



**Sight  
Scotland**

# iSight

Summer 2024 | [sightscotland.org.uk](https://sightscotland.org.uk)



**Life looks different with a little support**





## Dear Supporter

Thank you for being a shining light of support for people impacted by visual impairment. Thanks to your assistance and that of people like you, we are able to help and advocate for more people with sight loss across Scotland.

Our team are so excited to connect people and to help them to do the things they love. In this edition, you'll read about creative writing student Andrew and an aspiring sportswoman, Sam Gough.

You'll also find out about the new social events and activities we are running for people with visual impairment. These are opportunities to socialise and connect with people facing a similar challenge. Read more on pages 12 and 13.

In addition to connecting people, we are creating opportunities for people with visual impairment to make a difference. The newly launched Sight Loss Councils are bringing people together to advocate for change. You can read more on page 18.

Finally, we have a great success to share – following our Fair Fares advocacy campaign, Transport Scotland is piloting a new fare that will make travel easier for people with visual

impairment. You can read about it on page 22.

The future is bright and we are so grateful for your support. We couldn't achieve what we do without people like you - every raffle ticket purchased, donation made, marathon run or bit of time volunteered makes an impact.

Happy reading,

**Davina Shiell**

Director of Marketing, Communications and Engagement



### Sight Scotland Support Line

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

### Did you know?

Electric scooters in York are being fitted with a new acoustic alert system, thanks to a trial organised by the North Yorkshire Sight Loss Council. Now, everyone can hear these e-scooters coming! You can read about our new Scottish Sight Loss Councils on page 20.

**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](mailto:fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk)

**Sight Scotland** Sight Scotland is the operating name of Royal Blind. 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, 2A Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh EH11 1PZ



## You are making a real difference!

Facing a sight loss diagnosis can be one of the most challenging experiences in life, but people with visual impairment are getting the help they deserve, thanks to your support.



### How are donors making a difference?

#### Raffle ticket sales enable music therapy sessions

By buying raffle tickets, you've helped raise an incredible £3,135, meaning that pupils at the Royal Blind School can access 74 interactive music therapy sessions across the school year!



**330 hours of Support Line assistance, thanks to your generosity at Christmas**



### Thank you for your Christmas donations

You might remember the story of Santa, as told in our Christmas appeal. Santa was experiencing sight loss and was struggling to read his list of presents. He called our freephone Support Line on 0800 024 8973 and received a visit from Community Worker, Debbie.

Thanks to Debbie's advice, Santa was able to read his present list, and safely deliver gifts across Scotland.

At Christmas, supporters donated £7000, enabling the Sight Scotland Support Line to give more than 330 hours of support, so people across Scotland can get the help they need. Thank you to everyone who donated, and to everyone who is continuing to support people with vision impairment.



# Sensory Nook delivers engaging experiences for children with visual impairment

Children attending our afterschool and holiday club, Kidscene, can now enjoy time in our new Sensory Nook.

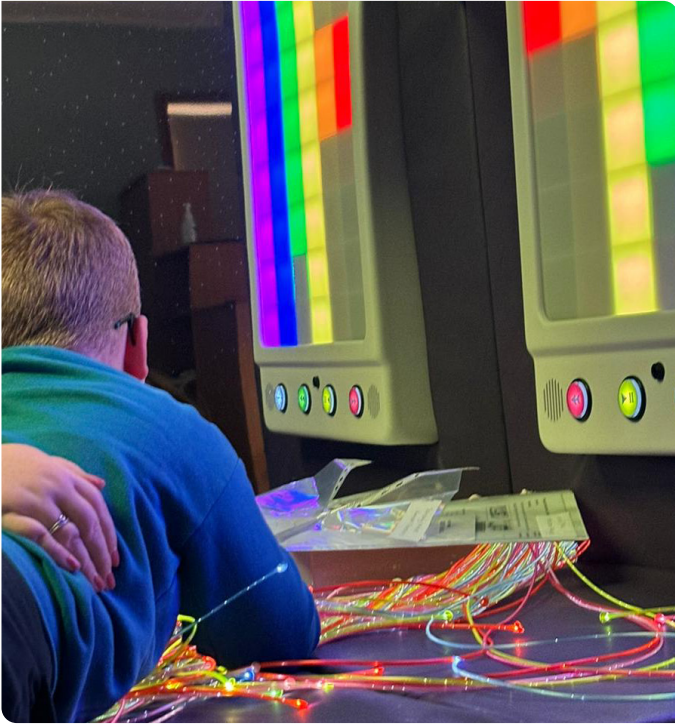
Children attending our afterschool and holiday club, Kidscene, can now enjoy time in our new Sensory Nook. This wonderful multi-sensory pod is creating unique experiences for children, which are only possible thanks to your generosity, and the fantastic support of trusts, which also provided grants towards this innovative equipment.

The Sensory Nook has interactive light tubes, customisable colour lighting, ultra-violet twinkle effect strands, and a fibre optic twinkling wall.

Young people can settle in and enjoy smelling a nebulising scent system, and tactile pads. The upholstery reduces noise from outside the Nook Pod. Children who use wheelchairs can lie down flat inside it, making it accessible for everyone.







A unique calming experience is created for children with visual impairment, encouraging interaction using other senses. A sensory experience can be customised for each child and their needs using just a simple Android tablet and app.

Thank you. Your support for Sight Scotland services helps ensure a brighter future and improved daily life for young people in Scotland who have sight loss and additional support needs.





## Royal Blind School graduate striving for his dreams at Strathclyde University

Andrew Pettigrew is striving for his dreams at university and says his visual impairment shouldn't be a barrier to doing the things he loves.

The young man from Hamilton, who also has a hearing impairment, is passionate about disability awareness. He wants to inspire more deafblind people, with his dual sensory loss, to achieve their goals.

Andrew was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in 2007, which means he only has light perception. He attended the Royal Blind School from 2013 to 2020 and scored straight A's in English, Biology, Politics, History and Modern Studies.

Andrew says the Royal Blind School supported him to succeed.

"Due to my dual sensory impairment, I would have struggled in a mainstream school and might not have got into university, so for that I am grateful. The Royal Blind School is all about what pupils can do, not what they can't do. It helps to inspire and empower its pupils to get them to where they want to be."

Whilst at the school, Andrew won the Pushkin Prize for young writers; he attended work experience at the Scottish Poetry Library, and he spoke at the UK Eye Geneticists' annual conference about his experience growing up.





## Aspirations

Now, Andrew is at Strathclyde University, studying English and Creative Writing.

Andrew says: “I left school with excellent qualifications, and maybe more importantly, a great deal of self-confidence. It’s my ambition to be a successful, published writer – this has been my dream since a young age. I also plan to continue as a disability activist to help influence change.

Andrew explains: “I am very passionate about disability awareness and want to show people what is possible and to help change perceptions. It is vital to show people what a deafblind person looks like and show them that I am as capable as anyone else. I love going into schools to talk about my disability, my daily experiences, and getting the pupils to ask questions so they can see that disabled people are approachable.

“Having a disability shouldn’t be a barrier to doing the things you love and enjoy. Yes, you need help at times, but you can still achieve your dreams if you work hard.”

Learn more!

You can learn more about our learning support for children and young people at [sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/learning](https://sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/learning)





## Mum and daughter's tartan team up

Eilidh Mercer and her daughter Freya are embarking on a fundraising journey across Scotland, participating in three Kiltwalks to say thank you to Sight Scotland.

The mum and daughter team have begun tackling the Scottish Kiltwalks side by side, first in Aberdeen and then Dundee, followed by Eilidh taking on the Edinburgh Kiltwalk solo. Eilidh and Freya, who live in Tranent, are determined to raise funds for Sight Scotland in recognition of the tremendous support they've received over the years.

Freya, now 7 years old, was born prematurely and has severe vision impairment. She attends the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh. Since joining the school nearly two years ago, Freya's progress has been nothing short of remarkable, according to her teachers.

Eilidh explains: "There has been such a big change in Freya since she started at the Royal Blind School. She is communicating so much more now, and she has become stronger and more independent—crawling and pulling herself up. Witnessing her growth firsthand is truly astonishing.

"Freya's progress and development over the last few years is almost unbelievable, and we owe so much of this progress to the Royal Blind School. Our goal was to provide Freya with the best possible start in life and education, and the Royal Blind School is fulfilling that vision."



Eilidh adds: “We are walking these Kiltwalks to give back and say thank you to Sight Scotland for the immeasurable impact they’ve had on Freya’s life. Freya and I have taken on the ‘Wee Wander’ in Aberdeen and next is Dundee, followed by me walking the ‘Mighty Stride’ in Edinburgh on my own. The help and support Sight Scotland provides for people with vision impairment is incredible, and they do so much in terms of helping to fight loneliness and isolation and ensuring people keep their independence. I don’t know where we would be as a family without Sight Scotland’s help, and we are fundraising to do our wee bit so that other people and families can benefit just like we have.”



Can you help?

### Would you like to sponsor Eilidh and Freya on their Kiltwalk mission?

Please visit their JustGiving page: [justgiving.com/page/freyareillysightscotland](https://justgiving.com/page/freyareillysightscotland)

### Would you like to try a fundraising challenge?

For a free entry place and advice on fundraising visit: [sightscotland.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/](https://sightscotland.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/) or email [fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk)

“ We are walking these Kiltwalks to give back and say thank you to Sight Scotland for the immeasurable impact they’ve had on Freya’s life. ”





## Roaring with the Lionesses!

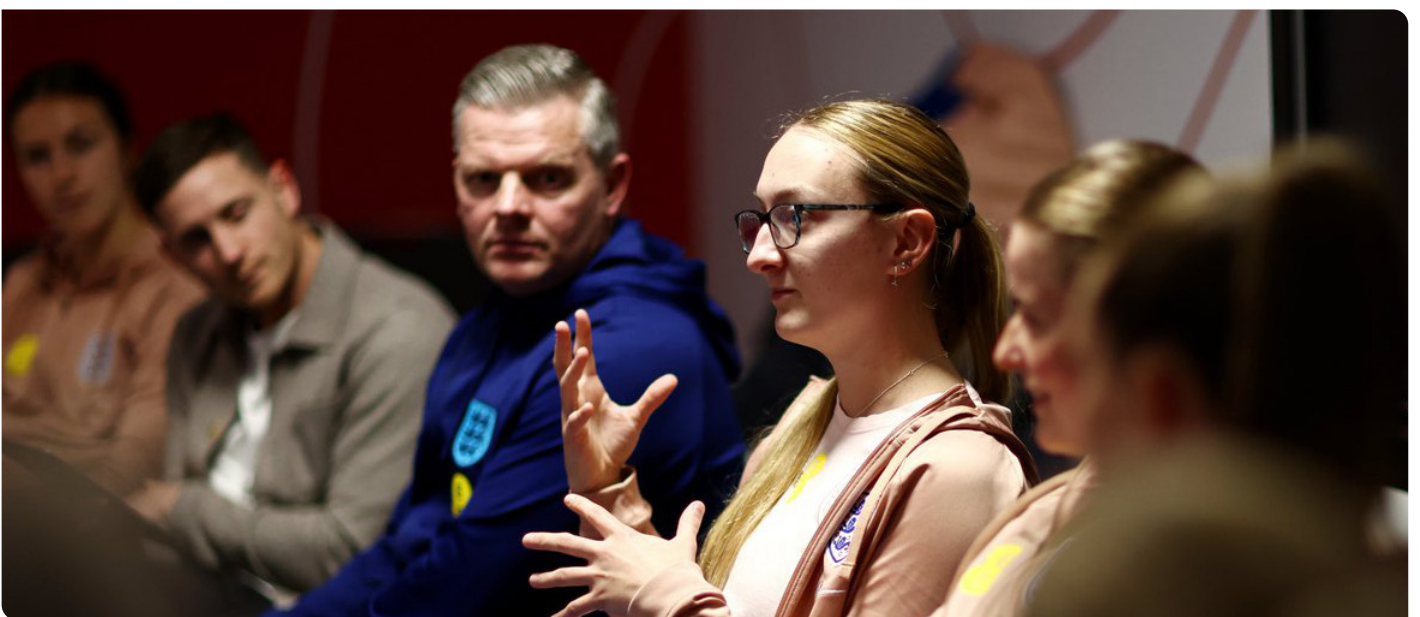
You may have heard about Samantha Gough from our recent fundraising campaign.

The former Royal Blind School pupil is going from strength to strength. These days, she's the captain of England Women's Blind Football team. Recently, Sam travelled to St George's Park elite training ground in Burton Upon Trent to meet the Lionesses – England's national Women's Football team. Sam trained with the Lionesses and spoke with the team about her footballing journey.

Sam was born with cerebral visual impairment (CVI), which means her eyes can track and follow things but her visual pathways to her brain don't function. In 2014, Sam's vision deteriorated, leaving her severely sight impaired, unable to navigate or read and write, she says it felt like losing a part of herself.

Sight Scotland sees possibilities, not barriers, and by providing the right support helps people like Sam achieve amazing things.

Sam is now the England Blind Women's Football captain and played at the inaugural IBSA



Photos provided courtesy of the FA and Getty Images.



“  
It wasn't long ago that I didn't think I could take part in sport at all. Being severely sight impaired excluded me from sport. Sight Scotland's Royal Blind School changed this path for me. If you told me then what I would be doing now, I would never have believed you.”

Women's World Championship. She loves swimming, horse riding, plays goalball, and recently won Bronze with Great Britain at the U19's Para Youth Games. Sam is also on the pathway for Great Britain for rowing after being introduced to the sport by a teacher at the Royal Blind School.

Keep going Sam, we are all with you!





## Sight Scotland activity groups bringing people together

Visual impairment often leaves people feeling isolated. When faced with a sight loss diagnosis, people with visual impairment can lose their confidence and self-esteem, and the ability to do many day-to-day activities.



Connection is so important, and so we want to bring people together. That's why we're running regular activity groups across the Central Belt for people with visual impairment. We are putting on activities ranging from technology groups and giant Scrabble games, to just a coffee and a chat.

Andrea Curro (pictured left) is running groups in the Glasgow region and says that running the activity groups is both inspiring and rewarding.

Andrea says: "Our activity groups provide activities for members to explore interests, develop new skills and meet new friends, in a safe and welcoming environment.

"The idea behind these groups is to provide a social platform where members can come along and hopefully enjoy themselves and meet new friends. The activity groups give us another way to engage with and help more people. It has huge potential to make a big difference to people's lives."

“  
Our activity groups provide activities for members to explore interests, develop new skills and meet new friends...”



## Glasgow community events:

### Glasgow City Centre

Mitchell Library Peer Support Group

Meets at: The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN.

When: Every second and fourth Friday of the month, 11 am to 1 pm.

### Glasgow North West

Knightswood Peer Support Group

Meets at: Knightswood Library, 27 Dunterlie Avenue, Glasgow G13 3BB.

When: Every third Friday of the month, from 11 am to 1 pm.

### Glasgow West End

Group: The Mitchell Library Parents Support Group

Meets at: The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN

When: Every last Wednesday of the month, from 11 am to 1 pm.

### Glasgow Southside

Pollokshaws Library Parents Support Group

Meets at: Pollokshaws Library, 60 Shawbridge Street, Glasgow G43 1RW.

When: Every third Friday of the month, 11 am to 1 pm.

## Edinburgh community events:

Blind Yoga session

Meets at: Portobello Library, 14 Rosefield Avenue EH15 1AU.

When: Every Friday from 12pm to 1pm.

Parent Support Group

Meets at: Royal Blind School café, 43 Canaan Lane EH10 4SG

When: Every Monday 2 pm to 4 pm.

### Edinburgh (Southwest)

Adult Social Group

Meets: Edinburgh Rehabilitation and Support Service, 62 Longstone St EH14 2DA.

When: Every Monday 11 am to 1 pm.

### Edinburgh (East)

Adult Social Group:

Meets at: Piershill Library, 30 Piershill Terrace EH8 7BQ.

When: Fourth Thursday of the month. 3 pm to 4 pm.



Find more information about our Community Events for people with visual impairment at:

[sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/community-events](https://sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/community-events)

Call 0800 024 8973

Email: [communityactivity@sightscotland.org.uk](mailto:communityactivity@sightscotland.org.uk).

Read about yoga sessions for people with visual impairment on the next page!



## New yoga sessions for people with visual impairment

Our Community Team is helping people connect at specialist yoga sessions.



Tamas is a trained yoga teacher and he is running yoga classes specially for people with visual impairment.

Tamas says: “People with visual impairment can have a difficult time accessing this knowledge, as seeing and copying what the instructor does is a big part of today’s yoga practice. By slowing down the speed of the practice and giving very descriptive verbal cues, the joy and clarity that comes with yoga becomes available for everyone.”

The success of Tamas’ first specialist yoga session showed him how accessible it was for people with visual impairment.

“

**There were around 10 people in the group, everyone over the age of 70. We practiced breathing exercises, meditation and very simple versions of yoga poses adapted to sitting on a chair.”**

Tamas Danyi-Nagy is running yoga sessions for people with visual impairment. Tamas, who moved to Scotland eight years ago from Hungary, is a Community Activity Assistant in Edinburgh.

You might remember an article about Tamas’ volunteering from our previous iSight magazine. He continues to volunteer as a befriender, helping to reduce the loneliness and isolation felt by people with visual impairment.



“There were around 10 people in the group, everyone over the age of 70. We practiced breathing exercises, meditation and very simple versions of yoga poses adapted to sitting on a chair. The response from the community was incredible! Everyone really enjoyed it and had a great time.”

Tamas says that yoga has a lot to offer.

Tamas explains: “One of my main missions as a yoga teacher is to show people you don’t have to do crazy backbends and handstands to practice yoga. Yoga is the union of mind, body and soul, and is for everyone. Using our breath and conscious positioning of our body, we build up awareness and control. We learn to control our emotions, thoughts and even our nervous system. Yoga helps deal with anxiety, mental health issues and physical pain as well.

“I believe these groups can make a huge difference to people and help get them out into the community again.”

The next yoga event for people with visual impairment:

Meets at: Portobello Library, 14 Rosefield Avenue EH15 1AU.

When: Every Friday from 12pm to 1pm.



Find out!

Find more information about our Community Events for people with visual impairment at: [sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/community-events](https://sightscotland.org.uk/how-we-help/community-events)

You can call 0800 024 8973

You can email: [communityactivity@sightscotland.org.uk](mailto:communityactivity@sightscotland.org.uk).





## Meet our Fundraising Manager

If you've ever wondered about the impact of your donations or who is making the magic happen behind the scenes, meet Stephanie Shanks.

Stephanie is our passionate Fundraising Manager at Sight Scotland. We asked Stephanie about the power of fundraising, and how crucial it is for us.

### Where is your favourite place in Scotland?

"My favorite place in Scotland is a small fishing village called Arbroath. It's not super fancy but I love going there with my husband, my dog, and our friends to walk, relax, and perhaps enjoy a small refreshment by the seaside!

### How did you first get into fundraising?

"I always knew I wanted to do a job that gave back. Initially, I was involved in volunteering for a charity and quickly realised that to sustain these services, fundraising is critical. I secured a full-time role within the sector, and I love being able to see, firsthand, the tangible impact that our fundraising makes – whether it is funding life-changing assistive equipment, or enhancing community services. I love the difference we can make."



## What does my donation to Sight Scotland make possible?

“We are dedicated to fundraising for the vital services that Sight Scotland provides. Our Family Wellbeing Service is one such service and this supports people with sight loss – and their families – across Scotland.

“Individuals can contact our Support Line on 0800 024 8973 for guidance on assistive equipment, for peer support or to relate to additional support services. The support of our donors enables us to make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by sight loss across Scotland.”

## What kinds of equipment do people with visual impairment receive because of my donations?

“Your donations fund a range of assistive technology that helps people with sight loss maintain their independence and continue to do the things they love. Funding for magnifiers means people can continue reading, and donations towards equipment, such as the Innowalk Pro, are changing people’s lives. The Innowalk is a motorised standing frame and cross trainer which allows the user to change their postural position by safely and comfortably transitioning from sitting to standing. This helps improve a whole range of medical conditions.”

## What feedback do you get from people with visual impairment, and their families, about donations and the equipment that they receive?

“Sight Scotland receives lovely feedback from the beneficiaries we support. People have said that, as a result of contacting the Support Line, they are feeling more knowledgeable about the topic of their enquiry, and more aware of any next steps they can take. Furthermore, people say they have increased confidence in taking those next steps. Anyone who would like advice on life with visual impairment – for themselves or for their loved one or someone they care for – is welcome to call our team on 0800 024 8973. Thanks to donations, our Support Line team is here to help!”

Please give!

**Help us make a difference.**

Visit [sightscotland.org.uk/donate](https://sightscotland.org.uk/donate)



# Sight Loss Councils launch in Scotland

These councils aim to empower blind and partially sighted individuals by providing a platform for them to voice their concerns, influence local services, and contribute to policy-making.

Each Sight Loss Council consists of a small group of blind and partially sighted volunteers who meet monthly to discuss important issues. The first meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow were successful, focusing on key topics like transport and bus accessibility, accessible sports facilities (gyms, sports centres, stadiums), and overall health and wellbeing.

Ellen Doherty, who has Macular Degeneration and Stargardt's disease, is one of the first SLC volunteers in Scotland.

Ellen says: "It is so important that we are using real lived experience to raise awareness and, ultimately, make change. The Sight Loss Councils will amplify our voices, advocate for change, and ensure that more people recognise the needs of blind and partially sighted people across the country. I am very proud to be part of this and urge others to join."





Sight Loss Councils are delivered in Scotland by Sight Scotland, Sight Scotland Veterans, and Visibility Scotland, and are funded by the Thomas Pocklington Trust.

Callum Lancashire, Engagement Manager for Sight Loss Councils in Scotland, says: “The launch of the Sight Loss Councils in Scotland has been a great success. These initial meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow have laid a strong foundation and I have been delighted by the positivity and engagement coming from our members. As someone who understands first-

hand the challenges of living with a visual impairment, witnessing the energy and enthusiasm has been truly inspiring and I look forward to working together so we can try and influence real positive change.”

The Sight Loss Councils are continuing to grow and welcome participants with lived experience of visual impairment. Please get in touch if interested: call us on 0800 035 6409, or email [callum.lancashire@sightscotland.org.uk](mailto:callum.lancashire@sightscotland.org.uk)



# Celebrating a win for rail travel

## Free rail travel for companions of people with visual impairment is now being trialled!

We are thrilled that after many signatures and letters to policy-makers, Transport Scotland is helping make rail travel accessible for people with visual impairment.

In its recently published Fair Fares Review, Transport Scotland says it plans to launch a pilot project that extends free rail travel to companions of National (Scotland) Concessionary Travel for Blind Persons cardholders, as well as the cardholders. This ticketing change will have a profound impact on the lives of individuals with visual impairment across Scotland, many of whom depend on public transport for mobility and independence.

Joe Tottenham is a 92-year-old army veteran who lost his sight due to macular degeneration. Joe was delighted by the success of the campaign.

“Knowing no matter where I’m going in Scotland, that my companion can travel with me at no extra cost, will change my life. As a blind person, having someone to help me get on and off the train is vital – I’d be lost without them. I hope all Blind Persons Concessionary Travel cardholders will take full advantage of the pilot scheme.”



## On track to make a difference

Transport Scotland's decision comes two years after we launched our Fair Fares campaign. People with visual impairment had contacted us, concerned about the rising costs of rail travel, and reporting confusion about the different concessionary and companion schemes being operated in different areas of Scotland.

We called for a fairer policy across Scotland. Our Policy team held a debate in the Scottish Parliament on the issue and gave evidence to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. It was then considered in the Fair Fares Review, and the pilot was confirmed.

Our Chief Executive, Craig Spalding, says: "This news is transformative, both in terms of inclusivity and affordability, and we would like to commend Transport Scotland for actively listening to a segment of society that is regrettably overlooked far too often."

Thank you to everyone who has supported this campaign. We'll update you once the pilot scheme begins.

Support us!

## Want to support future campaigns?

Sign up for our email newsletter at [sightscotland.org.uk/influencing-change](https://sightscotland.org.uk/influencing-change)





# Take on a challenge event!

## Upcoming events:

**Kiltwalk – Dundee**

Sunday 11 August

**Scottish Half Marathon and 10K**

Sunday 18 August

**Kiltwalk – Edinburgh**

Sunday 15 September

**10K Edinburgh**

Sunday 22 September

**Supernova**

Saturday 2 November

Free  
entry!

For a free entry place  
and advice on fundraising

Visit:

[sightscotland.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise](https://sightscotland.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise)

Email [fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@sightscotland.org.uk)







*giftaid it*

### 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](mailto:privacy@sightscotland.org.uk) You can see how we protect and use your personal data in our privacy policy at [sightscotland.org.uk/privacy](http://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



**Sight  
Scotland**

Tackling vision loss together