

Signpost Spring Summer 2024, Issue 17

Front cover: *Image description: Meet Up Catch Up, Fetcham. Natalie, Community Champion from Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey with Yola who is supported by the charity. They are both holding cups of tea and clinking them together. In front of them is a high brick flower bed with yellow daffodils growing out of the top, a lovely signal of spring.*

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Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2024 Edition of Signpost

This edition is an action-packed issue brimming with news and stories from the charity, and beyond; including the upcoming Paralympics, Artificial Intelligence updates and our Meet Up and Catch Up events.

Times are very tough for many charities, including us, and we would not be able to put on the vast array of events without your ongoing donations, including our new Meet Up and Catch Ups which help reduce social isolation that many people who are Deaf, or have a sensory impairment experience.

We need your help to make this possible and ask if you are able that you set-up a regular donation or make a one-off donation to us. Please complete the form enclosed and send back to us in the pre-paid envelope enclosed.

With my sincere thanks and gratitude for your continued support.

Best wishes

Clare Burgess

P.S. – Don't forget you can listen to this edition on Amazon Alexa via Talking Newspapers. Say, "Alexa, enable Talking Newspapers". Then when asked for the region say "Alexa, play Signpost".

Contact Details

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

- Voice Line: 01372 377701
- Text: 07860 026 269
- Skype: sensory.services
- FaceTime: dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk
- Email: info@sensoryservices.org.uk
- Website: www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

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**.

Benefits Change

The benefits below are being replaced by Universal Credit by the end of 2024/2025:

- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit (for working aged people)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Other benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), will remain unchanged. If you are in receipt of one of the above benefits, look out for a letter called '*Universal Credit Migration Notice*' from The Department of Working Pensions (DWP) explaining what you should do.

If you receive any of these benefits listed above, you will be asked to move to Universal Credit and start a new online claim or your benefits will stop by the date in your letter.

Stage 1

Letters will be sent out to everyone inviting them to migrate to Universal Credit.

Stage 2

1st reminder letter issued

Stage 3

2nd reminder letter issued

If no claim or contact has been made, benefits will eventually stop. If there is a good reason, there is a process to change the deadline date.

- Internet is required as online journals need to be set up and used regularly.
- For rare exceptions there is a process for phone set up and the DWP 'may' assist with this but can't guarantee it.
- Transitional protection is a top up given to people who are entitled to more on existing benefits than on Universal Credit, if you need advice or support please contact us, or the DWP below.

For help and support please call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 and ask for the Benefits Team.

Useful Numbers

- Universal Credit Migration Notice Helpline Phone: 0800 169 0328
- Relay UK (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 169 0328
- Video relay service for British Sign Language (BSL) users is available via Sign Video visit www.gov.uk. Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 6:00pm.

New York artist Taka Rothenberg

Who knew that sitting in our midst at the Deafblind Friendship Group was a famous New York artist with 26 exhibitions under her belt!

Taka Rothenberg was born in Tokyo in 1929 and moved to the US aged 32 years old to study art in Washington DC. There she designed dresses for a number of socialites. Working with fabrics everyday led Taka to exploring the use of fabrics in her artwork and thus Taka's unique style of 'fabric art' was born. Each one of her exquisite pieces of artwork tells a story and captures the mood and feeling of the person or place, which is the essence of Taka's work.

Whilst sketching one day, Taka realised she couldn't see the detail that was so important to her pieces. Age related macular degeneration was

diagnosed and gradually Taka has been losing her sight, and more recently her hearing. This has not stopped her from painting and sketching, “I just do it differently now,” mentions Taka.

Taka now lives near Guildford and joined our Deafblind Friendship Group five years ago and enjoys meeting other people there. “Going to the Deafblind Friendship Group gets me out and about. I have a wonderful volunteer driver from the charity that picks me up and takes me to each event. The charity has been a great support to me.”

If you are interested in joining our Deafblind Friendship Group please email us on friendshipgroup@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call us on 01372 377701.

Russell joins Surrey County Council Interview panel

One of our Trustees, Russell Gilmore, was part of a stakeholder interview panel for the Surrey County Council CEO interview process.

Russell was very proud to be the first deafblind person on an interview panel for the county council and asked questions to the applicants to find out what level of commitment they had to making sure that people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind have opportunities to fully participate in community life in Surrey.

Russell was supported by a team of deaf and hearing professionals to provide communication support and told us, “I had one question to ask and then at the end of all the interviews we discussed which candidates we thought were best. It was such a good experience for me, and I would love to be involved again.” Concludes Russell.

JOIN OUR CHALLENGE EVENTS TEAM!

Do you want to raise money to support Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey but don't know where to start, or what to do? Whether you are a first-time fundraiser, or a regular giver, we all need a little help and inspiration, and we have lots of challenge events for you to consider.

From running, cycling, swimming to triathlons, hikes, sky dives and wing-walks, we can purchase guaranteed places at hundreds of challenge events across the UK!

From The Big Half on Sunday 1st September to RideLondon-Essex 2025 we can purchase a place for you, and in return we simply ask you to fundraise for us.

Big or small, any challenge undertaken for us makes a huge difference to the services we can provide to people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind in Surrey.

David ran the Royal Parks half marathon for the charity and said, “I wanted to give something back to the charity that provided me with tech support when my eye health deteriorated, and this was a fun and healthy way to do it. The event was so well organised and the cool, but sunny, October weather made the running conditions perfect. I enjoyed it so much I have signed up to run The Big Half this year!”

So, tell us about your dream challenge and we will organise the rest! Simply contact us on fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call 01372 377701.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Breaking Down Barriers is a workshop for professionals in Surrey to gain an overview, understanding and appreciation of inclusion, accessibility, and independence for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind.

Organised and hosted by us, at our offices in Fetcham, the event is led by people with personal insight into everyday lived experience, its challenges and opportunities. Attendees learn about the practical support available, accessible technology, communications and how we work with adults and children across Surrey.

This workshop will inspire and empower attendees to become a champion for access and inclusion in Surrey, helping to break down barriers so everyone can embrace an independent life at home, at work and in our communities.

Elliot from Citizen Advice Surrey Heath said, “the workshop provided great insight into the challenges faced by people with sensory impairments but also highlighted many ways to overcome those challenges. It also gave practical knowledge on how we would be able to provide better support and services to anyone with sensory loss.”

We also gave a talk to Citizens Advice Surrey Heath which yielded unanimously positive feedback. They found the tips on how to engage with a client with sensory loss particularly useful.

Dates for 2024:

- Tuesday 16th July
- Wednesday 16th October
- **Tickets:** Special offer currently £25 each (50% off)
- **Time: 09:30am to 3:30pm.**

To book: Visit www.eventbrite.co.uk and search Breaking Down Barriers.

To find out more, or book an accessibility talk for your organisation, please email Katie at kranderson@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Our Hearing Loss Team

The Hearing Loss Team provide information and support to assist people to manage their hearing impairment. The support the team provides is tailored to each individual after a thorough assessment of their needs.

So how do I receive support?

The first step to receiving support is to make a referral. This can be done yourself online through our website, via a family member or friend, or through a hospital audiology clinic. All our contact details can be found at the end of this article.

Once your referral is received, one of the team will make contact with you to book in an assessment of your needs. This initial assessment can take up to two hours. This could be in your home, by telephone, or at our

offices in Fetcham. At the end of the assessment one of the team will explain what pieces of equipment might help you. Some of these items may be available for loan to you, others may be available for you to purchase.

The types of equipment we can provide are:

- Personal amplifiers to aid conversations with people around you
- TV amplifiers to hear the television better and stop it being too loud
- Amplified phones both corded and cordless
- Flashing doorbells with a loud chime
- Flashing beacons and vibrating pagers to alert to doorbells and other sounds in the home
- Vibrating doorbells
- Flashing, loud alarm clocks with a vibrating pad
- Vibrating/flashing fire alarms
- Baby alerting equipment

What is a hearing loop, and how do I use it?

A hearing loop is a sound system for people who use hearing aids. Once the hearing aid has been activated to the loop setting, whatever is being played audibly will be played directly into the hearing aid with just two or three clicks on the hearing aid, depending on the brand.

Public areas such as train stations, GP surgeries and hospitals should all have hearing loops fitted.

Look out for the hearing loop logo when out and about and change your hearing aid setting to loop (check your hearing aid manual if you're unsure).

If you have any difficulties in doing this then please get in contact with us. Also, please do check with the establishment that you are visiting that they have the hearing loop switched on.

Bluetooth

Did you know you can also connect your hearing aid to your mobile phone, laptop or computer via Bluetooth technology. Not all hearing aids are compatible, but the quality of what you hear is clearer with no interference. You will need to change the programme setting of your hearing aid to the relevant setting (check user manual to know how).

Contact us on:

- **Helpdesk:** 01372 377701
- **Skype:** sensory.services
- **FaceTime:** dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk
- **SMS:** 07860 026 269
- **info@sensoryservices.org.uk**

Resource Centre and Artificial Intelligence

Come along to the Resource Centre - you'll be sure of a good find as it's bursting with gadgets and equipment, and now offers recommendations on the best Artificial Intelligence (AI) apps all designed to help make life easier if you are blind or partially sighted.

Keith Dear, our AI Trailblazer, said, "I am currently researching all the apps for the people we support and look forward to sharing my recommendations; in the meantime here are my top two!"

Clew

Utilising the device's camera, Clew identifies surroundings and overlays intuitive routes directly onto the screen. Simultaneously, it provides clear turn-by-turn voice instructions and tactile feedback, ensuring seamless navigation and it doesn't need WI-FI and mobile data. User-friendly features include the ability to save frequently used routes. Available to download via Apple Store for iOS devices.

Keith says, "this app would be ideal for someone who is blind or partially sighted working in an office, or a student getting around halls of residence."

Ava

The Ava app provides real-time transcription of spoken dialogue into text from casual conversations with friends to important meetings and events, this app is a game-changer for the Deaf and hard of hearing.

Ava is available to download from the App Store for iOS devices and Google Play for Android.

Tony Greene, Resource Centre Manager, adds, “we still stock bump ons, magnifiers, task lamps and digital scanners – we’ve got you sorted on all accounts.”

To book an appointment please call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Communicator Guide Service

Our Communicator Guide service provides help and support to people who are blind, partially sighted or have combined sight and hearing loss. Being a Communicator Guide is a flexible, rewarding and varied role and no day is ever the same.

Suzy, is a Communicator Guide for the charity, and takes Lorraine to the gym, on her weekly shop and helps her in the garden. Suzy tells us, “I always leave my visits with a sense of achievement knowing that I have assisted Lorraine to do something she would not have been able to do without my support.”

Lorraine, has been supported by us for many years and said, “I would be stuck indoors with no access to the community or opportunity to take part in the all the activities I do without the support of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey.”

If you would like the support of a Communicator Guide, or if you would like more information on how to become a Communicator Guide, please contact us on 01372 377701 or email info@sensoryservices.org.uk.

Interpreting and Communication Support

If you are Deaf or deafblind, we also have a team of Communication Professionals who can support you at medical appointments e.g. opticians, doctors and dentists, and could attend births, weddings and funerals. Whatever the occasion, or your need for communication support, we can help you.

We have our own database of Communication Professionals. Our Sign Language Interpreters and Deaf Translators are NRCPD registered and regulated.

To find out more please contact our Interpreting and Communications Team on 01372 377701 or email interpreting@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Paralympics 2024

The Paralympics will take place in Paris this summer running from 28th August to 8th September 2024. Around 4,400 athletes will compete in 549 medal events in each of the 22 sports.

The list of competing sports include: archery, athletics, badminton, football, boccia, canoeing, cycling, equestrian, goalball, judo, powerlifting, rowing, shooting, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, triathlon, volleyball, basketball, fencing, rugby and tennis.

Para athletics is the largest sport in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games programme in terms of participating athletes and the number of medal events. Up to 1,069 athletes will compete across 164 medal events in the French capital.

One to watch out for is Timothée Adolphe (France) who is blind and was a silver medallist in the men's 100 T11 Tokyo in 2020 and is aiming for a Paralympic Gold at his home games this summer.

Cuba's Omara Durand is another blind athlete, she has an impressive collection of no less than eight gold Paralympic medals and 14 World Championships.

There is no Paralympic category for athletes who are Deaf, but there is a separate Deaflympic Games, the next one takes place in Tokyo in 2025.

We are keeping our fingers crossed for Lizzi Jordan's selection in para cycling (featured Signpost Spring 2023).

The Paralympics will be televised on Channel 4 with extensive coverage on BBC and Radio 5 Live. Good luck to all Team GB!

Meet Up and Catch Up

Our Community Champions Team now offer a number of regular opportunities for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind to meet up with other people in the local area and help combat social isolation.

Please find below event details or visit www.sightforsurrey.org.uk/events.

- Fetcham

Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, KT22 9JX

Every last Tuesday of the month from 10:00am to 12:00pm

28th May, 25th June, 30th July, 27th August, 24th September, 29th October, 26th November

- Godalming

Wilfrid Noyce Centre, High Street, Godalming, GU7 1DY

Every 1st Thursday of the month from 10:00am to 12:00pm

6th June, 4th July, 1st August, 5th September, 3rd October, 7th November, 5th December.

- Merstham

Merstham Village Hall, Station Road North, Merstham, RH1 3ED

Every Thursday, school term time only from 10:00am to 12:00pm

- New Haw

New Haw Library, 28A The Broadway, New Haw, Addlestone, KT15 3HA

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10am to 12pm

15th May, 19th June, 17th July, 21st August, 18th September, 16th October, 20th November, 18th December.

- Oxted

Oxted Library, 12 Gresham Road, Oxted, RH8 0BQ

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10am to 12pm

12th June, 10th July, 14th August, 11th September, 9th October, 13th

November, 11th December

Please feel free to pop in, have a cuppa and a chat.

We do have a small number of volunteer drivers so please do contact our Helpdesk to see if we can help. For other transport options check out Surrey Connect on surreyconnect.org.uk.

New venue coming soon: We are bringing our Meet Up Catch Ups to Epsom. Please keep an eye on our website for details.

Braille Challenge 2024

Earlier in the year a number of children and young people we support attended the regional heats of the International Braille Challenge at Woking High School.

Attendees had a number of Braille challenges to complete during the day including comprehension and a practical test using a Braille machine. In addition, the Children and Young People's Service Team from the charity provided a habilitation activity for all the children to take part in. 'Make a Cake in a Mug' was a light-hearted activity after the rigorous Braille Challenge, although there was still learning involved; the children had to measure out the ingredients and operate a talking microwave, all daily living skills. Chocolate, banana or pizza cake was on offer and needless to say chocolate cake was a clear winner!

Bowling and Hanging Basket Workshops

Thanks to funding from The Powell Family Foundation we were able to take our 11Up group of blind and partially sighted young people out for a fun evening bowling. Everyone really enjoyed themselves, and it was a great opportunity to chat to others in between getting strikes and spares in a positive and inclusive environment. The funding also stretched to an afternoon of hanging basket making which was messy work, but some beautiful baskets were created.

Wildlife photographer extraordinaire!

Martina's love of photography developed in her mid-forties as she coped with the bereavement of her husband.

Whilst nursing a terminally ill friend at home some years later, she bought and photographed still life flowers. After he passed away Martina joined Bookham Camera Club and learnt many new photographic skills.

Inspired by her new skills, she travelled back to Africa, her home continent, to photograph an amazing array of wildlife. After her first trip she was hooked, and now has 26 visits to Africa under her belt, plus Iceland and Canada.

Martina's photography has won her many competitions and it is clear from her work that she is a very talented artist. Unfortunately, her deteriorating eye condition, Macular Degeneration, has made it increasingly difficult for Martina to continue her passion. However, she hasn't let that stop her. Martina still travels to Africa and only recently returned from a photography trip to the Maasai Mara.

Martina is now registered Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) and receives weekly visits from one of our volunteer Home Visitors. She has also received various pieces of equipment from the charity to help manage her sight loss.

If you have a vision impairment and would like an assessment, you can make a self-referral via our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk or call and speak to our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

St. John's School fundraises for us

We were delighted to be chosen by students from North and Montgomery Houses at St. John's School in Leatherhead as the beneficiary of their fundraising for this school year.

Students, led by Alex and Will, planned an exciting calendar of activities to raise money and awareness for us as their local charity. Alex, the

charity lead for his year group, knew first-hand how isolating living with sight loss can be having supported his grandmother with her own experience.

A number of teachers from the school took part in our Firewalk Challenge last November and helped raise over £6,000 for the charity. Earlier this year Alex also organised a sense-sation inspired fundraising dinner that parents, staff and students attended in their bright colours to show their support.

The evening started with a drinks reception followed by a game of heads or tails, delicious curry, a fun quiz, and a chilli challenge. The evening culminated with an auction for a pair of tickets to watch a game of football at Arsenal and a round of golf at Merrow which resulted in a bidding war for both!

If you know of a school, or community group, who would like to fundraise for us please ask them to contact us on fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call us on 01372 377701.

Charity Golf Day

Join us for a day of tee-rific charity golf on Thursday 25th July in the breathtaking Surrey Hills at Clandon Regis Golf Club with our partners, The Guildford Lions! Swing into action for a good cause at just £85 per person for 18 holes, Stableford Competition. Your entry includes a sizzling bacon roll on arrival and a delightful 2-course lunch. Secure your spot now for an unforgettable day!

- Arrival – from 8.30am
Breakfast – Bacon Rolls
Shotgun start – 10:00am
Lunch – 2 course meal
- Plus raffle, auction and lots of amazing prizes to be won!

Email GuildfordLionsGolf@gmail.com to sign up.

Thank you to our sponsors PW Mining International Ltd.
Not into golf but want to show your support, we are still looking for hole sponsors. Get in touch with the team at fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk for details.

Pat Tedder, Mayor of Surrey Heath, fundraises for us!

Pat Tedder, The Mayor of Surrey Heath, chose Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey as her charity beneficiary for the year she was elected, which ends in May 2024. One single bucket collection performance of Cinderella at Camberley Theatre over Christmas brought in a staggering £2,329.07.

The Mayor has held other fundraising engagements over the course of her residency and we look forward to finding out the final amount raised.

If you would like to nominate us for a charity fundraiser then please contact us on fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contact our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 and ask to speak to the fundraising team.

Rebecca leaves us a legacy

Rebecca was a well-loved member of our Fundraising Team since joining the charity as our Fundraising and Events Officer in November 2018 until she sadly passed away in July 2023, aged just 44.

Rebecca was a valued member of staff and had become a good friend to many of our staff, volunteers and the people we support.

Knowing she was ill, she wanted to get her affairs in order and when she wrote her Will, very kindly left a percentage as a gift to us. Rebecca wanted to ensure that with her support we can continue to support future generations. Without gifts such as these, we wouldn't be able to provide the essential additional services to the people we support.

Rebecca was an inspiration right to the end.

Free Will writing service

Did you know that we provide a free Will writing service with the experts at Octopus Legacy that is worth over £90, which can be done online or over the phone with any communication support you might need.

Having a Will is so vitally important and ensures that the right people will benefit from what you own, no matter how small, when you pass away.

Without a valid Will, it can take years to sort out your affairs and can mean your surviving dependents have to take on the everyday expenses such as utility bills without access to your money.

Octopus Legacy Wills are legally binding so you will have peace of mind that your affairs are in order.

Call 0800 773 4014 to arrange an appointment to start your Will over the phone, or email fundraising@sighforsurrey.org.uk.

Volunteers we really need you!

June heralds Volunteers Week (3rd - 9th June), and The Big Help Out (7th - 9th June), both designed to highlight the amazing work of volunteers and to encourage others to consider giving some of their time to help people in the community.

At Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey volunteers are vital to helping us provide our service. We urgently need volunteers in the following areas:

Home Visitors

Visits sit someone in their home once a week. We match the volunteer with the person requiring support to ensure you have similar interests. A cuppa and a good chat is all that's required!

Phone Befrienders

Call an isolated blind or partially sighted person once a week for a chat. Again, we match you, so you will both have a common bond to share whether that be gardening, music, football, or films, you won't be short on a subject or two to chat about.

Drivers

Pick up and drive a blind, partially sighted or deafblind person to one of our social groups, or to our offices and take them home again.

Technology Support

Support someone who is blind, partially sighted or deafblind with setting up, or troubleshooting an item in their home such as laptops, tablets, computers, phones, or TV's or supporting with providing essential hearing loss equipment.

We need support all across the county – please help us if you can.

To find out more, or to sign-up, please email volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call us on 01372 377701.

Advert

Professional Vision Services are one of the oldest companies within the visual impairment field today; we manufacture our own products to maintain quality and service excellence.

Magnilink products have always been at the forefront of technology and built to standards ISO9001 and ISO4001.

Desktops

- Monitor size from 13 to 24 inches
- Magnification range from 2x to 60x
- Folding, portable or standalone
- Battery operated
- Light for easy transport
- Rotating cameras for hobbies and distance viewing.

Reading Machines

- Scans text and reads aloud
- Portable / battery operated

- Voice change, speed and pitch
- Save options ideal for books

Head Mounted

- Watch TV
- Ideal for hands free activities sewing, playing cards, changing plugs
- Battery operated

Portable and Hand Held

- Various size screens from 3 to 12 inches
- Magnification range 3x to 16x
- Autofocus adjustment for ease of use

Please ring us on 01462 420 751, to book your no obligation FREE appointment with one of our qualified Low Vision Specialists.

We offer trial periods and a 30 day money back guarantee.

Please ring for a brochure of our full product range or visit www.professional-vision-services.co.uk.