

My Sight Nottinghamshire Annual Review 2021-2022



How we met the changing needs of
visually impaired people post pandemic



How we met the challenges of 2020-21

Our Annual Review 2021-22 illustrates how My Sight Notts has continued to support people with visual impairments throughout Nottinghamshire during this year of recovery from the impact of the pandemic. The facts, figures, stories and pictures it contains illustrate how our charity has reformed, developed and improved its services as we seek to navigate the changed post-pandemic world in which we find ourselves.

The last 12 months have presented numerous challenges for our charity as we strive to develop new and relevant services against a landscape of increasing financial constraints posed by the impact of the pandemic and the growing cost of living crisis, which will inevitably mean our supporters have less to donate.

With research suggesting 36% (c80,000) of eye test appointments were missed or 'lost' in Notts during the pandemic our fears of an eye health time bomb continue to grow. In addition visually impaired people have struggled

Michael Conroy
CEO

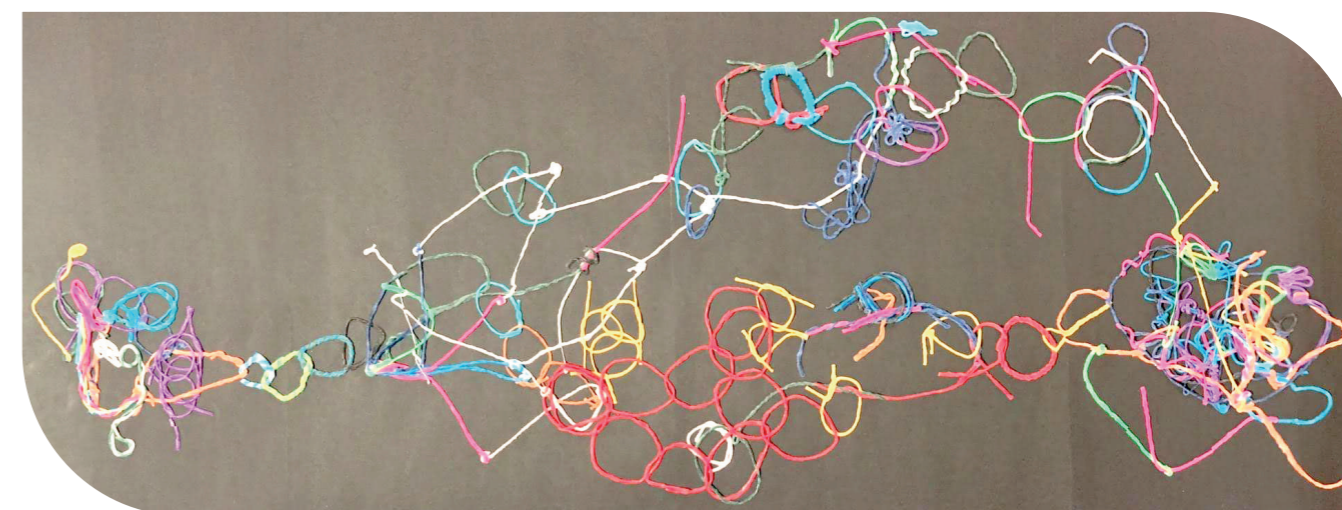


Jacky Fisher
Chair of Trustees



during Covid to get the support they need to deal with the often devastating impact of sight loss and this is reflected in the increasingly complex support needs our staff are dealing with. People are presenting with increased mental health challenges caused by sight loss, and the number of people we see who have lost their jobs as a direct result of their sight loss has increased significantly, these are both issues we are determined to tackle in the months and years ahead.

As we look towards the next financial year, we will deliver an ambitious strategy that will see us develop new ways of working so we can focus on meeting the needs of visually impaired people now and in the future.



Collaborations in art

A year of recovery and change

We began the year under review offering our services for people with visual impairments in a Covid-secure way, but as the year progressed it's been a real joy for all our staff and volunteers to see visually impaired people return with enthusiasm to face-to-face services while continuing to take advantage of our virtual services.

After two years of restrictions, our Heathcoat Street centre is once more full of people who are visually impaired enjoying our social groups, IT groups, choir and Shared Vision group and we have celebrated as people return to art, sports and healthy lifestyle activities at various venues across the county.

Technology and equipment services continue to expand as we invest in life-changing tech support for people who are visually impaired; helping them reduce isolation, stay connected and enjoy greater independence.

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Service at the Queen's Medical Centre (QMC) and our Shared Vision emotional and practical support services have supported an increasing number of people who have visual impairments, many with complex needs due to the devastating impact of the pandemic on people with sight loss.

None of this would be possible without our trustees, staff, volunteers and fundraising supporters. We thank them for the commitment and flexibility they've shown as well as their willingness to work in new and different ways to meet the changing needs of people with sight loss.

We remain committed to a Nottinghamshire where people who are visually impaired can live without barriers and where they can take full advantage of all that our great county has to offer. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic we have strengthened the support offered to local business and service providers, helping them become more inclusive and accessible for people with sight loss.



Volunteer John guiding Roger to our city social group

Supporting patients at QMC

The suspension and slow return of many support services has had a devastating impact on local people who are visually impaired, many of whom have been forced to face the life-changing impact of sight loss without access to a full range of support.

Shocking data suggests that during the pandemic referrals for ophthalmology dropped by 36% between 2020-21, and referrals were still down by 14% during 2021-22 when compared with 2019-20.

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer worked alongside medical professionals in the eye clinic at QMC offering emotional support, practical advice and signposting for patients.

What we achieved

- During 2021-22 we saw 1,534 patients up from 943 the previous year
- We undertook 400 certifications of visual impairment (CVI) compared with 260 during the last financial year, helping more patients access vital support
- We delivered a number of presentations to hospital staff on Sighted Guiding, the importance of certification and mental health and the impact of sight loss



Changing lives and saving lives through Shared Vision

We are passionate about our Shared Vision emotional and practical support groups and coffee mornings because they help create networks of support that deliver mutual learning, which significantly improves outcomes for people with visual impairments.

During the pandemic our Shared Vision groups met using video and telephone conferencing technology. As our services reopened we now offer face-to-face and virtual sessions to meet the increasingly complex needs for those who struggled without support for so long during the pandemic.

What we achieved

- During 2021-22 we delivered 7 Shared Vision groups, offering a total of 58 sessions
- 44 people with visual impairments attended our Shared Vision sessions benefitting enormously
- We hosted 6 informal peer support coffee mornings, which were attended by 100 people with visual impairments
- 2 support groups for carers and friends of people who are visually impaired were attended by 10 people
- Our first targeted support session for people with visual hallucinations after sight loss known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome was attended by 6 people

“It’s been incredible going to Shared Vision and meeting other people who understood my anxiety and everyday frustrations. It’s easy to think you’re on your own trying to deal with this scary thing that’s happening. So when you meet other people in a similar boat, you learn from each other and you support each other, it’s really life-changing.” **Dale**

The power of technology

The pandemic has changed the way we live our lives and one legacy from it is the growing importance of technology. As our reliance on the digital world grows, it's vital that people with visual impairments are not excluded from this tech revolution and are empowered to embrace its life-changing benefits.

Having supported many people who are visually impaired to get online and access our services remotely during the pandemic, our team of Sight Loss Advisors and Tech Befriending Volunteers continue to support people through home visits, technology workshops and a twice-weekly IT group.

With the support of our funders at the People's Projects, we were able to repurpose our community café, which was forced to close during the pandemic to create a Smart Room packed full of the latest apps, smart devices and daily living equipment. Our Smart Room is an important resource, enabling us to demystify tech and demonstrate a range of solutions in a non-threatening home-style environment.

What we achieved

- We provided 332 face-to-face and remote technology support appointments
- We delivered 84 IT group sessions, which were attended by 10 different participants
- We held 8 training sessions, which were attended by 98 people
- We recruited and trained 18 Tech Befriending volunteers
- We supported 87 people to access our groups in arts, peer support and other services remotely

Equipment Advice and Support

Our Equipment Advice and Support Service moved from offering remote appointments to once again seeing people face-to-face. We provided advice and hands-on support to help people select a broad range of daily living aids from magnifiers to lighting solutions and smart devices. The advice and equipment provided helped hundreds of local visually impaired people retain their independence.

What we achieved

- We provided 239 appointments for aids and equipment, which is an increase on the 128 offered the previous year
- We sold 693 daily living aids up from 170 the previous year



“ I was experiencing anti-social behaviour from teenagers on my estate, which the police couldn't tackle because I couldn't see the culprits. I got a Ring Doorbell from Amazon, which I'd seen in your Smart Space and shared the video evidence with the police and I've had no problems since! The Smart Space is a great.” **Neil**

Sports for all!

Over the course of the year under review we kick-started our inclusive sports and healthy lifestyles programme, offering a broad range of both team and individual activities to enable people with sight loss to benefit from all the mental and physical health benefits of an active lifestyle.

What we achieved

- 14 people participated in 19 goalball sessions with our Nottingham Sheriffs goalball teams at both novice and intermediate levels
- 10 people took part in 38 supported swimming sessions
- We organised 38 supported gym sessions, which were attended by 10 people
- 12 people with visual impairments enjoyed 14 Walkie Talkie gentle walks for health
- We hosted 22 rambles, which were enjoyed by 12 visually impaired people
- 14 visually impaired people participated in 4 tenpin bowling sessions
- 40 people were supported to attend 10 Boccia sessions

“The walks are amazing, the support and guidance that we get from the walk leaders and sighted guides is great and they're very efficient and describe surroundings of the walk very well. I enjoy socialising with people in similar situations and the walks are always around lovely routes and scenery which allows me to get out and about more for longer walks.”

Teresa

Social groups reduce isolation across Notts

We deliver social groups not just in Nottingham but throughout the county. During the pandemic some of our social groups got together online, helping us reach even more people across the county.

We host five social groups in Newark, Nottingham, Worksop and Mansfield, and this year we set up a new lunch group in Mansfield. They help reduce isolation and provide social activities including day trips, arts and crafts, guest speakers and a good old chat over a cuppa!

What we achieved

- Total number of visually impaired people accessing our social groups 58
- Bassetlaw 6, Mansfield 6, Newark 21 Nottingham 25
- Activities enjoyed include Boccia, quizzes, arts and crafts, talks on varied topics from guest speakers plus visits from our staff for technology and equipment advice



Hiking group in sunflower field

Collaborations in art

Delivering arts for people who are visually impaired during the pandemic proved challenging, but as we emerged from the restrictions, our arts groups have enjoyed collaborations on a number of exciting projects.

In December we took part in an audio tour of two exhibitions delivered by the curators at the New Art Exchange in Nottingham. The tours were followed by a virtual arts session in February, which will culminate in a practical workshop in May 2022.

Our second collaboration was with textile students at Nottingham Trent University, who worked alongside our blind and partially sighted artists through three workshops to explore sensory materials.

Our innovative Tactile Universe Project, helped bring astronomy to people with sight loss. We worked with Astronomer Nic Bonne to create a number of 3D tactile models of stars and galaxies so visually impaired people had the universe at their finger tips!

What we achieved

- It has been challenging holding virtual arts and choir sessions for people who are visually impaired, which is why numbers of participants have been lower than in previous years. We are working hard post-pandemic to rebuild participation in these valued services
- 8 people who are visually impaired took part in online arts
- The number of participants who took part in the collaboration with New Art Exchange, was 6
- 6 people who are visually impaired took part in the collaboration with Nottingham Trent University
- We held six choir sessions, which were attended by 6 people with visual impairments

Communications support

We offer a range of services to help people with sight loss access communications in formats that meet their needs.

Our Transcription service converts the written word into large print, audio and Braille formats. We also offer a Talking News service in an audio format, which is posted direct to people's homes and we are the local provider of the national British Wireless for the Blind scheme.

What we achieved

- During 2021-22 our transcription service carried out 13 transcription projects into large print, Braille and audio formats for a number of organizations including iconic local restaurant Annie's Burger Shack
- 42 visually impaired people enjoyed listening to our Talking News service



“Our Braille menu is so exciting! Everybody should be able to enjoy their experience at our restaurant and never feel excluded. Ever!”
Annie Spaziano

Valuing our volunteers

Volunteers are the beating heart of My Sight Notts, without their support and commitment our charity would simply be unable to deliver the variety of services that we do.

Varied volunteer roles

We work hard to recruit, train, retain and support our volunteers in more than 20 different roles including admin, reception and mail outs; arts, choir, talking news; car/minibus drivers, IT/tech befrienders, fundraising and charity shops; My Guide befriending, Shared Vision, rambling, walking and other sports; social groups, telephone befriending and not forgetting our service user engagement volunteers and our trustees.

What we achieved

- Total number of volunteers 136
- 30% of our volunteers are visually impaired
- We created and supported 11 befriending partnerships
- Number of telebefriending partnerships 13
- Number of training sessions Level 1 - 20 people; Level 2 - 7



Sighted guide training

Marketing

Marketing and engagement

Like most charities, My Sight Notts needs to communicate with beneficiaries, volunteers and potential funders to tell the story of the work we do and to raise our profile within the local community.

In January 2022 we launched our new accessible website, providing information for people with sight loss about the support available. The website included important new pages about common eye conditions together with advice on looking after your eye health and where to go to find support.

We also worked with our supporters, encouraging them to tell their stories to the local and national media. During the year in review one of our visually impaired artists, Rob, fundraiser Paul and Volunteer Co-ordinator, Rachael all told their stories on BBC East Midlands Today. We provided four interviews for BBC Radio Nottingham, two for Notts TV and contributed to 5 articles in the Nottingham Post. We worked with our funders at Global Make Some Noise on a series of interviews broadcast on national Global radio stations including Smooth, Heart and Capital Radio and even contributed to a national advertising campaign for Vodafone encourage people to donate unwanted laptops, desktops and tablets.

As part of our engagement activities with local people who are visually impaired, we worked with members of our Service User Member Involvement Team (SUMIT) to draw up plans to take service user engagement to the next level by establishing a sub-committee of our trust board with strategic responsibility for delivering our growing service user engagement agenda. This exciting new project will be launched in 2022.

“Now that I’m retired I have some spare time and what better way to use it, when I can see the difference that can be made to people’s lives by donating a few hours to My Sight Newark.” **Vivienne**

Fundraising

Fundraising overview

2021-2022 proved to be a really challenging year for fundraising as we continued to feel the impact of the pandemic and the looming cost of living crisis.

Very few events or community fundraising activities were able to be planned for with any degree of certainty and the availability of Covid emergency grants was greatly reduced.

We finished the year with an income of £463,748 a decrease of 33.7% on the previous year's income of £698,951.

Charity Shops

Our charity shops faced numerous challenges during 2021-22 when they were subject to greatly reduced footfall due to social distancing measures placing limits to the number of customers allowed in shops at any given time.

We also experienced a reduction in capacity to process and store donated stock because Covid restrictions mandated that we had to store our stock for 72 hours before we were able to sort it and get it out on the shop floor.

Shop income for 2021-2022 was £76,281, almost £65,000 less than in 2018-2019 prior to the pandemic.

“ I began walking around my home village of Ravenshead during lockdown as a way of getting out and keeping active and I decided to put all that walking to good use and raise money for My Sight Notts. I'm very grateful to everyone who supported me.” **Paul**

Trusts and Grants

During the pandemic, we, like many other charities saw a significant uplift in income from grants due to government support including furlough and business interruption schemes and other Covid related grants. As most pandemic support schemes were wound up during the year under review we experienced a drop in income from grants to £80,137.

Thank you to our community fundraisers

We would like to thank our community fundraisers for their continuing support. Thank you to visually impaired fundraiser, Paul Baskcomb who raised over £2,500 and to our President, Len Jackson whose summer raffle raised £4,000. Thank you also to the former Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, Cllr Wallace whose appeal raised £3,464 for our charity.



A Year in Pictures



Tactile Universe



Goalball celebrations



BBC film our artist at work



Bassetlaw social group



Equipment advice



Smart space



Summer raffle



IT group



Shared Vision Christmas party

**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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