East Sussex
Vision Support
1OO YEARS 1921-2O21

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

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 East Sussex Vision Support

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 - Autumn/Winter 2021

Welcome to our Autumn/Winter bulletin. We're featuring the services we offer, information about a new Sight Loss Council, The new look Tuesday Club and much much more.

We'd also like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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A message from our Chairman

As we near the 2 year anniversary of you know what we find ESVS in relatively good shape. By that I mean we are financially stable, settled in our new premises and have a quality team that are dedicated to the cause.

Clearly we are frustrated by the continued restrictions but despite this our support to our members as measured by numbers is slowly returning to pre COVID levels. This is a testament to our fantastic team who are working in unprecedented conditions. Thank you to everyone.
Let's hope that we can improve our support further into next year and provide more of the outstanding service that our members deserve.

Picture shows Ian Fletcher-Price

ESVS has moved offices.

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

Our telephone number remains the same, 01323 832252.

Contact us via email, info@eastsussexvisionsupport.org or visit our website, www.eastsussexvisionsupport.org

New East Sussex Sight Loss Council seeks visually impaired volunteers

A new advocacy group led by blind and partially sighted volunteers is set to launch in East Sussex early next year and urges people to get involved.

The new East Sussex Sight Loss Council (SLC), which will also cover Brighton and Hove, will work to influence positive change across the region and tackle issues affecting blind and partially sighted people, such as cluttered pavements and inaccessible medical information.
East Sussex SLC funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust, will join a network of Sight Loss Councils across the country, working to improve access to products and services at a local and national level.

Kevin Satizabal, Sight Loss Councils Engagement Manager (South East) said: "If you are a visually impaired person enthusiastic about advocating for change and sharing your stories with key decision makers, sign up to volunteer. You'll receive training and support, have the opportunity to meet other people and play a real part in advocating for a more accessible world."

East Sussex Sight Loss Council will meet once a month and base its work on three priority areas: Employment and skills, Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Communities.

To find out more or apply to volunteer, please email info@sightlosscouncils.org.uk, call 020 8996 1937

FREE AMAZON ECHO!

Tech giveaway to celebrate RNIB Talking Books library on Alexa

The RNIB are giving away 3,000 Amazon Echos (smart speakers), to blind or partially sighted people, to celebrate the launch of their Talking Books library being available on Amazon Alexa. You can simply say “Alexa, open RNIB Talking Books” to access thousands of titles. RNIB Library and Reading Services are fully accessible via an Amazon Echo and you can also ask the device to call the RNIB Helpline. You can ask Alexa to play titles from BBC Sounds, Spotify or Amazon Music. You ask it to play background sounds like rain or thunder, sea sounds or a gentle stream. You can ask what the time is, what the weather is like outside, set alarms, use it as a bluetooth speaker and much, much more! You can even ask Alexa to solve family arguments by checking facts or figures.

To register interest in the offer call the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999.

Terms and conditions do apply.

Apply Online for a Post Office PASS Card

Post Office PASS proof of age cards are available for any UK resident and are issued in 3 age categories: '18+' for adults, '16-17' for young people aged 16 or 17 and 'Under 16' for children. All Post Office PASS Cards expire 3 years after issuing (rounded up to the end of the month card was printed on).

Whether you are home shopping, applying for a new job, renting a new home, accessing services like transport, housing services or claiming benefits, Post Office PASS Card helps you prove your age and identity.

www.postofficecitizencard.com/apply-online

Volunteers with lived experience wanted!

We are gauging interest from our members to see if anyone would be interested in a Peer Support Role. We would like to find people with lived experience of sight loss who would be happy to chat to other members, we often come across someone who has lost their sight and is lonely or housebound. This has become much more prevalent since the recent lockdowns.

So if you feel that you could give sometime to help someone who is struggling, then please give us a call at HQ on 01323 832252 and let us know.

Wealden Talking News

Wealden Talking News is a registered charity producing weekly memory sticks of news and features taken from the local papers together with a monthly magazine service – free of charge for the visually impaired.

It produces 4 editions of news each week covering a wide area of East Sussex, Heathfield & District, Crowborough & Uckfield, Hailsham & Polegate and Seaford & Newhaven.

Each week the news and features are followed by a magazine. These are; Sussex Life, Listeners’ Sussex, The People’s Friend and Richard’s Roundup.

OUR RECORDINGS are available free to anyone who is unable to read a newspaper due to sight problems - there is no formal qualification required. There are currently around 130 listeners and anyone that is sight impaired is invited to join the WTN mailing list by phoning 01435 862 304 (ansaphone only).

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A message from our CEO

Daniel Brookbank

We come to the end of another very challenging year for people living in East Sussex with sight loss. Although our world is gradually opening up again, many of our members are still finding life to be challenging. Here at ESVS, yes all our branding and changes have now gone through, we recognised that a new kind of working was needed to enable us to help our members more. Earlier this year we launched our higher intervention service with three new members of staff working directly in the community helping members who have complex or multiple needs. Already we are experiencing challenges we never thought would be part of our role. People have more mental health needs than ever before, members are lo sing their homes as they struggle to pay rents and landlords seek other uses for their properties, many people have lost a lot of confidence simply in going out and members who have suffered other health issues find their sight loss more and more challenging. But we are here and we are ready to help.

I am in awe of the leaders of our social groups, they have worked so hard to get the groups back up and running, The groups I have visited since re-opening are a testament to why it's so important to have social activities, the opportunity just to be with friends is stronger than ever and all of us here at ESVS offer a huge thank you to the volunteers who have got the groups up and running again.

Community Wellbeing in East Sussex, Connected people and places

Strong relationships and connected communities are essential foundations for tackling loneliness and developing overall community wellbeing.

Local authorities in East Sussex, the NHS, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VSCE) sector and others are working together – with the help of Collaborate Community Interest Company – to understand how to better support connected communities. To do this we'd like to hear from as many residents as possible.

We have developed a survey to help us understand what connection means to you. Your responses will help us develop an approach based on real experiences of living in East Sussex. **If you complete the survey you could win one of two £50 shopping vouchers in our prize draw!**

The survey can be accessed online here:

https://bit.ly/ESconnectionsurvey

Alternatively, if you would like to speak to someone rather than fill in the survey, please call 07513 379870. If no one is available when you call, please leave a message and someone will call you back at a later point.

If you have any questions about this survey, or would like support to complete it, please contact tajwar@collaboratecic.com or call 07513 379870 (available 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday). If you would like to complete the survey in a different format or language, please also get in touch with them.

The Tuesday Club

The Tuesday Club is a very friendly group with members of various ages, skills & abilities.

We do a range of activities so that we can include something for everyone's taste such as Ten Pin Bowling, a Quiz evening with a buffet, Meals out in various restaurants & games evenings.

We are always pleased to receive suggestions from members with regards to new activities or venues for a meal.

As the name suggests we meet on the 2nd Tuesday evening of every month & our new home venue for quiz & games nights is the Polegate Community Centre.

The PCC is a 7-minute walk from the rail station/bus stop making it easy for members who wish to come by public transport

We are currently making some changes, looking to the future & how we can encourage new members to join.

One aim is to enable members to set up smaller groups taking on new challenges or simply meeting for a coffee morning etc.

This is the link to our new Facebook group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/249548413723294/?ref=share

The Picture to the Right shows some of the Tuesday Club at a recent Bowling event.

The Tuesday Club has a new look. It's on Facebook, it's providing lots of new and interesting activities and I'm so pleased to see so many members back and enjoying it.

Picture shows Daniel Brookbank

Along with a few changes to our staff, we have also had some changes to the board of Trustees, in particular, Carol Borowski has retired. Carol has been a volunteer and part of the Board of Trustees for many years and she has helped to shape the organisation you see today. Her lived experience added a key dimension to the decisions the board made and her strong beliefs on equality and diversity made a lasting impression on me. I'd like to publicly thank carol for all the support she has given me as CEO and to wish her a very happy retirement from ESVS.

I was saddened when I heard of the passing of Alec Kendall. Alec and his wife Ann have run the Bexhill group for many years, dedicated and kind, they always organised a friendly and enjoyable group. My thoughts are with Ann and her family at this sad time.

As we move forward into a new world, I want to assure all our members and anyone else who needs our services that we are here, we are open and we are visiting people at home. Our services and staff are all here to help in anyway we can. Please get in touch with us if you need some assistance. Maybe you're struggling with a new piece of tech, we can help, do you have problems with your housing, get in touch, we may be able to assist. Or perhaps you need someone to talk to about your eye condition. All our staff cans assist you and all our services are free.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Aids & Equipment

Hello, Here we are in the run up to Christmas once again. The A and E Resource room is open for anyone who would like to come and take a look at equipment. I can send out the RNIB and Cobolt catalogues to you if you would like me to, but you can't beat getting that "hands on" experience. I always try to do any visits by appointment, that way, you get as much time as you need to look at things. That doesn't mean that we don't still have people just turn up at the door! If I am free, then of course I will see you, but if I already have someone with me, it does mean that you may be unlucky.

My colleague, Gez has been working with us for a few months now and he is wonderful at sorting out I Pads and tablets as well as I Phones with the built-in accessibility features. So, if you have a "Smart" device and you don't think that you're using it as much as you should be, give us a call and we will take a look to see if we can get you using it more.

If you have any questions concerning equipment, don't worry about giving me a call, it's what I'm here for. I may not be able to give you an answer immediately, but I can always give you a call back once I have the information that you need!

Have a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

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

Telephone Helpline

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

There are lots of ways to get in touch with us, you can phone us, email us, visit us on Facebook, go to our website or scan on the QR code to find us.

t. 01323 832252
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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 we can

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 completely 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 Outreach Service

Picture to the right shows the ESVS Outreach Vehicle

Hello, here is a little information to let you know about the Outreach Vehicle. Over the last few months since Lock Down started, the Outreach vehicle has been out of commission. I am glad to say that this is no longer the case. It's back out on the road and I am looking for venues where I can bring it. I have had some success in finding some places already, but if anyone has any suggestions where it might be possible to bring the ESVS Outreach Vehicle and be able to park with access so that people can get on and take a look at what we have on board, that would be great!

The Outreach Vehicle has a display of equipment on board, the most popular and most asked for items . It will give you a chance to try some of them and even buy some things on the spot. If I don't have it in stock, then I can always get the items ordered for you.

I hope to put a list of places that the Outreach Vehicle will be in future Bulletins as well as making sure that they are on the ESVS website.

Gez, our new OV Co-ordinator, is looking for some volunteers to assist him when he goes out on the vehicle. If you have lived experience of sight loss and could spare a few hours each month to be part of the OV team please can you get in touch with him, either on the HQ telephone number 01323 832252 or by emailing him gez@eastsussexvisionsupport.org

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Sports Activities

We have been running a series of six activitiy sessions with Defiant Sports in Eastbourne using funding from the Tackling Inequality Fund.

These give an opportunity to try out a number of sports with adaptations (where necessary) including Sound Tennis, Boccia, Kurling, Football and Table Tennis.

We plan to run a further series of these events in the new year and would like to invite ESVS members to take part. No previous experience is required and we will adapt for different levels of sight and fitness

The sessions are likely to be from 11am – 1pm on Thursdays. Spaces are limited so please contact early to avoid disappointment.

Please contact me by email pgillett3@gmail.com or phone the ESVS office if interested. There will be no charge for participants

We cannot guarantee to provide transport but may be able to meet attenders at Eastbourne station to get a bus or share a taxi.

Paul Gillett

The Picture shows the ESVS Outreach Vehicle visiting Defiant Sports

Social Inclusion

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.

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 interest, 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.

Paul Gillett runs the Brighton 10K to raise funds for ESVS

2 years ago I put my name down to run in the Brighton Marathon 10k event. I was not to know how long I would have to wait but as the event T shirt says "The Comeback is always stronger than the setback"

Sunday 12th September finally arrived with the bonus of being a lovely day with very light wind as I met my guide runner Jonathan Elsom at Preston Park to get ready for the run along with over 2,000 other runners.

Even at the early time in the morning there were already crowds along the route cheering us on and it created a fabulous atmosphere that really helped when the going got tough, you sometimes do not appreciate the effect of a slight incline if you are walking along a pavement

My guide expertly supported me to watch out for sleeping policeman and other obstacles and to pass lots of other runners and eventually we were running down the road along the seafront to the pier and on to Madeira drive where the last section seemed to go on for ever but I managed a final sprint and finished in 61 minutes 59 seconds

I had set myself a target of 62 minutes so was thrilled with that time which was 9th out of 19 in my age group

I have so far raised £611 for ESVS

Picture shows Paul Gillett (right) and Jonathan Elsom (left)

Brighton and Hove News

Where has the time gone? It doesn't seem five minutes since our last bulletin. So, what's been going on in Brighton and Hove?

As we emerge from the restrictions it's a busy time in the Brighton and Hove area, demand for our services has significantly increased. Referrals for support are high but we are working hard to support you all and all urgent needs will be prioritised.

Having done an absolutely sterling job of supporting people by telephone over the last few years, most of our Brighton area befrienders are back visiting face to face. Visits are managed carefully within guidelines to ensure they are safe for everyone.

Our social groups are starting to meet face to face again and we're all looking forward to some splendid Christmas lunch celebration's together… at last! We hope that next year will be a year to enjoy many more fun social meetings and activities.

Getting to and from these activities is difficult and expensive for our members. If you know of anyone who would be kind enough to be a volunteer driver, please do ask them to get in touch. Their help would be greatly appreciated.

I know that covid has made some feel a little uneasy about going out which may prevent you from attending groups or even popping out for a walk. If so, then perhaps you would benefit from a befriending volunteer to help you regain confidence out and about, or maybe you would prefer a telephone social group? Let me know. If there's enough demand, I could organise.

Brighton and Hove News

Here at ESVS we have a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers. Our volunteer services have been truly vital during the last few years, relieving isolation, and making sure people were getting any support that they need. Between them they befriend around 35 visually impaired people throughout Brighton and Hove and make coming along to our social groups fun and possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all so much for their important work! We just could not do it without you!

Sue Fever

The picture on the right shows the delicious cream tea from the last Social Group meet

The two pictures to the left show members enjoying the recent Brighton social group meet