

Outlook

The **iSight**Cornwall Newsletter

Spring / Summer 2021



iSightCornwall[®]

Inspiring futures for
people living with sight loss



Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2021 edition of Outlook

As the first of the Covid-19 restrictions start to ease, I hope that many of you have had the opportunity to meet up with family and friends again.

However, the pandemic is not over yet and many safety measures remain in place. At the Sight Centre we are still restricting the number of people who are in the building at any given time, therefore we would ask that you book ahead even if you're just popping in for a quick visit.

We are also continuing with our reduced opening hours for the time being, meaning that the Sight Centre remains closed on Mondays unless you have a pre-booked low vision appointment.

We still don't have a date for clubs reopening yet but we will of course keep you updated as soon as we have any news. If all goes to plan with the roadmap out of lockdown, the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact by 21 June. However, we need to find

out what this means regarding car sharing before we can ask volunteer drivers to provide transport for club members.

We are as eager as everyone else to get clubs back up and running as soon as possible so please rest assured that we are working on a plan and will be in touch as soon as we know more.

We are also very much looking forward to a big get-together as soon as we can. We'd originally hoped that this year's AGM might be the perfect opportunity for that. However, as we can't be certain when restrictions will be fully lifted we've decided to keep the AGM as a virtual event for the second year running. We've set the date for Wednesday 13 October and you'll be sent details of how to join us online or via telephone nearer the time.

Until we meet again - stay safe.

Carole Theobald
Chief Executive

165 years of **iSight**Cornwall

In September we are celebrating our 165th anniversary! We'll be producing a special anniversary edition of Outlook with lots of information on the history of Cornwall's oldest charity. We're also asking people to fundraise for us to mark the occasion. We've got people running marathons and jumping out of planes but if you prefer to keep your feet firmly on the ground there are other ways you can support us!

You could take inspiration from our anniversary and do something that marks each of our 165 years such as running, walking or cycling for 165 minutes. You could set yourself a physical challenge to do 165 squats or chair exercises over a week. But not every fundraising idea has to involve breaking into a sweat. You could collect loose change in one of our home donation boxes, or collect used stamps. You could become a Friend of **iSight**Cornwall, or take part in a Gaming for Good challenge (page 6). Or you could simply help us spread the word to local groups looking for a charity of the year to support.

Sight Centre Opening Times

Mon:	Closed
Tue:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Wed:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Thu:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Fri:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Sat:	Closed
Sun:	Closed

Book ahead

If you are planning to visit us, please make an appointment first so that we can limit the number of people in the Sight Centre and make sure the person you want to speak to is available.

Monday appointments

If you have received a letter asking you to come for a low vision or assistive technology appointment on a Monday, your appointment will still be going ahead. When you arrive at the Sight Centre, please ring the doorbell and a member of staff will direct you through to the clinic room.

Latest News

National award for low vision service

We're delighted to announce that **iSight**Cornwall won the Share Award at the Annual Visionary Awards which took place in November 2020. The Visionary Awards recognise and celebrate the impactful services delivered by sight loss charities across the UK and the positive difference they make to the lives of blind and partially sighted people.

We were nominated for the Share award by other sight loss charities after devising a way to carry out remote low vision assessments during the Coronavirus pandemic and sharing our toolkit with other Visionary members.

Sight Concern Bedfordshire said: "Thanks to **iSight**Cornwall's willingness to advise and share resources we have now piloted three remote clinics and will be increasing our offer in the new year – reaching more people at this critical time. Thank you **iSight**Cornwall for showing us the way."

Low vision services help to make the most of a person's remaining sight and can have a big impact on other parts of their life. With this in mind we were acutely aware that the national lockdown could cause people to feel even more isolated without the aids they would need to help them read, continue with their hobbies or watch TV.

So, with no idea how long our regular services would be restricted, we developed an innovative remote assessment to determine which magnification aids would be best suited for each person, before posting them directly to their home.

Since March 2020 more than 170 patients have received a remote assessment, with more than 350 aids dispatched.

Photo: Shannon Smith with award



Fundraising News

Gaming for Good

There's a new form of fundraising that's becoming increasingly more popular and it could be a real game changer for **iSight**Cornwall.

Gaming for Good is when individuals or teams raise money for charity simply by playing video games. Typically they will record themselves whilst they're playing and 'stream' it (i.e. broadcast it) live for others to watch online.

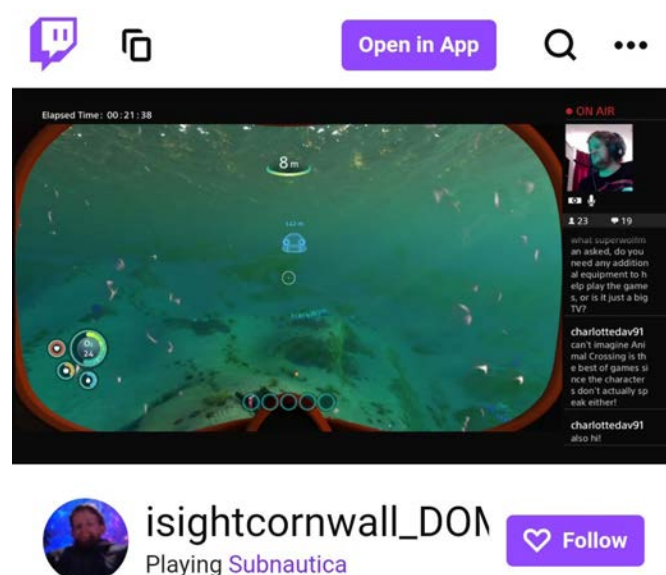
A live stream for charity might involve taking part in a challenge such as completing a computer game as fast as possible or taking part in a gaming marathon and playing for a set amount of time. Whilst the live stream is taking place the gamers will be promoting the charity to their followers and asking them to donate.

Our very own gaming experts Dominic Hall and Beth Perry have recently begun a series of live streams aimed at visually

impaired gamers. Dom plays a different game each time whilst talking about the benefits and challenges for visually impaired gamers. During the stream Beth will ask Dom questions that have been put forward by the viewers.

Their first stream was a huge success with over 100 viewers and several donations too. If you want to follow their streams go to www.twitch.tv/isightcornwall_dom or watch the videos on our website www.isightcornwall.org.uk/fundraising.

To donate to our Gaming for Good fundraising campaign go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/isightcornwallgaming.



Anniversary Skydive

On 26 September, Gary Oliver will be taking to the skies to raise money for **iSight**Cornwall with a tandem skydive. This will be the second time that Gary has raised money for **iSight**Cornwall by jumping out of a plane.

"I've been using **iSight**Cornwall's services for years, especially getting advice on different types of software, mobile phones and computers. They've been so helpful to me so I'm doing the skydive to give something back. If the charity disappeared there would be nothing.

"On a personal level, I want to do a skydive again because I enjoyed it so much last time and you don't need to have sight to do it. It feels liberating to jump out of a plane. I get the feeling of freedom – my disability doesn't matter in the slightest."

London Marathon 2021

After the disappointment of not being able to take part in the London Marathon last April, Claire Parkyn and Rachel Simmonds will finally get their chance to complete the 26.2 mile race in Cornwall! They didn't want to risk

further disappointment if this year's event was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions, so they've opted to take part in the virtual race instead. The virtual London Marathon, which takes place on 3 October along with the traditional London Marathon, will give 50,000 runners the chance to take part in the race wherever they are in the world. Claire and Rachel will complete the distance in Cornwall meaning that more of their friends and family will be able to cheer them on without having to travel to London.

One person who will be travelling to London, however, is Peter Brodey as he takes part in his first ever London Marathon. Peter's no stranger to marathons, having completed the Liverpool Marathon twice, but it has always been his ambition to run the famous course in London. With a history of glaucoma in the family, Peter is aiming to raise £1,000 for **iSight**Cornwall.

Charity Challenge

Paul Bourton Funeral Service (PBFS) in St Austell recognised that 2020 was a tough year for charities. So with that in mind they set themselves a challenge to

support local charities throughout 2021. They are aiming to take part in 21 separate fundraising challenges to raise money for 21 local charities with an overall target of £2,021.

We were delighted to be charity number 2 in their epic fundraising challenge. Over the course of a week, two of the PBFS team each aimed to virtually climb the highest point in England, Scafell Pike. In order to do this they had to climb and descend 5,433 stairs each, equating to a total of 1,956 metres. They successfully completed the challenge and surpassed their £100 target, raising £120 for **iSight**Cornwall.

Tesco Bags of Help

We're delighted to announce that we have 'bagged' £1,000 from Tesco's Bags of Help community grant scheme.

Bags of Help is run in partnership with community charity Groundwork, and sees grants awarded to thousands of local community projects every year.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic Tesco had to remove its popular blue token voting scheme for local community projects from its stores. Instead, Tesco staff worked together to decide which three local projects in their region should be awarded a grant of £1,000 and we're thrilled to have been chosen as one of them.

Thanks to our Supporters

Macfarlanes Charitable Trust
Mullion Golf Club
Mylor Church
Paul Bourton Funeral Service
South West Water
Tesco Bags of Help
United Methodist Church
St Keverne

Support our fundraisers

If you would like to support any of our fundraisers, visit their fundraising pages below or contact The Sight Centre:

Gary Oliver: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/gary-oliver9

Claire and Rachel: uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/MyGuideandMe

Peter Brodey: uk.virginmoneygiving.com/peterbrodey

A Simple **Guide to Canes**

Many people are familiar with the idea of white canes being used by people with visual impairments but not everyone will realise that there are different types of canes or even different types of cane tips.

We've been lucky enough to be given a brand new, innovative prototype cane tip to try out but first here is a guide to the different types of canes and cane tips already available.

Types of cane

Symbol cane

A small, foldable cane that indicates that you have low but useful vision. It is not used to detect objects on the ground. It measures about a metre in length when extended and you hold it to let people around you know that you're partially sighted.

Guide cane

A long, rigid cane used to find obstacles in front of you such as kerbs or steps. Guide canes usually reach from ground to waist height and are used

by people who have some useful vision but not enough to safely navigate a route through obstacles and hazards.

Long cane

The longest of all the canes, usually measuring from ground to mid-chest height. Long canes help you avoid obstacles if you have restricted or no vision and require training to use. You roll or tap the long cane from side to side as you walk.

Red and white cane

Any of the above canes with red banding on them indicates that you have a hearing impairment as well as sight loss.

Types of cane tips

Pencil tip

A cylindrical tip shaped a little bit like a pencil. They are often used on guide canes to identify obstacles and tend to be a similar diameter to the cane. However, because of their narrow shape, pencil tips are more likely to get stuck in pavement cracks or drain grids.

Marshmallow tip

Resembling a giant marshmallow, these tips are wider and shorter than the pencil tips. They can be fixed in place on the cane for a tapping technique or they be on a roller for a sweeping technique that allows constant contact with the ground.

Roller ball tip

These have a wide 5cm diameter and are mounted on a bearing to roll easily from side to side on the ground with the constant contact technique. They are designed to give greater sensitivity for picking up surface changes.

The all-terrain cane tip

iSight Cornwall trustee, Steve Holyer, has once again been designing products to help improve the lives of people with visual impairments. After the success of RoomMate, which provides audio descriptions of public conveniences, Steve has taken on the challenge of designing a new type of cane tip for guide and long cane users.

Steve was frustrated by his traditional roller ball cane tip snagging on various surfaces and

causing his cane to jab into his body. So he designed the Huju All Terrain Cane Tip which is the only tip that can be used on all terrains including grass, sand, gravel and cobbles without snagging.

The cane tip curves up at the end like the tip of a ski and is designed to fit Ambutech long and guide canes. It is made from a high quality type of plastic used in the aerospace industry called acetal which is hard wearing, strong and gives excellent tactile and audible feedback from surfaces.

We asked four cane users to test the Huju All Terrain tip and the overall impression was very positive. One user said: "Overall I've been very happy with the tip. It skips quite happily over the top of most obstacles, giving enough feedback to let you know it's there but without the unpleasant jolt you can sometimes get."

Another user said: "The tip worked well for me, it was great at identifying obstacles while walking and is the best tip I have tried so far."

The Huju All Terrain Cane Tip will be available to buy from the **iSight** Cornwall shop.

Emotional Wellbeing

Telephone befriending – one year on

On 23 March 2020 the UK went into its first nationwide lockdown and, along with everything else, all of our clubs suddenly stopped.

We rapidly set up a telephone befriending service in response to this so that people who were missing out on seeing friends or family could have a regular chat with one of volunteers to look forward to each week.

Over the last year, some wonderful friendships have been formed and are still going strong.

Ruth said: "Now that my sight has gone I get very frustrated at not being able to do the things I used to love such as baking and knitting and I'm often left wondering what to do with my time. So I really look forward to my call from Edna every week. She's lovely and we get on so well. I just love it!"

Edna also gets a lot out of the calls saying: "I really enjoy our

weekly chats. When we first went into the lockdown I thought about how many people would suddenly be feeling very lonely and wondered if there was anything I could do to help. I used to be a Talking Support volunteer for **iSight**Cornwall so I gave them a call and was delighted to find out that they had set up a befriending service that I could be part of."

Befriending hasn't just been a source of comfort to our clients but it has also helped the charity attract new forms of funding. Penzance Town Council, South West Water and Western Power have all generously provided grants to help manage the service.

Photo: Ruth talking to Edna



Silverline

Some people feel more comfortable talking to someone they don't know or they may need a bit more support than a befriender can give, in which case Silverline might be able to help.

Silverline is a free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Their specially trained helpline team can:

- Offer conversation and friendship
- Listen to your concerns or worries
- Provide information and advice
- Link you to local groups and services
- Refer you on to receive regular friendship calls

If you often feel more lonely at night than during the day, this is a really good service to use. Some people phone just to say goodnight to someone before bedtime.

Whatever you want to talk about, you can call Silverline for free on 0800 4 70 80 90. The service is aimed at people who are 55 or older.

Talking newspapers

Talking newspapers are a huge source of comfort to those who receive them, particularly during lockdown, and Cornwall is lucky enough to have three talking newspaper associations to choose from, all completely free.

The Cornish Talking Newspaper and Magazine Association

Western Morning News, West Briton, Cornishman or Cornish Guardian, Packet Series, and articles from Sunday supplements.

Louise Perry, 01872 273806
Jenny Salmon, 01872 277762

North Cornwall Talking Newspaper

Cornish Guardian, Western Morning News and North Cornwall Advertiser.

01208 74400

Pengarth Talking Newspaper

The Cornishman

01736 364307

Eye Health

Charles Bonnet Syndrome

What is Charles Bonnet Syndrome?

Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) is a condition which causes people who are losing their sight to see things that aren't there. These hallucinations appear to exist in the real world and can range from simple patterns, shapes or colours, to vivid detailed pictures of people, animals, objects or buildings.

Charles Bonnet Syndrome often develops in the first few weeks or months following a deterioration in your sight. This loss of sight means that your brain isn't receiving as much information from your eyes as it used to so it responds by filling in the missing information with fantasy patterns or pictures.

Even if the visions themselves aren't frightening it can be very alarming when they first start happening. Some people fear they may be developing a serious mental health problem

or dementia and therefore may be reluctant to tell their family or friends what they are experiencing.

The hallucinations can also cause practical problems by distorting the ground or the environment around you. These complex hallucinations can make it difficult to judge your surroundings and make you feel anxious about moving until the hallucination has passed, which could be a few seconds or even as long as a day.

Is there any treatment?

There is currently no cure for Charles Bonnet Syndrome but there are a few things you can try which may help to manage the hallucinations. For some people, simply knowing that the hallucinations are caused by sight loss rather than being a symptom of a physical or mental health illness can be hugely reassuring.

When a hallucination starts, you could try the following techniques to see if they help:

- Stare directly at the image and blink rapidly or reach out to touch it.
- Move your eyes from left to right for 15 to 30 seconds

without moving your head. If this doesn't work immediately have a rest and try again up to a maximum of five times.

- Change the lighting conditions that you're in when the hallucination occurs. So for example if you're in a brightly lit room, switch off the lights or go into a darker room. If the hallucination occurs when you're in a dimly lit area, try turning on the light or opening the curtains.
- Change what you're doing when the hallucination occurs for example get up to switch on the TV or move into another room as long as you can safely judge your surroundings.
- Try to get plenty of rest – the hallucinations can be worse if you're tired or stressed.

A rise in cases

Charles Bonnet Syndrome is thought to affect about 30% of people living with sight loss. However, the hallucinations can be triggered by anxiety, loneliness and stress meaning there has been a rise in the number of people experiencing CBS hallucinations during lockdown.

"During lockdown my Charles Bonnet Syndrome went berserk, and if I hadn't already been diagnosed and understood what it was then I would have found it terrifying. I got through it by walking into the town centre twice sometimes three times every day in order to focus on something different." Brad.

A recent storyline on Coronation Street has also helped to raise awareness of the condition meaning that more people may have contacted their GP and been diagnosed with CBS.

What support is available?

The charity Esme's Umbrella was set up to raise awareness of Charles Bonnet Syndrome. It has encouraged local telephone support groups called Esme's Friends to be established for people to talk about their experiences.

Sensory Solutions in Plymouth are running a telephone support group that is open for people in Cornwall to join.

For more information, contact Julie Lewis from Sensory Solutions on 01752 201899.

Assistive Technology

Electronic magnifiers

Electronic magnifiers, also known as video magnifiers, allow you to magnify text on a screen and change the colour contrast, making it much easier to read newspapers, medicine labels, books and much more. They can be handheld and portable or larger desktop devices.

Each different electronic magnifier has its advantages and disadvantages depending on your sight condition and your daily living needs. They vary in price from around £150 to over £2,000 depending on their size and the functions they perform.

At our Sight Centre in Truro you can 'try before you buy' by booking an appointment with one of our Assistive Technology Advisers so that you can find out which magnifier is best for your needs. We can even loan you some of the devices for up to two weeks so that you can try them at home to make sure they are right for you.

Our Assistive Technology Adviser, Dominic Hall, has reviewed two of the most portable handheld electronic magnifiers that we have available for demonstrations – the Mercury Pocket Voice and the Compact 6 HD Speech. Both come with built in Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software which means that they can recognise text within a scanned image and read it back to you.

Mercury Pocket Voice

This pocket-sized electronic magnifier has a 5.5 inch screen and looks more like a smartphone than a magnifier. It has a magnification range of 3x up to 80x zoom which makes it one of the only hand held magnifiers that can scan text at a distance such as an information board at a train station or a classroom whiteboard for example. It can also capture an entire A4 page in one scan and read it back to you.

The Mercury Pocket Voice can be controlled by manual gestures, voice command or touch screen. The manual gestures can be a bit tricky to remember, for example tapping three fingers on the screen allows you to change the

colour contrast. But the four voice commands are simple to use and allow you to take a scan, zoom in and out and change the colour contrast. There are five different colour settings for both text and background allowing you to find a contrast that suits you.

Other features of the Mercury Pocket Voice include a large tactile orange power button, a built-in light, a fold out reading stand and an anti-skew feature which arranges text in straight lines. It also comes with a pair of headphones so that you can listen to the audio feedback in public without worrying about disturbing people around you.

This magnifier costs £695 plus postage.

Optelec Compact 6 HD Speech

This magnifier has a 6 inch screen allowing you to see more text at a time. It has a magnification range of up to 21x zoom which means that it can scan text up to approximately one metre away as well as being able to capture a whole A4 page in one scan. It also has a built in stand allowing you to rest the magnifier on the page that you're reading.

The Compact 6 HD Speech is controlled through a touch screen menu. Simply tapping on the screen will allow you to zoom in and out. Not only does it have colour contrast options for the text you're reading but also for the touch screen buttons and background making the menu even more easy to use. It also features two tactile buttons; an orange one for power and a white one for screen capture.

You can also purchase a wearable headset for a completely hands-free option which is useful for cooking, writing or watching TV for example. Simply lock the magnifier into the Compact 6 HD Wear device and place it over your head. It magnifies the full screen and brings it close to your eyes for comfortable viewing with minimal eye strain.

The Compact 6 HD Speech magnifier costs £1,095 and the Compact 6 HD Wear costs an additional £175 plus postage. Optelec have offered a 10% discount to our members.

For more information on any of our magnifiers call us on 01872 261110.



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

Sight Centre

Opening Times

From 12 April the Sight Centre will be open as follows:

Monday:	Closed
Tuesday:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Wednesday:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Thursday:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Friday:	9.30am – 4.00pm
Saturday:	Closed
Sunday:	Closed

Outlook is also available as:

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