

My Sight Nottinghamshire Annual Review 2017-2018



175 Years
mysight
Notts
Seeing beyond sight loss

**Supporting Local Blind
and Visually Impaired People**

My Sight Nottinghamshire

Annual Review 2017-2018

The 2017/18 financial year was one of anticipation, excitement and preparation for My Sight Notts as we drew up plans to move into our modern new city centre hub on Heathcoat Street and to celebrate our 175 anniversary in style.

The signing of contracts on our new city-centre hub brought to a close our two-year search for suitable premises. Contracts were signed on a 10 year lease in February 2018 and building works began later that month.

Collecting the keys for our Heathcoat Street hub means we will realise our vision of creating an accessible space in the heart of Nottingham, which local visually impaired people told us they wanted and which we hope will be enjoyed by them for many years to come.

It seemed fitting that we moved into our bright new centre on Heathcoat Street in the same year that we celebrate our 175 birthday.

We were busy drawing up plans to capitalise on this unique opportunity to create a lasting legacy for local blind and partially sighted people by launching our 175 Birthday Appeal.



Michael Conroy
(left)
Chief Executive

Jacky Fisher
(right)
Chair of trustees





Thanks to the generosity of our funders and supporters, we were fortunate to raise significant funds towards the capital costs of transforming the interior of Heathcoat Street into a welcoming home-from-home for visually impaired people. This helps minimise the impact of the building costs on our charitable reserves. We will continue to look for further funding opportunities as the more we raise the more we will be able to complete all those optional extras that often make all the difference.

We have not let all these exciting preparations distract us from our mission of providing high quality services for local blind and partially sighted people. This year we launched a new Walkie Talkie Wednesdays, gentle walks for health initiative, a new Peer Support Group and our final Big Lottery funded Hub in Bassetlaw.

We continue to deliver on our commitment to campaign on issues affecting local visually impaired people. This financial year saw the launch of our 'Sight Loss Aware' accreditation mark for local businesses. We also celebrated receiving funding for a new two-year eye health project aimed at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, where certain sight loss conditions are prevalent.

In 2018/19 we will build on these achievements and reap the rewards of all of our planning as we complete the transformation of our new Hub and move services into our bright new city centre premises. We will also enjoy celebrating our 175 birthday year with an exciting range of events.

Opening the door to our future

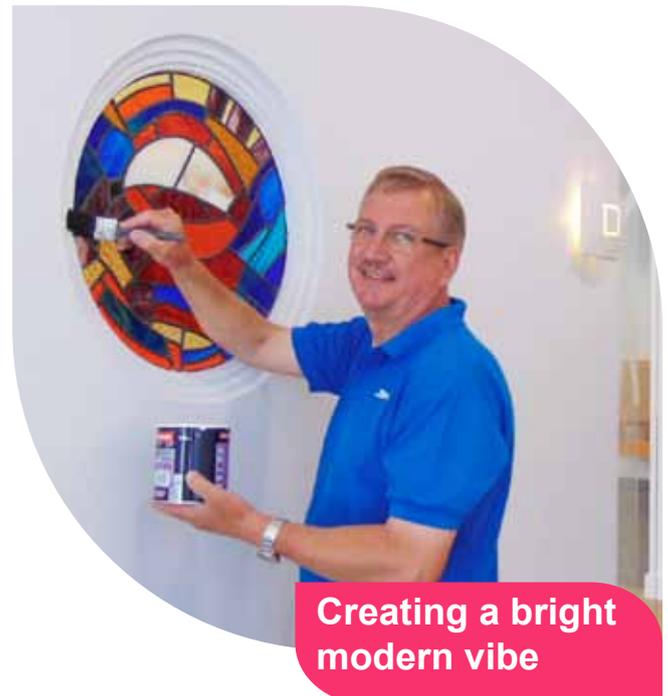
After two long years of searching, we collected the keys to our new Nottingham city centre hub in February 2018. The Heathcoat Street Hub is easily accessible by public transport and offers level access throughout. The building is large enough to meet all our needs and even provides access to drop-off parking outside.

Anyone visiting 26 – 28 Heathcoat Street in February 2018 would have seen an empty shell, a former laser surgery eye clinic, which looked rather cold, clinical and soulless.

Our vision was to capitalise on its great central location, with easy access to city centre transport networks, level access and significant internal space; transforming it into a vibrant, modern social space for visually impaired people to make their own.

With support from our funders, the expertise of our contractors and the input of our staff and service users, we aimed to create a building we hoped would inspire and empower visually impaired people to achieve everything that they are capable of achieving. We rejected anything that created an institutional feel, instead we chose modern materials like glass and bespoke lighting to harness natural day light to create an even spread of light throughout the building. We have also picked out bright, modern fun colours to help to create a space where visually impaired people want to come together to socialise and to enjoy the life-affirming services that we will deliver.

We plan to capitalise on the central location of our new hub to help us develop the important partnerships with local government, the business community and



Creating a bright modern vibe



City centre location

other voluntary sector organisations that will encourage them to work with us to eliminate the barriers that visually impaired people experience. We hope our new location will help to create a Nottingham that local visually impaired people are able to access so that they can benefit from all that this great city has to offer.

What we achieved in 2017/18

- We raised £28,000 towards the capital cost of creating a building, with many applications still pending.
- We created a design using modern materials, intended to enhance natural daylight supplemented with electric lighting to create an even distribution of light and minimise shadow and glare.
- Our use of high contrasting, bright modern colours will create an accessible environment with a modern vibe.
- An indoor toilet for guide dogs will help facilitate worry-free visits for guide dog owners.

Vision for the Future

Our vision for Heathcoat Street is to create a space from which to deliver services designed to inspire visually impaired people to be all that they can be and to play an active role in their communities.

From our central location, we will seek out the partnerships that will help us create sustainable services and a more accessible Nottinghamshire.

In the year ahead we plan to develop our city centre hub as a place that will work for our charity by enabling us to hire out space to generate income and forge future partnerships.

“We’ve been waiting a long time and it will be fantastic to see the My Sight Notts family reunited under one roof. I can’t wait it will be like we’re finally coming home.”

Kay Dear



**Training
Volunteers**

Emotional support and guidance

In addition to our Eye Clinic Liaison Service (ECLO), which supports many patients attending the eye clinic at Queens Medical Centre, we also provide a number of emotional support and guidance services aimed at helping people deal with the emotional impact of sight loss.

Peer Support

During the early part of the financial year, we conducted a proof of concept study to assess demand for a facilitated peer support programme.

In February 2018 we received funding from Boots Charitable Trust to fund the Peer Support programme for 12 months starting April 2018.

To date over twenty five blind and partially sighted people have benefited from our facilitated Peer Support Group and the invaluable opportunity to talk to people going through a similar experience. This helps to reduce anxiety and enables people to develop coping strategies for dealing with the impact of sight loss.

What we achieved

- 25 visually impaired people have benefitted from peer support during 2017-18.
- Before the launch of our Peer Support initiative, local visually impaired people told us that they felt fearful of how sight loss might affect their future and the negative impact it would have on their quality of life. Those who took part in the Peer Support programme now report feeling more positive. They told us that attending the Peer Support group increased their knowledge of available support. Feedback from all beneficiaries confirms that meeting others who understand how they feel has had a positive impact.
- Almost all of those who participated in our Peer Support group now regularly access other services from My Sight Notts.

Vision for the Future

- With funding secured for the next 12 months, we will continue to deliver the Peer Support programme, so that those who attend can benefit from the opportunity to validate their emotions in a supportive environment, leading to improved self-confidence, empowerment and greater independence.
- We will endeavour to secure further funding to continue the Peer Support service for the next financial year.

My Guide sighted guide service

We continue to offer the My Guide service, which matches visually impaired service users with a volunteer sighted guide. Visually impaired people are matched with a volunteer based upon personal interests and goals. The service aims to tackle isolation, loneliness and confidence.

What we achieved

- During the last financial year, we extended the My Guide service geographically to form new My Guide partnerships across the county of Nottinghamshire.
- In 2017-2018 a total of thirty six partnerships were newly formed, across the city and county.

Vision for the Future

We will continue to pair service users with volunteers both in the county and the city. The opening of our new premises in the city centre offers an excellent central venue with increased opportunities to recruit and deliver training days for new volunteers.

Josh's Poem

From the age of 16 I knew
I knew exactly what I wanted to be
I wanted to follow in my granddad's footsteps
I wanted to mean something to myself and others

Then it happened
Expected plans were replaced by
needles and pain
I am diabetic
Hope was replaced by fear
The slow decline became a fast one

Now I live a life coated in blackness

So where does this circle of awesome
people come into it?
These people are kind, tough, inspiring and brave
I tell you now we have all been brought together
By amazing place called My Sight,
what incredible people
So who am I?

My name is Josh, and I am blind



Josh benefits from
Peer Support

Enablers to Independence

Living with sight loss can lead to a loss of independence, causing many people to feel frustrated and dependent on those around them. We provide a range of services designed to encourage and enable independence.

Equipment and advice

Over the last 12 months we have seen the number of visually impaired people accessing our Equipment and Advice service grow significantly. Since the move to its temporary location in the popular Victoria Centre Market, the service has capitalised on the high footfall in the city centre.

What we achieved

- Over the last 12 months we saw a huge four-fold increase in visitors to the Equipment and Advice service.
- 50% of people visiting the service were first-time customers who have not benefitted from equipment and advice support before.
- Locating this service in the city centre has successfully raised the profile of My Sight Notts during this period.

Vision for the future

Upon moving from the Victoria Centre Market to our new city centre premises, we made successful relocation plans and have continued to enjoy many customers accessing our service from our new location. We are confident that we shall still attract new and returning customers from diverse backgrounds.



**Increase in
visitor numbers**



Community health events



Campaign to prevent avoidable sight loss

This year, we were successful in securing funding from Health Education East Midlands to launch a new project promoting eye health among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. The project raises awareness of the increased prevalence of specific eye conditions in those communities and how sight loss might be prevented or managed.

What we achieved

- We recruited a new member of staff whose main objective is to engage with our communities and deliver eye health messages through outreach work, including education and awareness of healthy lifestyles and prevention of sight loss.
- We have successfully delivered more than 25 community events and talks including at the Hyson Green Cultural and Community Festival, the Mela at the Arboretum and the Senior African Elders Group meeting.

Vision for the Future

We will continue to work with these communities to identify local community champions who can act as long-term ambassadors of eye health.

“The My Sight Equipment and Advice Centre is in a great location in the city centre, it’s great to see it conveniently located on the high street.”

Mark Whittle



Enrichment

Our enrichment programme helps many visually impaired people to build mutually supportive friendships, reducing isolation, improving both physical and mental health; helping people to get more out of life!

Our happy hubs

Our Big Lottery funded hubs in Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Nottingham continue to provide a much-loved service for local visually impaired people, helping to tackle the loneliness and isolation that all too many blind and partially sighted people experience.



Dinosaur encounter

What we achieved

- Through our hubs we offer a varied programme of user-led social activities that include pub lunches, trips out to places of interest and talks by various groups.
- We also deliver our Community Equipment and Advice service, IT support, Eye Health information, arts and sports through our hubs to people who previously struggled to access them.
- Over 50 visually impaired people regularly attend our hubs in the county, while 32 people regularly attend our Nottingham city hub.
- My Sight Mansfield celebrated its first anniversary by winning a prestigious local community award, which was presented by the Lord Mayor of Mansfield.
- In September 2017 we launched My Sight Bassetlaw, the third new hub funded by Big Lottery, which is regularly attended by around 16-18 visually impaired people.
- With help from members of our Service User Member Involvement Team we held two consultations in hubs this year – one in Newark and one in Nottingham. Feedback from these events will be used to develop an Action Plan to ensure our hubs remain responsive to service users' needs.

Vision for the Future

As our three-year Big Lottery funded projects comes to fruition in 2019, we will look for ways to ensure its long-term sustainability by seeking new funding opportunities and asking service users and volunteers how they can play a role in making our hubs more autonomous.

With the support of our visually impaired Service User Representatives we plan a third and final consultation in Bassetlaw.

Creative Arts

What we achieved

- Our creative arts programme has enjoyed expansion into the county this financial year with frequent art workshops reaching over 20 service users in the Mansfield and Newark areas.
- Our artists in Newark commenced an innovative new project called “Ways of Seeing” in which artworks depict an impression of each visually impaired person’s view of the world.
- In the city our art groups and choir were invited to join Nottingham City Council’s celebrations of Disability History Month, which took place in December 2017. Our choir of visually impaired and dual sensory impaired singers has performed at various venues including the Soundswell concert and Victoria Centre Christmas Carols.



Choir sing at the Victoria Centre

Vision for the Future

During the year ahead we have exciting plans to set up a visually impaired choir exchange with the Liverpool Inspirational Voices choir.

My Sight Newark artists will exhibit “Ways of Seeing” in The Spotlight Gallery in Newark Town Hall.

Work with Nottingham Trent University’s School of Art and Design on collaborative art projects.

Sports & healthy lifestyles

What we achieved

- The launch of our new Walkie Talkie Wednesday gentle walks for health was set up in direct response to requests from local visually impaired people. They told us they wanted an alternative to our long-established Rambling Group's full day 8-mile hikes, and the opportunity for everyone - regardless of their ability - to enjoy the great outdoors.

Vision for the Future

Our next challenge is to extend this relatively new service further afield to visually impaired people who live in the county.

"I really enjoy the Walkie Talkie walks, my guide dog Leonard and I love the fresh air and it's great to chat to friends as we go."

Philip Simpson

Enjoying Walkie Talkie Wednesday





Volunteering Opportunities

Valuing our volunteers

My Sight Notts relies on a team of around 174 amazing volunteers, without whose support we would be unable to deliver the wide range of services that we provide for local visually impaired people.

We offer a diverse number of volunteer roles that includes working in our charity shops (33 volunteers), producing and reading our Talking Newspaper (9 volunteers) and providing one-to-one support through our My Guide sighted guide service (41 volunteers).

We also provide volunteering opportunities for local visually impaired people, who add enormous value to our work as they have experienced first-hand what it's like to live with sight loss. Through volunteering people make new friends and develop new skills which can lead to improved self confidence and employment.

“I've been volunteering as a Service User Representative at My Sight Notts for around five years. The skills I've developed as part of that role, such as public speaking, chairing meetings and facilitating consultation discussions played a pivotal role in getting me into the jobs market this year, which has been amazing!”

Shamaila Kauser



Supporting services to grow

Working to ensure the long-term sustainability of our services and helping to increase the profile of our charity is Fundraising and Marketing. Through partnership working and community engagement we work hard to raise awareness of the issues affecting local people with sight loss so that they can access all their communities have to offer and lead fulfilled and independent lives.

What we achieved

- We successfully raised £28,000 toward the capital cost of refurbishing our new city centre hub on Heathcoat Street, with many funding bids still pending.
- We successfully raised £10,000 to launch our new Peer Support Group.
- We secured funding of £42,000 over 2 years to deliver our Black Asian and Minority Ethnic sight loss prevention project.
- We developed a range of marketing resources, including a short film, Fundraising Action Pack, anniversary print and digital branding resources to help commemorate our 175 anniversary.
- We helped to raise our profile by generating 15 press releases, which resulted in 36 TV, radio and print articles.



Future vision

We aim to secure continuation funding for our Big Lottery funded hubs.

We will seek out opportunities to expand our charity shops by opening one new shop in the next financial year.

We aim to support and develop our community fundraising activities.

We will aim to create a range of imaginative fundraising and awareness raising events that capitalise on our 175 anniversary.

We will plan an exciting official opening event for our new Heathcoat Street hub designed to raise our profile and develop sustainable new partnerships for our charity.

We will use mass media channels to campaign on issues affecting local visually impaired people.



Founder: Mary Chambers



ITV Central filming
OrCam demonstration



Supporting Nottinghamshire's Blind and Visually Impaired People to get more out of life



Get in touch

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My Sight Nottinghamshire

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