East Sussex Vision Support

NEWSLETTER - Spring 2023

Welcome to our Spring Bulletin

Picture above shows Steve Saunders and Gez Myers outside Number 10 Downing Street

How to contact ESVS.

You can find us at

13 Vicarage Field, Hailsham, BN27 1BD.

Our telephone number is 01323 832252.

Contact us via email,
info@eastsussexvisionsupport.org

or visit our website,
www.eastsussexvisionsupport.org

Messages from our Chairman and CEO

Welcome to our spring bulletin. I'm very pleased that we have added to the services we already offer our members. To be able to access help with IT equipment and issues has been something we have needed for a while and I want to wish Taz Ahmad in Brighton good luck with his new post.

At this time of year we ask you all to consider making a donation to the organisation. I would urge you to provide support, even if it's a small amount. The money given to us ensures that we are able to provide so much care to so many people living with sight loss. Your support is greatly appreciated, thank you.

Picture above shows Ian Fletcher-Price

An important part of the work we do at ESVS is enable our members to live as independent a life as possible. This is why we have added to the list of services we offer. IT support services are becoming more central to what we do and I'm very pleased that we are able to work on this.

Campaigning has become much more central to what we do these days. As we see cuts to services, long waits for help and more complex and time consuming systems to access help it has become apparent that we need to work harder at highlighting the issues our members face. This is why we are campaigning to ensure that there are always staff to help on the railways, that the new disability strategy in Brighton and Hove is what disabled people really need and that access rights for people across East Sussex are fit for purpose. Rest assured that ESVS is campaigning hard to make sure that the hard fought for rights of disabled people are not eroded by a stretched and struggling system.

Picture to the left shows Daniel Brookbank

FUNDRAISING & DONATIONS

Funding the work that ESVS does is vitally important, every penny we receive goes towards providing essential services to blind and partially sighted people across East Sussex, Brighton and Hove.

Please could I ask you to make a donation to us, your money will help us to make sure that more and more of our members are able to live independently and have the life they want. Even a small amount makes a difference.

Currently we are looking after about 1700 people across the county, that's 1700 people who are benefiting from a wide range of our services, from one to one care, using the Aids and Equipment service or attending one of the wonderful social groups that are available.

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.

£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 our members

Thank you

Alternatively you can donate via our Just Giving page, just visit

www.justgiving.com/eastsussexvisionsupport

Maggie Grinyer, our Low Vision Support Worker tells us about Spamedica

There is a new NHS trust eye hospital called Spamedica that has been open near Hassocks since 2021. I have never heard of it before.

I had a call from one of our members in Seaford who had been referred there by the local optician as she would need immediate cataract surgery. Glasses would not have corrected her vision.

Spamedica deal with cataracts only, and they do follow up appointments with the YAG laser treatment if required. They are a large company with over 40 centres in the UK

When I arrived, they were very efficient, offered us both tea or coffee, and within minutes we were in with the eye care assistant who did the visual acuities.

We were then passed onto the nurse who went through all other medical problems and took the blood pressure. She then explained the whole procedure and asked if there were any questions we needed answered.

We then went into the optometrist who checked the shape of both eyes and the intra ocular lens that would be required to complete the surgery.

This whole procedure took roughly 60 minutes, and we were told that surgery would take place within two weeks!.

The exciting part of this is that they are opening another centre in Bexhill at the beginning of April 2023.

You do not need to be referred by your GP your optician can do it. The whole idea is to relieve the eye hospital and eye clinics here in East Sussex of their huge waiting list.

Picture above shows Maggie Grinyer ESVS Low Vision Support Worker

East Sussex
Vision Support

ESVS Social groups are a continual support to our members, if you, or someone you know might like to volunteer to help out just once a month, please get in touch with us at Head Office on 01323 832252 or email info@eastsussexvisionsupport.org.

Can you help the East Sussex Vision Support Bexhill Social club for Visually Impaired People (VIPs)? The club meets from 2 – 4pm on the first Friday of the month at St Augustine's Church Hall, Cooden Drive, Bexhill where our VIPs to enjoy entertainment, quizzes, a raffle and tea and cakes. If you would like to help with these activities or by offering transport to and from the hall please contact Christine (07437 841366) or Brian (07361 249252)

The Pictures to the left and above show members of the Bexhill Social Group enjoying an afternoon tea and entertainment

A message from Steve

Hopefully, we have the worst of the weather behind us and the Spring and Summer to look forward to. The time since the last Bulletin has been extremely busy. We have had so many more people making appointments for visits to the Resource Centre and we have also had a change in Aids and Equipment that I need to let you know about.

Picture above shows Julie Hollister

At the beginning of December we had another member of staff who joined us. Julie Hollister is now part of the Aids and Equipment team and has settled into her new role really well! Julie is now beginning to learn what happens in a Resource Centre visit and will soon start shadowing Gez when he goes out and about.

Gez is being kept busy with going out to clients, helping them with IT support. We are still looking at finding venues to take out equipment and carry out talks and giving advice, so if you know of any venues that would be happy to have a visit from us, do let me know.

I also have to tell you that my role has changed and I am now much more involved with representing ESVS. Since the beginning of the year, I have already taken part in a TV interview with Meridian News and Gez and I have been to 10 Downing Street to hand in a petition concerning the proposed changes planned for the railways.

Picture to the right shows Steve Saunders, Taz Ahmad, Jenny Wallace (Teacher at Balfour Key Stage 2 School). Also in the picture is Rosie, Steve's Guide dog and Trine, Taz's Guide dog.

If the proposals go ahead, staff on smaller stations will be a thing of the past and so will Train Managers or Guards on board trains. This will make travelling as a VIP more difficult, buying tickets at stations will no longer be possible unless it's one of the main ones.

Picture above shows Steve Saunders being interviewed by the Meridian film crew outside downing Street

We have been going out, and we have carried out a couple of visits, one to a U3A group in Brighton and another to a middle school where we spoke to over 400 students.

We are beginning to get the word around as to what we do and who we are here to help.

As an organisation, ESVS is, once again, giving Vision Awareness training to groups of people who come into regular contact with our clients. This training gives them a much better understanding of the needs of someone with a Vision Impairment. Hopefully, it will also give the people who have the training the ability to signpost people to us.

Both Daniel and I represent ESVS on several Advisory Boards, making sure that the voice of Vision Impaired People is taken into account when decisions are being made. It's so important that decision makers are aware of the issues that VIP's experience every day. We give a voice to people who can be overlooked and unheard, a really important part of what ESVS does. We represent you in a very real way across East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

If you come across issues that concern you as someone with a Vision Impairment, let us know. We can't promise to sort out all of the problems, but where we can, we will do our best to make a difference.

Dance-Ability (©) ™ registered **2020 (UK)** with all rights reserved.
(my logo depicts ME, in a round circle/3-d image exercising to music in **purple**, **pink** & **mauve** colours

Do you Want to **exercise, keep fit/get** more **active?**
But affected by **impaired/low vision** or **blindness?**
If so, please let me know as
I need at least **10 VIP/Blind people.**
Who like to exercise to music?
To do some **Exercise to MUSIC classes especially for VIPs & people** who are **Blind.**
Who can **move your arms, legs?**
I can also do CHAIR based classes).

(My classes can be adapted for **age** & **ability.**
For me to source some local suitable, safe, accessible venues.
Or to do with you at home if you live in the Bexhill/Hastings area?
If/or you can arrange/provide transport if living elsewhere?
(as being a VIP myself – I can not/do not drive)
I audio describe the movements

I can see:

Body shapes.

Colours & if you should need my attention.

This is why I was allowed to train to be an

ETM Instructor.

I am also Liability Insured.

I can **NOT** see clearly face recognition.

Unless people tell me who they are!

Exercising to music is **fun** and **effective.**

For building **strength, mobility & confidence.**

Don't let lack of OR **no vision stop you.**

From keeping more fit & active.

Let's get moving & grooving for 2023!

My contact details are.

E-Mail – for a prompt response!

abilityaccess@hotmail.com

OR via **Ability to Access 07942-493-177**

(answer service)

Facebook page

Ability to Access/Dance-Ability

Or via my website:

www.a-2-a.co.uk/dance-ability

I look forward to hearing from you & meeting you.

Picture to the left shows Christine Ward standing next to her advertising banner. The picture on the previous page shows a chair based exercise class

Shot While Blind

Greeting cards from a blind guy with a camera

Picture above shows Heinrich Barth cuddling his guide dog Lincoln. Lincoln is a German Shepherd Dog

I'm Heinrich Barth

I had been shooting pictures for decades before an aneurysm in 2019 left me legally blind. I spent 17 days in a coma and had to learn to walk and talk again.

I thought I would never take another photograph. But then I got Lincoln, my guide dog, and started going on long walks with him.

I took my camera one day, and suddenly found that despite being blind in one eye, and only having a narrow strip of vision with the other, I can still take photos that capture the beauty of the world.

My love of nature and passion for photography came alive again, and now I can share this with you.

To purchase some of Heinrich's beautiful cards depicting scenes around Sussex and Kent please visit his website at

www.shotwhileblind.co.uk or give us a ring at HQ and we will put you in touch

Paul Goddard, one of our members living in Crowborough, was recently elected as Chair of the Uckfield and Tonbridge Community Rail Steering Group.

The group's main aim is to raise awareness of stations, rail services and points of interest in the surrounding areas through community projects such as art exhibitions at railway stations, planting of gardens, and offering train trips to groups who are under represented.

In the past, the group has often lost its focus and concentrated on rolling stock, timetabling, and electrification of the Uckfield line. Paul says, !I am very keen to bring the focus back to the main aim of the group, to reconnect the community with the railways, and especially regarding access. As a VI guide dog user, it is imperative that trains and stations are not only fully accessible, but are also safe to use. I look forward to the many exciting challenges ahead."

Paul has already started to make community contacts to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in and around the Crowborough area. If anyone would like to find out more, or has an idea for a community project in their area, then please do get in touch with ESVS HQ on 01323 832252 and we can forward details on to Paul.

Picture above shows Paul Goddard on the local Santa Express with Father Christmas

News from Brighton and Hove by Sue Fever

Here's a little taster of some of what's going on in the Brighton and Hove area.

Technical Support: We are now very pleased to be able to offer one to one technical support across the area. We know that sight loss can bring some challenges especially when using and accessing modern technology. But we are also aware that technology is a key factor to enhancing independence in our modern times. Our Tech specialist Taz can help you to understand, access and manage your IT and mobile phone's with confidence. If you would like some technical help or advice, please do contact our Head Office.

Social Groups: Our Brighton and Hove Social Groups continue to offer fun and interesting activities such as Quizzes, Guest speakers and Singers, Bingo, Murder Mysteries, Bowling, Gentle Exercise and Adaptive Sports, Coffee Mornings, and Walks, to name but a few.

So far this year our VIable Social Group has visited Hove museum, held weekly bowling sessions at the Marina, met for tea and coffee, enjoyed an Eastbourne Theatre Trip, and survived a Valentines day murder mystery.

ESVS Sound Tennis Sussex continues to provide twice monthly sessions on Sunday afternoons at Withdean Sports Centre.

We're always keen to welcome new players and volunteers. We have adult players of all ages and with different levels of fitness and ability. Our experienced coach provides great support so you can learn and develop your game in a way that is suitable for you.

Sound Tennis is an adapted form of the sport to make it more accessible for blind and partially sighted people. Adaptations include a sponge ball which can be heard when it bounces and additional bounces to allow players time to track the ball.

If you feel you would like to join any of the groups or could assist as a volunteer for any of them, please do get in touch.

East Sussex Vision Support

Our Brighton area volunteer Befriending service telephone or visit a visually impaired person. They may be asked to read and respond to confidential correspondence, give help with IT, go for short walks, help to build confidence out and about, or maybe just sit and talk to offer some companionship. Visits vary depending upon individual circumstances and the duration anything from up to an hour or two.

We currently have a long waiting list for this service so if you know of anyone who would be kind enough to be a volunteer driver or befriender, please do ask them to get in touch. Their help would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, and most importantly I would like to say a huge thank you to all the Brighton and Hove Volunteers for your support, time, and commitment. You really do make a difference. Whether it's a couple of hours a week, or a month, volunteering has a huge impact on somebody's life.

The picture above shows our SocialEYE's group doing chair- based exercise to music using colourful hula hoops. From a seated position they're rotating the hoops in front of themselves to mimic hula hooping.

IT and computer support

We are planning to hold regular support sessions for our members who want to find out more about using modern tech equipment.

The sessions will be held at Blatchington Court Trust on the first Tuesday of the month (starting in May) from 10.30am to 12pm.

Taz, our IT support Worker for Brighton and Hove will be on hand to cover a wide range of subjects, including:

- Introduction to computers and the internet
- How the main devices can help you as a VI person
- Staying safe online
- Using Email
- Social media
- Using Apps, including Shopping, Banking and specialist VI Apps

If you would like to attend, please can you get in touch with ESVS HQ on 01323 832252, or email Taz, taz@eastsussexvisionsupport.org and we will get you booked in.

The sessions are open to all, but please be aware that you would need to get yourself to Blatchington Court Trust, which is in Hove, very near to Hove Station.

Picture to the right shows Taz Ahmad, ESVS Brighton and Hove IT support worker on his laptop and phone

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 completely 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.

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 to 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

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

East Sussex Vision Support

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 10 social groups run by 100 volunteers. These offer a vital lifeline to over 200 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 offer a social group for the more vulnerable members of our community, they meet monthly, on a Friday and enjoy conversation, teas and meals as well as entertainment and social interaction.

ESVS 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 50 members and goes to about 4 shows per year.

Southern Water Priority Services

How we can help our customers that need extra support

Our Priority Services ensure that people in special circumstances can access water services – such as an audio bill, or extra support if there's disruption to their water supply.

To ensure we always know who needs Priority Services, we keep a register.

We can add you to our Priority Services Register if you or someone in your household:

- are pensionable age
- have a disability or chronic illness
- have a long-term medical condition
- have difficulty seeing, hearing or communicating
- have a child under the age of 5
- or have any other needs that mean you require a little extra assistance

If you meet the requirements above, tell us about any special circumstances you have to help us support you better.

You can also add the name of someone else living in your home who may need extra support.

When you contact us you'll need to tell us your customer number or payment reference number – both can be found in the top right corner of your bill:

Email customerservices@southernwater.co.uk

Visit southernwater.co.uk/priority-services

Freephone 0800 027 0800

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Textphone 0330 303 1265

Write to Southern Water, PO Box 41, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 3NZ

East Sussex
Vision Support

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 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