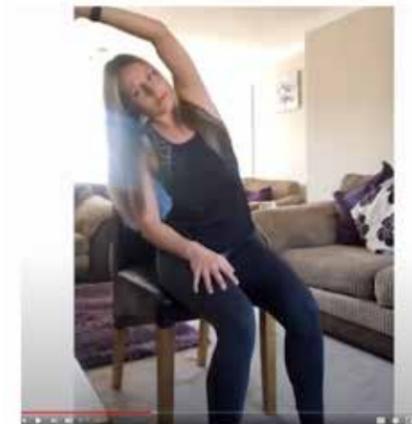


# mymagazine

Edition 14

Summer 2020



- IT and Equipment Service reopens!
- Our plans for the future
- AGM by Zoom!
- Your lockdown stories

## Welcome!

Welcome to My Magazine, we sincerely hope that you and those you love remain safe and well and that you are managing to keep positive during these challenging times. We would also like to extend our sympathies to any of our readers who have lost loved ones during the pandemic, you are in our thoughts.

We'd like to say thank you to the visually impaired community and to our staff, volunteers and supporters for rising so admirably to the challenges presented by Covid-19. We're grateful for your understanding, resilience and imagination during these strange times.

Our charity has been significantly impacted by government advice and like many others, we took necessary steps to temporarily close Heathcoat Street and move as many services as possible to the phone and online. We've also been forced to cancel fundraising events and close our charity shops, which has had a significant impact on our charity's income.

We'd like to pay tribute to our volunteers who have stepped up to the challenge and turned their skills to volunteer telephone befriending, shopping deliveries and hosting social groups by teleconferencing. We'd also like to thank our Trustees, Service User Member Involvement Team (SUMIT) and staff for providing invaluable telephone support for the most vulnerable, for turning the cameras on themselves to make online videos and developing new and exciting ways to support visually impaired people.

As lockdown restrictions ease, we're pleased to announce that we'll be offering Equipment Advice, IT support and limited IT drop-in sessions at Heathcoat Street from Tuesday 4 August. Although the re-introduction of face-to-face services demonstrates some return to normality, we have to insist that you phone to pre-book an appointment; this is to keep everyone safe and ensure services are Covid secure.

We'll continue to explore new and exciting ways of working to maintain and improve services during the challenges ahead, starting with our charity's first ever AGM on Zoom!

**Michael Conroy**  
CEO



**Jacky Fisher**  
Chair of Trustees



**4.**

# IT and Equipment service reopen

As Lockdown restrictions are eased, we're pleased to let you know that we will be opening up our IT and equipment service from Tuesday 4th August. At present this will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Heathcoat Street and will be strictly by 30 minute appointment only.

## Equipment advice

Equipment appointments will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will be for a maximum of 30 minutes.

## IT support

IT one-to-one appointments will be on Tuesdays, again for 30 minutes each, and IT Group will resume on Thursdays. IT Group will be in two sessions from 10am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm. Again, please call to book a space as we can only accept up to a maximum of three people on each session. IT Group will take place in two separate rooms.

## Where will the appointments be?

All appointments will be at My Sight Notts centre at 26-28 Heathcoat Street in Nottingham city centre.



**Appointments now bookable for equipment advice**

**5.**

**Tech support to resume**

## Telephone and online support will continue

As we go forward, we will continue to offer online and telephone support and we'll be introducing telephone and video call advice and will be reintroducing home visits.

## Covid secure services

We are currently looking at risk assessments and safety protocols to ensure the maximum safety for our staff and service users. All our services will be Covid secure and comply with latest government guidance to ensure everyone is kept safe.

## Volunteers urgently needed

Do you have skills in IT and/or assistive technology? We are looking for volunteers that can support our service users to get online, use a variety of apps, websites and smart speakers and much more. If you are interested or know someone that may be interested please call our Services Manager, Emma Lucas on 0115 9706806.

## Telephone befriending

Since the start of the pandemic we have been offering a telephone befriending service where you can get a regular phone call from a volunteer to have a general chat and feel more connected to the outside world. We are continuing with this service going forward and have a number of volunteers that are offering a friendly ear over the phone.

If you would like a befriender or are interested in becoming a befriender yourself, please contact Rachael, our Volunteer Coordinator on **0115 9706806** to have a chat.

# Keeping you safe



Please wash your hands

Keeping our staff, volunteers and service users safe when they visit Heathcoat Street is our priority. Until further notice you must only visit Heathcoat Street if you have a pre-booked appointment.

### Please do not visit if:

- You have symptoms of Covid-19
- A member of your household has symptoms of Covid-19
- You have been in recent contact with someone who has symptoms of Covid-19
- You have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and have been advised to isolate

Establishing a strict appointment system for visits helps minimise the number of people on site at a time, helping to keep everyone safe.

When you book your appointment, we'll record your contact details and run through our Covid-19 safety procedures, so you know what to expect during your visit.

Appointments will be kept to a maximum of 30 minutes. Please don't come early as we have a small waiting area and can't have groups of people congregating together. Please leave the premises immediately after your appointment.

We know you all love a brew, but sadly refreshments won't be available during your visit. Water in a disposable cup can be provided or you can bring water with you in your own bottle.

To make sure you remain safe during your visit, we'll ensure all areas of the site, including public areas and toilets are cleaned thoroughly each morning and frequently throughout the day. You can help by thoroughly cleaning your hands on entering and leaving, hand sanitiser is available at reception, please use it.

Everyone working or visiting Heathcoat Street must adhere to our social distancing procedure, including restrictions on access and movement around the building.

Although we'd like to welcome everyone back with a big hug, this is not possible yet as physical contact must be avoided. Staff have been trained in safe sighted guiding techniques and will be offering guiding if needed.

If your appointment involves getting closer than the recommended 2 metres to look at equipment or view a computer screen, staff will wear a face covering and gloves to ensure your safety. Please be assured that all equipment, IT computers and seating etc will be cleaned after each appointment.

In adherence with government guidance, your contact details will be recorded and kept safely on file for tracing purposes, but if you experience Covid-19 symptoms following your visit, please let us know immediately. These measures may sound a little different, but they're designed to keep everyone safe.

# Our plans for the future

Over the next few months we hope to return to a phased reintroduction of more face-to-face services, unless government advice changes.

## IT and Equipment service

Heathcoat Street will open for two days a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4th August. This will be for IT support and equipment support only and will be by appointment only.

More opportunities for telephone and video support will be phased in. We're recruiting new tech volunteers to support people to get online and use different technologies with confidence. Home visits will resume once we can ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and of those whose homes we visit. We're working on risk assessments and procedures.

## Social Groups

During the coronavirus pandemic many of our social groups have successfully used telephone conferencing to stay in touch.

Now that restrictions are easing, we hope to open up the Nottingham social group soon. To ensure everyone's safety, this will be in smaller groups or social bubbles at first, with small groups meeting each week so that every social group member visits at least once a month. Transport is our main concern, but we're looking at procedures to combat risks.

We're working with the Nottingham social group first because we've put safety protocols in place at Heathcoat Street, our county venues are not yet open to the public. Once we have determined opening dates for venues we'll work with them to agree safety protocols to get our county hubs running again soon.



More telephone and online support

## My Guide and befriending

During the coronavirus pandemic we've supported the loneliest and most isolated visually impaired people with telephone befriending. As My Guide services have been temporarily suspended, our amazing My Guide volunteers have been supporting their service users by telephone. We're proud of our volunteers for their commitment and adaptability in continuing to support people. We've recruited 60 new volunteers and due to the huge success of telephone befriending we'll continue the service alongside our My Guide services when things return to normal.

## Braille and Bean Café

Unfortunately, we will not be reopening our cafe in the near future until we can safely reopen Heathcoat Street on a full time basis.

## Arts and choir

Arts activities will not be re-introduced yet due to the one to one support needed to deliver them.

## Sports groups

As most indoor sports venues are only just reopening, we will not be delivering sports until we have more information about the protocols being put in place to keep people safe at these venues.

We'll keep you updated on developments and if you have questions about services, please get in touch.



Social groups will return

It's often easy to assume that Covid-19 has brought everything to a stop, but we've remained busy throughout lockdown. Our amazing staff and volunteers have worked hard to support visually impaired people during the pandemic.

## Telephone support

Throughout lockdown we've been phoning some of the most isolated visually impaired people, offering advice and someone to talk to. Our team of staff, trustees, visually impaired service user reps and volunteers have made over 1,000 phone calls, referring people to other services, providing IT and equipment advice or simply keeping people company.

## Online and video support

Our staff and Service User Member Involvement Team (SUMIT) have made over 20 videos, which are posted on social media and on our website.

We've created dozens of video resources demonstrating equipment, providing information about different eye conditions and two videos offering a gentle armchair based exercise class and a more robust 30-minute workout. Because we were forced to postpone our volunteer party, we created thank you videos instead to mark Volunteers Week in June.

If you missed them you can watch them on our YouTube channel:

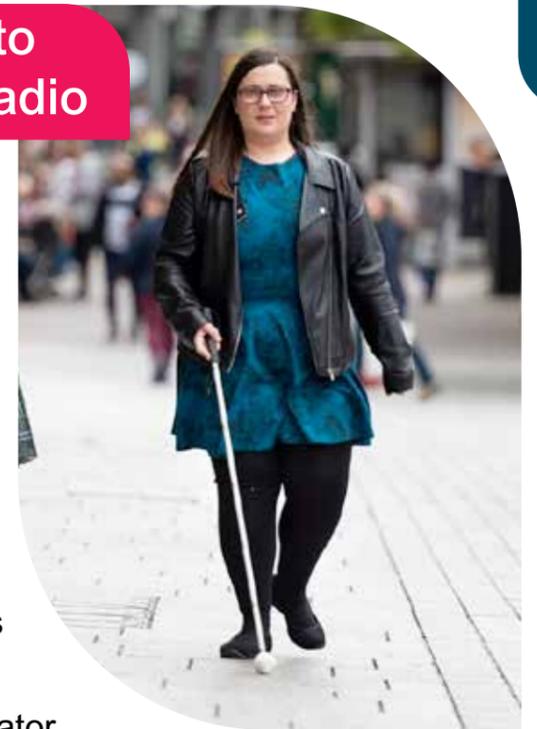
[www.youtube.com/channel/UCkc7XU14CxCU109h-NJzYoA/videos?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkc7XU14CxCU109h-NJzYoA/videos?view_as=subscriber)

## Service User Member Involvement Team

Our Service User Member Involvement Team (SUMIT) reps have worked hard during lockdown. They've spent many hours making support calls to other visually impaired people, making videos for Volunteers Week and setting up a new facebook group offering peer support, which you're welcome to join!

## Campaigns

During lockdown and as restrictions are eased, we've been campaigning on your behalf, working to raise awareness of the issues faced by people with sight loss as they struggle to navigate the new normal. Social distancing is impossible if you can't see as our visually impaired Volunteer Coordinator, Rachael, told RNIB Connect Radio in a recent interview. We've also helped many of you share your own experiences in the local press and through our blog.



We've worked with regional councils in Bassetlaw and Ashfield on publicity campaigns and Michael, our CEO, has attended many Zoom meetings with our partners in the NHS, social care and at national level through his work on the Board of Visionary - which links sight loss organisations across the UK.

## Befriending partnerships

Volunteer Coordinator, Rachael worked with existing My Guide Volunteers and recruited new volunteers to work as telephone befrienders, offering support as well as a friendly chat. We're now offering telephone befriending support to over 60 visually impaired people.

## New website coming soon!

Marketing is working on a new, accessible website for our charity. The bright, modern website is easy to navigate and provides information about eye health, different eye conditions, the services we offer, fundraising and volunteering opportunities and much more!

# Your lockdown stories

## Paul Baskcomb Marathon Man!

“I began experiencing problems with my vision in my thirties and over the years, it’s deteriorated, until three months ago when I almost completely lost my sight.

“Thankfully I still have a good memory and know my way around my village of Ravenshead where I’ve lived since 1976.

mined to take my daily walk - three miles a day or a marathon every eight days! I’m very aware of sounds, smells and changes in weather. So I may not be able to see, but I still enjoy my walk. We’ve been ‘locked down’, but there’s no need for us to be ‘locked-up’ as well!”

## John Crofts in the Worksop Guardian

“I’m totally blind but with the help of my guide dog Chris, I enjoy going out independently. I used to enjoy walks to the newsagents and getting the bus into Worksop for meetings at My Sight Bassetlaw.

“Since Coronavirus nothing’s the same, everything’s changed! I haven’t been out alone for weeks because I’m afraid of getting too close to people. My guide dog can’t read floor signage in shops or measure a two metre distance!

“As lockdown eases I’d ask people to be kind. You can see me; I can’t see you, so please give me



**Paul Baskcomb**

I get around with my white stick; although I occasionally get attacked by wheelie bins and cars parked across pavements!

“Since lockdown I’ve been deter-



**John Crofts and  
guide dog Chris**

I’ve experienced verbal abuse from people as I struggle with social distancing.

“Early in lockdown I went into a local supermarket and was told to ‘follow the arrows and keep two metres apart and don’t browse’. I use a long white cane and I tapped the back of a customer’s leg by accident I got verbal abuse like ‘keep your distance’ and ‘back off pal!’

plenty of room. The new signage in shops and on buses is visual, so try to understand if I don’t get it right, talk to me and explain the new rules.

“I’d love to go out alone but I’m fearful. It’s not nice being trapped indoors as others go out. I hope with the understanding of others I’ll feel confident to go out soon.”

## Neil Beeching in the Nottingham Post

“I’m a former Tesco manager who is registered blind and there have been times during lockdown when

“It’s almost impossible to socially distance when you can’t see; I didn’t know where I was going because with all due respect I couldn’t see the arrows on the floor. I also need to pick products up to know what they are.

“I’d urge retailers and the public to show compassion. If new instruction are visual how can I comply? It’s extended isolation for us, you’re not just isolating from the virus but from people’s thoughtlessness as well. I’m determined not to let it isolate me from my own life!”

## Charity shops

After closing our charity shops in March, we're pleased to let you know that our Mapperley charity shop re-opened its doors to customers on 7th July. The shop will be open on reduced hours of 10am - 4pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

We'd like to pay tribute to Sue, our Mapperley charity shop manager and her team of super volunteers who have worked really hard to get the shop ready to reopen.

Our charity shop in Hockley will reopen soon with a new manager to lead the team of dedicated volunteers. We'd like to thank Richard Rudkin, who managed the Hockley shop since it first opened its doors for all his hard work at the Hockley store and at the Stapleford shop before that. Sadly, due to adverse trading conditions, our Stapleford shop will not be reopening. We'd like to thank the incredible volunteer team at Stapleford for their fabulous work over many years.

## Stock donations

Thank you to everyone who's contacted us about donating stock to our charity shops. Unfortunately we can only accept a very limited amount of stock donations at present, so please call us before dropping off stock to make sure we're able to take it.

We only have limited storage space and this is compounded by the fact that we have to store donated stock for 72hrs before we can process it to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. We're also unable to collect stock at the moment, so if you have items to donate and you live in Mapperley, please call the shop directly otherwise call main switchboard on **0115 9706806** – thank you!



Donating stock

## Leave a gift in your will

Gifts in wills make up nearly 60% of My Sight Nottinghamshire's income. By leaving a gift to our charity in your will, you'll be helping to make sure we can be there for even more local people affected by sight loss in the future, which means fewer people have to face the devastating impact of blindness alone.

Lydia Fenton, Fundraising Manager, said: "A large proportion of the work we do is only possible due to legacies; we would not be here today providing the services we do, without the generous gifts left to us in people's wills."

We're working with a professional will writer, Amanda Harrison who is herself visually impaired. Amanda offers free advice regarding wills, Trusts and Powers of Attorney. For more information, please call Lydia Fenton on **0115 9706806**

## Charity of the Year!

We'd like to thank Cllr Stuart Wallace, newly elected Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council for nominating us as his Charity of the Year 2020. Although some planned fundraising events will have to be cancelled due to coronavirus, we're looking forward to working with Cllr Wallace to raise much-needed funds for our charity and to raise awareness of the support we provide to local people with sight loss.



Cllr Wallace

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

“Losing your precious eye sight is a terribly frightening experience and My Sight Notts is a real lifeline. I simply couldn't live without it and the advice, support and services it provides”

Lillian aged 83 from Edwalton

**Get in touch**

**0115 9706 806**

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

[info@mysightnotts.org.uk](mailto:info@mysightnotts.org.uk)



@Mysightnotts



My Sight Nottinghamshire

Registered charity 511288