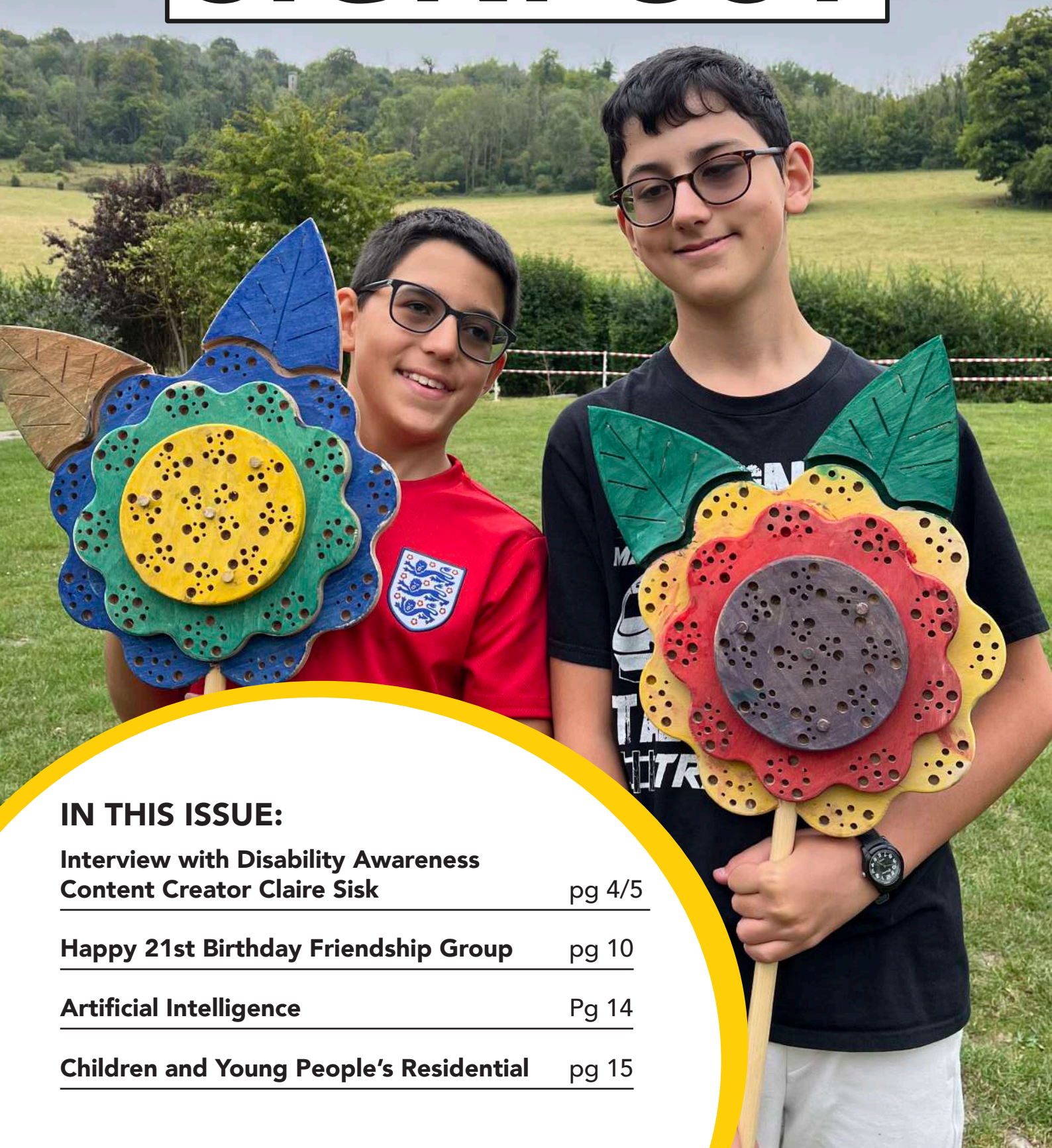


SIGNPOST



IN THIS ISSUE:

**Interview with Disability Awareness
Content Creator Claire Sisk**

pg 4/5

Happy 21st Birthday Friendship Group

pg 10

Artificial Intelligence

Pg 14

Children and Young People's Residential

pg 15

WELCOME

to the Winter 2024/25 edition of Signpost.

We are bringing you another packed edition, brimming with stories and news from the charity, the people we support and beyond.

The interview with Claire Sisk, the Disability Awareness Content Creator and presenter, gives me confidence that brands and organisations are being encouraged to think about accessibility in the planning stages, so it becomes a forethought, rather than an afterthought.

Enclosed in this edition you will find details of our Winter Appeal, which is replacing our customary Christmas raffle. I hope you can still support us in this current climate and cost of living crisis, which I appreciate is tough for everyone, including ourselves. No matter how small your donation, we will put your money to good use and help, support and inspire over 8,000 people in Surrey who are Deaf, hard

of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind.

I am over the moon we have won the Community Impact Award at the Visionary 2024 Awards, sponsored by Specsavers, for our community hubs. I am immensely proud of the work of the entire team setting these up across Surrey. The new dates for 2025 are featured on page eight and nine.

Wishing you a very happy festive season and I look forward to seeing you in 2025.

Best wishes

Clare

Clare Burgess
CEO



Contact details

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

Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey
 Rentwood | School Lane | Fetcham
 Surrey | KT22 9JX

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 gdp@r@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contact our Helpdesk.

Registered Charity Number 1121949

Christmas

Opening Hours

December 2024

Tuesday 24th	9am to 5pm
Wednesday 25th	Closed
Thursday 26th	Closed
Friday 27th	9am to 5pm
Monday 30th	9am to 5pm
Tuesday 31st	9am to 5pm

January 2025

Wednesday 1st	Closed
Thursday 2nd	9am to 5pm



2025 Diaries

Organise your life! The large print 2025 diaries are in stock and we are ready to take your orders and dispatch.

The 2025 calendars are available in multiple sizes including an A3 wall calendar, A4 and A5 desk size and a very handy pocket size. To order your diary please contact our Helpdesk, our contact details can be found on page 2.

Surrey Connect

Surrey Connect is a safe and reliable on demand bus service, operated by Surrey County Council, that runs across Surrey.

You could use this service to visit our Resource Centre, or to join one of our Meet Up Catch Ups. Buses run:

Monday to Friday 7am - 7pm
Saturday 8am - 6pm

Adult single fares start from £2 for a journey under 5 miles. Children under 11 years must be accompanied by an adult.

To find out more or to book, please visit surreycc.gov.uk.



INTRODUCING DISABILITY AWARENESS CONTENT CREATOR CLAIRE SISK

Claire Sisk slid onto our mobile phone screens in December 2020. Claire is a Disability Awareness Content Creator who is blind. Here we caught up with Claire.

How did you end up doing what you do?

"I never set out to be a content creator – it happened by pure chance when I posted a video of myself crossing the road on my private Facebook account and it sparked an unexpected wave of reactions. People I hadn't spoken to in decades reached out, telling me how amazing it was, and how they'd never considered the challenges I face. Encouraged by several of them, I decided to share it on mainstream social media. Not long after, I was accused of faking my blindness because I was seen using my phone in a supermarket. That moment really hit me - if a stranger could question my reality, what might my friends and family think, watching me live my everyday life? So, I started posting more, determined to raise awareness and share the truth of my experiences. By October 2021, for Blindness Awareness Month, I decided to start posting daily videos showing how I navigate life. Many of those videos went viral, and that's when everything really started to take off."

What would you say to other blind or partially sighted people that are wanting to pursue a career in media?

"I want you to know that your vision loss doesn't define your capabilities. The world needs your unique perspective and voice. There's real power in sharing your story, in being authentically yourself, and in representing those who might not often see themselves reflected in the media.

The journey might feel daunting at times, and there will be moments where you'll feel like the world wasn't built with you in mind, but don't let that stop you. Use those moments as fuel to create something that others can connect with. Surround yourself with people who see your potential,



and don't be afraid to ask for support. Pick up that mic, record that video, share your thoughts. The more you put yourself out there, the more the world will start to make space for you. Your journey can inspire others, and every step forward creates a path for the next person to follow."

What kind of apps or technology do you use to help you create your social media content?

"VoiceOver on my iPhone is like my personal assistant, helping me stay connected and create content. Unfortunately, none of the social media apps are fully accessible, but over time, I've figured out how to make them work for me with a few creative workarounds. My iPhone camera and VoiceOver are my go-to tools. Editing though is a real challenge. Most editing apps aren't accessible, and there are ones that make you edit second by second. It can take me hours just to edit a few seconds of footage. Whenever I can, I get some sighted help because, honestly, it's exhausting."

What is next for you?

"I'm continuing to work with brands and companies to ensure that accessibility is a priority. Through my social media and presenting on 'This Morning', I'm committed to raising awareness and showing that accessibility benefits everyone. My main focus is on giving others hope - because I know first-hand how isolating and frustrating the journey can sometimes feel. I want to be a positive impact, to show that no

matter what life throws at you, there's always a way forward. Together, we can create a world that's truly inclusive and uplifting for all of us."

Follow Claire on Instagram
[@canseecantsee](https://www.instagram.com/canseecantsee)



DEAF COFFEE MORNING DATES

Our Deaf Coffee Mornings are a great meeting place for the Deaf community to get together and have a good old chat over a cuppa or a coffee. They take place once a month between 10am and 1pm at venues in Woking and Redhill.

Often, they have guest speakers attending which have previously included Yvonne Cobb, celebrity Deaf Chef. Other speakers and activities include Christmas decoration making, flower arranging and scam avoidance with Surrey Trading Standards.

2025 Dates:

Redhill Tuesdays, 10am - 1pm

Redhill Methodist Church
Gloucester Road
Redhill
RH11 1BP

14th January	8th July
11th February	12th August
11th March	9th September
8th April	14th October
13th May	11th November
10th June	9th December

Woking Thursdays, 10am - 1pm

Pret a Manger
Unit 41
Wolsey Walk
GU21 2XX

23rd January	17th July
20th February	21st August
20th March	18th September
17th April	23rd October
22nd May	20th November
19th June	18th December

There is no need to book just turn up ready for tea and chitchat! A British Sign Language Interpreter will be present.

For more information

Please contact our Deaf Services Team on SMS: **07860 026 269**
FaceTime: dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk | Skype: [sensory.services](https://www.skype.com/join/sensoryservices) or
SignLive via our website [sightforsurrey.org.uk](https://www.sightforsurrey.org.uk)

BRITISH TELECOM (BT) DIGITAL SWITCHOVER DEADLINE EXTENDED

The BT Digital Switchover completion deadline has been delayed until **January 2027** because of the oversight of the needs of older people and those who are disabled.

What is the BT Digital Switchover about?

All UK landlines are being switched from an analogue system to a new digital service. Digital lines will be easier to maintain and provide a better service.

This should be a very simple and straight forward changeover as all anyone needs to do is plug their specialist phone into their new Smart Hub 2 that BT supply. However, if the Smart Hub 2 is not in the place you usually have your phone, you need to request a free Digital Voice Adapter so

you can continue using the equipment you have been supplied at a location in the home that suits you.

In addition, you will be entitled to a free 'battery backup unit' to keep your phones working in case of a power cut. The battery backup works for up to 12 or 24 hours and will provide one hour of calls into your home and one hour of calls out.

The rules apply to any phone company, no proof is needed, such as a Certificate of Vision Impairment or any other documents.

To request a free voice adapter

please call BT on **0330 1234 150**, text the word **ADAPTER** to **61998**, or text **150** from a BT mobile.



MEET UP CATCH UP NEAR YOU!

Our monthly community hubs named **Meet Up Catch Up** have been running for nearly a year now and are proving to be a popular date in the diary for many of the people we support. They take place in various venues across the county between 10am and 12pm every month.

It's a chance for people to get together in a relaxed atmosphere and meet other people with similar sight and hearing impairments, who appreciate and understand each other, and have a nice cuppa and maybe a hob nob too! Please don't just take our word for it here is what some of our regular attendees have said:

"I woke up today so excited to come to the Meet Up Catch Up. I haven't been to a social event in a while and was a bit nervous, but you've all been so welcoming."

"It was so lovely to come and have someone understand my access needs. I look forward to seeing you all next month."

So, what are you waiting for? Get your diary out and make a note of the Meet Up Catch Ups near you!

Epsom 10am - 12pm

Epsom Social Food Hall (near the library) | Epsom Square | Epsom KT19 8AG

3rd Tuesday of the month
21st January 2025
18th February 2025
18th March 2025
15th April 2025
20th May 2025
17th June 2025

Fetcham 10am - 12pm

Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey
Rentwood

Last Tuesday of the month
28th January 2025
25th February 2025
25th March 2025
29th April 2025
27th May 2025
24th June 2025

Godalming 10am - 12pm

The Wilfred Noyce Centre | Crown Court | High Street | Godalming GU7 1DY

First Thursday of the month
January – no meet
6th February 2025
6th March 2025
3rd April 2025
1st May 2025
5th June 2025

Merstham 10am - 12pm

Merstham Village Hall
Station Road North | Merstham RH1 3ED

Thursdays, term time only.

Contact our Helpdesk for further details, see page 2.

New Haw 10am - 12pm

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

3rd Wednesday of the month
15th January 2025
19th February 2025
19th March 2025
16th April 2025
21st May 2025
18th June 2025

Oxted 10am - 12pm

Oxted Library | 12 Gresham Road
Oxted RH8 0BQ

2nd Wednesday of the month
8th January 2025
12th February 2025
12th March 2025
9th April 2025
14th May 2025
11th June 2025



Keep a look out on our website for the remaining dates for 2025; sightforsurrey.org.uk/events

HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY FRIENDSHIP GROUP!

Don't we all wish we were 21 again! Well for our Friendship Group their wish came true when the group went out for a slap-up pub lunch to celebrate their 21st year as a group bringing together people in Surrey with combined sight and hearing loss.

Julie inherited the group from Royal Association for the Deaf and has led the group from strength to strength and loves spending time with everyone.

Julie devises a wide and varied range of activities for the group to participate in each month including a Pets as Therapy dog petting session, cycling around Bushy Park, boating at Earlswood Lakes, gin tasting and a visit to Mercedes Benz World to name a few. She likes to add a new activity or two each year following feedback and suggestions from the group members.



Regulars to the group include Sarah who has been coming to the group for ten years, Roy for seven years but topping the leaderboard are Anne and Russell who have been coming to the monthly meet up for 17 years!



JOIN IN THE FUNDRAISING FUN IN 2025

As a charity, we rely on the generosity of our supporters to help fund certain activities and services like our Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLO), Volunteer Service, Community Hubs, Technology Experts and Artificial Intelligence (AI) support. To help us continue providing these vital services we need to ask for your help in raising funds.

From sky dives, wing walks, runs, cycles, swims to sponsored bake sales and themed nights, or making us your charity of the year, we would love to have your support.

Can you persuade a member of your family, or a friend, to take the plunge and sign-up to do something special for Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey during 2025?

Over the past year we have had people take on all sorts of fundraising challenges and in return for your gallant effort, we will give you tons of support, lots of fundraising and training tips and a branded t-shirt to wear on the day of your challenge.

Golf Day

The Guildford Lions organise a Golf Day every year, benefiting a local charity, and this year we were very lucky to be selected as their charity of choice!

Clandon Regis Golf Club in Surrey was the venue for this year's golf day and 63 people signed up to play the stunning 18-hole course, Stableford style, which kicked off with a bacon roll on arrival plus a two-course lunch all for just £85. The event raised £5,500 for us.

Do you play golf and would like to organise a charity golf day for us at your local club? We would love to hear from you, our contact details are below.

For more inspiration or if you have a fundraising idea, then please contact our friendly fundraising team on fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk



PEDAL POWER ACROSS THE ISLE OF WIGHT (IOW)

After receiving a First Class Honours degree in Media and Communication, and inspired by her dissertation, 'Disabled People Using Their Voice', Alison decided to use her voice and fundraise for Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey as she took on an epic cycle challenge across the IoW.

Alison, who has Retinitis Pigmentosa, along with her pilot, Paul, and other family and friends, cycled 71 miles across the IoW over two days in July. The landscape was much more challenging than Alison ever imagined, with some significant climbs, over 1,000 metres in elevation in total!

Alison requested donations to us in lieu of presents at her, and her daughter's, joint graduation celebrations, and her 30th wedding anniversary party. Nearly £3,000 has been raised to date!

Alison told us "I want to encourage and empower people who are vision impaired and wary or frightened of tech to have more employment opportunities and maximise their capabilities, as I went back to university to gain a degree after struggling to get a job interview as a vision impaired woman."

Thank you to everyone that has heard Alison's voice and donated to her fundraising cause.

Feeling inspired?

If you would like to take on a fundraising challenge for us like Alison, please email our Fundraising Team who will help you set up your challenge, please contact them on fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk

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 and with people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind.

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

Tickets cost just £30 per person so don't delay and book your tickets today!



The next Breaking Down Barriers Workshop is taking place on Wednesday 29th January 2025.



Book: Visit www.eventbrite.co.uk and search **Breaking Down Barriers** or scan the QR code with your camera.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The world of AI is on fire with advances in technology and the growth of accessibility apps. Here our AI Trailblazer, Keith, shares his two favourite apps.



(rogervoice.com)

This is the app to download if you are Deaf or hard of hearing to facilitate communication. The app leverages real-time transcription technology to convert spoken language into text, allowing users to engage in phone conversations and is available to download via Android and Apple iPhone.

Key features include:

- 1. Real-time Transcription:** Converts spoken words into text during phone calls, providing instant transcription to the user.
- 2. Multi-language Support:** Offers transcription in multiple languages.
- 3. Voice Synthesis:** Enables users to type responses which are then converted into spoken language, allowing for two-way communication.
- 4. Accessibility:** Designed with an intuitive interface to ensure ease of use for people with varying levels of ability.
- 5. Customisation:** Provides options to adjust text size and language preferences.



The Clew App

The Clew app is available for Apple iPhone only and provides blind and partially sighted people the opportunity to navigate unfamiliar surroundings within buildings.

The Clew app uses the iPhone camera and augmented reality function to guide users by allowing them to record routes from point to point.

For partially sighted users, it provides an on-screen customisable map where users can change the route guidance colour to red, blue or green.

For blind users, it provides turn-by-turn voice guidance along with haptic feedback to keep users on route. It also allows you to save journeys to a route list for future use.

If you need help downloading these apps, or any others, please contact technology@sightforsurrey.org.uk

FUN AT JUNIPER HALL

Every two years the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) team organise a residential weekend away for the children we support and their families.

For many, this is the only chance for them to have a really fun weekend away that is totally geared to them, and their vision impairment. This year ten families attended with a total of 38 people in attendance.

Everyone arrived on the Friday night and settled in. On Saturday they had fun and games on the field and then some travelled to Walton Firs Activity Centre for high ropes climbing. Then it was back to Juniper Hall for lunch followed by a Scavenger Hunt and Treasure Trail, making a wooden bee

house, talk by a Beekeeper, making a beehive collage and sensory garden walk. The Saturday evening finished with a BBQ and campfire for everyone.

Before the families left on Sunday everyone took part in a pizza making activity, which provided them with their lunch. Children and adults enjoyed making the pizza dough, selecting their toppings and identifying and picking the fresh herbs from the garden.

"I really enjoyed learning about Bee Keeping. Seeing the children have fun and socialise with each other has been a highlight."

"This is a list of my favourite activities; The Campfire, The Bee Homes, The Scavenger Hunt, bunk beds, hot chocolate and having fun."

A big thank you goes to The Powell Foundation for their funding which made this event possible.





HAYLEY AND GRACE JET OFF TO LOS ANGELES (LA)

Hayley and Grace, who are both supported by the charity, were lucky enough to make it through to the finals of the Braille Challenge which took place in LA. 50 children from Canada, the US and the UK were invited to attend the finals.

Grace explained how the competition worked, "You had 45 minutes for each task, the first task was speed and accuracy. I had to listen to four passages and I had to type up what was being said as quickly and

accurately as possible. The next task was proof reading, and we were given ten paragraphs to read in braille and had to list the sentences that were wrong.

After lunch was reading and comprehension, here we were given six pages of Braille and we had to read the text and then type up our answers using the Braille machine. Then there were four different charts and graphs and ten questions about each chart and graph. After that we swam in the pool to cool down from the competition stress."

Hayley won the Sophomore category and told us, "Having the opportunity to travel to LA was an absolute delight. The most memorable part of the day was the moment we filed in, the atmosphere was full of support and encouragement, more than I could have ever hoped for. At that moment I realised it didn't matter if I won or lost, what mattered was giving my best and enjoying every second of the day ahead."

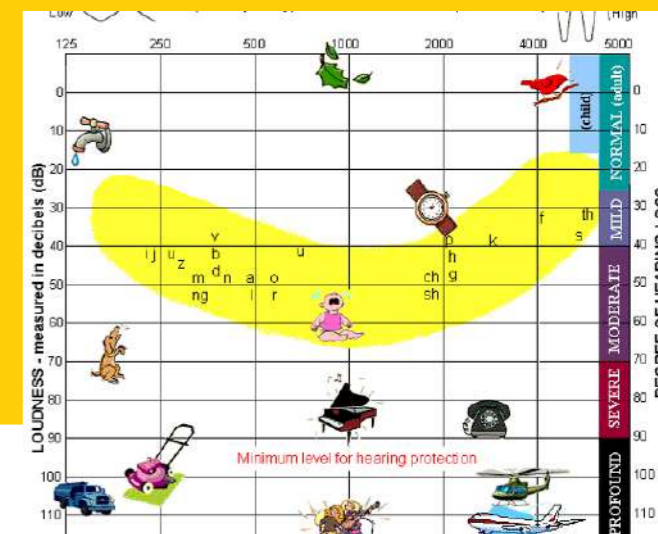


SPEECH BANANA

As the saying goes, if you know, you know, but do you know what Speech Banana is? The Hearing Loss Team at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey use 'Speech Banana', as one example, when assessing anyone for their hearing loss. This method of assessment helps us determine everyone's individual level of hearing loss and then our staff can recommend equipment and services to help.

Wendy, is a Hearing Loss Advisor and carries out all our hearing loss assessments, and draws up a blank audiogram with a speech banana to explain how hearing loss affects speech discrimination. The audiology department where the hearing aids are issued can often provide an audiogram to see each individual's pattern of hearing loss, and we can often discuss that with them, and their families.

Many people think cochlear implants and hearing aids make people who are Deaf or hard of hearing hear everything, but they don't. For many people who use this type of equipment to help them hear, they will still miss out hearing certain letters and vowels like th and ch.



Wendy recently assessed a person with hearing loss and learning needs, she needed to use a toy doll to show the individual how to use the hearing aid and equipment that she had recommended.

Did you know we stock the following equipment:

- Portable TV and Personal Listener - to hear the TV louder and clearer through the neck loop or headset wirelessly.
- Personal Listener (battery operated only) – has a microphone to help hear conversation clearer and louder anywhere.
- Doorbell with loud sound, different melodies and flashing light.
- Amplified corded and cordless phones.
- NEW: Bluetooth TV and Personal Listener for Bluetooth Phonak, Danalogic Resound and Oticon hearing aids.

If you are hard of hearing and would like an assessment in your home, or to visit our Resource Centre to try out some equipment, please contact us through your preferred method of communication on page 2.

FREE WILL WRITING SERVICE



Arrange an appointment
Call 0800 773 4014 to arrange an appointment to start your Will over the phone, or visit our website sightforsurrey.co.uk to do it online.

We have teamed up with Will writing experts, Octopus Legacy to offer a free Will writing service all year round saving you £90!

Writing a Will is so vitally important and saves those left behind the task of sorting out your affairs. If you don't write a Will the process for sorting out your affairs is long and complicated, and your money might go to the government, rather than people, or places of your choice.

Will writing with Octopus Legacy is quick and easy and they will help guide you through the process. It is 100% safe, and your Will is checked by the Octopus Legacy experts.

Rebecca, pictured above, used Octopus Legacy to write her Will and left a percentage of her estate to us in her Will.

Rebecca was diagnosed with cancer in January 2016 and was told later that year she was cancer free. Unfortunately the cancer came back in 2019. When she was given the news it was terminal she wanted to get her affairs in order and used our free Will writing service with Octopus Legacy. Rebecca sadly died in 2023.



VOLUNTEER JOHN

John has been a volunteer for us since he started to lose his sight 34 years ago when he noticed, whilst trekking in The Himalayas, that he kept straying off the path! A year later he was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a genetic sight loss condition that gradually affects your peripheral vision.

Rather than think of what he could no longer do, John thought about the things he could do. He has volunteered in a variety of roles for the charity, including as an event volunteer, giving talks and speeches about his lived sight loss experience, has featured and been photographed in our leaflets and he completed four mountain fundraising climbs raising over £15,000 for local sight loss charities!

John now has only 5% of his central vision remaining but still goes target shooting and paints watercolours. Our Christmas card this year features one of John's beautiful paintings, featured on the right.

You can send one of our virtual Christmas cards featuring John's painting through www.dontsendmeacard.com.

We have many different volunteering opportunities available. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer then please contact our volunteer team on volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contact our Helpdesk, our details can be found on page 2.



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 ISO14001.

PROFESSIONAL
Vision
SERVICES LTD



Desktops

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



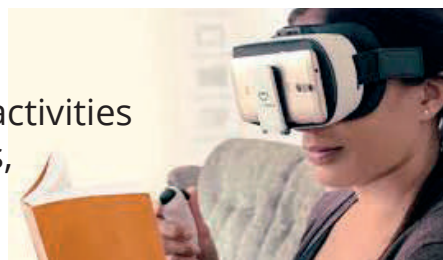
Reading Machines

- 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 in
- Magnification range
- 3x to 16x
- Autofocus adjustment for ease of use

Please ring us on
01462 420751
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