

iSight

Summer 2022 | sightscotland.org.uk



**Sight
Scotland**

In this issue:

Supporting
independence
Page 4

Speaking at
Parliament
Page 6

Retraining
at age 42
Page 12

Sharing the lived experience of people with sight loss





Dear Supporter

We are working hard to be there for all who turn to us for support. Within our magazine, you'll read about how people are being empowered at school, at work, and even at public places like the Scottish Parliament, to share their voice and do the everyday things they love.

We are increasing our provision of education to several children and young people with visual impairment who attend mainstream schools. In addition to supporting young people in their local communities, we are also welcoming a number of pupils to attend specialist lessons at the Royal Blind School campus in Edinburgh. You can read about Samantha's experience on page 4.

Our Family Wellbeing Team is supporting people of working age, like Phillip Purvis, who is now facing sight loss at the age of 42. The team is supporting Philip to retrain and work in a new way. You can read more about Phillip on page 12.

There's nothing more powerful than hearing someone's lived experience. At an event at the Scottish Parliament recently, Bilal Iqbal delivered a speech to MSPs and guests about his time at the Royal Blind School and the challenges he now faces. Learn more on page 6.

The recent pandemic taught us that access to green space is so important for everyone's mental health. That's why we're planning to rebuild the outdoor area at Forward Vision, our residential care service for people with visual impairment and complex needs to ensure they have a suitable outdoor space all year round. Read about it on page 10.

I hope you enjoy reading your copy of iSight and that you have a great summer.

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 the past 10 years, the number of young people with visual impairment in Scottish schools has increased to 4,930 pupils.

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



Supplementing children and young people's learning



The Royal Blind School has broadened its provision of specialist education to children and young people with visual impairment who attend mainstream schools.

More than 170 young people who attend mainstream schools in East Lothian, Midlothian and the Orkney Islands local authority areas are supported by our Outreach education team. This Outreach team consists of specialist teachers, learning support assistants and habilitation specialists. This team identifies the best way to assist them with their learning at their local school.

Now, several pupils are also travelling to the Royal Blind School campus in Morningside, Edinburgh, for flexible placements, which

supplement the learning they receive at their mainstream school.

Our Head of Learning, Lucy Chetty, said: “When visiting the school, the young person has access to our many QTVIs (Qualified Teachers of Children with Visual Impairment), who can provide expertise across all areas of the curriculum.

“The young person’s school day here is customised to their learning needs and outcomes, whether it’s independent living skills, braille learning, time with our physical therapists, or time with subject-specialist teachers, who are experts in enabling a child with visual impairment to access a subject area.”

Lucy said: “We work in close partnership with the local authority setting to make sure all the support measures around the child are consistent and coordinated. It is important that the pupils who are with us on a flexi placement have a collaborative team around them and that both schools work together to achieve the outcomes for that pupil.

“Once young people have learned skills in one context, such as at the Royal Blind School, our Outreach team can help them to use those skills in a different context, and within their local community.

“We can be responsive to their needs and help them flourish.”

“

We work in close partnership with the local authority setting to make sure all the support measures around the child are consistent and coordinated.”

Samantha's story



Samantha Gough

Samantha Gough, 18, says attending Sight Scotland's Royal Blind School for the past year on a flexible placement has been "life-changing".

Samantha, who is from Lasswade, has been visually impaired from birth due to cerebral visual impairment (CVI). This is a condition where the eyes are healthy, however, the brain's visual pathways do not work, resulting in sight loss. Samantha's sight has deteriorated over time and she is now severely sight impaired.

Samantha said: "My sight started to get worse in 2014. As my sight has deteriorated over time, I've had to relearn how to live. I needed to do mobility training to find my way around the world again."

For the last year, Samantha has split her schooling between her mainstream school and a flexible placement at the Royal Blind School.

Samantha said: "At the Royal Blind School, I'm learning how to use braille, which I love because I had lost the ability to read and write, as my sight was taken away from me due to my condition."

"Reading and writing in braille has helped me reconnect with that. It feels amazing. I feel like I've found a part of myself again, which I had lost when my sight deteriorated. I'm now working with different technologies, such as a BrailleNote Touch, to be able to type and learn how to use a computer."

“

I feel like I've found a part of myself again, which I had lost when my sight deteriorated.”

Samantha has also learnt independent living skills. “It’s things like learning cooking skills, and learning how to go to the shops and advocate for myself by saying what support I need. I’m just learning how to use the bus independently, which will hopefully progress to train travel,” Samantha said.

“The Royal Blind School teachers have also been helping me with self-advocacy. Now that I have this support to learn all these independent living skills, as well as specialist teaching in things like braille, I feel like I can be confident. I can be an 18-year-old.”

Playing sport is one of Samantha’s favourite activities. In PE class, she has been teaching classmates to play Goalball – a fast-paced sport in which all players’ eyes are covered and they must throw and block a ball that has bells inside it.

Samantha said: “There are still struggles and things I’ll always need help with, but it’s about learning coping strategies and how I can do things on my own. It’s about building that up and being prepared for the future.”



Samantha Gough uses a page with raised lines to show her classmate the layout of a court.



Samantha Gough leading a PE lesson with her classmate Amy

Sharing their lived experience at Scottish Parliament



Bilal speaks to guests

We believe it's crucial for policy-makers to hear the lived experience of people with sight loss.

That's why we organised an event at Scottish Parliament in March, and brought together MSPs, and people with sight loss, to meet and speak with each other.

The event was hosted by MSP Stuart McMillan, convener of the Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment in the Scottish Parliament. Guests included the Minister of Public Health, Scottish Braille Press employees, past and present pupils and parents from the Royal Blind School and other organisations working in the sight loss sector.

We also showed MSPs and guests our 2022 Local Authority Election Manifesto. This manifesto sets out five actions we are urging local authorities to take, to bring about a more inclusive Scotland for blind and partially sighted people. You can read more at sightscotland.org.uk/manifesto-2022



Bilal shows Maree Todd MSP the page that has his speech in braille.



Maree Todd MSP looks at Bilal's speech, which is written in braille.



Stuart McMillan MSP, Minister of Public Health Maree Todd MSP, and Craig Spalding, Chief Executive of Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans

Bilal's experience

Bilal Iqbal attended the event and spoke to guests about the importance of information being accessible – especially during the Covid pandemic. We are delighted that Bilal, who learned braille at the Royal Blind School, has recently secured a Braille Proof Reader role at the Scottish Braille Press.

We asked Bilal how he found meeting MSPs at the Scottish Parliament.

Q: You gave a speech in front of the guests, at a podium. How did you find that?

Bilal: It was my first time public speaking... I've never done a speech like that before. I wrote the speech and the Royal Blind School put it into braille for me, so I could read from it. I talked about my experience and my internship at the Scottish Braille Press. It helped increase my confidence doing that, especially at a place like the Scottish Parliament. I would do it again.

Q: Who did you speak with?

Bilal: I met the Minister of Public Health, Maree Todd. She saw me reading my speech in braille and was quite interested; she asked me how I managed to read that. I talked about my experience of the Covid pandemic, and what I learned at the Royal Blind School. I also met someone who was from my religion (Foyso Choudhury, MSP for Midlothian), and it was quite nice to meet someone else who is Muslim.

Q: Do you think it's important for politicians and policy makers to meet people like yourself, who have visual impairment?

Bilal: Yes, because these events can make a difference. Maybe things will be improved because the MSPs and the Minister who attended will have more of an understanding of sight loss. If issues come to them – like the issues raised at this event – they might be more likely to support changes to make a difference for someone like me.

Influencing change

We're working to make Scotland a fairer society for people with sight loss by campaigning for positive change. You can read about our campaign for Fair Rail on page 16. Find out more at sightscotland.org.uk/our-campaigns.



Scan this QR code to visit our webpage



Fundraising at new heights



Raymond Dixon is taking on an epic Sight for Sight challenge, abseiling off six cliffs across Scotland. Raymond works as a Residential Care Worker at Allermuir, our residential service for young adults with visual impairment and additional disabilities.

The 52-year-old, who comes from Rosyth, near Dunfermline, says he's not scared of heights – but he is scared of falling.

Raymond is abseiling cliffs at:

- The Hawkcraig at Aberdour
- Trapain Law at Haddington
- The Kilsyth Cliffs
- Craigie Barns at Dunkeld
- Rosyth Quarry
- the North Buttress at Buachaille Etive Mor, near Glencoe

Raymond said: "It's a challenge for me because I'm not actually that good with heights. The exposure up there on a cliff is actually quite a scary thing."

By the middle of May, Raymond had raised over £400 in donations for Sight Scotland.

Raymond said: "By taking part in this challenge, I'm hoping to raise some funds for a great charity, and also raise awareness that there is support there for people with sight loss from Sight Scotland.

"The charity provides support to people with sight loss of all ages."



“Any donations at all in support of my fundraising challenge would be hugely appreciated. Sight Scotland is a brilliant charity and they really make a difference for people with sight loss and their families with their specialist support.”

You can do a Sight for Sight challenge!

Sight for Sight challenges are a great way to have fun and to generate funds towards helping people with sight loss. We're here to help every step of the way.

Call our fundraising team on 0131 446 3089

Email fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk

Visit sightscotland.org.uk/sightforsight



Scan this QR code to
visit our webpage



Much needed garden makeover!



Jamie loves the fresh air and the sounds of the outdoors at Sight Scotland's residential home, Forward Vision, where he lives. Jamie has visual impairment and additional disabilities.

Aromatic plants, trickling water, and birdsongs all provide wonderful therapeutic experiences for Jamie and the people he lives with at Forward Vision.

Jamie has boundless energy and he loves exercising at our outdoor facilities. He is keen to go out and spend time in the garden almost every day.

“

Before the pandemic, the families of the people we care for at Forward Vision raised almost £10,000 towards the garden redevelopment.”

Nature provides peace and tranquillity to those without sight.

Jamie enjoys the outdoor space at Forward Vision, but the grounds have needed work for some time. Now that the pandemic is easing, we are excited to move forward our plans to make it a truly wonderful space for Jamie and everyone with visual impairment in our care, who uses it.

The redevelopment will mean the people with sight loss who live at Forward Vision will be able to:

- Run their fingers through the sensory garden plants
- Enjoy the smells of aromatic plants
- Listen to relaxing water features
- Get access to a ground-level trampoline, set up for people using wheelchairs
- Visit a summer house with their families, giving easy weather-proof access to the open air

Before the pandemic, the families of the people we care for at Forward Vision raised almost £10,000 towards the garden redevelopment.

The pandemic sadly halted the redevelopment, but we are now resuming our campaign to deliver on our plans for the garden, to improve life for Jamie and the other individuals we support. We are actively fundraising towards making this a reality!



To help realise this garden redevelopment, we are asking you - our valued supporter - to help us! Together we can make a huge difference for Jamie and everyone at Forward Vision.

If you can support this garden redevelopment for the people with sight loss in our care, please go to the donation page at the back of this magazine and enter your details.

Select "Forward Vision garden project" as how you want to make a difference for people with sight loss or simply give us a call.

Make a difference with an online donation

Scan this QR code and you can support the garden redevelopment with a donation.



Scan me to give your support



Support Line helping people move forward with their lives

Phil Purvis worked as a butcher for 28 years. He says the impact of sight loss on his life was “like a ton of bricks”.

The Midlothian dad-of-two has the hereditary sight condition Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), which causes gradual sight loss.

Phil said: “At the moment, my sight is like I’m looking through a box or over a shelf. I was having falls, walking into people and door frames. I found it difficult to talk about.”

Phil, 42, has bottled up his feelings about his slowly deteriorating vision. He realised he’d need to give up his career.

Phil said: “Everything came at once, and it was like a ton of bricks. For me, the main worries and concerns were to find a new career that suits me. I was overwhelmed.

“That’s when I called Sight Scotland’s Support Line. I got through to a lovely advisor and I just broke down. She was brilliant with me, and she had all the time in the world for me on the phone. That was the first time that someone had listened and took me on my word.”

Since that first phone call, Emma Hope, who is one of Sight Scotland’s Community Workers, has been providing Phil with regular practical and emotional telephone support.

Phil said: “I’d been in the butcher’s trade for 28 years and I’ve managed a lot of shops in my time. I didn’t know where to start – it was really daunting not having a clue which way to take my career.

Phil Purvis



“But Emma listened to what I had going on and what was happening. Straight away she just started sending help my way. She linked me in with the disability advisor at the job centre. She has also put me in touch with organisations to help me with computer skills.

“She’s broken down what I need to do and when I need to do it. It’s given me a bit more of a plan instead of me going round in circles in my head.”

Phil encourages people affected by sight loss to call Sight Scotland’s freephone Support Line.

“Without Sight Scotland I don’t know where I’d be or what I’d be doing. I wouldn’t have a clue how to manage this emotionally either.

“This service is really important for me. It’s given me all the little bits that I need to move forward with my life.”

You can turn to us

You can call our Support Line for information about sight loss and support.

Calls from family members, friends and carers of anyone with sight loss in Scotland are very welcome, as well as calls from anyone who is coping with sight loss or blindness themselves.

You can email
supportline@sightscotland.org.uk
if you prefer.

Support Line

Call 0800 024 8973

9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday

“

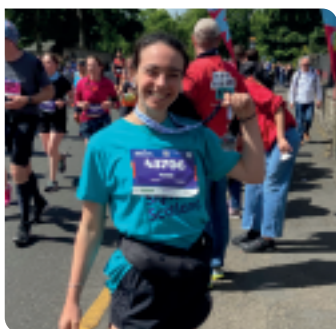
I’d been in the butcher’s trade for 28 years and I’ve managed a lot of shops in my time. I didn’t know where to start – it was really daunting not having a clue which way to take my career.”

Striding out in support!



Running from Edinburgh City to East Lothian is no easy task – but three fantastic fundraisers took it in their stride!

The Edinburgh Marathon Festival was held on Sunday 29 May, after being postponed for two years.



A huge thank you to James from Dunkeld, Maud from Edinburgh, and Monika from London. These three ran for Sight Scotland and raised funds for people with sight loss.

James said: “The best part of the Edinburgh Marathon was the build up to the event and the start itself. Such a great atmosphere at the start line and in the early kilometres through the city streets. There was great support from many spectators all the way along the coast to the 18-mile point, where we turned to head back towards the finish in Musselburgh.”

James’ top tip for people planning to do a fundraising race was to create a good training plan.

“Do your best to stick to it, which will enable you to give your best on the day and be satisfied with yourself.

“Also, choose an event that’s easy to get to and maybe has significant other cultural attractions alongside the event itself to make a weekend of it!”

You can help make a difference

Get involved in a fundraising challenge, and we’ll support you every step of the way. You can call us on 0131 446 3089, or email fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk

Find your perfect challenge on our website: sightscotland.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise-us/find-challenge-event



Scan this QR code to find your fundraising challenge!



Don a kilt and get involved in a Kiltwalk!

We have free places at the Dundee and Edinburgh Kiltwalks to give away if you fundraise for Sight Scotland.

You can help make a difference for people with sight loss, and have a great day out!

Dundee Kiltwalk
21 August 2022

Edinburgh Kiltwalk
18 September 2022

Give us a call on 0131 446 3089 or
email fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk

You can support our campaign for Fair Rail

Rail travel is difficult to access for those living with sight loss. We are calling for changes and you can help us make a difference.

Currently, there are different concessionary schemes for rail tickets in different areas. Train stations in some local authorities provide discounted tickets to people with visual impairment and their travelling companions, but other stations don't. We've heard first-hand how this is causing confusion to both passengers and rail staff.

ScotRail is now publicly owned and controlled by the Scottish Government. We are calling for a new national rail travel policy for Scotland, like that of the free bus travel scheme.

We are calling for:

- Free rail travel for those with a National (Scotland) Concessionary Travel for Blind Persons card and their companion
- Accessible rail travel for blind and partially sighted people
- A consistent policy across Scotland, wherever you are travelling



Raising the challenge of rail travel at Parliament

We took a ticket machine prop to Holyrood to show MSPs how difficult a standard ticket machine is to use for blind and partially sighted people.

Members of the public and visiting MSPs tried it out, and also signed our petition calling for Fair Rail.

Joe Tottenham, who has sight loss due to diabetic retinopathy, attended our stall at the Scottish Parliament. Joe lives in Kirkcaldy and said he could not travel by train by himself. He backs our call for free train travel to apply to the travelling companions of people with sight loss too.

“My sight is more like shadows now. A travel companion to provide support can be really important for someone with sight loss.

“You’ve got to manage getting from the platform onto the train, and coming off the train, it’s things like stepping back down onto the platform and not knowing where the buttons are for opening the doors. Some stations have different levels of platforms, which is very hard to manage alone.”

Craig Spalding, Chief Executive of Sight Scotland, said:

“So many visually impaired people rely on the rail network to get around, and problems with accessibility create a real barrier to independent travel.

“With ScotRail now in public ownership, Sight Scotland is calling for all local authorities in Scotland to work with the Scottish Government to make local travel networks as accessible and affordable as possible for blind and partially sighted people and their companions.”



Sign the petition

You can sign our petition for Fair Rail online at change.org/p/free-rail-travel-for-blind-partially-sighted-people-their-companions-in-scotland



Scan this QR code to visit the petition webpage



Have you met Agnes?



You may remember Agnes, whose story we shared in a recent mailing.

Agnes, who lives in Prestonpans, received a diagnosis of age-related macular degeneration.

Agnes said: “When I was told I had it, I was devastated. At that time, I got no information at all.

“It was a huge shock. If I had had support at an earlier point following my diagnosis, I don’t think I would have gone into such a depression. When you hear that your sight is going, you think, ‘What am I going to do? How am I going to manage?’ You can’t sleep for thinking about how you’re going to cope.”

Struggling with the impact of her sight loss, Agnes called our Sight Scotland Support Line on 0800 024 8973.

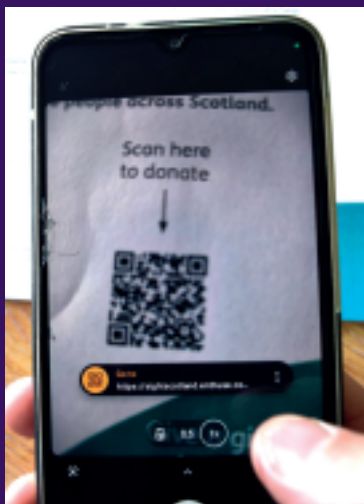
Agnes said: “This is the first time I feel I have some support now [with Sight Scotland]. There was somebody there who would listen to me. It’s been a blessing.”

You can help us be there

Thanks to support from donors, we were able to be there for Agnes when she needed us.



Scan this QR code and you can help give people like Agnes someone to turn to.



Scan a QR code and make a difference for people with sight loss

You can scan QR codes with your smartphone to make a difference online. You’ll find QR codes throughout this magazine. Our postal mailings now have QR codes too, so you can access our website easily.

To scan a QR Code:

1. Open your smartphone camera
2. Hold your smartphone so the QR code appears in the viewfinder.
3. Tap the notification to open the link associated with the QR code.

Note: If you have an Android phone and it does not recognise the QR code, try using an application called “Google Lens”. Older smartphones may require a third-party app such as “Barcode Scanner”

**Yes, I want to change
the lives of people with
sight loss forever**



**Sight
Scotland**

Tackling vision loss together

Please fill in your details below:

Title: **Forename:** **Surname:**

Address:

..... **Postcode:**

1. I would like to give a one-off gift of:

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

☐ I enclose a cheque or voucher made payable to Sight Scotland
OR please debit my card:

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF Charity Card

Card No: ---

Expiry Date: / Security code:

Name on card:

Signature:

Or

2. I would like to make a monthly gift

Giving a regular gift to Sight Scotland helps us plan ahead with confidence, which is vital to us reaching and supporting more people with sight loss across Scotland.

I would like to make a monthly gift of £3 ☐ £5 ☐ £8 ☐ Or my choice of £

Please collect my payment on the ☐ 1st or ☐ 15th of every month
(please tick your preferred date).

Name and full address of your Bank/Building Society:

To: The Manager Bank / Building Society

Address:

Postcode:

Name(s) of Account Holder(s):

Bank / Building Society Account Number Branch Sort Code

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Service User Number



Reference (for office use only)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society. Please pay Sight Scotland Direct Debits from the account detailed 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. Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

Signature(s):

Date:

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Please return to Sight Scotland, NOT to your bank. We will confirm your new regular donation details by letter.

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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.

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 address is:

We're committed to keeping your details safe, and we will never sell them. Raising funds is crucial to our work, but if you'd prefer not to receive fundraising communications from us, please email us at privacy@sightscotland.org.uk You can see how we protect and use your personal data in our privacy policy at sightscotland.org.uk/privacy

Your continuing support means so much to people with sight loss

Across Scotland, thousands of people living with sight loss have no one they can turn to for help. But by giving a precious gift today, you can offer hope and transform lives. We have several projects we are actively fundraising for. If you would like your donation to go to a specific campaign, please select below.

☐

Where my donation is most needed

☐

The Forward Vision Garden Project

☐

The Innowalk campaign

☐

The Family Wellbeing Service and Support Line



**Sight
Scotland**

Tackling vision loss together