



Sight
Scotland

230
Years

iSight

Summer 2023 | sightscotland.org.uk



Making a difference for 230 years



Dear Supporter

Welcome to this special edition of our iSight magazine, celebrating the 230 years we've been supporting people impacted by vision impairment. For generations, people just like you have been helping transform outcomes for those impacted by vision impairment in Scotland.

Thanks to decades of generosity from our donors, the tailored support we have been able to offer people with sight loss has made an incredible impact on their lives. Today, we strive to make sure everyone who needs it has access to care, education, community support and hope, and that research is at the forefront of our work to help future generations with sight loss.

I do hope you enjoy reading about our history and how philanthropy has shaped the work we do. As we look to adapt for the future, on page 10, you can read about the new 3D printing technology we're pioneering in our teaching. This is enabling pupils with visual impairment to understand complex concepts and large structures using their tactile learning.

Feeling confident with your practical skills is so important. On page 12, we share Margo Scott's story, who's learning about how to use a long cane to travel by bus, increasing her independence.

And on page 16, learn about Swanston Brasserie training staff to welcome and serve a person with vision impairment.

As we go through the year reflecting and celebrating the charity's 230-year history, I am incredibly proud that the ethos of philanthropic culture that started our work continues strong today. And for that, thank you.

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine.

Davina Shiell

Director of Marketing, Communications and Engagement



Support Line

Talk to us on **0800 024 8973**
Now open 9am to 5pm,
Monday to Friday

Did you know?

UK inventors have created a white cane with ultrasonic sensors that detects obstacles up to nine feet away.

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

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Together, we've been creating opportunities since 1793

Sight Scotland was founded in 1793 to improve opportunities for people impacted by sight loss. Since the very beginning, the generosity of people like you has been woven into the fibres of the support we've offered.



1793: Reverend Dr David Johnston began our charity with Dr Thomas Blacklock and David Miller in Edinburgh. Donations from Rev. Johnston's church in Leith enabled lessons in handicrafts, arithmetic and recitation.



1806: We employed men as skilled craftspeople, producing mattresses, baskets and cane furniture. From 1922 onwards, women sewed and knitted, and the community bought handicrafts from our shop in Bruntsfield, Edinburgh.



1876: We opened the Royal Blind School at newly-constructed premises in Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh. Our 41 pupils attended classes in arithmetic, braille printing, English, geography, history and recitation.



1991: We opened Canaan Lodge in Morningside, Edinburgh. This was Scotland's first purpose-built school and care accommodation for pupils with multiple disabilities as well as vision impairment (MDVI).



1999: Older people with vision impairment moved to Braeside House in Liberton, Edinburgh – our purpose-built care home for visually impaired older people. This closed in 2021.



2010: Young adults with multiple disabilities and vision impairment (MDVI) began receiving care and support at Forward Vision at Canaan Lane in Edinburgh.

Do you have any memories from our history that you could share with us? Email us at marketing@sightscotland.org.uk or call us on 0131 446 3099.



1891: We began the Scottish Braille Press. Early printing focused on printing religious and educational texts in braille, while today, a wide range of accessible documents are printed for organisations across the UK.

1929: We built the Thomas Burns Home, providing accommodation for blind women, as well as workspaces and recreational areas on the Craigmillar Park property.

1945: For preschool-aged children, we opened Barrie House, providing a separate location for early education care and learning.



2014: The Royal Blind School moved from Craigmillar Park to our specialty adapted campus in Morningside, Edinburgh.

2021: We launched a telephone helpline, 0800 024 8973, which provides expert advice and support for people with sight loss, their families, carers, and friends. This led to face-to-face support through our Community team, helping people at their homes.

2023: Building on our Support Line and Community service, our new Activity teams begin hosting free social gatherings for anyone impacted by vision impairment. These gatherings help people with similar experiences to meet, and to get back to doing the things they love.

Then and now: Looking after buildings for over 25 years

Since 1996, George Notman has helped transform buildings into modern, purpose-built campuses.

George has seen first-hand the direct impact the support of donors, especially through gifts left in Wills, has had on people, particularly children, with vision loss.

George, our Head of Estates for 25 years, says:

“Today, our specialist teachers are providing personalised learning with the child's needs and learning development at the very centre. But when I started in 1996, more than 60 children with vision impairment were living and learning at the Royal Blind School at the Craigmillar Park campus, in the south of Edinburgh.

The Royal Blind School in Craigmillar Park was purposely built in 1875 as a school for blind pupils. Back then, it was surrounded by fields. In that building, on the same floor, there was an English classroom, then beside it would be a dormitory room, with four bedrooms and then four bathrooms.

The new Morningside campus at Canaan Lane opened in 1991, before my time, as the first purpose-built school for pupils with multiple disabilities. Initially, each of the five houses accommodated six pupils.



I remember when the decision was taken in 2014 to refurbish the campus to move all the children who were currently at the Craigmillar Park school to Morningside, where the Royal Blind School is today. I remember thinking that the modernisation work will take a long time to fundraise for. When I heard that the work was going ahead thanks, in part, to gifts people had left in their Will, I was blown away by this generosity.

The development of the Canaan Lane campus in Morningside enabled the transformation of the Royal Blind School into a modern, cutting-edge facility. Pupils now have a hydrotherapy pool to enjoy and exercise in, a large music room with many instruments, and are now also interacting with 3D-printed objects to learn about concepts, using their sense of touch and their imaginations. None of this would have been possible in the old school.

This is all providing enhanced care to the children and young people who stay with us and use our services.. I'm so proud of the small part I've played in this.

- George Notman, Head of Estates

Legacies creating opportunities for 230 years

For 230 years, donations and gifts in Wills have changed the lives of individuals of all ages impacted by visual impairment.

For 230 years, donations and gifts in Wills have transformed the lives of individuals of all ages impacted by visual impairment. As far back as 1956, people had the foresight to see the impact their generosity could make when they were no longer here. Between 1956 and the end of the century we received over £14 million through legacy giving.

Gifts in Wills have led to the creation of specialist buildings and facilities, meaning that their gifts continue to be impactful and benefit those with a visual impairment long into the future.

The kindness of supporters in the 1980s created the opportunity for people with vision impairment, who lived with multiple disabilities, to live and learn in new purpose-built facilities. Supporters pledged an incredible total of £2.4 million in legacy gifts between 1986 and 1990, and due to their generosity, we opened the Canaan Lodge care home in 1991. This care home in Morningside, Edinburgh, gave excellent support to 30 young people's educational and social needs. The Canaan Lodge had five interconnected houses, a sports hall, a hydrotherapy pool, and centres for speech therapy and physiotherapy.

Did you know?

The Canaan Lodge gave expert care to those in need, thanks to the generosity of those who pledged legacy gifts. Today, this care home continues to provide support and care.

In 2010, gifts in Wills once again helped adapt our service offering, providing adaptations that are still going strong today. Our Canaan Lane buildings have provided a loving home for young adults with vision impairment and additional disabilities, who would struggle to live alone in private accommodation due to the health difficulties they live with every day. Today, more than a dozen adults, such as Ben, Andrew (pictured) and Clair, are living enriched lives at the facilities built many years earlier.

The legacy of generous donors continues to be felt by children and young people growing up with vision impairment too. Today, pupils attending the Royal Blind School like Ross, Lauren, Lu, Cory and Rocco, are all flourishing in happy supportive homes at Canaan Lane, and are receiving the specialist care and learning they need. Every day, we appreciate and show our gratitude to all donors, especially those whose legacy lives on after their own death.



Focusing on the future

Inherited eye conditions, such as retinitis pigmentosa, pose formidable challenges for those who live with them.

These conditions are often progressive, robbing individuals of their precious gift of sight over time. The impact on their lives, their dreams, and their independence cannot be overstated.

Vital research into these inherited eye conditions could change countless people's lives. We firmly believe that scientific advancements hold the key to transforming the lives of countless individuals and families affected by these conditions.

With more understanding of genetic conditions, we can make bounds of progress in spotting genetic conditions early, and even investigate treatments such as gene therapies. More understanding of genetic conditions and developing gene therapies that could change the lives of people who haven't even been born yet.

We hope you will join us and make a long-term difference that will help many generations. The legacy of research will be earlier diagnosis and better treatment for countless people's lives, for the generations to come.

Imagine a future where a young child, diagnosed with an inherited retinal condition, need not face a lifetime of diminishing sight. Imagine a future where families no longer bear the burden of watching their loved ones lose their vision.

We are passionate about the future, and the progress to come. If you are interested in making a difference that lasts generations,

“

Vital research into inherited eye conditions could change countless people's lives.”

you can visit our website to download our free Gift in Will guide. Scan the QR code below with your mobile phone, or visit sightscotland.org.uk/get-your-gift-will-guide

Thank you for your interest in research and your compassion for the generations ahead.



How we help

Interested in research that's making a difference?

Visit sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/learning/research



Download a free Gift in Will guide at:
sightscotland.org.uk/get-your-gift-will-guide

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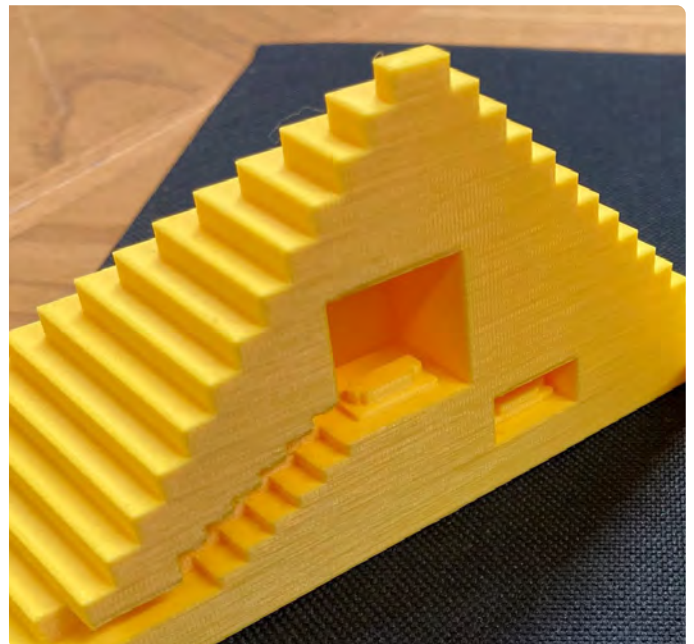
Creating 3D models that help youngsters learn

We've been providing education since 1793, and we are continuing to find innovative and new ways to help children and young people learn.

For young learners with vision impairment, the sense of touch is a crucial way to understand the world. While models imitating real-world objects have long been used in teaching, often these models aren't designed for visual learners. For example, standard models might use colours to convey information, or the details might not be large enough to be detectable by fingertips.

However, new 3D printers mean we can create model objects ourselves, allowing them to make sense to tactile learners.

To create the best designs for models, our Royal Blind School teachers have been working with experts from across Europe. Together, we are creating a catalogue of objects for learners with vision impairment and drawing on the expertise of our European colleagues.



“
Our priority is to create models of objects that may be difficult or impossible for individuals with vision impairment to access through touch alone.”

- Lauren Lockhart, Depute Head Teacher



Lauren Lockhart, a Depute Head Teacher at the Royal Blind School, says: “We’ve identified 25 objects that are specially designed for learners with vision impairment. The ability to touch and feel a 3D model helps learners with vision impairment understand objects and bridge conceptual gaps. This is part of the future of vision impairment education, and we are at the forefront of this exciting development.”

Did you know?



We are creating models of objects that can't be handled in real life because they are:

- too large
- too small
- too dangerous or
- too fragile to handle.

Our priority is to create models of objects that may be difficult or impossible for individuals with vision impairment to access through touch alone. For instance, monuments like the Arc De Triomphe are too large to understand through touch, microorganisms are too small to handle, porcupines are too dangerous, and human body organs like the heart are too fragile to handle and understand through touch.

This collaborative effort between European experts and the Royal Blind School represents a significant step forward in enhancing education and accessibility for learners with vision impairment.

We'll share the website once it is ready – stay tuned!



‘My cane is now my guide dog’

Margo has learnt to use a long cane to board a bus – and is now getting out across Edinburgh, thanks to our Community team’s help.

Helping others!



Margo has relied on a guide dog for many years. When her beloved dog Thistle was forced to retire last year, Margo could not get a new guide dog straight away and had to go onto a waiting list.

This is obviously greatly affecting Margo's ability to get out in Edinburgh, where she lives. But she is certainly not letting it hold her back.

Margo has been doing long cane training with our Rehabilitation and Mobility Officer Marie O'Donnell. Now Margo can visit the shops, go to cafes and visit friends.

Margo says: "I have never been through this before. Everyone keeps asking me where my dog is, which is sad. But I am not letting this get me down, and I am still going out and about as much as possible.

"My cane is now my guide dog."

Margo's late husband, Alex, who died in 2016, was a huge advocate for the accessibility rights of people with visual impairment. He played a major part in getting free public transport for people with disabilities, which was introduced in Scotland in 1999.

To help Margo practice getting on a bus with a long cane, Marie contacted Lothian Buses. The Edinburgh-based bus company kindly offered a static bus for Margo and Marie to use.

"She has picked up the long cane training really quickly and she can now navigate her way



"Margo is an inspiration, she doesn't let anything get her down and she is always out of her house doing something."

- Marie O'Donnell

around confidently and safely. The training on the bus was really beneficial, and I plan to do more of this for clients, and I would like to thank Lothian buses for their help."

Margo says: "Marie has been great, and I now feel so much more confident using my long cane. The training on the bus was really good, I now know how to use my cane to get on and off safely."



Coronation party at our inclusive after-school club

Children who attend Kidscene celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III with a delightful afternoon tea spread.

Kidscene is our after-school club in Edinburgh that welcomes children with and without disabilities to play and learn. The children shared a wonderful afternoon tea in May to celebrate the Coronation. Of course, our Kidscene crowd did notice their pot of tea tasted suspiciously like healthy apple juice! We'd love for more children to join the fun. If you are interested in enrolling your child, you can find our email at the bottom of this page.

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Kidscene is our after-school club in Edinburgh that welcomes children with and without disabilities to play and learn.”



Keeping vision impairment issues on the agenda

Meeting with MSPs and political parties is so important. Face-to-face conversations and ongoing discussions help to remind policy-makers of the impact that having a vision impairment has on access to public services. This keeps eye health issues in consideration when the Scottish Government and political parties are developing health policies.

To keep eye health issues in mind, we recently held information stalls at Scottish political party conferences. We spoke with MSPs, such as Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and Shadow Health spokesperson for Scottish Labour, Jackie Baillie MSP, at the Scottish

Labour Party conference in February. At the Scottish Conservative Party's conference in April, we spoke with MSPs such as Scottish Conservative Party MSP Miles Briggs, who is a member of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment.

We will continue highlighting the issues facing people impacted by vision impairment, and hope to work with many of these MSPs in the coming months.



Restaurant making accessibility a top priority

We have joined forces with Swanston Brasserie in Edinburgh to encourage more venues to 'open their doors' to people with visual impairment.

Swanston Brasserie, south of Edinburgh's city centre, is putting accessibility for people with vision impairment at the top of its priority list.

The Edinburgh eatery has made changes to its layout, ensuring that a person with vision impairment can feel as comfortable as possible from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave. Swanston has introduced braille and large print menus, as well as an audio menu on its website.

Swanston plans to use the WelcoMe App, which enables customers with a disability to indicate the specific assistance they require when booking.

Swanston enlisted the help of Sight Scotland's Marie O'Donnell, who works as a Rehabilitation and Mobility officer, to advise on what accessibility changes were needed. Marie assisted with staff training, so waiters and waitresses know exactly how to welcome and serve a person with vision impairment, and provide the extra information that's so helpful to someone eating in a new environment.

“

As a society, we need to work on education, and improve our understanding that everyone is different, but these differences should not prevent anyone from doing the things they enjoy.”



Sam Lockhart, who is Marketing Manager at Swanston Brasserie, says: “I am very passionate about this due to my great grandfather who was blind. He lived until he was 102 and there was literally nothing he could not do. We want to improve the visitor experience for everyone, and make people with vision impairment, or any disability, feel as welcome and comfortable as possible.

“As a society, we need to work on education, and improve our understanding that everyone is different, but these differences should not prevent anyone from doing the things they enjoy. I very much believe that we should try and give 100 per cent to everyone.”



We are encouraging all restaurants, cafés and venues to be more welcoming and accessible to people with visual impairment. You can download a copy of our advice guide “Giving great service to customers with visual impairment” at our website: sightscotland.org.uk/great-customer-service



**Making
change**



Fundraising champions

More than 230 years ago, the generosity of a community led to the founding of our charity. Reverend David Johnston wanted to help people living with visual impairment, and his church community kindly offered donations to the cause.

Today, that philanthropic spirit is still alive and well. In the last 12 months, we have had people running full and half marathons, abseiling from places across the country, putting on their kilts for the Kiltwalk and even making toilet roll dolls out of Lego.

A huge thanks to all the fundraisers who took on these challenge events and to everyone who continues to donate and support our endeavors to be there for people with sight loss, where and when they need us! This page has pictures of just a few: half-marathon runners Charlotte, Alan and Melissa, marathon-runner Kalen, and Joanna and Sophie who did the Glasgow Kiltwalk.

You can help

Interested in fundraising?

You can do a fundraising event too! The Edinburgh Kiltwalk is on Sunday 17 September and we have free entries for fundraisers wanting to make a difference. Visit sightscotland.org.uk/kiltwalk or call us on 0131 446 3089. Kiltwalk events are so much fun and we'd love for you to get involved!

“

In the last 12 months, we have had people running full and half marathons, abseiling from places across the country, putting on their kilts for the Kiltwalk and even making toilet roll dolls out of Lego. ”



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



**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

- -

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 the 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 Family Wellbeing Service and Support Line



Royal Blind School



Sensory Pod for Forward Vision



**Sight
Scotland**

Tackling vision loss together