

iSight

Winter 2020 | sightscotland.org.uk



**Sight
Scotland**

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Dear Supporter...

By Davina Shiell

Welcome to our winter edition of iSight. In this edition, we introduce our new Community Service – a service many months in development. The new Community Service is focused on reaching out in new ways to support more people impacted by sight loss, including the families of people diagnosed with visual impairment. We’ve brought together a team of three with more than 60 years of transferrable experience between them. Read more on page 6.

On page 4, we feature the fantastic work done by Kirin Saeed, who works as a Braille Proof Reader at the Scottish Braille Press. Kirin wrote a play during the Coronavirus lockdown about her relationship with her support worker, and then performed it in October.

The young people we provide support to have also been busy this year. On page 8, 16-year-old Angus Dixon tells us about his efforts assisting others with technology. On page 12, we share the stories of four Royal Blind School pupils who have completed their schooling with us, achieving their National Qualifications and more.

On page 15, you’ll see four ways your Christmas shopping could help us tackle sight loss. This year has been a tough one, so a huge thank you to everyone who has helped us make a difference for people with sight loss.

We are determined that no-one should face sight loss alone and have ambitions to do more in 2021, so please visit our website sightscotland.org.uk to find out more.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

D Shiell

Davina Shiell
Director of Marketing and Communications
Sight Scotland



Did you know?

Two thirds of the people with visual impairment we surveyed recently said they felt their visual impairment had made the Coronavirus lockdown more difficult for them.

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 Registered Charity No. SC017167

Sight Scotland Veterans SCIO Charity No. SC047192

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50 Gillespie Cres
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Join our journey to support more people across Scotland

We launched our new ambition – reaching and supporting more people with sight loss across Scotland – and our new name, Sight Scotland, with celebrations at our residential services on Thursday 8 October. Check out the photos from Braeside House, Forward Vision and Kidscene after school care.



A message of hope

“Hope” is a poem written by Andrew Pettigrew, who attended the Royal Blind School from 2011 until summer 2020. Andrew is now studying a Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing at the University of Strathclyde. We wish him all the best! See pages 12–13 for more news about our 2020 school leavers.

Hope by A J Pettigrew

Hope is a song that fairies can sing,
It flickers through your fingers with its gossamer wings,
It dances in the magic of a newborn spring day,
It defies a legion of demons that stand in its way.

Hope is the father of blossoming dreams,
It shimmers in flowers of purples and greens,
It lies in the calm of a sweet summer night,
It shines in the dawn, in the silver-limned light.

Hope is the beauty of a child’s sunrise,
It is the hand of a mother who wipes tears from his eyes,
It’s a whisper that promises to be there at the end,
And hope lives there in the smiling face of a friend.

Companionship can be complicated

A woman with visual impairment and her support worker tread the boards



Relationships can be complicated — especially relationships between people with visual impairment and those employed to support them.

A new play explores one of these complex relationships.

Kirin Saeed, who is registered blind, wrote the play with her care worker, Sara. The duo first performed the play, “Crossing Care”, at a North Edinburgh theatre in early October. Kirin has since been submitting the play to performing arts and disability festivals for consideration.

“The play is about a year in the life of both of us: from when Sara started working with me until when she moved on to another job,” Kirin said.

“It illustrates the many issues people and their support workers have, in my case, as a person with a visual impairment.”

Kirin works as a Braille Proof Reader at the Scottish Braille Press. She said she appreciated the work and efforts of support workers, even though the relationships formed were unusual.

“For many people with visual impairment and for lots of disabled people, what often occurs in our lives is: we meet and have intense relationships with people who are either supporting us in securing benefits, enabling us to have confidence doing something, or doing rehabilitation work with us,” Kirin said.

“That relationship is really intense, but then it ends abruptly and we have to move on. Then we have to learn new things, with a new support person.”

The play highlights the difficulties that occur when disagreements arise between a support worker and a supported person.

“One of the scenes shows the role a worker has in enabling social situations to be more positive and interactive,” Kirin said.

“Another scene illustrates those moments of crisis, when both parties have to make decisions that cross over the grey barrier between employer and employee.

“Then there’s that final moment, when everything settles and there are positive outcomes — but then the worker has to leave. The whole cycle starts over again.”

Kirin hopes her experience can help more plays featuring blind and partially sighted actors come to stages.

“We’re intending to share our experience with playwrights and directors as a training opportunity on how to work with someone who’s visually impaired,” she said.

“We can teach people the whole process we used, from writing to performing, and everything in between.”

Kirin said she hoped more people with visual impairment would become involved in theatre.

“I wanted to tell my story and then open the door to other people to tell their stories. I want to show visually impaired people that they can do this too,” she said.

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I wanted to tell my story and then open the door to other people to tell their stories.”

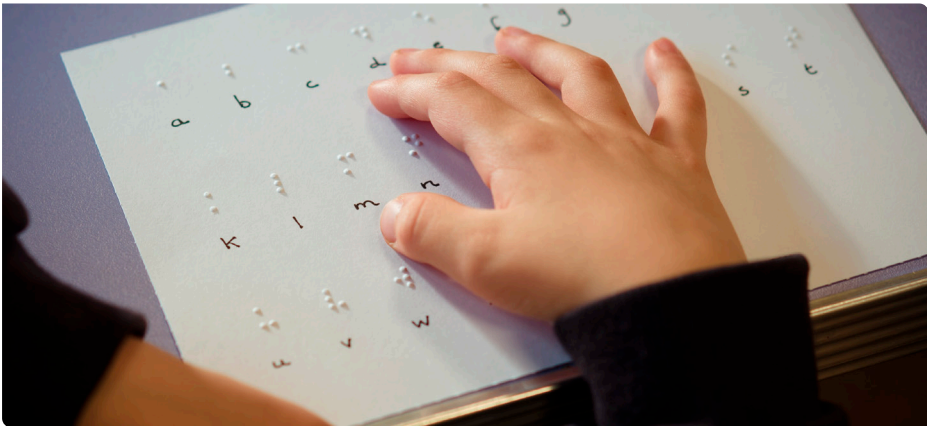


New Community Service coming soon!

Sight Scotland will soon launch our new Community Service. This new service is part of our commitment to reach more people impacted by sight loss right across Scotland.

The initial focus of Community Services will be to:

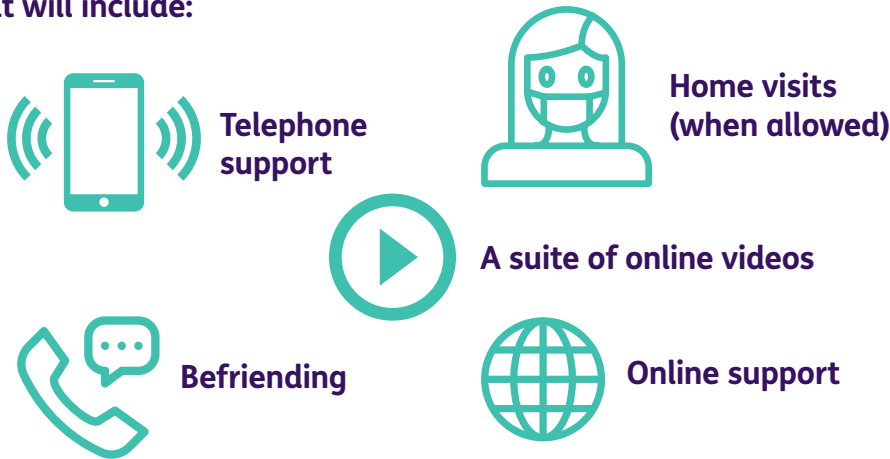
- Grow the new Family Wellbeing Service, which will provide expert advice and support to families who have a loved one affected by visual impairment.
- Deliver the Rehabilitation and Mobility Service in the City of Edinburgh Council local authority, supporting individuals and families following a sight loss diagnosis.
- Extend our education support for young people in mainstream education even further across Scotland.



The Family Wellbeing Service

The Family Wellbeing Service will provide practical and emotional support to not only those with a visual impairment, but everyone affected by that visual impairment, including friends, families and carers.

It will include:



The Rehabilitation and Mobility Service

The Rehabilitation and Mobility Service will support 275–300 people in Edinburgh. It will be delivered on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council and is due to start April 2021.

We will support individuals and families following a sight loss diagnosis, offering direct support from staff at that very early stage. This includes information and advice, helping them improve their everyday skills and building confidence.

Highly experienced staff

The team of three we've assembled to deliver this support have 60 years of transferrable experience between them. Colin Hilditch, previously Service Development Manager at the Royal Blind School, is leading the service's strategic and operational development as Head of Community Services.

Colin said: "Our new community

services' offering is a great example of how we can reach out in new ways to support more people impacted by sight loss.

"Our research shows that people with visual impairment can lose their confidence, self-esteem and ability to do many day-to-day activities. For families, they have huge concerns about how to best support their loved ones

and don't have the support themselves in coping, particularly at first diagnosis stage.

"I'm really excited at the prospect of using all of the skills and knowledge we have across the charity to help provide advice, together with the practical and emotional support so many people with sight loss need".



Anita O'Reilly, Senior Community Worker

Anita O'Reilly has worked for Sight Scotland for 18 years.

Anita said: "I have had the privilege of working with many young people and their families over those years, as well as

working alongside multi-disciplinary teams of care staff, therapists, nurses, teachers and class staff.

"We work alongside our colleagues to help our young people learn and grow and access the world around them."



Debbie McGregor, Community Worker

Debbie has 15 years of experience at Sight Scotland as a Residential Care Worker.

Debbie said she's always proud when young people with visual impairment learn new skills.

"For example, I worked with a young man who enjoyed a milkshake for supper every night, which was prepared by staff. After a chat with his Mum, we decided on a plan that

allowed him to prepare milkshakes for himself," Debbie said.

"We created a social story in braille with instruction for the task, which we talked through with him. He completed this task with great success, and we could tell how pleased he was.

"A few years on, this young man continues to make milkshakes. Knowing that the skills he gained continue to be carried out makes it all worthwhile."

The DJ sharing his technical expertise



Angus Dixon

Like many teenagers, Angus Dixon is passionate about electronic music and technology. The 16-year-old lives in Tranent, East Lothian, where he has DJ'd at his high school's disco and school sports day. Angus said specialist technology can enable people with visual impairment, like him, to do so much—and he is keen to share his knowledge.

The gregarious young man has been blind since his birth due to a rare eye condition called Leber congenital amaurosis.

Angus said: “It was devastating for my parents to find out I was blind and they worried how I would cope, but specialist support has made a big difference for me.

“I can do so much with my iPhone and I use social media a lot. I am a member of online groups where I help advise other people with visual impairment on using new technology.”

Angus attends Ross High School in Tranent. He said he loves the social aspect of school and was happy to return in August.

Angus said: “I found the lockdown very difficult, I was missing friends and school. I was worried about how social distancing would work being back at school but it was great seeing my friends again and I feel much better.”

At Ross High School, Angus is supported by Sight Scotland specialist visual impairment teachers from the Royal Blind School through a ground-breaking partnership with East Lothian Council. Through this partnership, Sight Scotland teachers work collaboratively with teaching professionals at Ross High School and other mainstream schools to ensure pupils' developmental needs and educational needs are being met. This can include teaching braille and introducing specialist technology and techniques.

“**I have been learning braille since nursery and it has helped me a lot in school and in other activities too.”**

Angus is a strong advocate for the teaching and learning of braille.

“I have been learning braille since nursery and it has helped me a lot in school and in other activities too,” Angus said.

“In school I use BrailleNote Touch; a device which you use like a tablet but with braille. This was provided for me by East Lothian Council and teachers from the Royal Blind School really supported me in learning braille and using BrailleNote.

“I have used braille to learn lines for plays I have performed in, and it helps me prepare my sets as a DJ too, which I've already played at events like our school disco and sports day. I think it is

very important people with visual impairment can learn braille.”

Angus is doing well at school, achieving an A grade in his National 5 exam for music this summer.

Angus said: “It is important that the services provided by Sight Scotland and other charities are there for people with visual impairment. It would be really difficult if that support wasn't there.

“The specialist support I have received at school has been so important to me and now I'm looking forward to the future after school, doing more as a DJ and hopefully working in computers and technology.”



Braille readers read documents, emails and webpage text using the refreshable braille display at the bottom of BrailleNote devices like this.



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

Arty presents in production

Care home residents at Braeside House in Edinburgh have been working on paintings to gift their families for Christmas.

Meaningful Activity Assistant Tony Daley said residents were loving the experience.

“Our residents are getting great satisfaction from creating something tangible. We’re using acrylic paint and painting flowers and landscapes,” he said.

“Residents have been getting great feedback from other staff, residents and their families about what they’ve produced.

“Whenever someone comes into the room and comments on it, it gets a bit of chat going and it really lifts residents’ esteem.”

Staff are wearing the recommended PPE and following Scottish Government advice to minimise the risk of Coronavirus transmission at both Braeside House in Edinburgh and Jenny’s Well, Sight Scotland’s care home for older people with sight loss in Paisley.

Tony said a maximum of two residents are taking part in each painting session at Braeside House, ensuring safe social distancing.

“We have some people who are totally blind, but they enjoy painting and having other people explain it to them. They like the learning part of it, and it’s something to pass on to their family,” Tony said.

Sight Scotland is very grateful to every family and every business that donated art supplies earlier this year.

Tony said: “We’ve had easels, canvasses, watercolours, oil paints, brushes, pencils, and pens donated as well as donations from individuals. Tesco kindly donated £500 for supplies too. We’ve had a massive response and we’re very grateful to everyone who has helped.”



Loving being back at school

Day pupils returned to the Royal Blind School premises in August to join their fellow pupils within our residential services for children and young people.

Pupils have found the differences in school, due to Coronavirus restrictions, a little tricky and are missing having the freedom to independently access all areas of the school building. They particularly miss having lunch with their friends in the dining room, using the hydrotherapy pool and the library. Having said this, they have all worked really hard to adapt to the restrictions and have done so well. Several classes have been learning about the December holidays for a variety of world religions (Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism) and have been studying World War II as a topic.

Staff and pupils at the Royal Blind School extend their Christmas wishes to all our readers and supporters. Merry Christmas everyone!



Our School Leavers in 2020



Namarra

Namarra came to the Royal Blind School in September 2013 and left us in June to transition to adulthood. Namarra made some lifelong friends and has continued to keep in touch with them since leaving.

She gained a variety of National Qualifications in subjects ranging from Art to Maths to Crafts, Design and Technology (CDT). Namarra enjoys braille and is a keen reader of fiction. We have had the privilege of hearing her sing at many an assembly and Christmas show. Namarra has a wealth of memories from the Royal Blind School and we wish her all the best for the future.



Andrew

Andrew started the Royal Blind school when he was 12 years old and has now embarked on an English undergraduate degree at Strathclyde University and will no doubt go on to become a world-famous author. No pressure, Andrew!

Andrew has enjoyed his time at the school. As well as the knowledge he has gained from the school, he has also acquired a huge range of skills which will allow him to lead an independent life in the future.

Andrew is particularly adept at using BrailleNote Touch devices and has recently acquired funding for his own piece of equipment to support his access to learning at university. Andrew

achieved a range of National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher and took a particular interest in Politics, Latin and English. He has been a star performer in almost all of the Christmas shows and always gave a great performance!

Andrew will be a great advocate for access to further education and to employment in the future, and has been an inspiration to the pupils at school.



Stefan

Stefan left after 14 years at the Royal Blind School. Stefan achieved a range of National Qualifications and gained invaluable skills of independence as a young adult.

He loves music and has always been a keen

performer and entertainer in Christmas shows and assemblies. His favourite singers are Elton John and Bon Jovi! Stefan has an excellent memory and has always been the first one to learn his lines in the Christmas show.

He is very sociable and loves being out and about in the community. He has a variety of interests, including football, so has lots to talk about! We wish him all the best in the future and we are very proud of the young man he has become.



Ciaran

Ciaran has grown and developed significantly since joining the Royal Blind School in 2011. He has formed great relationships with his peers and staff, both in class and in residential, and gained a range of National Qualifications.

He has shown a great interest in learning, particularly French and Music. He has gained skills from the study of Mindfulness that he will be able to use in later life, despite being resistant to it at first!

Ciaran is an able brailist, using the BrailleNote Touch and screen-reader software which will enable him to access information as he gets older. He has gained invaluable skills of independence in Gigha house with our residential staff, the class team and the Occupational Therapists. Ciaran is a sociable young man who will go on to form lasting relationships with peers and those who work with him. We wish him all the best in the future.



“Ciaran has grown and developed significantly since joining the Royal Blind School in 2011.”

Supporting veterans at home



Sight Scotland Veterans’ new Interim Director of Services, Clair Bryan, provides an update on our sister charity’s services for veterans with visual impairment.

What services has Sight Scotland Veterans been running since both the Linburn and Hawkhead centres closed due to Coronavirus restrictions?

“Our Outreach Team has continued to work with our veterans, keeping in contact by phone and during home or garden visits or sighted guide walks. We have also run a weekly quiz . Our Rehabilitation Team has still been undertaking assessments and making referrals to other agencies such as local authorities, health and social care. The decision to keep our centres closed has been taken in light of the continued rise in numbers of Coronavirus cases and our wish to keep veterans and staff as safe as possible. It may be that we have to stay closed until Spring 2021.”

What new ways of supporting veterans are you developing?

“Over the next few months, we are planning new events and activities for those who are online, and extra group social activities by phone. We are also trying to boost engagement though the veterans’ Facebook page with self-management videos, tips and hints.”

Could you tell me more about Sight Scotland Veterans’ ambition of reaching more veterans across Scotland?

“Yes, we have great ambitions to do more and to help more people. We know there are a huge number of people living with a visual impairment, but are not receiving the support they need. Many are from the National Service generation that may not think they are eligible for support from us. With our recent change in name and a commitment from the Trustees of the charity to grow, we are now in a position to start to explore how we can do that.”

Four Christmas gifts that support our charity’s work

Every purchase from Sight Scotland supports our charity’s work. Why not do your Christmas shopping with Sight Scotland and help us continue to tackle sight loss in the process?





Great Prizes!

1st prize - £500
2nd prize - £250
3rd prize – 1 night Bed & Breakfast at The Fairmont Hotel, St Andrews

1. Buy your Christmas cards from Sight Scotland

We have five beautiful Christmas card designs to offer. Cards come in packs of 10 and cost just £3.75 plus postage. Order online, or fill out the order form that came with this magazine.

2. Purchase Christmas raffle tickets for a chance to win £500

Buying tickets for our Christmas Raffle is a great way to make a donation to Sight Scotland - and put yourself in the running for some great prizes! Tickets are £1 each and are sold in bundles of five for £5. Buy tickets for yourself, or for friends or family. The raffle will be drawn on Friday 18 December. Tickets for sale at sightscotland.org.uk/christmas-affle

3. Purchase a braille book for a braille-reader you know

Crime thrillers like Alex Gray’s “The Stalker” and Lesley Kelly’s “The Health of Strangers” are among the titles newly available in braille format from our online store. Order a new braille book for a braille reader you know so they have some great new material to enjoy this Christmas. Order from sightscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/enterprise/braille-bookshop



4. Gift some funky Sight Scotland-branded items

We have stylish items for sale online: a dishwasher-safe Thermos mug, an insulated water bottle, an A5 notebook, a reusable tote bag, a trolley token and a Sight Scotland pin badge. All proceeds go towards supporting people with sight loss. Order from the enclosed form or online at sightscotland.org.uk. Merry Christmas!



I would like to help support Sight Scotland



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: Email address:

Phone number: By giving us your email address you consent to receiving email updates from Sight Scotland.

1. My special gift:

I enclose a cheque or voucher made payable to Sight Scotland ☐ Individual gift amount £

Please debit my Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF Card ☐

Card no. Expiry date / Security code

Name on card Signature(s)

2. My special gift to support Sight Scotland:

There's no need to fill in this section if you just want to give a one-off gift to support Sight Scotland. Please complete and return this form or set up a direct debit at sightscotland.org.uk/donate

I would like to make a monthly gift of £3 ☐ £5 ☐ £10 ☐

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 / /

Originator's ID 251709



Instruction to your bank or building society:
Please pay Sight Scotland direct debits from the in this instruction, 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.

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4. Communications preferences

If you would prefer not to hear from us or would like to change the way we communicate with you please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or email privacy@sightscotland.org.uk



The Direct Debit

This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits. If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Sight Scotland will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Sight Scotland to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request. If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Sight Scotland or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society. If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Sight Scotland asks you to. You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.