

Issue 15



Spring
Summer 2023

SIGNPOST



In this issue:

A Royal Visit

**Lizzi Jordan, GB
Paralympic Cyclist**

Coffee & Cake Dates

**Be a Coronation
Volunteer**

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of Signpost.

This is my first issue as the new Chief Executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, and I have really enjoyed my first few months getting to know the charity, some of the people we support, and many of our volunteers.

I look forward to meeting many more of you at some of the events we have coming up this year, details of all these can be found as you read, listen or watch on.

Personally, I am really looking forward to Music in the Park on Sunday 11th June. I am keeping my fingers crossed for a warm summer's evening and lots of dancing!

Please do read the article on the British Telecom (BT) switch over on page 11, we are very pleased that BT have listened to us on this important issue.



Finally, Signpost is available on Amazon Alexa via Talking Newspapers. Say 'Alexa, enable Talking Newspapers' and then when asked for the region say 'Alexa, play Signpost' and it will play the latest edition.

Clare

Clare Burgess
Chief Executive

This edition of Signpost has been sent to you as someone who requested information from us. If you would like Signpost in a different format, please let us know.

If you'd rather not receive our magazine, you can unsubscribe by emailing gdpr@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contacting our Helpdesk on **01372 377701**.

Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, Surrey, KT22 9JX. Registered Charity Number: 1121949.

Voice Line: **01372 377701** Text: **07860 026269**

Skype: **sensory.services**

FaceTime: dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk

Email: info@sightforsurrey.org.uk www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

A Royal visit

On Wednesday 19th April 2023, we welcomed Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh to our offices.

Clare Burgess, Chief Executive, and Christine Wilmshurst, Chair of Trustees, greeted HRH and took her on a tour. First she met with Tony Greene, Resource Centre Coordinator, Satwinder Ghotra, Low Vision Dispensing Optician, Jane Wemhoener, Hearing Loss Advisor and her interpreter. Tony explained the benefits of coming into the Resource Centre and showed her pieces of equipment including magnifiers, a talking clock, bump on stickers and a large button, loud speaking phone.

The Duchess then met John Mitchell, a service user and volunteer for the charity for 33 years, who was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa 40 years ago. John told The Duchess about taking up target shooting once he was registered blind.

HRH also discussed with Jane Wemhoener the hope that ongoing developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) could enable advancements in British Sign Language interpretation.

The Duchess moved onto the kitchen where she met Deanne Weller, a Sensory Specialist Worker, who demonstrated specially adapted cooking equipment for people with a vision impairment (VI).

The Duchess then joined a real-time 'Let's Talk Tech' session and met Tech Trainer, Gary Eady, who explained the advances of technology that are helping people with a VI stay connected in a world with many accessibility barriers. Gary also explained how an Orcam My Eye works.



Picture credit: Mark Lewis Photography

HRH then moved on to meet some of the charity's volunteers and Trustees, including Deafblind Trustee, Russell Gilmore, who uses hands on BSL to communicate which amazed The Duchess.

She then met the creators of a collaborative piece of artwork from the charity's various social groups including: Deafblind Friendship Group, Deaf Social Group, Children & Young People's Service & Blind and VI Communications Group. The finalised artwork will hang in the front entrance at the charity's office.

The Duchess spoke to a group of blind and VI children about the artwork they were making and spoke of her three dogs and tortoise, Marmite, who loves grapes. Two children supported by the charity, Rylie and Amy, presented The Duchess with a goodie bag and a hand woven bird feeder crafted by members of the Children and Young People's Service Group.



As she departed, The Duchess unveiled a Braille plaque to commemorate her visit and cut a stunning cake demonstrating the work the charity has done over the last 100 years.

Clare Burgess, Chief Executive, said, ***"It was a privilege and great honour to introduce The Duchess to some of our service users, volunteers and staff and highlight the crucial work we do supporting people who are blind, vision impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing and those with combined sight and hearing loss."***



Picture credit: Mark Lewis Photography

Tech Trainer to the rescue

Tech is a fast moving sector, and for people who are blind or vision impaired, the introduction of accessible technology has made keeping and staying in touch with friends and family much easier.

However, learning how to use all the accessibility settings can be a minefield. This is where our Tech Trainer, Gary Eady, steps in to the rescue!

Gary organises and runs our popular monthly online Zoom training sessions, Let's Talk Tech, and offers individual sessions at our offices.

The online sessions run via Zoom every last Wednesday of the month, except in August, from 11am to 12.30pm (please note the time change for June).



The sessions for the rest of the year are:

31st May - Android Accessibility

28th June - Amazon Echo & Alexa (2pm to 3pm)

26th July - Using an iPhone or iPad

27th September - Synapptic, the app that makes a Smartphone or Tablet easier to use

25th October - VoiceOver screen reader for iPhone/iPad

29th November - Windows 10/11 Accessibility

To book yourself onto a session, please call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701, or email info@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Gary has also produced a series of downloadable 'How To Guides' and recordings of the Zoom training sessions. They are all available on our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Deaf Coffee and Tea Dates



Our Deaf Coffee Mornings in Redhill and Afternoon Tea in Woking take place every month and are a wonderful opportunity for the Deaf community to get together and have a catch up.

Joan, one of our regulars, said, *“I really appreciate going to the Deaf afternoon tea and coffee mornings, it helps me to get out of the house and I enjoy meeting other Deaf people to socialise with.”*



The dates for the rest of the year are:

Redhill Coffee Mornings Tuesdays 10am to 1pm

- 📍 Pistachio's in the Park, London Road, Redhill, RH1 1SZ
 - 6th June
 - 4th July
 - 8th August
 - 5th September
- 📍 The Harlequin Theatre & Cinema, Café Area, Warwick Quadrant, Redhill, RH1 1NN
 - 3rd October
 - 7th November
 - 5th December

Woking Afternoon Tea Thursdays 2pm to 5pm

- 📍 Pret-A-Manger, Unit 41, Wolsey Walk Shopping Centre, Woking, GU21 2XX
 - 25th May
 - 22nd June
 - 20th July
 - 24th August
 - 21st September
 - 19th October
 - 23rd November
 - 21st December

A British Sign Language Interpreter will be available at all the venues and dates. For other requests please contact us to discuss. Text us your number to receive reminders and updates.



We look forward to welcoming you.

SMS: 07860 026 269 **Skype:** sensory.services

FaceTime: dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk

Paralympic GB Cyclist Lizzi Jordan

In 2017, Lizzi Jordan suffered a catastrophic reaction to E.coli food poisoning, with multiple organ failure that resulted in multiple blood clots all over her body, including behind her eye which pulled the retina back, starving her eyes of oxygen, and resulted in Lizzi completely losing her sight at 19 years old.

Lizzi spent three months in a coma and had a long period of recuperation and reflection whilst coming to terms with her sight loss. Lizzi started to try to get her life back together and reached out to Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey for help.

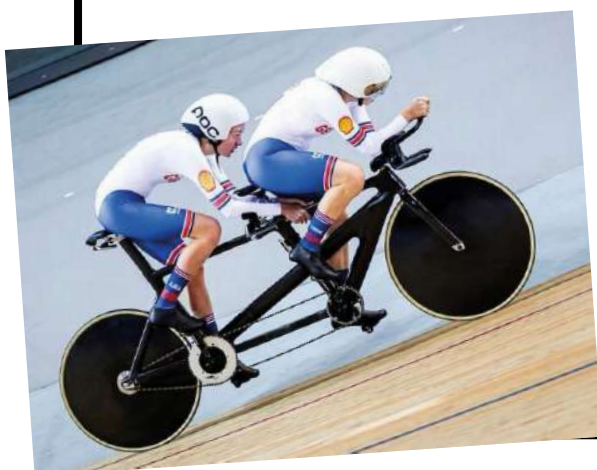
A home visit and assessment of Lizzi's needs was arranged.

Gary Eady, our Tech Trainer, met Lizzi to show her how to use an iPhone with Voice-Over, which reads the screen. Gary also showed her how to navigate the home screen, open and close apps and make and end a phone call. Lizzi said, ***“Learning how to use my iPhone again was life-changing for me, as I had been feeling very isolated since leaving hospital. It allowed me to make contact with my friends, and gave me back some independence.”***

One day a friend, and member of staff from Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, told Lizzi about a Cycling Paralympic Talent ID Day. Lizzi went along and was invited to join the foundation team. This involved Lizzi training two days a week with the team, and many more hours of gym work and training.



Picture credit: Surrey Live



Picture credit: SWPix Cycling



Lizzi continued her tech training with Gary, learning how to use JAWS and Windows 10.

This enabled Lizzi to feel confident to apply for a job, which she got in 2022, with Surrey Choices through the government funded KickStart Scheme.

Lizzi now competes with the GB Paralympic team and last October competed in the Paralympic World Track Championships winning Silver. She is currently training for the Belgium and USA road races and hopes to compete in the Paralympics in 2024.

Lizzi is now looking for sponsorship and a job to help fund her ambition.

Come and work for us!

We are always on the look-out for great candidates to come and work for us, and we offer a variety of full, part time and hourly roles. From Communicator Guides to Hearing Loss Advisors, Eye Clinic Liaison Officers to Helpdesk Advisors, we have a wide range of roles available.

Susie has worked for us as a Communicator Guide for 11 years and tells us why she loves her job.

“I started with Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey when my children were at primary school, I needed a job away from being ‘Mummy’ that was flexible around school hours and holidays. I love my job as a Communicator Guide and I have worked with some lovely and interesting people. No personal care is involved, just providing companionship and helping adults with hearing and sight loss to live their lives independently.”



Our latest roles are available on our ‘Work for Us’ page on our website: www.sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Come for Coffee & Cake!

Do you like the sound of free coffee and cake, and the opportunity to talk to our staff about your hearing and sight loss concerns?

Come and visit us at one of the Coffee & Cake dates below, our Community Engagement Team look forward to meeting you there.



Dates for your diary

- **Monday 26th June** 10am -12pm:
Open Cafe (Orchard Room), All Saints Church, High Street, Banstead, SM7 2NN
- **Tuesday 25th July** 10am - 2pm:
St. Mary's Church Hall, 10a The Ridgeway, Fetcham, KT22 9AZ
- **Wednesday 23rd August** 10.30am - 12.30pm:
Claygate Village Hall, Church Road, Claygate, KT10 0JP
- **Monday 18th September** 10.30am - 12.30pm:
Horley Methodist Church Hall, Victoria Road, Horley, RH6 7AS

Shout out to Schools & Scouts

Calling all schools, community groups, Scout and Girlguiding Groups! If you would like a talk from us about living with a sensory loss, we can provide a spokesperson to come along to your school or group and give a talk. We can bring our simulation sight condition spectacles so people can experience a variety of sight conditions, and our ear defenders to try some activities when you can't hear. Talks are all free of charge, all we ask for is a donation.

To book one of the team in for a Sensory Loss Talk, then call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 or email us on info@sightforsurrey.org.uk.



Music in the Park

Music in the Park is back on Sunday 11th June, the musical extravaganza in aid of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and Guildford Talking Newspapers.

Set once again in the stunning grounds of Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, with the glowing Grade I listed house as the stage backdrop, a variety of live acts will take to the stage and perform a selection of stonking 'Best of British' tunes.

From Dire Straits, Oasis, Beatles to Queen, you won't stop dancing all night!

Tickets cost £25 per adult, children under 16 and carers go free. Buy your tickets today online at www.guildfordlions.com/music-in-the-park/.



Please bring your own palatial picnic and set up your spread from 5.30pm. Then sit back and relax whilst the music serenades you from 6pm to 9pm. A small café serving refreshments and light snacks will be open until 8pm.

We will also be running a raffle on the night with a variety of lovely prizes on offer from pub dinners to pamper vouchers. So don't forget to bring cards or cash to purchase raffle tickets.

Have you heard about Smart Meters?

A smart meter is a simple way to take control of your energy use. You don't need to pay to have one installed, and you don't need to have an internet connection to use one.

Smart meters come with an in-home display that shows how much gas and electricity you're using and how much you're spending, so you can take steps to save energy around your home.

Ask your energy supplier for a smart meter. You'll find the contact details on your energy bill.

BT Digital Switch



In 2017 the BT Digital Phone Switchover commenced! A move from an analogue telephone system to a faster digital system.

The upgrade was offered free of charge, all customers needed to do was connect their home phone to the new Smart Hub 2 supplied on the switch date. It all seemed perfect! However, all did not go to plan and we started receiving messages about phones not working.

After some digging, we realised the problem was with the new Smart Hub 2.

All landline phones have to run digitally from this hub, meaning that an adapter is needed for big button and amplified telephones, otherwise these phones will not work.

The adapter plugs into a mains socket anywhere in the home and will then link that phone to the hub. However, many service users were not aware of this, and therefore did not know to ask for the adapter, and BT were not offering it either!

For many weeks Tony Greene, our Resource Centre Coordinator, was messaging BT asking that engineers carry these adapters and offer them to anyone who is vision impaired or hard of hearing so they can carry on using a phone that suits their needs.

So if you use a big button or amplified telephone and it stops working after you've switched to a digital broadband service then call BT on 0330 1234 150 or text 150 from a BT mobile and order an adapter today.



Volunteer with us today!

Volunteering need not take up hours and hours of your time, you could volunteer for as little as one hour a week and make a real difference to the life of someone who is blind or vision impaired, Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing.

We have over 30 people on our waiting list hoping to be matched with a Home Visitor volunteer and we have other opportunities available too, these include:

- Phone Befrienders
- Drivers
- Events & fundraising

“I have really enjoyed visiting the lady I have been matched with in her home, she is housebound and doesn’t see a lot of people. It’s great to add another aspect to her life, and for me to engage with someone whilst my children are at school. It’s been lovely to see her mood brighten each week and how much she is looking forward to me visiting again.”

Adeeba, Home Visitor

“It’s the most worthwhile thing you’ll do all week.”

Valerie, Phone Befriender

These are just some of the lovely things our volunteers say about being a volunteer for us, but don’t just take our word for it.

“I love having my volunteer come to visit me each week, it’s so nice to have company when you don’t see anybody from one week to the next. I have nieces and nephews that call me, but there is nothing like having face to face contact with someone, you can’t beat it.”

Mary, Service User



The Coronation Champions Awards is a new awards scheme to honour Britain's unsung army of selfless volunteers. Launched by Her Majesty Queen Camilla with The Royal Voluntary Service (RVS), the awards will celebrate those who go the extra mile in their communities during this historic year of celebration for the nation.



Katie Wilson, our Volunteer & Community Engagement Manager, said, ***“I am delighted the work of volunteers across the UK is being celebrated in this way, every single one of our volunteers deserves an award in my opinion.”***

We made a number of nominations and are delighted that Lee Roake, who is supported by our Children & Young People's Service team, was chosen as a Coronation Champion for the work he does as an Ambassador. Lee received a coronation pin and certificate signed by both Their Majesties and was invited to attend one of the Coronation events. Well done Lee!

Being a volunteer is one of the most rewarding things you will do in a long time. To find out about volunteering opportunities please email volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call our Helpdesk on **01372 377701** and ask to speak to Katie in our Volunteer Team.

Deafblind Friendship Group

Julie Barclay leads our Deafblind Friendship Group who meet up once a month and take part in various activities. Last month the group received a visit from Haslemere Museum. The curator brought a number of exhibits for the group to feel and touch. The washing board brought back memories to many of the group members.



If you would like to join this group please email Julie Barclay on jbarclay@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Woking High Regional Braille Challenge

The regional UK heats of the World Braille Challenge took place at Woking High School in February and we thought we just had to get involved!

The World Braille Championships is an annual event organised by the Braille Institute and is the only academic competition of its kind for students who are blind or vision impaired. The challenge is designed to motivate students to practise and hone their Braille literacy skills which are essential to academic and employment success.

Any blind or vision impaired student in primary and secondary school who can read and write Braille is eligible to participate in the challenge. Contestants are divided into five categories and tested on fundamental Braille skills such as:

- Reading Comprehension
- Spelling
- Speed and Accuracy
- Proofreading
- Charts and Graphs

Only the top 50 students (10 in each category) with the highest scores are invited for the final round – two days of competition, camaraderie and fun!



In between the challenges students were given the opportunity to make a cake in a mug with our Habilitation Specialists. This was a lot of fun, and also an opportunity for students to practise many important skills, including measuring, weighing, mixing and using a talking microwave.



Woking High School has a specialist Vision Impaired (VI) Department and schools from around Surrey came along with their VI students to take part.

Finalists will be announced in early May with the finals taking place in late June in Los Angeles, California! Good luck to all who entered.

Willow Weaving & Chocolate Workshop

The Children & Young People's Service (CYPS) team each year organise an action packed schedule of fun family friendly events for all the blind and vision impaired children and young people they support.

So far this year five events have been organised with great attendance at all. Willow Weaving took place in February at Albury Village Hall. A specialist teacher came and taught a small group of vision impaired children, and a few parents, how to make a willow bird feeder. The group were encouraged to feel the different types of willow branches and discuss how their characteristics helped to make different sections of the bird feeder. The teacher also brought along examples of other willow woven



products for the group to feel. All the feeders looked very professional and the group really enjoyed the activity.

On 1st April the CYPS team organised a chocolate workshop for the 11UP group at Wotton Hatch Village Hall, just in time for Easter. The group first tasted different flavours and varieties of chocolate including milk, dark, vegan, lime, orange and sea-salt. There was a chocolate quiz and corny chocolate jokes told throughout the two-hour activity. Each young person was given a plain chocolate egg to decorate with a bowl full of edible sprinkles and glitter plus a tube of icing with which to secure the items. Everyone had a great morning and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



Joke

Why did the M&M want to go to college? To be a smarty!

Come and join us at an event near you!

As a charity, we need to fundraise to ensure we can continue providing help and support to people in Surrey living with a sensory loss.

Come and see us at one of the events below this year.

- **Wed 3rd May – Sat 2nd July:** Centenary Story Exhibition, Guildford Cathedral, Stag Hill, Guildford, GU2 7UP
- **Sun 11th June:** Music in the Park, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, GU4 7RT. Doors open 5.30pm, music starts 6pm
- **Mon 26th June:** Coffee & Cake, 10am to 12pm. Open Café (Orchard Room), All Saints Church, High Street, Banstead, SM7 2NN
- **Fri 7th July:** Golf Day, Cranleigh Golf & Country Club, Barhatch Lane, GU6 7NG
- **Tue 25th July:** Equipment Open Day & Coffee & Cake, 10am to 2pm. St Mary's Church Hall, 10a The Ridgeway, Fetcham, KT22 9AZ
- **Wed 23rd August:** Coffee & Cake, 10.30am to 12.30pm. Claygate Village Hall, Church Road, Claygate, KT10 0JP
- **Sun 17th September:** Cricket Day, Oxted & Limpsfield Cricket Club, Master Park, Oxted, RH8 9NA
- **Mon 18th September:** Coffee & Cake, 10.30am to 12.30pm. Horley Methodist Church Hall, Victoria Road, Horley, RH6 7AS
- **Thu 16th November:** Firewalk, Guildford Pavilion, The Sports Ground, Woodbridge Road, Guildford, GU1 4RP
- **Tue 5th December:** Christmas Carol Concert, 7pm. St Andrew's Church, Downside Bridge Road, Cobham, KT11 3EJ



Golf Day

We are hosting a Golf Day at Cranleigh Golf & Country Club on Friday 7th July 2023.

Teams will be joined by World Champion Blind Golfer, Jason Bastable, and will get their chance to 'Beat the Pro' and help the charity raise money to provide services for people who are blind, vision impaired, Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing across Surrey.

The 18 hole course at Cranleigh Golf & Country Club boasts a picturesque setting with both a challenging and playable course to suit golfers of mixed experience.

Get a group of four friends together and enjoy a day of golf in the glorious Surrey Hills all in aid of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey's life-changing work.

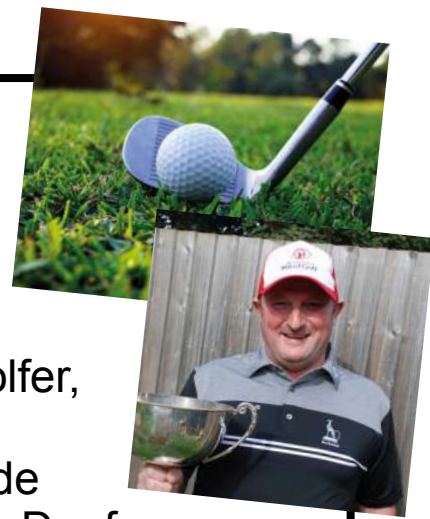
£350 per team of 4 includes:

8am: tea & coffee, plus pastries

9am: 18 holes tee-off (shotgun start) Best 2 of 4 game play

2pm: two course lunch

To enter please email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.



Can you raise valuable funds for us?

Can you, your friends, family or company help us to raise necessary funds for Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey? By hosting a garden party, taking on a skydive, a sponsored event, or holding a cake sale, you will really help make a difference towards enabling us to increase the services we can offer.

Thank-you to everyone that has supported us in the past year.

Our fundraising team would love to hear from you about any fundraising efforts you would like to consider in 2023. Please get in touch with us. Email: fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.



From Ukraine to the UK

In January, we received a referral from a new service user who required our support, a Ukrainian refugee named Olena, who is registered blind, and moved to the UK under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.

Olena started noticing problems with her sight when she was 21 years old and was diagnosed with Diabetic Retinopathy.

Olena and her husband fled Kiev in April 2022, leaving Olena's parents behind. It's a subject that Olena still finds hard to talk about. ***"I speak to them twice a week, they are ok, but it's not easy for them."***

Olena and her husband came to Epsom to live with their host for three months, and the host introduced them to the Epsom & Ewell Hub. A volunteer at the hub told Olena about Swail House in Epsom, which provides social housing to people with a vision impairment. The volunteer and



Epsom Citizen Advice Bureau helped the couple apply for accommodation and they moved into Swail House in August. A local charity gave them furniture and other items to set up their home.

Laura Palmer, one of our Senior Sensory Specialist Workers, has supported Olena with mobility training. Olena said, ***"I enjoy the training with Laura, it has helped me so much. I can manage myself independently around our flat. I am now learning the route to the Ashley Centre so I can make my own way to the English classes I attend, and not have to rely on my husband. It has been a big learning curve as everything is different, from the traffic, to the cane I use. I am so grateful for the support I have received so far."***

Leaving a legacy

Are you passionate about ensuring that everyone with a sight and hearing loss has a happy and fulfilling future with the same opportunities as sighted and hearing people?

We strongly believe in that too, and, in fact, that is our mission, and you can help us reach that goal.

Giving a gift in your Will could help future generations within the local community gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they need, and not let their sensory impairment hold them back.

Of course, family comes first when you are making your Will, but once you have made provisions for loved ones, a percentage, no matter how small, left to Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey will transform the lives of sensory impaired people in Surrey. It can help us plan for the future, knowing we have your support in years to come.

We know and appreciate that writing a Will can be a tricky and

uncomfortable subject to tackle.

However, by getting your affairs in order now, this will help your family and friends after you have gone.



To help make writing a Will easier, we have teamed up with the Will writing experts, Guardian Angel, to provide a free Will writing service.

To book to write your Will over the phone or face to face, call **0800 773 4014** and quote **'Sight for Surrey.'** You can also write your Will online at gawill.uk/sfs.

Take the first step towards creating a better future for the people we support by leaving us a gift in your Will.

You can help us support and develop young children, like Ashar, pictured, to be better equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve all their hopes and dreams.

VisionZone 2023

Solutions for low vision



Open day, supporting low vision and hearing loss

Tuesday 25th July - Open from 10am to 2pm
St. Mary's Church, 10a The Ridgeway,
Fetcham, Leatherhead, KT22 9AZ

Would you like to learn more about support, services, and groups? Meet your local charities and societies, ask any questions you might have. Gain hands on experience with products and technology to aid you in your daily activities. Magnifiers, electronics, reading machines, desktops and much more. Entry is free and no appointment needed
We look forward to meeting you there!



0800 145 6115
www.lowvisionshop.co.uk