

Outlook

The **iSight**Cornwall Newsletter

Autumn / Winter 2020



iSightCornwall[®]

Inspiring futures for
people living with sight loss

**International
Recognition for
Low Vision Service**

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2020 edition of Outlook

As the end of the year approaches, the coronavirus pandemic continues to have an impact on all of our lives.

As a charity we had to adapt very quickly to the challenges brought on by the crisis and as a result there has been a significant change in our working practices. Our staff have responded with innovative solutions and I am incredibly grateful for their dedication, flexibility and resilience during this difficult time.

Like every business, we are having to revise our budgets. Cost savings have been made and contingency plans have been drawn up. But once again our wonderful supporters have stepped forward and taken every opportunity to raise money for us. Your donations help us to keep providing our vital services.

And it's not only clients that raise money for **iSight**Cornwall; staff do their bit too, even the chief executive! Both myself and Shannon Smith took part in the

2.6 Challenge earlier this year raising over £500 between us. And instead of asking for presents on her birthday this year, Ruth Broad set up a fundraiser on Facebook and raised over £120.

I would also like to thank our volunteers for the compassion and commitment they've shown during this difficult time. It is wonderful that volunteers have been in regular contact with members since the clubs had to temporarily close.

A vital part of our charity is our membership. My gratitude goes to your loyal support and contribution with your ideas, feedback and good humour. You are part of the legacy of Cornwall's oldest charity.



Carole Theobald
Chief Executive

We are **Open...** but with some changes

The Sight Centre reopened at the beginning of October with new opening hours and a new look reception.

However, with new restrictions being introduced from 5 November we are currently only open for pre-booked appointments. To help us be Covid-safe and follow Government guidelines please do not drop in to the Centre without contacting us in advance.

We can continue to offer pre-booked appointments for our services such as low vision and assistive technology because of the safety measures we've implemented to make this possible including installing a hand sanitising station and asking people to wear face coverings. The biggest change we've made is to extend our reception area to create more space for social distancing.

We look forward to welcoming those of you with appointments soon and wish everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and a happy new year.

Opening hours

Our telephone helpline is open for enquiries from Tuesday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.00pm. As opening times are subject to change you can call us at any time on 01872 261110 and if we're not available, leave a message and someone will get back to you just as soon as possible.

Alternatively our website will always be up to date with the latest information
www.isightcornwall.org.uk.

Our online shop remains open too so you can still get hold of our large print calendars and Christmas cards in the run up to Christmas. If you can't shop online just give us a call and we can take your order over the phone instead.

Photo: New look reception



Latest News

New Look Sight Centre

Apart from a few coats of paint over the years, the Sight Centre reception area hasn't changed a great deal since it opened in 1994. But with more and more visitors each year and social distancing now being an important consideration too we realised that the space was no longer fit for purpose so we launched a funding appeal in March to help us refurbish it.

Our vision was to make the reception area larger to accommodate more visitors, add new socially distanced seating areas, install new energy saving

lighting, a new phone system and add a new area for demonstrating equipment and daily living aids.

Thanks to the generosity of the Mark Master Masons who donated £10,700 through the Mark Benevolent Fund and a £5,000 donation from the Screwfix Foundation, we were able to make our vision a reality.

The changes will make a big difference to the way we deliver our services and make the experience more welcoming and accessible for our visitors.

Special thanks goes to Phillip Lakin and Kevin Hicks from the Boscawen Mark Lodge for their support with our appeal.

Photo: Kevin Hicks presenting Carole Theobald with a cheque for £10,700



The National Rail Awards

Congratulations to **iSight** Cornwall trustee, Steve Holyer and his wife Helen, who have won yet another award for their hugely popular RoomMate device.

In partnership with Great Western Railway, they were awarded the Customer Service Excellence Award at the 2020 National Rail Awards for providing the railway's first RoomMate which gives an audio description of station facilities for people with visual impairments.

Steve said: "GWR have recognised the difficulties for those with sight loss, dementia and learning disabilities which until now have not been addressed in accessible toilets."

Virtual AGM

For the first time in our 164 year history, our AGM on 29 September was held online. Members were able to join via Zoom on their computers or by phoning in. In addition to this we received a record number of proxy votes which meant that we exceeded our quorum which is the minimum number of members required to vote and all the resolutions were passed.

Clubs

We know how much everyone is missing their clubs but with the current restrictions in place they will remain closed until at least the end of this year. We are constantly reviewing government guidelines and will reopen the clubs as soon as it is safe to do so.

Bude Club

Sadly Bude Club for the Visually Impaired is no longer running. Long-standing club organisers John Grecian and Marie Colwill were due to retire in May this year but the pandemic forced the early closure of the club in March. Without anyone to take over

organising the monthly outings, the difficult decision has been made to close the club. Thank you so much to John, Marie and all the volunteers who have been involved with the club over the years, particularly to Dawn Ferrer who volunteered at the club for over 20 years.

Fundraising News

The 2.6 Challenge

Back in April we invited you to take part in the 2.6 Challenge to help us raise vital funds for the charity. With activities ranging from attempting 26 different yoga positions to a blindfolded 'trash catch' of 26 items of rubbish, you rose to the challenge raising a fantastic total of £1,560.

Almost half of that money was raised by just one person, Robin Carr, who walked 26 laps of his garden in front of a socially distanced crowd of friends and family cheering him on. The challenge took about an hour to complete and Robin raised £100 on the day. However, he didn't stop there. Robin is a member of the Rotary Club of Helston-Lizard and as soon as they heard about the challenge, the club members wanted to support Robin with his fundraising efforts. Between the members and a donation from the club itself they raised a further £650 bringing the grand total to £750.

Robin said: "**iSight**Cornwall has helped me so much since I lost my sight a couple of years ago that walking 26 laps around my garden didn't seem like much to ask to give something back to the charity."

Thank you to Robin and everyone at the Rotary Club of Helston-Lizard for their generous donations.

Photo: Robin Carr taking on the 2.6 Challenge



Williams Travel Coach Seats for Causes

Despite the difficult end to their 2019/20 season, Williams Travel raised a terrific £1,130 for **iSight**Cornwall through their Coach Seats for Causes campaign.

Huge thanks to Williams Travel and their wonderful customers for their support.

We want to hear from you

As you know we rely on donations to help us deliver our services and as members you are often our biggest supporters. However, this time we want to ask for a different kind of support. We are looking for people who are willing to share their story with us to use as part of a new fundraising campaign.

If you are willing to talk about your own experience of sight loss and what **iSight**Cornwall has done to help you, we want to hear from you. Your story would be shared on our website, social media channels and in the local press to help raise awareness of our charity and encourage people to support us.

Thanks to our Supporters

Boscawen Mark Lodge
Camelford Town Council
Charitable Aid Foundation
Cornwall Council
Cornwall Mark Foundation
Friends of Kenneth Launder Court
Gardner's Trust for the Blind
Hayle Town Council
Mark Master Masons
Mullion Golf Club
Penzance Town Council
Rotary Club of Helston-Lizard
Screwfix Foundation
Thomas Pocklington Trust
Truro Day Committee
Western Power
Williams Travel

Thanks to the Boscawen Mark Lodge for recommending us to the Cornwall Mark Foundation as one of the charities to be supported by their fund. They generously donated £500 towards our refurbishment appeal.

2020: Adapting to change

2020 has been an extraordinary year. Like all charities, we've had to adapt our plans to respond to new challenges. But our aim throughout has been to ensure that the charity continues to function, albeit at times on a smaller scale.

We responded immediately to the crisis by changing our working practices to protect service users and staff whilst continuing to provide our services. Staff moved to working from home, some needed to be furloughed, and our plans for events, fundraising and volunteering activities had to be cancelled with immediate effect.

We devised a new remote way of carrying out low vision assessments which received national and international attention and we set up a directory of the support available across Cornwall during the pandemic. Our helpline was more important than ever, receiving over 1,000 calls since 23 March. We also made best use of the time that the Sight Centre

was closed by extending our reception area to create a larger and safer space for visitors.

Meanwhile, strict instructions to stay at home, practice social distancing, and limit social interactions meant that many people felt the effects of isolation and loneliness, so we launched 'MyFriend' a new telephone befriending service. And for people struggling to come to terms with their sight loss we've now invested in a new counselling service in partnership with the Macular Society.

The ever-changing situation caused by this pandemic continues to bring significant financial and service delivery pressures for the charity. As optometry services begin to increase their capacity once more, we are experiencing an increase in referrals for low vision assessments. In response we have developed new and more flexible ways of working and we will continue to do so for as long as is necessary.

A look back at 2019

We have completed our annual review for 2019 and here are some headline figures:

- **780** People helped through our low vision service
- **500** People helped at home by the community outreach team
- **880** People helped by our benefits support service
- **1,275** People helped by assistive technology support, advice and demonstrations
- **1,102** People helped by our eye clinic liaison officer
- **24** Grants given for technology, aids and equipment through the Legacy Fund
- **13** People helped to develop their specialist computer skills to move closer towards or into employment (Building Better Opportunities Working Together project jointly funded by the Big Lottery and European Social Fund)
- **2,586** Times people used our information services
- **29,324** Visitors to our website

Assistive technology

Thanks to a donation from the RNIB and Amazon we've been able to give a visually-impaired teenager a boost to her college experience with a brand new Amazon Fire Tablet 8HD.

16 year old Daisy is studying an equestrian course and thanks to the new device she is now finding her coursework much easier. The different apps mean she can easily add photos and videos to her case studies and the text-to-speech function is great for reading her textbooks.

Daisy can also use the tablet to listen to music, watch videos and read books and the accessibility features mean it's really easy for her to operate.

"I want to thank **iSight**Cornwall, it really has made a world of difference and as she gets more confident using the tablet, Daisy is finding new ways in which it is a help to her both academically and personally."

Lynne, Daisy's mum.

Low Vision

Global recognition

iSightCornwall got a special mention on a radio show in New Zealand thanks to the way we delivered the low vision service during the first lockdown.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to cancel all our face-to-face clinics but we know how important the low vision service is to clients. So low vision adviser, Shannon Smith, responded quickly and devised a new way of helping patients via a telephone assessment.

With other low vision providers across the country suspending their service during lockdown, our approach caught the attention of Visionary, a national membership organisation for local sight loss charities.

When Fiona Sandford, chief executive of Visionary, was interviewed by a local radio station in New Zealand, she highlighted **iSight**Cornwall as

an example of a UK charity that had led the way with its response to the challenges of lockdown saying: "They very quickly adapted in a really creative and inspiring way."

As a result we were able to help over 100 people access the low vision aids they need despite all of our clinics being closed.

As one patient put it: "I am sincerely grateful for all your support, I no longer feel as isolated during a very isolating time."

We've now developed a remote low vision toolkit to share with Visionary's members after securing funding from the Thomas Pocklington Trust and have been nominated for the Share Award at the Visionary Annual Awards 2020.

Photo: Shannon Smith, Low Vision Adviser



Low vision clinics

Thanks to the safety measures we've implemented at the Sight Centre we are now able to offer low vision assessments at our Truro clinic (subject to change if new government restrictions are introduced).

To ensure your safety during your visit we have introduced the following measures:

- We will call you 2-3 days before your appointment to complete a pre-attendance screening questionnaire.
- We ask you to wear a face covering on the day of your appointment. If you don't have one we can provide one for you.
- We ask that where possible you come into the Sight Centre alone. Anyone who accompanies you to the appointment may be asked to wait outside the Sight Centre.

Currently all of our other clinics around the county remain closed and are unlikely to reopen until later in the new year. But please contact us if you feel that you may benefit from a new assessment and remember that it is important to keep up to date with your regular eye tests.

New counselling service

We know from experience that losing your sight is traumatic. For most people it is devastating news and takes time to adapt. For some people it can take months, for others it takes years. So we have teamed up with the Macular Society to provide counselling for those who need emotional support.

They have a team of professionally trained counsellors who provide support for people with Macular Degeneration. But thanks to our funding, people with other sight loss conditions can now benefit from this service too.

If you would like to talk to someone about coming to terms with sight loss you will need a referral from **iSight**Cornwall. After an initial assessment you will receive up to six one-to-one confidential telephone sessions with a counsellor from the Macular Society.

To find out more please contact us on 01872 261110.

Money Matters

TV Licence changes

Changes to the over 75 TV licence came into effect on 1 August 2020. This means that anyone over the age of 75 is no longer eligible for a free TV licence unless they or someone in their household receives Pension Credit. However, if you are registered as severely sight impaired you may still be eligible to receive a 50% discount off the cost of your TV licence, regardless of your age.

To apply for your blind concession visit the TV Licensing website tvlicensing.co.uk. You need to fill in the application form online, print it out, and send it to TV Licensing along with a copy of one of the following documents to confirm you are registered as severely sight impaired:

- CVI (Certificate of Visual Impairment)
- BD8 Certificate
- A certificate or document issued by a Local Authority that shows you are registered as blind (severely sight impaired)

- A copy of a certificate from an Ophthalmologist (eye surgeon), stating that you are blind (severely sight impaired)

Alternatively you can call 0300 790 6151.

Please note that as a result of more people requiring proof of their visual status, CVIs are currently taking longer than usual to process.

Take Five to Stop Fraud

Take Five is a national campaign that offers straight-forward and impartial advice to help everyone protect themselves from preventable financial fraud.

They are warning that criminals are using the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to trick people into parting with their money or information by impersonating trusted organisations such as the NHS or HMRC.

The campaign encourages people to be suspicious of any unsolicited contact and 'Stop, Challenge and Protect' when they receive any messages out of the blue.



STOP - take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information.



CHALLENGE - Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.



PROTECT - Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud.

What to look out for

Covid-19 relief funds - Scam emails offering access to 'Covid-19 relief funds' or grants of up to £7,500, which ask you to fill in a form and hand over your personal information.

Council tax reduction - Scam emails from a 'government department' offering you a council tax reduction which trick you into giving them your money or information.

Coronavirus protection - Phone calls offering you protective face masks, hand sanitiser, testing kits or medicine and asking you to make a payment over the phone.

TV Licensing payments - Scam emails and/or texts purporting to be from TV Licensing regarding the fee changes for over-75s claiming that your payment has failed and asking you to set up a new direct debit.

What to do

- Avoid clicking on links or attachments in unsolicited emails or texts. Instead, log into your account directly to update your information or make any legitimate payments.
- If you are in any doubt about someone's identity, contact the organisation they claim to be from using a number you know to be genuine.
- Only provide your personal or financial details to organisations that you trust.
- Be suspicious of any 'too good to be true' offers or prices.
- It could be a scam if you're being pressurised to act quickly.
- If you believe you've fallen for a scam, contact your bank immediately on a number you know is correct, such as on your statement, their website or on the back of your debit or credit card.

Gift Guide

If you're looking for present ideas for someone with a visual impairment or want to know what's available to help you with everyday tasks at home, here's a roundup of some of our best selling products for people with sight loss.

(Prices correct as of October 2020 but may be subject to change.)

Sonic 2 MP3 Player



A lightweight portable MP3 player that lets you listen to music or audio books via Bluetooth or USB stick. It is simple to use and has excellent sound quality. It has been specifically designed for visually impaired people to easily navigate between multiple publications at the touch of a button.

Liquid Level Indicator



This unusual looking gadget is perfect for tea and coffee lovers. You simply place the liquid level indicator on the side of a cup or glass and the sensor will let you know when the liquid gets to the top through a series of beeping sounds and vibrations meaning that you never overfill your cup.

Talking Keychain



This small, portable keychain clock announces the time and date at the touch of a button. It's lightweight and small enough to carry around wherever you go.

Explore 5 Magnifier



The Humanware Explore 5 handheld electronic magnifier is simple to use and can magnify up to 22x. It's ideal for reading menus, prescription labels, newspapers and much more.

New in

Large Print Calendars

Our popular large print calendars are now in stock for 2021. They cost £5 each or £4.50 for members.

Christmas cards

You can choose from owl, hare, kingfisher, Christmas tree or Christmas bouquet designs. A pack of 10 cards costs £4 or £3.60 for members.

Awareness badges

In addition to our popular 'I am partially sighted' pin badges we have introduced a new larger badge designed to let people know that the wearer is visually impaired and therefore cannot see to socially distance. The badge, which costs £1.80, is attached to a lanyard and worn around your neck.



We are the first centre of resource for all in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly who are affected by sight loss, whatever their age, circumstance or condition. We care passionately about helping anyone living with a visual impairment and have done ever since our foundation in 1856 when the charity supported Cornish miners.

01872 261110
www.isightcornwall.org.uk

iSightCornwall
The Sight Centre, Newham Road,
Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2DP

Registered charity number 1108761

2021 large print calendars

Make sure you don't miss any important dates next year with our 2021 large print calendar.

The A3 calendar displays one month to a page with the dates in large bold text.

Available online at
www.isightcornwall.org.uk/shop
or call 01872 261110.



Outlook is also available as:

- **USB Stick**
- **Audio CD**
- **Large Print word document**
- **Online audio via our website**