know most of you reading this share with me.

I have no sight to speak of in my left eye and that which I can see on the right hand side is limited to a small patch. I was born with Amblyopia - a 'lazy' left eye - so I have never been able to see clearly from it – all vision in that eye has been blurred, and because the imbalance trying to correct it with a strong lens would be hard to bear I was never given any corrective treatment.

Then to add insult to injury in 2004, whilst undergoing heart surgery, I had a stroke on the operating table which damaged where the optic nerve joins the brain meaning a loss of sight on the left and in both eyes a blurring of everything else I see – apart that is from a tiny patch, which has adapted brilliantly, allowing me to go about now, after I adjusted, more or less as a normally sighted person.

When I became Lord-Lieutenant in 2008 I was a bit concerned that it may hamper me and that I could not perform the role as I should. Would I recognize people? How do I get about? I needn't have worried. Margaret , my long suffering wife has been so kind in driving me everywhere, well almost everywhere, sometimes I have driver but that is quite rare nowadays, and I love travelling on public transport though I have yet to travel in uniform with a sword on the buses!

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Social Inclusion is vital to many people and at ESVS we look to provide varied and flexible social events to suit every age and group. Whilst most of our groups are quite traditional, we are constantly exploring new, modern ways of helping people to get together. The groups are looking at using WhatsApp and some already have Facebook pages dedicated to their club. We are actively working with the groups to provide this kind of flexibility and service.

We currently provide 14 social groups run by 200 volunteers. These offer a vital lifeline to over 500 of our members who would experience social isolation and exclusion without the opportunity to get together once a month.

The social groups meet monthly in various locations such as village halls and provide a social atmosphere for up to 60 blind and partially sighted people including, outings, entertainment and the opportunity to meet friends. Our volunteers drive members to the groups, provide refreshments, support and assist, organise entertainment and sit on each group's committee.

Outings can range from trips to gardens, National Trust properties, places of interests, theatre, teas and lunches. All of these would not be possible without the social groups and the help of the volunteers. Thus, ensuring that our members are not excluded because of their visual impairment.

In Brighton and Hove we are now also able to provide a wonderful new group specifically for those who are deaf/blind. This group covers a whole range of ages and abilities and provides some vital social inclusion for the members.

ESAB Viable provide a varied and interesting social diary for younger people living in Brighton and Hove.

The Theatre Club, run by volunteers, takes members to the Devonshire Park Theatre in Eastbourne for Saturday Matinee performances with audio description. The shows vary from Musicals, Dramas and Pantomimes. The Theatre group has 20 members and goes to about 20 shows per year.

LOW VISION SUPPORT

Our long running, successful, Low Vision Service provides a detailed one-to-one package of care that will help you get back on your feet, sort out a range of problems or just provide care and support when you most need it. The service will:

Explain your eye condition

Provide you with information about the clinical services you may need

Refer you onto other available services

Assist you to attend the eye clinic

Direct you to the right benefits

Assist you in getting modern technology to work for you

Help you with appeals

Support you and your loved ones to better understand your condition so you can live a healthy, inclusive life.

A Low Vision Support Worker will contact you by phone initially and then visit you at home. They will run through your condition and enable you to access all the help available, either internally from East Sussex Vision Support or from a huge range of external services. This service is complete free of charge and will normally be completed within six weeks of the initial visit.

The Low Vision Support Workers, along with the Brighton and Hove Co-ordinator, see over 400 people a year in their own homes and have contact with over 1000.

The result of a diagnosis of sight loss can be devastating. This is a crucial time for East Sussex Vision Support to start helping, and by managing the certificates of visual impairment for the county, we can identify people at a very early stage. At present we manage over 300 certificates per year; assisting with referrals, explaining the impact of their diagnosis and helping them to come to terms with the changes.

The Picture shows Sir Peter Field

I did worry on my first royal visit that I might not recognize the royal person, or that I might trip over or bash into someone or something, but taking a calm approach saw me through and whilst it took about 18 months from the loss in 2004 to adjust to life with limited vision, life nowadays is very much routine as I am sure it is for most of you. Yes, I cannot drive a car. Yes, I find sport difficult (but then I always did) and there are other things sighted people can do that I cannot but, like you, I do not worry. If I do not recognize someone because I have only met them once before (and that may have been yesterday) I have no hesitation in asking them to tell me who they are and why I didn't recognize them. It helps us all that they should realise that just because I look perfectly well it doesn't mean I don't have a disability.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as your Lord-Lieutenant. I hope that I have fulfilled the role as you would want me to and indeed as Her Majesty would want me to. It has been a great privilege and a very special time in my life. Even though I am stepping down in this odd, Covid restricted world I look forward to seeing many of you in my retirement and to supporting the cause of ESAB – a brilliant ambassador and service for us all with a sight disability.

BRIGHTON & HOVE NEWS

"It's bulletin time Sue" said Daniel. "Can you tell everyone what's been going on in Brighton and Hove?" Now I wish I could be telling you about all the exciting happenings and activities that have taken place, but alas not a lot has changed since our last bulletin. However, I feel confident that at last I can see light at the end of the tunnel.

By now almost all of you have would have received at least one dose of the vaccine and a return to "careful" normality looks promisingly close. At the time of writing this Brighton and Hove in general is preparing to welcome visitors. Shops are opening, hospitality unlocking their doors and local entertainment is emerging from the lockdown. It's understandable that after a year of restrictions, and for many a long lonely isolation, you may be feeling apprehensive or even quite scared about getting back out into the wide world. That's okay, you're not alone.

It's been a difficult time! Many may find venturing out challenging because confidence and muscle strength has declined over the year. Once things get going again our Brighton and Hove social groups will be offering fun activities to help build both these, and of course build friendships too. If you would like any information about our groups, please do get in touch.

Our Brighton area befrienders have been doing a sterling job of keeping in touch with people by telephone. This regular contact has made a tremendous difference, I know this because I'm always being told how much the calls mean to people. Following government guidelines, face to face visits will be able to resume when government advice allows and most importantly, both parties are agreeable. Not everyone will feel comfortable meeting (or be able to meet) at a distance and may wish to continue with telephone support. That's fine!

Remember we may have been locked down but we're still here taking referrals, offering advice, information, aids and equipment, Vision awareness, and emotional and practical support. Please do contact me if you would like a chat, maybe have worries, would like to hear more about our social groups or perhaps like a befriending volunteer to help you regain your confidence.

And finally I'd like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the volunteers that have helped support our clients though this awful period. Your support has been absolutely invaluable. Thank you!

AIDS & EQUIPMENT

Here we are again, another Bulletin and another Lock Down. As with our last newsletter, we are still having to cope with the restrictions in place. We are still here, helping our members and making sure that we get the right equipment to people.
We have moved to our new premises and the new Aids and Equipment Resource Room is taking shape. We are looking forward to being able to see our members once again, giving them the time and expertise that they need to make life a little easier.
There will be a lot of second hand equipment available once we have everything sorted out and items PAT tested where necessary. To all of you who contacted me after the last newsletter, rest assured, the items that we have spoken about are put to one side with your names on them. The move has given us much more room, but we seem to have even more items to fill the space and as of this moment, it feels as though we're trying to put a quart into a pint pot! When we are ready to open, everything should have a home and it will be much better for anyone wanting to come in to look at items or to have a one to one appointment. We look forward to seeing you soon.

The three pictures above show the new Aids and Equipment Centre at 13 Vicarage Field, Hailsham.