

iSight

Spring 2022 | sightscotland.org.uk



**Sight
Scotland**

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Dear Supporter

I hope you and your family are well.

A new year brings hope, and new opportunities to meet others and make new friends. With this in mind, I invite you to read about the volunteering positions we have. Many people with sight loss found the lockdowns lonely and isolating. But you can help. As we open up – and as restrictions lift – we are encouraging supporters to consider volunteering as a befriender.

A befriender spends time with a person with visual impairment on a scheduled basis and provides friendly social support. Befriending can have significant results, leading to increased self-confidence and enjoyment of life.

On page 3, I'm delighted to introduce our new Chief Executive: Craig Spalding. Craig joined us in January as Chief Executive of Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans.

He was previously the Director of the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service. Craig was born and raised in Australia, but his parents are Scots. Craig says he loves living over here and exploring our great outdoors.

On pages 8 and 10, we have articles introducing some of the pupils we support at the Royal Blind School.

Finally, we extend a warm thank you to everyone who donated to our Christmas appeal. We received a wonderful response and were able to provide more fantastic sensory lights for the children and young people in our care who can sense light. See the photos on page 18 and 19.

Thank you for reading – I wish you all the best,

Davina Shiell

Director of Marketing and Communications



Support Line

Talk to us on **0800 024 8973**

Now open 9am to 5pm,
Monday to Friday

Did you know?

Over 40% of people with sight loss who we surveyed said they were not confident about going back into the community with social distancing measures in place.

iSight in alternative formats To receive iSight in large print, braille or audio CD please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or email fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk

Sight Scotland is the operating name of The Royal Blind Asylum and School. Scottish Charity Number SC017167

Sight Scotland Veterans is the operating name of Scottish War Blinded, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, charity number SC047192.

Address: Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans, 2a Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh EH11 1PZ



Q&A with Craig Spalding

Chief Executive of Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans



Q: What motivates you at work?

Craig: “I love a challenge, and to solve seemingly impossible problems. I’m really passionate about making real and lasting changes, both organisationally, but more importantly, in individuals. I love seeing colleagues grow and develop, and achieve things they never thought possible.”

Q: What is your biggest takeaway from the past 22 months of the pandemic?

Craig: “The biggest thing that has struck me over the course of the pandemic is the increased need for empathy.”

“We have all experienced the past 22 months differently, but one thing we have in common is that we have all experienced challenges of some sort. Stopping to be curious about how someone else is coping with these challenges is more important now than ever, and I hope it is one of the long-term changes we see in our society as a result of the pandemic.”

Q: Our ‘Sight for Sight’ fundraising challenge has people taking on a challenge inspired by their favourite Scottish sight. What is your favourite place in Scotland?

Craig: My favourite place so far would be Lochgoilhead in Argyll - I spent a long weekend there last year, and it was the most amazing experience.

Q: What is your favourite Scottish meal or food?

Craig: Apart from my addiction to Irn Bru, my favourite Scottish meal would have to be my Uncle Jim’s stovies.

“

I’m really passionate about making real and lasting changes, both organisationally, but more importantly, in individuals.”

Do you know the power of volunteering?



Sight Scotland is currently recruiting new volunteer befrienders. Would you consider giving your time to support someone with sight loss?

Volunteer befrienders make a huge difference to the lives of people with sight loss.

Lois Lauder would love to spend time with a befriender. Lois has age-related macular degeneration. The 90-year-old's vision loss means she's now unable to see the squirrels scuttling around her garden in Bo'ness.

“**It's terribly important to have people who can support and help, especially to people with sight loss of my age.**”

Lois loves to chat, but she struggles to see the detail of people's faces.

Lois says: “I find that very difficult because I have to say to people, ‘I'm sorry, I can't see your face' and I can't see if they are looking at me or not, or whether they are speaking to me.

“It is worrying if I'm with people I don't know or who don't know me well. People need to understand that sight loss affects everybody in different ways,” she says.

“It's terribly important to have people who can support and help, especially to people with sight loss of my age.”

James Whyte, Volunteer Development Manager at Sight Scotland, says befriending sessions take place at an agreed time.

James says: “Volunteer befrienders can give the gift of time. Befriending is a supportive relationship, and it is a structured relationship with professional boundaries.

“These volunteer roles are uplifting and rewarding, while making a big difference to someone's life. The value of a friendly conversation and a social connection cannot be underestimated.”

More information

Lois has age-related macular degeneration. Read more about this common condition on page 15.

Could you spare some time to spend with someone like Lois?

Your volunteering would be for 2 hours each week. Volunteers receive training on sight loss conditions, as well as ongoing support.

Learn more at sightscotland.org.uk/volunteer

What difference could I make?

Carol, one of our befrienders, says:

“Befrienders can offer friendship and compassion... and laughter and fun and all of that.

“Every week, the person I call will set their alarm clock for five minutes before our scheduled call so she can be seated. That’s how much people value our calls: They look forward to it and it’s important to them. I think if we can give back to people like that, they feel valued and respected.”



Carol says: “Anybody can be a volunteer: you can be a taxi driver, work in a supermarket or be retired yourself. It’s about being friendly and willing to listen.

“You don’t have to be anything other than who you are – you just have to be you, and that’s enough.”

You could make such a difference to someone’s life this year.

Visit sightscotland.org.uk/volunteer



Passionate about volunteering



Bilal Iqbal

Braille-reader Bilal Iqbal is passionate about volunteering – and he encourages others to volunteer too.

“Volunteering is a great way to meet others,” he said.

“You interact with a lot of people and there’s problem solving too.”

Bilal, who has visual impairment, has volunteered on reception at the Royal Blind School and at our Kidscene holiday club for children with visual impairment and their siblings.

“
Volunteering is a great
way to meet others.”



“I’d go on the till at the morning tearoom,” Bilal said.

“I’d handle the money and take payments. The new £10 and £20 notes have braille on them now, so I can tell which note it is.”

Bilal is a graduate of the Royal Blind School. He recently did work experience with the Scottish Braille Press.

“I’d read braille documents and identify any spelling mistakes or errors in the braille before the documents go out. Spelling mistakes were the most common mistakes I’d spot.”

Bilal uses a long cane to navigate locally and goes further afield with assistance from a sighted guide.

“I’ve had someone supporting me to go to places, such as Tony Macaroni restaurants. I’ll get their margarita pizza – it’s quite good!”

More information

Visit sightscotland.org.uk/volunteer to learn more about volunteering



How do we transform the magic of Harry Potter into a braille book?

Sight Scotland runs the Scottish Braille Press, which translates documents to accessible formats, including Large Print, audio and braille. Braille is difficult to learn and is usually taught in school. Braille books can be ordered from our online braille bookshop, which has many popular titles, such as the Harry Potter series.

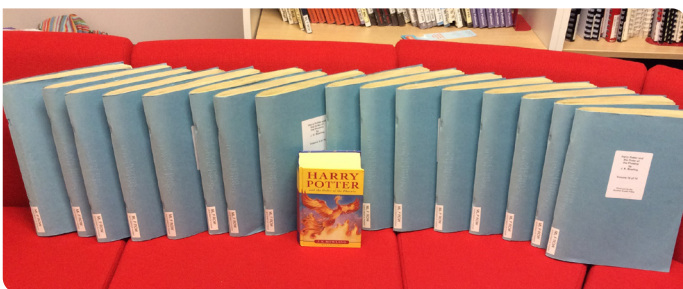
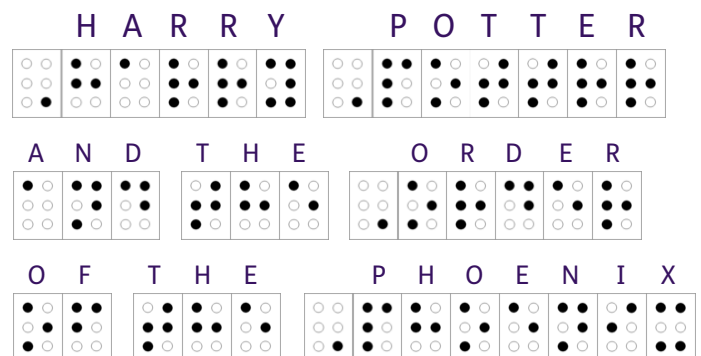
But how does a braille book get made? Stuart McPherson, Logistics Team Leader at the Scottish Braille Press, shares the steps involved:

1. First, authors and publishers send us a PDF copy of their book
2. We transcribe it to braille electronically using Duxbury translation software, and our transcriber formats the text into volumes
3. Braille proofreaders check the first draft of braille and highlight any corrections required
4. Braille is embossed onto pages using a braille printer, like the Braillo 650 SW2
5. Braille pages are stitched together into volumes, with up to 100 pages per volume, and given a protective cover
6. A braille label is placed on its spine, identifying the title and volume number
7. When ordered, volumes of braille books are sent to braille readers to enjoy. And when it's Harry Potter, that means many volumes!



Did you know?

When translated to braille, a 100-page paperback can transform into three braille volumes – and each braille volume has 100 pages of braille dots!



When transcribed into braille, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix fills 16 braille volumes – more than 1500 pages of braille!

Lucia's story



The Royal Blind School continues to provide specialist education, care and learning to children and young people with visual impairment, including those with complex needs.

Lucia, one of the Royal Blind School's newer pupils, has broadened her interests and has increased her independence since joining our specialist school.

Lucia grew up with visual impairment and complex needs as a result of a brain haemorrhage which struck when she was two years old.

Doctors were uncertain what Lucia's capacity for speech and vision would be, however, Lucia is now a very verbal and active 16-year-old who loves the outdoors. She has adapted extremely well to using her limited vision.

Following a fun summer at KidsScene, Sight Scotland's after school and holiday club, Lucia started attending the Royal Blind School at the start of the 2021/22 school term. Lucia's mum, Tracy, said the holiday club was the perfect way for her family and her daughter to meet school pupils and staff, and to familiarise themselves with the campus.

Lucia has settled into her new school routine and residential placement at the Royal Blind School, with a tailored programme combining one-to-one sessions, lessons with her classmates, and therapy.

Tracy said: "Lucia just needs that extra input to really help broaden her interests and social group, and to really help her blossom as a young adult.

“

The move to the Royal Blind School and its residential service has given her the opportunity to really build on her social skills, increase friendships, enjoy more group activities and, with the help of the staff, increase her independence as much as possible.”

A tailored approach

Each Royal Blind School pupil's curriculum is tailored to their needs and development.

Tracy said: "Lucia has a day that's tailored to her needs and interests and to the goals that the school are starting to set for her. She's responded to that really positively. She's spent a good bit of time working on stories and been out at Hagrid's Hut in the school grounds.

"I'm quite astonished at just how much blended learning there is and support between education and therapy, such as with speech and language therapy, which now seems to be well embedded in the curriculum for Lucia.

Tracy said: "It's been lovely to see that, as well as her interactions with the teachers and in other activities she's doing, like mobility sessions. I can see that Lucia is really happy."

Lucia's father, Callum, said: "The transition so far has gone really well and everyone is heartened by just how resilient Lucia is proving to be in adapting to her new life away from home during the week. She really is blossoming."

More information

Read more about learning support for pupils with visual impairment at sightscotland.org.uk/learning



Science lab



Hydropool

Royal Blind School



Rocco's story

Rocco is 12 years old and has visual impairment. He enjoys time with his friends at the Royal Blind School, where he stays four nights a week.

Life has been tough for Rocco, though: complications when he was born led to him having Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy. Rocco is wheelchair dependent and requires nursing care.

Rocco's parents Louise and Mark Wood say Rocco is happy and supported at the Royal Blind School. Rocco participates in many therapies, including hydrotherapy, rebound therapy and iJoy balance therapy, plus music, mindfulness and time in the sensory lights room.

Louise says: "Now, Rocco is approaching his teenage years. Sadly, the equipment he used as a child is no longer suitable."

"Fortunately, there is specialist equipment that could change Rocco's life forever."

The equipment is called the Innowalk Pro rehabilitation trainer. The Innowalk is a motorised standing frame that enables a user to change their postural position.

Louise says: "The Innowalk would support Rocco to experience walking and cycling movements safely and securely.

"It would enable him to keep active and moving every day, which is extremely difficult for Rocco as he can't support his neck, body and legs unaided."

Rocco and several other Royal Blind School pupils trialled the use of an Innowalk recently.

Louise says: "Rocco absolutely loved his assessment in the Innowalk. He was so happy and amazed with himself that he could actually stand and move his legs at the same time. He could feel what it is like to walk."



You can help children like Rocco to experience walking with the Innowalk

Exercising in a standing position would have follow-on benefits for Rocco and all the other Royal Blind School children who would use the Innowalk.

“The Innowalk gives us hope for a better future for our boy,” Louise says.

“It would help prevent pressure sores and muscle weakness. It would minimise the risk of Rocco getting scoliosis and complications of the spine. It would minimise the risk of Rocco needing another double hip reconstruction. But most of all, it would minimise and prevent long-term pain and suffering.

“The Innowalk would help Rocco achieve so much in his life.”

The Innowalk trainer would last Rocco right through adulthood and will be used by other children and young adults at Sight Scotland services too.

Louise said: “As parents, we felt extremely proud and were bursting with pride in the way that Rocco took to using this equipment so quickly.

“However, we were also extremely sad when he had to come out of it, knowing that he would not have that same sensation – being able to walk or cycle – again, unless there was an Innowalk he could use every day.

“We can’t even begin to imagine how Rocco feels.”

This month, we are launching our appeal to fund an Innowalk Pro machine for the Royal Blind School, for Rocco and his friends to use.

Every donation matters and will make a huge difference to the children.

Your support would mean so much to Louise and Mark Wood, and other families like them.



Can you make a donation?

If you are able, please consider making a donation. You can donate at sightscotland.org.uk/innowalk or by using the form on the back page of this magazine.

The impact of the pandemic on people with sight loss



We asked more than 400 people with sight loss about how they felt going out and what additional impact their sight loss had on their experience of lockdown.

The difficulty and stress of trying to social distance were highlighted as major concerns by respondents.

In 2021, people with sight loss said...

58%

said they felt there has not been enough understanding among the general public of the problems social distancing causes for blind and partially sighted people

29%

said they didn't feel confident returning to their previous routine while social distancing was in place

Ongoing issues identified by people with sight loss at a January 2022 focus group:

“When I was doing my shopping, you were only allowed one person in the shop at any given time, even when I explained that I needed help as I have a little one and I can't see labels. I got told they don't make the rules – it's one person only, so if I can't do my shopping, I should get someone else to do it. Trying to keep your independence is very difficult when left treated like that.”

“It's difficult when you're partially sighted or blind and you're living in a sighted world, where you have to fit in. I've noticed it is getting better, but we're not there yet.”

“Recording the lateral flow test result on the NHS website was pretty much a nightmare. It wasn't accessible with the screen reader JAWS, Zoom Text, which is the magnification software that I use.”

“The lateral flow test itself is nigh on impossible if you're trying to do it without assistance. It's quite fiddly and I can't see the liquid in the dropper that you have to put the drops in.”

More information

Read the full report on our website: sightscotland.org.uk/impact-of-covid

Our work influencing change



May 2022 Local Authority Elections

The Local Authority elections are being held in May, and we're asking candidates what actions they will take to improve communities for blind and partially sighted people.

So far, people with sight loss have raised many issues of concern, including pavement parking, difficulty of access to public transport, and access to equal education. We've summarised those issues in our 2022 Scottish Local Authority Elections Manifesto.

You can read about these issues at sightscotland.org.uk/2022-manifesto

Our campaign for Fair Rail

Thank you to everyone who has supported our campaign for Fair Rail so far! More than 250 people added their names to the open letter we sent to the Minister for Transport. We've also received cross-party support from Green MSPs Gillian Mackay MSP and Mark Ruskell MSP, and organisations such as The Alliance, Guide Dogs Scotland and Visibility Scotland.

What is our Fair Rail Vision?

Currently, some local authorities provide free or discounted rail travel to people with sight loss, while others don't. We want all people with sight loss across Scotland to have equality of access to rail transport, wherever they live!

Taking action on Fair Rail

Our Fair Rail campaign calls for the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to establish a new national policy of free rail travel across Scotland for people with a National (Scotland) Concessionary Travel for Blind Persons card, as well as their companions.

Next, in late March, we will feature the campaign at our exhibition at the Scottish Parliament and will ask MSPs to support it.

Read more at sightscotland.org.uk/FairRail



Get involved

If you have visual impairment, we still want to hear from you.

- What changes do you want councils to consider for people with visual impairment?
- What has navigating your local streets been like for you, recently?
- How accessible to do you find public transport as a visually impaired person?

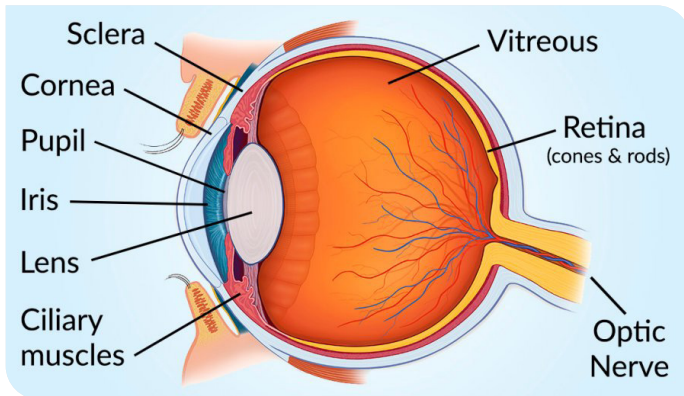
Email us at policy@sightscotland.org.uk to share your views.

Research into eye disease

Sight Scotland is committed to funding research into eye disease. We know that research can find solutions to change lives for the better.

Our funding is managed and distributed in partnership with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd). We are contributing £100,000 over two years, as one of several funders, to support the Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research (SCONe) project. This project is being delivered by the University of Edinburgh.

SCONe's work involves building up a large collection of images of retinas. The retina is the layer at the back of the eyeball that senses light and sends signals to the brain via the optic nerve.



Each year, millions of retinal images are captured by 1200 optometrists across Scotland. These images are a rich resource for research and for work in eye healthcare.

SCONe aims to collect, classify and curate a repository of these images. This repository will help enable the early identification of eye disease, improve clinical outcomes, and help uncover biomarkers that are predictive of ocular and systemic diseases.

More information

Learn more about research we support at: sightscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research



All about Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration is the most common eye condition for people over 50 years old. The risk of developing the disease increases with age: by the age of 90, you have a one in five chance of developing AMD. The condition affects the macula – the part of the eye responsible for your central vision and all the detail you see.

What are the symptoms?

Early symptoms can include struggling to read small print and see detail. For some, a straight line may appear wavy, or you may notice a blurry spot in the centre of your vision. The most common difficulty for someone with AMD is that they may lose the ability to recognise someone. This happens because the macula is responsible for the detail we see, and facial features have a lot of detail.

What are the types of macular degeneration?

There are two types of AMD: wet AMD and dry AMD. Dry AMD is caused by a build-up of a fatty substance called drusen which gradually deteriorates the macula. Wet AMD occurs when the cells in the macula change and new blood vessels start to grow. These blood vessels can bleed, which is why it is called 'Wet'. The formation of the new vessels can cause scarring which has a significant effect on vision.

Is there a treatment?

There is currently no treatment for dry AMD, however, lighting and aids like magnification can help you to adapt. Wet AMD can be treated in a couple of ways if it is caught early, such as with Anti-VEGF therapy [Anti-vascular endothelial growth factor therapy].



Lois Lauder (page 4) has age-related macular degeneration.



Taking fundraising to fifth gear

We are so grateful to a creative group of female truck drivers who have found an innovative way to raise funds!

The drivers are selling colourful 2022 calendars that showcase their trucks and the work they do – as well as raise funds.

All proceeds from calendar sales are split between five charities, of which Sight Scotland is one. We are delighted that so far, £4,250 has been donated to Sight Scotland!

Karen Sutherland, the driving force behind the calendar, says she wants to show everyone what drivers do and to raise some money for charity too.

“We chose Sight Scotland because my boss’s son Nathan receives excellent care and has a high quality of life at Allermuir, Sight Scotland’s care service for adults with visual impairment and additional needs. It was a way of giving something back and saying thank you.”

“No-one in Scotland should have to face sight loss alone, and we wanted to help people with sight loss receive the support and care they need, to build their independence.”

Thank you, Karen, for everything you and your friends have done!

Every purchase contributes a donation!

2022 Girls Torque calendars are still available to purchase for £12.50 plus postage.

Visit hewsoninternational.co.uk to order a 2022 Girls Torque calendar.



A percentage of the proceeds from the sale of this calendar will be donated to a leading UK cancer support charity

ERSKINE
MIND HEALTH
Ronald McDavid House
Sight Scotland



Karen Sutherland and Nathan, who stays at Allermuir, our accommodation for young adults with sight loss and complex needs.



Sight
Scotland



Tackle a Sight for Sight

Help people with vision loss

Take on a personal fundraising activity inspired by your favourite Scottish sight. From cycling around Loch Ness to climbing Arthur's Seat, the choice is yours.

 Visit sightscotland.org.uk

   #SightForSight

Registered Charity No. SC017167

Beautiful Christmas baubles



iSight readers sent in a fantastic response to our call for Christmas bauble decorations!

Amy and the other children and young people we provide care for decorated their Christmas tree with the baubles you sent in, such as the ones below.

A massive thank you to everyone who helped make Christmas special for all those with visual impairments that we care for!



Amy, a young person in our care who loves to decorate Christmas trees.



Thank you for your support!

A huge thank you to everyone who donated to our Christmas appeal for sensory lights!

Your donations helped us to buy the sensory lights that were very much needed by everyone in our residential services – thank you.

These sensory lights provide stimulation and enjoyment for those in our care who have visual impairment, but can still sense light.

Thank you for all your support!



Yes, I would like to help people with sight loss.



Sight Scotland

Tackling vision loss together

Please complete and return this form or donate online at sightscotland.org.uk/donate

Title: Forename: Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

1. I would like to donate

My donation is for the Innowalk appeal so children like Rocco can be supported to walk and cycle.

Here is my donation of £12 £22 £54 or my own choice of £

Please debit my card OR find the enclosed cheque or voucher made payable to Sight Scotland:

Mastercard Visa CAF Charity card

Card no. Expiry date / Security code

Name on card Signature(s)

2. I would like to set up a regular gift

Please consider making a monthly donation. Monthly donations support Sight Scotland's ongoing work and future planning to ensure everyone with sight loss in Scotland gets the help they need.

I would like to make a monthly gift of £5 £9 £15

My own choice of £

Starting on the 1st 15th of month year

To: The Manager Bank / Building society

Address Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s) Signature(s)

Account no. Sort code Date // Spring 2022

Originator's ID 251709



Instruction to your bank or building society: Please pay Sight Scotland from the account detailed in this description, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Sight Scotland, and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

3. My Gift Aid

Make your donation worth 25% more with Gift Aid. If you are a UK tax payer, we can reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate - just tick the box below.

Yes, I am a UK tax payer and I would like Sight Scotland to reclaim tax on all donations I have made in the past 4 years or will make in the future until I notify you otherwise. I 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. Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or if you no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and / or capital gains.

giftaid it

4. Communications preferences

Please let us know if we can continue to communicate about our work, progress and future needs so that together we can ensure everyone in Scotland with sight loss has someone to turn to.

Please contact me by phone. My number is:

Please contact me by email. My email address is:

If you would prefer not to hear from us or change the way we communicate with you, please email privacy@sightscotland.org.uk