

# Somerset Insight



01823 333818

**Somerset  
Sight** Working with people  
who lack sight, not vision

Registered Charity No: 1154472

Issue 71  
September 2021



**A wonderful day out with  
Fenix Carriages**



## Low Vision Product Clinic

**By Appointment only, call - 0800 145 6115**

**21st October, 2021**

We are excited to now be in a position, to offer you the chance of seeing our latest products. Each dedicated 45 minute session will be personal and you will get plenty of time to be hands on with the equipment, knowing our experts are available to help or question.

Receive advice and hands on experience with low vision aids.

Talk with the local Charity about the support they can offer you.

**Times available between 9am and 4pm  
Northfield House, 51 Staplegrove Road  
Taunton, TA1 1DG**

**Come along and explore the latest products and technologies for blind and partially sighted people.**

At all of our events you can get hands-on-experience, of our latest products. With an experienced consultant on hand to give you advice and answer any questions you may have.

**“Solutions for all conditions of visual impairment”**

Further information can be found at [www.lowvisionshop.co.uk](http://www.lowvisionshop.co.uk)

If you are unable to attend this date we do provide FREE home demonstrations on most products.

**NEW**



**Compact 10" HD Speech**

# Contents Page

Page 4	CEO Report
Page 5	Donation Form
Page 7	Chair of Trustees Report
Page 8	Professional Vision Services
Page 9	Christmas Party and AGM
Page 10	Kirsty's Story
Page 12	Volunteer Drivers Needed
Page 13	The Joy of Volunteering
Page 14	Inspiring Local Connections
Page 15	In Memory of David Janes
Page 16	Charles Bonnet Syndrome Groups / Menus on the Go
Page 17	Mobile Advisory Service Dates

Page 21	Taking Back Your Life
Page 22	Heidi's Update
Page 24	Activity Report
Page 26	Upcoming Activities
Page 27	Cookery Sessions
Page 28	Ode to the Pride of Exmouth
Page 29	Dorothy's 90th Birthday / Coffee Catch-Ups
Page 30	Charity Bike Ride
Page 31	Alpaca Walking
Page 32	Canal Walk / Calling Cyclists and Runners
Page 33	Trip to Teignmouth / Technology Support
Page 35	Social Groups

**Somerset Sight**

**Reception: 01823 333818**

**Email: [admin@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:admin@somersetsight.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk)**

# CEO Report

Over the past 18 months Somerset Sight has continued to provide an outstanding service to those in our county with visual impairment. Staff and volunteers adjusted and adapted and served you, despite the chaos elsewhere. A major achievement, performed at some considerable cost, and for which many of you have expressed gratitude. I am asking if you would be kind enough to support Somerset Sight, your local charity, and donate to us now on the form, so we can continue the support on which so many of you rely.

I was much moved by a recent conversation with a lady who said that she keeps her personal email address a very closely guarded secret, strictly for friends and family. She now wanted to give it to Somerset Sight as she counted us as one of her friends, and enormously values the support she has received over many years.

She has made that decision as she understands that email or text is the most cost-effective way to communicate. You can now dictate messages, have them read to you, use voice over or magnification, it really is very easy. Not being able to use these simple methods of communication can put you at a distinct disadvantage. If you need help or a refresh to use this

technology, please contact us on 01823 333818.

Our Seeing Life Differently (SLD) days are proving to be very successful. Led by people with visual impairment these days enable people to come to terms with their situation, adjust adapt, remain independent, continue to do the things they enjoy and importantly, take up new challenges. They meet others in a similar situation, talk about their experience and learn about the help available in the community. 30 people since June have enjoyed SLD – that's 630 hours of benefit.

People attending SLD have said

*Shy to join but quickly felt at home.  
I no longer feel alone.*

*It felt positive to start facing my  
new problems.*

*Learning new techniques has been  
tremendous.*

By donating to Somerset Sight on the form in the magazine you can ensure these valuable days and our other services can continue - £30 pays for one hour of support and every contribution however small or large makes a huge difference - thank you in advance.

With very best wishes

**Jackie Sopwith**



**Donation Form - Make a donation to Somerset Sight,  
over the phone by calling 01823 333818  
or donate online at somersetsight.org.uk**

Full Name		Tel:	
Address			
Postcode		Email:	

### Single donation

I enclose a donation cheque of £..... for Somerset Sight

### Multiple donations:

Standing Order Mandate:

Bank (e.g Lloyds)			
Bank Address			Postcode:

Please pay Somerset Sight Ltd;

Account Number: 57387068 Sort Code: 77-50-01

I would like to make a standing order of	£5	£10	£20	Other:
--	----	-----	-----	--------

With the first payment on the ..... (Date) of ..... (Month) 20..... (Year)			
Every Month	Quarter	Half Year	Year

Account Name							
Account Number							
Sort Code							

## Thank you!

**Gift Aid – Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate.**

Gift Aid can be reclaimed by Somerset Sight from the tax you pay for the current year. Your address and postcode is needed to identify you as a current taxpayer. **You must tick the box below.**

**I want to Gift Aid my donation to Somerset Sight and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years.**

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.

Date .....

- Please notify us if you want to cancel this donation, change your name or address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.
- If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your gift aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

**Send this form to:**  
**Fundraising Office, Somerset Sight, Northfield House,**  
**51 Staplegrove Road, Taunton TA1 1DG**

If you are not already one of our members, we would like to add your name and contact details to our database so we can occasionally send you an update about our charity and how the funds are used to help the lives of our sight impaired members to become less isolated, more confident and more active within their communities.

In accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018, by signing below you are consenting to Somerset Sight securely storing your data. We do not pass on any of your information to any other organisation without your permission. If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time, please contact us and we will remove your records.

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

# Chair of Trustees Report



We are very pleased to welcome Sarah Tufton to the Board of Trustees. Many of you will have met Sarah at Somerset Sight events, particularly those taking place in the eastern part of the county. She has a wealth of experience in administration in local government, is committed to her charity work, and has made a huge impact on the lives of many of our service users in the Wincanton and Frome areas.

For those of you who were not able to attend our trip to Exmouth, be sure to read Sue Walter's clever Ode to the Pride of Exmouth in this edition of *Insight*. It was an absolutely wonderful day out. The Teignmouth Holiday break will take place in September and we have had a really encouraging number of people who have booked – the last trip was a success and the word spread.

Just a reminder that Somerset Sight is still running the telephone group calls during the week, and we now have about 100 people participating. Service users are able to enjoy contact and friendship with others and the feedback has been excellent. If you know of anyone who would benefit from joining a telephone

group, or would enjoy being matched up with a volunteer visitor, please contact us on 01823 333818.

I hope very much that everyone has been able to benefit from the easing of lockdown restrictions, and that we will see more of you at some of our events and activities. The County Fair at Yarlington, by kind permission of the Count and Countess de Salis, is on 12th September and promises to be a great event. Please do support us and bring your friends and family.

As we go to press I have been advised of the very sad closure of the West Somerset Talking Newspaper which has been serving West Somerset for 40 years. I would like to thank the Chair Roger Hurst and his team for all they have contributed over the years and for their generous decision to donate their final cash assets to Somerset Sight. We very much hope that we will find a way to continue with some form of talking newspaper in the future.

With my best wishes

**Bella Flood**



**01462 420 751**

**01823 333818**

**Professional Vision Services consultation day at Somerset  
Sight**

**Appointment only**

**Wednesday 29th September 10.00am - 2.00pm**

**Northfield House, 51 Staplegrove Road Taunton, Somerset,  
TA1 1DG**

**Come along to our appointment only consultation day, where we will be demonstrating all the latest technology and equipment for the visually impaired. To book an appointment please call Somerset Sight on 01823 333818**







# **Volunteers Christmas Party**

**Friday 10th December 2-4pm**

**Northfield House, Taunton TA1 1DG**

**Mulled Wine, Mince Pies and Carols**

**Free to all volunteers, limited spaces  
available so please book early**

**RSVP to [admin@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:admin@somersetsight.org.uk)  
by 1st December for Catering Purposes**

## **Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021, 11.30am – 2.30pm**

**Wanstrow Village Hall, Frome Road,  
Wanstrow, Shepton Mallet BA4 4SX**

**Light refreshments provided**

**Please RSVP to [admin@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:admin@somersetsight.org.uk)  
by 7th October**

# Kirsty's Story



Kirsty McLeary's story is one of awe-inspiring optimism and determination to learn how to experience life at its fullest in the face of adversity.

Born in Northern Ireland, Kirsty moved to Hampshire in her mid-teens, where she later had her first child, a son. It was here she met Richard Adams, author of *Watership Down*, when he would pop into her mum's pub. The first of many celebrities that have passed through Kirsty's amazing life!

She moved to Somerset in 1996, qualified to become a veterinarian nurse, but had to give up her new career due to health concerns. Switching gears, Kirsty got a job as a restaurant manager, when, devastatingly, she was blinded in her left eye during a workplace accident.

Kirsty was to suffer another blow when she was diagnosed with pseudoxanthoma elasticum (PXE), an incurable genetic disorder that causes serious medical problems, including vision loss, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal issues.

Undeterred, Kirsty now entered the hospitality industry. She worked at a variety of festivals and sporting events, brushing shoulders with numerous celebrities and sporting personalities, including Frankie Dettori, Freddie Flintoff, Jonathan Ross, and even golfing legend Tiger Woods.

Then, when she was pregnant with her daughter, she discovered

# Kirsty's Story

she had an underlying heart condition that led to a three-month hospital stay.

Once again undaunted, Kirsty decided to train as a florist. She had only planned on completing a one-year course, but went on to study for two years, qualifying at Level 3. She entered florist competitions as a student and was the first student florist in the UK to win the Level 3 oasis competition.

Just prior to lockdown, Kirsty's sight began to worsen. Due to Covid, it took a year to learn the disheartening diagnosis that the crevice in her right eye caused by PXE was deepening. Her already limited sight would deteriorate further.

Kirsty said she initially struggled to perform day-to-day tasks, but when she was referred to Somerset Sight by the patient support nurse at Bristol Eye Hospital, it was a life changer. She's enjoyed the Zoom cookery classes, book club and quiz, and

talks about the amazing support of the sight impaired community. Learning about the equipment that is available through Somerset Sight's Resource Centre has also been invaluable.

Kirsty says there is a plus side to sight loss ... everyone is pretty and handsome now.

*If you are interested in learning more about the equipment and technology that is available for the sight impaired, please contact Somerset Sight on 01823 333818*

**Carolyn Bastick**  
Volunteer Writer



# Volunteer Drivers Needed

Our service users frequently tell us that Somerset Sight's organised activities add enormous value to their lives. Combined with our other fantastic services, such as emotional support, volunteer visitors, Seeing Life Differently Days, we can help people build their confidence as they start to regain a full, enjoyable and productive life.

We work hard with individuals to help them gain their independence and mobility skills so they can arrange their own transport. However, this often takes some time to achieve. Learning to use mobility aids such as a guide dog or white cane is not something that happens overnight.

Then there are the difficulties of using public transport for someone with vision loss. Trains, buses and taxis can be daunting to master, requiring you to plan routes and access timetables. While this can be done by using some of the amazing technology that is available to the sight impaired, learning these skills takes time. We are fortunate to live in this beautiful rural county, but it brings its own challenges because not all places are accessible by public transport.



## VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

At Somerset Sight we are very lucky to have amazing volunteer drivers who are happy to collect our members from their homes and take them to our activities all over the county. These volunteer drivers have enabled us to help change the lives of many of our service users. However, we have almost reached capacity in some areas as more and more people sign up for our activities, and need our help initially with transport. We now have a shortage of volunteer drivers, meaning we can sadly no longer offer this wonderful service to all service users.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver, or know of someone that might be a good fit for this volunteer position, please contact Liam at 01823 333818, or email [liam@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:liam@somersetsight.org.uk).

**Liam Harkness**

Emotional Support & Technology Support

# The Joy of Volunteering

When I finally retired in February 2020, I wanted a challenge to keep me occupied.

Somerset Sight had an advert in the local press asking for volunteer drivers to transport visually impaired passengers to functions in the Frome area and other parts of Somerset.

I had been a taxi driver for nearly 25 years, and felt this was the ideal opportunity for me because I loved driving and meeting new people. I also had some understanding of the transportation challenges that the sight impaired faced from driving Somerset Sight's Liam Harkness to and from work for nearly 20 years. I had found this role very rewarding and, as a result, already had some knowledge of how to guide and

assist the visually impaired.

Covid prevented me from being able to fully contribute as a volunteer driver in 2020 as Somerset Sight was forced to cancel their activities. But now in 2021, as we are starting back up again, it fills me with great pride and joy to participate in this very worthwhile role. I love knowing I am helping a person who may not otherwise be able to participate in fun activities.

If you are interested in supporting this very worthy cause, you too can experience the warmth and joy of being a volunteer driver. I would highly recommend it.

**Mike Bishop**  
Volunteer Driver



# Inspiring Local Connections

Claire, a co-ordinator for Somerset Sight's Volunteer Visiting Service, was delighted to be able to introduce two local people to each other in May of this year. Edith, who is now 91, lives alone in a small village in the Mendips. Although extremely independent, she had told Claire that she was losing her sight rapidly as a result of retinal occlusions, and she felt it would be both enjoyable and beneficial to be matched up with a volunteer visitor. Edith has no local family in Somerset and wants to continue living in her own home.

Claire visited Edith shortly after learning of her circumstances, and within two weeks had partnered her with Mary, a new volunteer visitor. Edith and Mary were delighted to be introduced. Living in villages only two miles apart, they quickly discovered a mutual love of gardening - and cake! Edith's husband used to be a well-known caver in the area and there turned out to be many local connections between the two ladies which they looked forward to exploring together.

Edith explained, "When you are blind, the days can seem lonely and long. It makes such a difference to have a regular visitor to look forward to and enjoy. I always feel much happier after Mary's visits. Thank you so much."

**Claire Packwood**  
Volunteer Visiting Co-ordinator



# In Memory of David Janes



David Janes died on 25th May at St Margaret's Somerset Hospice, Taunton, aged 87. He moved to Taunton in 1975 as Manager of Boots the Chemists, then located on The Parade next to Lloyds Bank. From 1978 to 1989 he was Manager of the new Boots shop in High Street. He had been a member of Round Table and in 1981 became a founder member of the Rotary Club of Taunton Vale.

Taunton Deane Audio News (TDAN) started in June 1982, and David's son Andrew started volunteering as a reader in 1983 and soon joined the committee. One of the five original recording teams dropped out in 1987 and the Rotary Club of Taunton Vale supplied a replacement team with David as the technician. When Andrew became Chairman in 1990, David also joined the committee to support him.

Although TDAN had always had connections with Somerset

Sight, it wasn't until 2009 and the expansion of Somerset Sight at Northfield House that the two organisations became more closely linked. It now became possible for TDAN to use the meeting room at Northfield House on a Friday evening for recording, and in 2011 it was agreed that Northfield House would be the return address for TDAN wallets. David started to visit NH weekly to check that newspapers had been delivered and resolve any postal queries. Later in 2011, TDAN changed from using cassette tapes to digital recording onto USB sticks. This meant new players had to be delivered to listeners, and David coordinated this with the help of the two Taunton Rotary Clubs. He continued to act as technician and editor for his recording team. He also took on the task of Distribution Coordinator visiting new listeners and showing them how to use the equipment. If you had questions about the service, David could always be reached by phone to lend a helping hand.

David continued in these various roles until March 2020 when the first Covid lockdown forced TDAN to cease their services.

**Andrew Janes**

# Charles Bonnet Syndrome Groups

We currently have two Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) groups running back-to-back. The groups give people the opportunity to share their stories about their visions (as they are known), which can range from experiencing flashing lights to seeing galloping horses in the lounge.

We have completed four of our eight weekly sessions, and they are proving to be very helpful. Although the reasons are not entirely understood, talking and sharing your visual experiences with others suffering from the same condition can lead to having fewer visions, as well as making the visions themselves less vivid.

We have done a guided meditation, with mixed results. Some participants reported feeling a sense of extreme relaxation after the session, while others said they experienced nothing at all. Friendships are also being made, and people are feeling less lonely and isolated. Which can only be a good thing.

So if you or a family member are experiencing involuntary visions, this could be CBS. Please do call Somerset Sight on 01823 333818 and ask to speak to Graham.

**Graham Glover**  
Emotional Support Worker

## Menus on the Go

I don't know about you, but sometimes when I go out for food, I have found reading the menu challenging. I was recently pleased to discover an app called "good food talks".

This free fully-accessible website and mobile application offers menus in an accessible format on your mobile device. There is a facility to search restaurants and public houses, or you can use the location facility which will

find all the pubs and restaurants near you who have their menu available on the app. These are mostly chain establishments such as Wetherspoons, Nando's and Pizza Express, but as with most mobile applications, I imagine this will become more widely available over time.

Give it a try.  
<https://goodfoodtalks.com/>

**Heidi Linegar**



# Mobile Advisory Service Dates

## Sep 2021 - Dec 2021

### Mendip

Area	Date	Location	Time
Frome	Tues 28th Sept	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 25th Oct	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 29th Nov	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Weds 8th Dec	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Glastonbury	Tues 19th Oct	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tues 23rd Nov	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
Shepton Mallet	Fri 22nd Oct	Tesco	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Mon 20th Dec	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Wells	Mon 18th Oct	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 22nd Nov	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 13th Dec	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm

### Sedgemoor

Area	Date	Location	Time
Cheddar	Wed 27th Oct	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 30th Nov	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm
Bridgwater	Fri 3rd Sept	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Thurs 30th Sept	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 1st Oct	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Tue 26th Oct	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 5th Nov	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 19th Nov	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Weds 24th Nov	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 3rd Dec	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Thurs 9th Dec	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm

**PULL  
OUT AND  
KEEP!**

# Mobile Advisory Service Dates

## Sedgemoor

Area	Date	Location	Time
Burnham-on-Sea	Weds 29th Sept	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 7th Oct	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 15th Nov	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Weds 1st Dec	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
Cannington	Thurs 4th Nov	By the Brook	10.30am – 12.30pm
Highbridge	Tue 14th Sept	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 18th Nov	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Nether Stowey	Thurs 4th Nov	St Mary's Church	1.30pm – 3.30pm
North Petherton	Weds 3rd Nov	Car Park	10.30am – 3.30pm

## South Somerset

Area	Date	Location	Time
Bruton	Thurs 11th Nov	Budgen's	10.30am – 12.30pm
Castle Cary	Thurs 11th Nov	Mill Brooke Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
Chard	Fri 10th Sept	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Thurs 28th Oct	Sainsbury	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 12th Nov	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
Crewkerne	Tue 9th Nov	Henhayes Centre	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 14th Dec	Henhayes Centre	10.30am – 3.30pm

# Sept 2021 - Dec 2021

Ilminster	Wed 1st Sept Tues 16th Nov	Tesco Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm
Langport	Mon 21st Oct	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Martock	Mon 27th Sept Mon 1st Nov	Moorlands Car Park Moorlands Car Park	10.30pm – 3.30pm 10.30pm – 3.30pm
Somerton	Wed 13th Oct Wed 15th Dec	Cox's Yard Cox's Yard	10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm
S. Petherton	Mon 13th Sept	Hospital	10.30am – 12.30pm
Stoke sub Hamden	Mon 13th Sept	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
Wincanton	Tues 12th Oct Thurs 25th Nov	Morrisons Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm
Yeovil	Tues 7th Sept Tues 5th Oct Weds 20th Oct Tues 2nd Nov Wed 17th Nov Tues 7th Dec Tue 21st Dec	Hospital Hospital Hospital Hospital Hospital Hospital Hospital	10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm 10.30am – 3.30pm

# Mobile Advisory Service Dates

## Taunton Deane

Area	Date	Location	Time
Wellington	Thur 14th Oct	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thur 16th Dec	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Wiveliscombe	Thurs 2nd Sept	Top Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm

## West Somerset

Area	Date	Location	Time
Minehead	Mon 6th Sept	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 4th Oct	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 8th Nov	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 6th Dec	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
Dulverton	Thurs 2nd Sept	Car Park	10.30am – 12.30pm
Williton	Thurs 9th Sept	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
Porlock	Thurs 9th Sept	One Stop	10.30am – 12.30pm
Watchet	Wed 8th Sept	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 6th Oct	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 10th Nov	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 2nd Dec	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm

Dates may be subject to change.

If you are making a special journey, please call our office prior to your visit on **01823 333818**.



# Taking Back Your Life

The emotional support service has now been running for five years. During this time, common themes among sight loss sufferers have made themselves apparent: lack of confidence, increased anxiety and deep seated fears about the future. Addressing these emotional issues has enabled people to move on and regain their life and independence. Especially following the initial diagnosis of severe sight loss.

In addition to emotional support, Somerset Sight offers other services and resources for those with vision loss. Seeing Life Differently Days is one of our most powerful programmes. Designed to bring together people in similar vision-impaired circumstances, it includes guest speakers and a section on IT when you are able to review some of the clever gadgets that allow the sight impaired to live safer and more independent lives.

Firm friendships are frequently formed during this course, leaving participants with renewed confidence. We often find that people will later go on to become more engaged in other Somerset Sight activities, such as cookery courses, boat trips and day outings.

Others may take up volunteering roles within the charity like organising the Friday night quiz, or even becoming a trustee on Somerset Sight's board. These are amazing achievements and we have been struck with how well people have grown from not having the confidence to leave the house, to embracing Somerset Sight and all it has to offer. Enriching their own lives and gaining a greater sense of well-being even in the face of tremendous adversity.

If you are someone that feels lacking in confidence, who may be experiencing increased levels of anxiety, please call Somerset Sight on 01823 333818 and ask to speak with us about our emotional support service. I will be in touch as soon as possible to guide you through next steps.

**Graham Glover**  
Emotional Support Worker



# Heidi's Update



We are thrilled that so many Somerset Sight service users have joined us for our recent events and activities. We recognise it can be worrying to attend an activity when you're new. Through our telephone support calls, one-on-one or groups, emotional support service, online quiz, cookery and book club, we can help you build a foundation to gain greater independence and quality of life. One small step at a time. Our activities give you the opportunity to meet others with sight loss, to build lifelong friendships and to have new experiences in a safe and understanding environment.

## Seeing Life Differently Days (SLD)

In June, we held three SLD courses in Taunton and Yeovil. These courses allow you to meet up with others for peer support and to learn about services and resources available in Somerset. Topics covered include low vision aids, mobility, cooking, technology, emotional support and much more.

One of the ladies on the Taunton SLD course got a taster for the technology support available to the sight impaired. During the course we demonstrated some of the accessibility features on her iPad. She has now decided to take one-on-one sessions, enabling her to continue creative writing. Something she'd always enjoyed, but since losing her sight thought her writing days were over. We find that a lot of people feel that they have to give up what they love to do. But sometimes it just takes exposure to the support and alternative solutions available to those suffering with sight loss that can change your life.

## Social Groups

It's fantastic to have our monthly social groups back up and running.

The Yeovil Group is held on the first Monday of every month and is very well attended and enjoyed by so many. Every month, we are seeing membership grow, with new members welcomed by volunteer and trustee Sarah Tufton. Plans for day trips are always in the works. We are endeavouring to set up similar social groups across the county. If you are interested in getting involved, please call us at 01823 333818.

In our Resource Centre and on our Mobile Advisory Service bus, we stock a number of mobility aids to assist with travel, such as a symbol cane to let sighted individuals know you have a visual impairment. We also sell VIP badges and lanyards. If you have some vision but not enough to see the bus number, a monocular (mini telescope) can be helpful. Alternatively, holding up a large print card displayed with your bus number lets the bus driver know which bus you are catching.

A visor or anti-glare shades (available in a selection of colours) can be helpful if you struggle with glare. These are just a few examples of what might help when you're out and about.

## Community Transport Schemes

We know travel can be challenging when you're no longer able to drive, but we are very fortunate in Somerset to have a concessionary bus pass scheme. If you have sight loss, you can travel anywhere on the bus free of charge after 9:30am.

David is one of our most inspirational service users. Despite never having had sight, he regularly travels unaccompanied between Taunton and Bridgwater with the aid of a long cane. He also participates in many of our activities, including playing for the Somerset VI Cricket Club and having a fortnightly spot on Apple FM.

There are many service users who attend our craft group and other social gatherings who make use of the various community transport schemes that offer door-to-door transport here in Somerset. See the next page for more information on these programmes.



# Heidi's Update

## Community Transport

**ATWEST** – Operates in the West Somerset area. Slinky services and public bus routes 10 and 198 only. For Atwest enquiries phone 01643 709701.

**Community Transport South West** – Operates in Chard, Ilminster, Crewkerne, South Petherton, Yeovil, Langport, Somerton and surrounding villages. It has increased capacity to supply transport for Covid vaccinations and medical journeys. They have increased car volunteers and many volunteers are happy to do weekend journeys. There are wheelchair accessible

buses available. Please contact them on 01935 477399 for any enquiries. Bookings open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

## Mendip Community Transport

01749 880613

## Sedgemoor Community Transport

01278 434881

## Somerset Accessible Transport

Operates in Taunton and Wellington. For Somerset Accessible Transport bookings phone 01823 331266.

## Wivey Link

01984 624666

## Activity Report

We have had a great few months here at Somerset Sight with activities resuming since March. Just a few of the wonderful activities that took place were a pottery class, cooking sessions and garden lunch at Northfield House, a forest walk, a day trip to Teignmouth and many more.

On Tuesday 8th June we had a fantastic day when we took 12

service users to the beautiful Carriage Driving Centre just on the Devon and Somerset Border. The owners Mark and Joanna took us on a wonderful carriage ride around their stunning farm in a beautifully restored carriage once owned by Princess Diana's family. It was amazing to feel and hear the way the carriage moved over the different surfaces. After looking around their incredible collection of



# Activity Report

restored vintage carriages, we had a delicious picnic lunch and had extra time to enjoy our beautiful surroundings.

Service user Jamie relates, "This was the second time I went on an activity with Somerset Sight. I was given the chance to go carriage riding and I thought it was amazing.

It was a bright, beautiful, sunny day, so the weather was perfect. The stables were clean and bright and the horses were beautifully groomed and very friendly. It was lovely to be able to get close to them and stroke them. The carriage ride itself was fantastic. It was so interesting to ride in an old carriage that is in pristine condition, and to have a small part of history come to life. The museum was a pleasure to visit with its brightly coloured, well-polished, different shaped carriages.



I really enjoyed this trip, thank you Somerset sight."

We also had a brilliant visit to Exmoor Owl and Hawk Centre near Minehead during July. Twelve service users (some of whom had never been on any activities with us before) had the opportunity to get very close to some beautiful birds, including tawny and mottled owls. We were split up into two groups and were told to stand in a large circle wearing a heavy-duty gauntlet and the birds would fly from glove-to-glove eating the food we were asked to hold. Our guide Rod was so funny and very knowledgeable about each bird. It was absolutely fascinating.

Service user Jean said, "I never thought I would ever get to hold and hand feed such beautiful birds, I thoroughly enjoyed it."

**Liam Harkness**



# Upcoming Activities

<p>Wednesday 6th Oct</p> <p>Monday 11th Oct</p>	<p><b>Craft House Chocolate, Somerton</b></p> <p>Find out all about how chocolate is made and get to taste some of Craft House Chocolate's delicious offerings. This activity has been so popular that we have managed to arrange another session on Wednesday 6th October. Please contact us to discuss availability.</p> <p>2pm - 3:30pm, £15 per head.</p>
<p>Monday 1st Nov</p>	<p><b>Willow Weaving, Northfield House, Taunton</b></p> <p>Join us at Somerset Sight's Northfield House for an opportunity to work with willow. You can choose to make either a bird feeder, plant grower or desk tidy.</p> <p>11am - 2pm, £14 per head, including lunch.</p>
<p>Monday 6th Dec</p> <p>Tuesday 7th Dec</p> <p>Wednesday 8th Dec</p>	<p><b>Wreath Making</b></p> <p><b>Westlands, Yeovil - 6th Dec</b></p> <p><b>Coxley Memorial Hall, Wells - 7th Dec</b></p> <p><b>The Hub, Minehead - 8th Dec</b></p> <p>Join us for a festive wreath making session.</p> <p>10.30am - 2.30pm, £20 per head, including lunch.</p>
<p>Wednesday 15th Dec</p>	<p><b>Christmas Panto at the Octagon Theatre, Yeovil</b></p> <p>Mother Goose is the original pantomime. It's full of all your favourite traditions – a fabulous fairy, a dastardly baddie and, of course, a bloke in a dress!</p> <p>1.30pm, £14.50 per head.</p>
<p>Monday 17th Jan</p>	<p><b>Tenpin Bowling, Hollywood Bowling Centre, Yeovil</b></p> <p>Come and join us at the Hollywood Bowling Centre in Yeovil where we can enjoy a couple of great games of bowling and chat amongst friends.</p> <p>Starting at 2pm, £3.25 per person per game.</p>

Contact Heidi or Liam on 01823 333818 to book  
or if you have any questions

# Grand Prize Draw

Raising money to help people with sight loss throughout the county  
Be in with a chance to win a fantastic prize for a donation of ONLY £5

1st Prize – Exclusive hot air balloon flight for 2 with champagne on arrival

2nd Prize – Beautiful leather Mulberry handbag

3rd Prize – £100 voucher from The Welsh Cheese Company

To enter, visit [www.pocket-app.co.uk/m/somersetsight](http://www.pocket-app.co.uk/m/somersetsight)  
or call us on 01823 333818 (Drawn: 29th September)  
Registered Charity No: 1154472



4 weeks to enter, don't miss out!

## Cookery Sessions

We were thrilled to hold a cookery session at Somerset Sight recently, where participants cooked a delicious lunch, with plenty of leftovers to take home. We had 8 participants varying in

age from 16 upwards, led by Chef Catherine from Anybody Can Cook. We have more sessions starting in September. Please contact Heidi on 01823 333818 for more information.



# Ode to the Pride of Exmouth

Exmouth Boat Trip  
2nd August 2021

It will come as no surprise  
The trip to Exmouth  
Was perfectly organised

Everyone assembled in plenty of time  
for temperature taking  
And following the Covid rules

Once the all-clear was given  
We could climb aboard  
The Berry's coach  
For our journey  
Which was expertly driven  
By big Rich!  
Who was so kind and caring

At half past 12 we arrived  
In Exmouth as was predicted  
Plenty of time for a leisurely lunch  
And a gentle stroll along the front

Then came the time  
For us to queue  
To start a new adventure!  
Our river cruise

Aboard the Pride of Exmouth  
We went safely sailing through  
Sea and river waters  
Admiring the views  
Listening to the commentary  
Given by the crew

Then came yet another treat  
Which kept us very quiet  
A very yummy cream tea  
No one's on a diet!

So, feeling full and content  
We watched the passing scenery  
Before we known time had flown  
We have to disembark  
So homeward bound we could be driven

We arrived at Northfield House  
To go our separate ways  
Having enjoyed a very special day

Once again, I give a vote of thanks  
On everyone's behalf  
To all the members of the  
Somerset Sight team  
Who made this come to pass!

**Sue Walters**



# Dorothy's 90th Birthday

Dorothy Killick has been a Somerset Sight service user and a keen supporter for many years. She recently celebrated her 90th birthday and her friend Pat suggested that we hold a tea party for her at Northfield House.

We thought this was a splendid idea and arranged an afternoon tea to be held in the garden for Dorothy and her friends, many of whom are also Somerset Sight service users. Dorothy asked for donations to Somerset Sight instead of gifts and raised a wonderful £280.

We were so thrilled to be able to help Dorothy celebrate her big birthday, if you would like to hold your birthday party at Somerset Sight, please get in touch.



## Coffee Catch-Ups

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported our coffee catch-ups. We held seven across the county and they were all a great success. Nearly 200 people attended and over £500 was raised.

It was lovely to see everyone again after so long and the events provided an opportunity for volunteers, service users and friends to catch up and socialise over a delicious piece of cake.



# Charity Bike Ride Raises Over £3,000

Over 70 cyclists took part in our Charity Bike Ride on Saturday 3rd July. The ride started at Somerset Sight HQ and the cyclists left at around 10am. Some on tandems and others solo. Routes ranged between 25k and 100k. The cyclists were a mixed group including supporters, visually impaired and blind service users, and members of the general public. We had cyclists from Musgrove Eye Clinic, as well as St James Medical Centre.

Refreshment stops to refuel and rest were in Hatch Beauchamp and Bishops Lydeard. The ride took cyclists all around Taunton and

surrounding areas.

The weather stayed dry in the morning, but unfortunately the afternoon brought very heavy rain and flooding. Although wet and soggy, riders powered through and started returning to Somerset Sight's Northfield House from around 3pm.

A massive thank you to all of our supporters. We have currently raised around £3000, and we are still collecting sponsorship.

And a big thank you to On Your Bike for providing mechanical support throughout the event.



# Alpaca Walking

Recently, we went for a visit to Stoke Wood Alpacas for a fabulous Alpaca Experience.

The owners, Steve and Sally, along with Tom the Alpaca, welcomed 20 visually impaired children into the centre where they learned about alpacas, spent time walking them and also fed them. Much to their delight.

It was an amazing experience. Steve is extremely knowledgeable about alpacas and the group really

enjoyed learning about these delightful creatures. Although the best bit was getting to walk them around the paddocks.

Everyone absolutely loved their experience and by the time we left, we all had our favourite alpaca. Thank you to Steve and Sally for accommodating the group and allowing us to spend time with your beautiful animals.

**Holly Sutton**

Fundraising & Development Officer



# Canal Walk

Richard Goldring recently decided he wanted to challenge himself to walk the length of the Bridgwater and Taunton canal to raise funds for Somerset Sight.

On 21st June (the longest day of the year), Richard and a group of walkers set off first thing in the morning. They walked 14.5 miles

through rain and shine to arrive at Somerset Sight's Northfield House tired and hungry and ready to enjoy a celebratory cream tea.

The walkers raised an amazing £300. Thank you, Richard! If you are interested in organising a fundraiser for Somerset Sight, call Holly on 01823 366147.



## Calling Cyclists and Runners!

Would you love to have a go at tandem bike riding and live in or near Shepton Mallet? We have a volunteer pilot ready to take you out!

We also have guide runners available throughout Somerset

who can accompany you on your runs no matter what your level of experience.

Please call Michele on 01823 333818 for more information



# Trip to Teignmouth



32 excited people met at Somerset Sight for the first seaside trip of the year. They travelled by mini bus, one driven by Jackie Sopwith, CEO and the other by Donna Cannell, arriving in Teignmouth, looking forward to exploring and

enjoying the beautiful weather.

First port of call was coffee and a wander up the promenade, enjoying the surroundings. Then some of the group went shopping or for lunch, others sat in the sunshine on the seafront. They told us that this was the first time they had been out since Covid, and they were thrilled to spend a day together with friends.

There was time for ice cream and fish and chips and exploring the sea front, listening to the hustle and bustle and waves splashing along the shore before they headed back to the bus for a sing song and returned to Taunton, happy travellers.

# Technology Support

We have 3 Volunteers, who are ready and waiting to visit Service Users at home to provide technology support. This could be to install Amazon Echo's, set up laptops, tablets or smart phones, even connecting a webcam so you can join your friends on zoom. Liam says "The support from our 3 technology volunteers has been invaluable and I am so grateful that we can provide technology help



at home, all around the county". If you would like to explore what technology could do for you, please call Liam on 01823 333818



**Touchpoint Vision**  
ORCAM Distributor & Reseller since 2018

# OrCam Read.

**A Game-Changer for People with  
Low Vision or Reading Difficulties**

**Here at Somerset Sight**

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 10am - 2pm**

**The full range of OrCam devices will also be available.**

**Call Somerset Sight to book on an appointment 01823 333818**

Assistive Technology for the Visually Impaired

The Award winning full-page text to Speech Reader

Ultra-small and lightweight hand-held device

Suitable for those with moderate to low vision

Helps Read Post, Menu's, Newspapers and Books along  
with small details on Prescriptions and Food Packaging

Great for all environments from Home ,work or School

Point and Press with additional voice commands

No internet needed

Home demonstration and full training provided

**RRP £2000 – Somerset Sight Offer - Save £100 - £1900**

**Telephone Mike Page on 07545 951797**

**Email [TouchpointVision@gmail.com](mailto:TouchpointVision@gmail.com) / [www.info@touchpointvision.co.uk](http://www.info@touchpointvision.co.uk)**

# Social Groups

(Please contact Somerset Sight prior to attending)

Type	Day	Time	Where
Bridgwater Social Group	Second Wednesday of each month except January, and August	2.30pm - 4.30pm	St Francis Church Hall. TA6 4JA
Bridgwater Activity Group	Second Friday of each month.	12pm - 2pm	Victoria Park Community Centre. TA6 7AS
Bridgwater Activity Group	Last Friday of each month	6pm onwards	The Nutmeg House. TA6 3EN
Frome Activity Group	Third Thursday of each month	10am - 12pm	Cheese and Grain, Frome BA11 1BE
Burnham on Sea / Highbridge Group	Last Thursday of each month	11.00am	The Windmill Club, Edithmead. TA9 4HE
Chard Social Group	First Thursday of each month except January and August	2.30pm - 4.00pm	Methodist Church Hall. TA20 1PT
Street Activity Group	Second Friday of each month	10.00am - 12.00pm	Lantokay Wetherspoons. BA16 0EY
Taunton Social Group	Third Wednesday of each month	11.00am - 1.00pm	Somerset Sight. TA1 1DG
Yeovil Social Group	First Monday of each month	10.30am - 12.00pm	Westlands Entertainment Centre. BA20 2DD
Taunton Deane Bowls Club	Every Wednesday	11.00am - 1.00pm	Blackbrook Pavilion. TA1 2RW
Yeovil Bowls Group	Every Tuesday	10.30am - 1.00pm	Yeovil Bowls Club. BA21 4AS
Taunton Acoustic Rifle Club	Every Thursday	2.00pm - 4.30pm	Contact Somerset Sight for details
Taunton Craft Group	Every Friday	1.15pm - 3.15pm	Somerset Sight. TA1 1DG



**Somerset  
Sight** Working with people  
who lack sight, not vision

Charity No: 1154472  
Company No: 8432686  
01823 333818

# Country House Fair & Treasure Trove Sale

**A family day out**

Sunday 12th September 2021

10am - 4pm

Yarlington House, Wincanton, BA9 8DY

Classic Cars

Antiques & Collectables

Vintage & Artisan Stalls

Plants

Stunning gardens

Refreshments



£5 Entry ~ Under 16's Free

More information can be found at [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk)  
or by emailing [admin@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:admin@somersetsight.org.uk)