

# My Sight Nottinghamshire Annual Review 2019-2020



**my**sight  
notts  
Seeing beyond sight loss

**Supporting Local Blind  
and Visually Impaired People**

# My Sight Nottinghamshire

## Annual Review 2019-2020

The year 2019 was a great year for our charity, as we continued to grow and develop our services for local visually impaired people.

We celebrated national recognition for our peer support group, scooping a national award for its life-changing impact. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer supported 988 patients in their journey through one of the busiest eye clinics in the UK. Our innovative arts programmes worked with Nottingham Trent University and BBC Radio Nottingham to provide opportunities for visually impaired people to shine.

Following a successful social media campaign, we secured funding from the Big Lottery People's Projects and opened our first community café and although our Reaching Communities lottery funding came to an end in May 2019, we're delighted that our social groups continue to support visually impaired people.

Building on these achievements, 2020 looked like a landmark year as we prepared to launch our Five Year Plan, which set out our vision for the future and then the unthinkable happened.

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on our charity and on the lives of visually impaired people we support has been enormous.



**Michael Conroy**  
(left)  
Chief Executive

**Jacky Fisher**  
(right)  
Chair of trustees



As 2020 unfolds and we look to the future, our plans must change significantly as we respond not only to a changed landscape for fundraising, but to the changing needs of local visually impaired people.

Working with partners, funders and the visually impaired community, we're confident our charity will rise to the challenge of these difficult times, developing exciting new ways of working and delivering services that are relevant for the new reality.



**Supporting patients  
at QMC**

“I’m still scared of losing my sight, but coming to Peer Support helped me feel more in control. I now believe I’ve still got a lot to live for.”

Gail Clayton

# Supporting the most vulnerable

We believe no visually impaired person should have to face the life-changing impact of sight loss alone.

## Our vision

### Eye Clinic Liaison Service (ECLO)

Our ECLO supports patients at the QMC through what is often an emotionally traumatic time, providing support when it's needed most. Working with health and social care, he offers information and advice, signposting patients to support services. Helping patients understand their treatment plans and comply with treatment regimes, he works to reduce avoidable blindness and deliver improved outcomes.

### Award winning peer support

We believe in the power of peer support to change lives for the better.

Meeting people in a similar situation improves confidence and reduces the sense of isolation.

People feel better informed and so are able to deal with the emotional and practical challenges of living with sight loss.

A staggering 80% of our peer support beneficiaries said they felt more confident about the future.



Life changing impact  
of peer support

## **My Guide and befriending services**

Our My Guide and befriending services match people with trained sighted guides and befrienders to help reduce social isolation. When our services were forced into lockdown in March 2020, these services played a pivotal role in supporting people with sight loss. Moving to telephone and online support, we expect these services to grow exponentially in the coming financial year.

### **Achievements**

- Number of patients supported by our ECLO – 988
- Number of My Guide partnerships – 22
- Peer Support: winner of the Visionary Award for Life Changing Impact

### **Fun fact:**

Our ECLO walks around 10,000 steps each day around the eye clinics. This equates to climbing Mount Everest 199 times a year!

“Because of my vision, I’m just not confident in going out by myself. Winnie, the My Guide volunteer is such a lovely girl; she takes me out for walks and on the tram. I can get out and about a lot more.”

Dora Reece

# Enabling independence

We are committed to ensuring that visually impaired people receive the right advice and support to access the latest technology to enable them to live independent lives.

## Our vision

### Technology

We firmly believe technology is a great enabler. Helping visually impaired people get online and feel connected to loved ones and the world around them is truly transformational. Our technology service supports people with computer skills, training and computer access, providing practical advice and guidance on IT issues and all the latest apps.

### Equipment and advice service

We believe in the power of aids and equipment to change the lives of visually impaired people, empowering them towards greater independence, helping them take back control of their daily lives. The equipment advice we offer is broad-ranging and flexible, helping people to access vision aids and independent living equipment.

### Talking Newspapers

For those who want to stay connected with all the latest local news, we also provide a talking newspaper service.



Equipment advice

## Achievements

- Our IT service made 221 home visits
- In the year under review we hosted 98 IT groups
- We've provided 783 pieces of equipment over the last 12 months
- We welcomed 1,102 visually impaired people to our equipment and advice service
- 44 listeners enjoyed our talking newspaper service

### Fun fact:

This year we've sold 615 bumpons to put onto equipment to make it more accessible. An average of two bumpons per piece of equipment, means over 300 pieces of equipment have been adapted to support visually impaired people to become more independent.

"You helped me set up a smart speaker at home. It has made such a difference to me. I can listen to books and music, get the news and loads of other things. I didn't have a clue how to set it up so having you there was a God send."

Hadyn Collins

# Enrichment through art

## Arts and choir

Our innovative arts programme helps visually impaired people express themselves creatively. Harnessing the power of art and singing, helps reduce isolation and improves mental health and wellbeing.

## Our vision

During the financial year under review, we created some exciting collaborations, which enabled visually impaired people to showcase their talents.



“I live with a number of health problems, including sight loss, cancer and diabetes, so it’s impossible not to get depressed sometimes. Art and choir give me a reason to get up and get out of the house. All my worries melt away for a few hours and I feel like a different person. I’m not the Wendy who walked in, I’m a happier, more confident Wendy – it’s a lifeline.”

Wendy Bradshaw



## Achievements

### Arts

- Collaboration with New Art Exchange, leading to an art workshop and gallery Touch Tour
- Collaboration with Nottingham Trent University on the LAPVI Project when 16 visually impaired artists shared concepts of aesthetics over 16 sessions. Leading to LAPVI Live when our artists were joined by 15 second year textile students to create a public exhibition
- Collaborations with the Harley Gallery, Mansfield and Nottinghamshire MIND at the Clay Therapy Pottery Studio
- Collaboration with the Spotlight Gallery, Newark to create a public exhibition entitled 'Ways of Seeing'
- Collaboration with Newark and Sherwood Community Arts working with textile artist, Elaine Winter

### Choir

- Collaboration with sight loss charity Bradbury Fields culminating in an exchange visit to Liverpool for a joint concert
- Collaboration with Nottingham City Council culminating in a performance at the Council House to launch Disability History Month
- Collaboration with BBC Radio Nottingham for Mark Dennison's Big Sing culminating in a concert at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham
- Fundraising collaborations with John Lewis, Nottingham Theatre Royal and Intu Victoria Centre for Christmas carol performances.

# Enrichment through sport

## Sports and healthy lifestyles

We support visually impaired people of all ages and abilities to lead healthy active lives.

## Our vision

Our individual and team activities together with healthy eating events raise awareness of the importance of a healthy life style in maintaining good eye health and wellbeing.



Enjoying Walkie Talkie walks

## Achievements

- We delivered 147 sports and healthy lifestyle sessions ranging from Cricket and goalball to swimming and rambling
- Our Goalball team, the Nottingham Sheriffs, won one silver and two bronze medals at both novice and intermediate level tournaments

## Fun fact

Visually impaired walkers and volunteers attending our Walkie Talkie Wednesday gentle walks for health have walked around 750 miles – the equivalent of walking from Nottingham to Dundee and back again!

# Braille and Bean Café

Following a successful social media campaign in April 2019, ITV helped us celebrate our Big Lottery People's Project win, which secured funding for our first community café.

## Our vision

To support local visually impaired people with training and learning opportunities, enabling them to learn essential skills to progress towards employment. The café also provided a place for local visually impaired people and their friends and families to get together and socialise.

## Achievements

- Social media campaign generated 2,051 votes from our supporters
- Number of visually impaired trainees – 6
- Number of qualifications gained: Food Hygiene Level 2 – 8 / COSHH – 1 / Food Hygiene Level 3 – 2



“I work part time in a pub, collecting glasses and some kitchen work. This is an ideal space for me to gain customer service experience and really hone my food making skills. It's brilliant!”

Josh Brown, trainee

Our first community café

# Communities

In May 2019 our Big Lottery Reaching Communities funding came to an end. It's a real credit to our communities, incredible volunteers and staff that our groups in Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Nottingham continue to support visually impaired people!

## Our vision:

To provide social space and peer support for people with sight loss to come together across Nottinghamshire, providing a range of interesting and fun activities and events, helping to reduce social isolation.

Over the last 12 months, our busy community groups have enjoyed various activities, including trips to the National Civil War Centre in Newark, a visit to the Swan Sanctuary in Southwell and Attenborough Nature Reserve. They've listened to talks from Special Edition Chocolate, Nottingham Energy Partnership and Woolly Tellers! As if this wasn't enough, they've also got active and participated in arm chair exercise, yoga plus country walks, quizzes, poetry readings and many a pub lunch! The groups have also provided opportunities for members to express themselves creatively with public exhibitions at the Newark Spotlight Gallery and the Harley Gallery in Mansfield.



Enjoying our  
social groups

## Achievements

- Funding came to an end in May 2019 and all of our community groups continue to support visually impaired people
- Number of people accessing social groups by area
  - Bassetlaw 17
  - Mansfield 22
  - Newark 18
  - Nottingham 31
  - Total number of visually impaired beneficiaries 88.



**Our Nottingham group  
travel by tram**

“I love coming to the group. I get to see my friends. I can’t go out much on my own so having this to look forward to each week makes a huge difference in my life.”

Nottingham Social Group Member

# Our volunteer heroes!

We rely on over 180 dedicated volunteers, without whom we would simply not be able to deliver the range of services for local visually impaired people that we do.

## Our vision

To provide volunteers for all My Sight Notts activities, adding value to our work and enabling us to provide a whole package of support to local visually impaired people.

### Achievements

- Number of volunteers in total 186
- Roles with the highest number of volunteers
  - Admin & reception - 28
  - Social Groups - 33
  - Charity shops - 48
- We delivered 6 sighted guide training courses during the year under review. Training 72 people to sighted guide visually impaired people.

“I love being a My Guide volunteer. I was matched to Elizabeth and we got on from the start. We have so much in common - we both grew up in India, which has given us a lot to talk about. I try to help her find what she needs, like telephone numbers, and I know she feels a lot less stressed now. I hope we can be friends for a good long time.”

Shukla Dhingra, My Guide volunteer



**Reception volunteer**

**Fun fact**

On average, My Sight Notts volunteers contribute around three hours of support each month. This equates to almost 7,000 hours each year!

# Positive change - campaigns and consultations

Our vision is for a fully inclusive Notts, where all citizens have equal access to essential services like health and social care and to all the opportunities on offer in our great city and county.

## Our vision

We strive to ensure the voices of visually impaired people are heard through consultation and effective campaigning.

## Consultation

### Consultation on our 5 Year Plan

During the financial year under review, we consulted with 28 visually impaired people at our Annual General Meeting 2018-19; to obtain their views on our charity's proposed 5 Year Plan.

### NHS ICS Consultation

In February 2019 we worked with our partners in the NHS at strategic level to facilitate a consultation with 26 visually impaired people about the future of eye health services as part of the Integrated Care (ICS) Clinical and Community Strategy. Six consultees will then be invited to take part in a Strategy Day with senior clinicians and NHS managers in the new financial year.



NHS ICS  
consultation



## **Campaigning**

### **BAME project**

In 2017 we launched our BAME project, developed to engage Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities to raise awareness of the prevalence of specific eye conditions, the need for regular eye tests and engagement with the sight loss pathway.

The project ended in 2019 with the production of a toolkit – giving BAME leaders resources on how to support people in their communities with sight loss prevention and management.

### **Eye Health Week 2019**

In September we joined sight loss organisations across the UK to raise awareness of the benefits of lifestyle changes in maintaining good eye health and preventing avoidable blindness. This year we took our message to the public with a fun-filled event in Nottingham City Centre that included a smoothie making bike courtesy of Pulp Friction, eye-popping giant human fruit and veg and the opportunity to have your cholesterol and blood sugar levels checked courtesy of BHR Pharmaceuticals.

### **Access to public transport**

During 2019 seven visually impaired people took part in an opportunity to orientate around a Nottingham City Transport (NCT) bus and speak to staff about access issues. 15 members of our Nottingham Thursday Community Group also took part in a Try a Tram Day with NET.



**All the fun of  
Eye Health Week!**

# Supporting services to thrive!

None of the support and services we offer to visually impaired people would be possible without sustainable funding and effective communication and awareness raising.

To all our funders, fundraisers and story tellers we'd like to say thank you - our work would not be possible without you!

This year we improved our overall fundraising ratio to 4.2:1 up from 2.7:1 in 2018. This means for every pound spent, we've raised £4.20.

## Trusts and Grants

Our Big Lottery funded Reaching Communities Project came to an end in May 2019. We now need to ensure the sustainability of our community groups. Group members and volunteers have stepped up to the challenge, getting involved in local fundraising.

Following a successful social media campaign, which saw 2,051 enthusiastic supporters voting for us, we secured £44,700 for our community café through a public vote as part of ITV and the People's project.

We also received £89,159 of Lottery funding over two years for our 'Together Project' to help tackle loneliness and isolation. Other grants included:

- £32,000 from Health Education East Midlands
- £20,000 from The Jones 1986 Charitable Trust
- Thanks also to Sir John Eastwood Foundation, The Skeritt Trust, Jesse Spencer Trust, JN Derbyshire CT, C L Hill Foundation, Primary Club and the Poysers Fund for their valuable contributions.

## **Charity shops**

Although we benefitted from our pop up shop at Beeston for longer than anticipated, it was a challenging year for our charity shops, which like the rest of the high street, saw a decline in income. COVID-19 forced the temporary closure of all our shops at the end of the financial year.

## **Events**

Our annual Firework event at Nottingham Racecourse raised £3,000 Len Jackson our President and his wife raised £4,193 through their fabulous production of Alan Bennett's Talking Head Monologues and £1,500 through their annual quiz.

## **Corporate donations**

Newark and Lincs Co-op - £756

Meadows & City Centre Co-op - £3,698



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

## Get in touch



**0115 9706 806**

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

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



@Mysightnotts



My Sight Nottinghamshire



@Mysightnotts

Registered charity: **511288**

