



Issue 19

Spring | Summer 2025

SIGNPOST



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WELCOME

to the Spring | Summer 2025 edition of Signpost.

It has been a busy start to the year with lots of planning going on behind the scenes for our community hubs and events. You will find details of everything we have to offer on our events calendar on our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk/events. I hope to see you at some point during the year.



Like many charities, we have been hit with a hefty increase in National Insurance Contributions, so your support is really needed now more than ever before. With this edition of Signpost are some raffle tickets for our Spring raffle. Please do help support us by buying some tickets or selling them to family and friends. See page 3 for further details.

Best wishes

Clare

Clare Burgess, CEO

Ps. Don't forget you can listen to Signpost on Amazon Alexa via Talking Newspapers. Say "Alexa, enable Talking Newspapers" and when asked for the region, say, "Alexa, play Signpost" and the latest edition will be narrated to you.

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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 gdpr@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contacting our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Registered Charity Number 1121949

SPRING RAFFLE

Enclosed with this edition of Signpost are raffle tickets for our Spring Raffle. There are some fantastic prizes to be won including 1st prize of £250 and 2nd prize of afternoon tea for two at Nutfield Priory Hotel and Spa, plus lots more!

A full list of prizes can be found on our website. Tickets cost £2 each and £20 for a book of 10. If you would like us to complete the tickets stubs, please contact our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 who can take payment over the phone. For a different contact method, please see page 2.



**THE DRAW TAKES
PLACE ON
MONDAY 21ST JULY
GOOD LUCK!**

The more tickets you sell to family and friends, the more support we can provide. For more tickets please call 01372 377701 or email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

TALKING THERAPIES

If life is proving too difficult, or you are feeling anxious or depressed, then Talking Therapies can help.

Talking Therapies Surrey is a free NHS service offering short-term psychological therapies for a range of common mental health problems.

There are five organisations that provide this service in Surrey. They are led by accredited therapists and can offer you help in different ways including in-person therapy, a live web chat, group video call, individual telephone call or guided e-learning.

The service is for anyone aged 17 years and over who is experiencing anxiety or depression and is registered with a GP Practice in Surrey.



For more information, please contact www.healthysurrey.org.uk/mental-wellbeing

POWERED WHEELCHAIR AND LONG CANE TRAINING

Habilitation Specialist, Sharn, works in the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) team at the charity and when she received a referral for a young person that wanted training to use a powered wheelchair using a long cane, Sharn knew this was going to be a new challenge but one she was delighted to take on.

Sharn worked with Mary, a very experienced Habilitation Specialist who had previously taught powered wheelchair and long cane training. The pair worked together to devise a training plan for Kaycie-Lea.

A setback to the plan occurred when her local council refused her funding application for a powered wheelchair on the grounds of her vision impairment. Sharn didn't let this set back stop them so she contacted Redhill Shop Mobility, who rented her a powered wheelchair, eventually giving Kaycie-Lea one on free loan when they heard about the difficulties she was facing.

Sharn and Mary worked with Kaycie-Lea for nine months showing her how to operate the wheelchair whilst using a long cane. Kaycie-Lea can now travel independently around school and not have to rely on a teacher to push her around, giving her the independence she so desperately craved.

So rare is it to teach powered wheelchair training with a long cane,



that Sharn was recently invited to the Habilitation Vision Impairment UK Conference in Birmingham to give three one-hour workshops on the topic of powered wheelchair and long cane training.

Sharn told us,

"It was very daunting speaking to so many people, including lecturers and fellow students, but it was good to impart the knowledge I have learnt and inspire others."

Sharn concluded,

"Here at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey we are all about empowerment and giving people the tools and training to live independent lives and this is exactly what we have done for Kaycie-Lea, which I am really proud of."



GOOGLE ACCESSIBILITY DISCOVERY CENTRE

The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) team recently organised a trip to Google's flagship Accessibility Discovery Centre in London. Eight young people supported by the charity met with a member from the CYPS team at various train stations across

Surrey. Here each person practised their public transport skills, including buying tickets, working out the times of the train and learning what platform they needed to be on. Everyone met at London Waterloo Station and then made their way to the Google offices.

The group had lunch at the Google restaurant and then headed off to the Accessibility Discovery Centre where they were shown some of the different technologies that are being used to play games including game controllers with eye gaze technology, Braille readers controlling phones and how a phone can help support taking a selfie for someone with a vision impairment. Everyone had a great day.



RESOURCE & TECHNOLOGY CENTRE



Last year we helped over **2,350** people



Last year we issued **4,219** pieces of equipment



BILL

Bill has visited the Resource Centre twice to find equipment to help him manage his sight and hearing loss. He told us, "The charity has been very helpful, efficient and friendly and provided me with various pieces of equipment that have enabled me to complete tasks independently. I have received a cane, large print diary, task lamp and have signed up to receive Talking Books and Newspapers. The task lamp has been a godsend as before I got it, I couldn't see the food on my plate."

We also issued Bill with an Echo Radio Link and Sennheiser headphones to wear over his hearing aids which have enabled him to watch and listen to the TV which he had missed.

Our Resource Centre is a hidden gem in the heart of Surrey. An ever-expanding hub of innovation with shelves stacked high with technology and tools for the kitchen and day to day living, plus gadgets and games that improve the daily lives of people with sensory impairments empowering them with the equipment and knowledge they need to remain independent.

To book an appointment at our Resource Centre please contact our Helpdesk, our contact details are all listed on page 2.

DEAF SERVICES TEAM

We have been providing support to people who are Deaf and hard of hearing since 2016 and continuing our support to people who are deafblind. Recently there have been some changes to the Deaf Services team so below is our guide so you know who best to contact.

Jane Andrews Team Manager

Jane manages the Deaf Services team enabling them to work effectively. She tells us, "I love working with the team they are so hardworking, compassionate and professional."

Emma Harrison Senior Social Worker

Emma provides support to Deaf residents across Surrey ensuring they receive the help they need and working with other agencies.

Susanna McDonald Social Worker

Susanna is a newly qualified social worker and has worked for the charity for over six years.

Contact our Deaf Services Team

SMS
FaceTime
SignLive via
Email

07860 026 269
dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk
sightforsurrey.org.uk
info@sensoryservices.org.uk



Marion Gibbs and Holly Ritchie Social Care Assistants

Marion and Holly cover duty, answering incoming calls, providing information and advice. They also coordinate care packages, assessment reviews and liaising with social workers.

Cathy Parker Deaf Community Coordinator

Cathy's role is new and she is responsible for developing links with the Surrey Deaf community, she also runs our monthly Deaf cafes.

Julie Barclay Deafblind Officer

Julie supports people who have a combined sight and hearing loss, providing specialist support and rehabilitation. Julie also runs the Deafblind Friendship Group.

Skype Alert!

From 1st May 2025 Skype is being taken out of circulation. To contact the Deaf Services team please use one of the contact methods listed on the left.



FARM LIFE FOR FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Deafblind Friendship Group has a varied schedule of events over the year that take them all over Surrey; from a trip to Wisley, a pub lunch and gin tasting to name a few. Recently the group paid a visit to Bocketts Farm in Fetcham.

Bocketts Farm is an award-winning family run farm park set in the beautiful Surrey countryside. A combination of animals and play areas, both inside and out, make the farm one of the South East's most popular all-weather attractions.

The group all met up and had a look around meeting and stroking various animals including rams and horses. They then went on a tractor ride around the site and after that visited The Big Animal Barn where they saw pigs and piglets, llamas, alpacas and a large pen of expectant sheep that were all very hungry! The group then had a lovely lunch in the spacious tearoom.

After lunch the group had an animal handling session and got to hold a baby chick, a rabbit called Gus and two guinea pigs.

If you, or someone you know has combined sight and hearing loss and would like to join the group please email info@sightforsurrey.org.uk stating you would like to join the Deafblind Friendship Group.



LONDON MARATHON 2026

We have two places in the iconic London Marathon which takes place on 26th April 2026, and we need your help to find two people to fill them!

Do you have a family member, or friend, who would like to take on the challenge of running the 26-mile course whilst raising funds to support people in Surrey who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind? There is just under one year to perfect your training plan, lace up your trainers and get out there gathering the miles so you can smash this race.

In return for a place, we are asking you raise a minimum of £2,500 in sponsorship.



Register your interest

Please get in touch with us on **fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk**. Or, if you are interested in doing any other type of challenge event, please get in contact and we can help you find your next BIG challenge!

NEW EGHAM SINGERS

The New Egham Singers is a non-audition, community choir and has three aims: making tuneful music, having fun and raising money for charities. We are delighted they have chosen us as their charity for the year and are holding two more fundraising concerts in aid of us!

Picnic & Proms

Saturday 5th July 2025
(venue TBC)

Christmas Concert

Saturday 6th December 2025
St. John's Church, Manor Farm
Road, Egham, TW20 9HR



To book tickets, please visit
www.neweghamsingers.co.uk



TECH TALK

Let's Talk Tech is an online Zoom webinar delivered by our Tech Expert, Gary Eady and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Trailblazer, Keith Dear.

These sessions cover a range of technology topics and teach people who are blind or vision impaired how to utilise all the accessibility features on their phone, computer, laptop, tablet and other devices, so they can keep connected with family and friends.

The sessions run quarterly on a Wednesday from 11.00am to 12.30pm as follows:

Artificial Intelligence

What is it and how can it help you?
Wednesday 25th June

Pocket Devices

BlindShell Classic 2 and RealSam.
Wednesday 24th September

Smartphone Accessibility

Features for Apple and Android.
Wednesday 10th December

AI UPDATE

Google Live Transcribe: Breaking Communication Barriers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Google Live Transcribe is a free Android app offering real-time captioning of spoken conversations. Live Transcribe uses advanced speech recognition to convert spoken language into text on a smartphone screen, providing a personal captioner for conversations and meetings.

Key Features and Benefits:

- **Real-Time Transcription:** Instant captions enable users to follow conversations effortlessly
- **Multi-Language Support:** Transcribes over 80 languages, crucial for diverse environments
- **Customisable Text:** Adjustable text size enhances readability
- **Save Transcripts:** Allows saving conversations for later review
- **Sound Event Notification:** Identifies sounds like knocks or alarms, increasing awareness
- **External Microphone Support:** Improves accuracy in noisy settings
- **Vibration Feedback:** Alerts users when someone starts speaking
- **Accessibility in Diverse Situations:** Useful in classrooms, workplaces, and social gatherings

Google Live Transcribe is available for free on Android devices via the Google Play Store. Please note that you will need Android version 12.0 (Snow Cone) or higher to install the app

To book a place on any of the webinars please contact us at technology@sightforsurrey.org.uk or using the contact details on page 2.

Seeing AI:

Microsoft's Seeing AI app is a powerful and free tool, transforming a smartphone camera into an intelligent lens that narrates the surrounding environment.

Seeing AI leverages artificial intelligence to describe the world for people who are blind and partially sighted. By simply pointing a smartphone camera, users can hear descriptions of text, people, objects, and scenes, providing a wealth of information that enhances interactions with the world.

Key Features and Benefits:

- **Short Text Reading:** Instantly reads aloud text that appears in front of the camera, such as signs, labels, and price tags
- **Document Reading:** Scans and reads longer pieces of text, including letters, articles, and reports
- **Product Identification:** Recognises barcodes and announces the name of the product, aiding in shopping and organisation

- **Scene Description:** Provides an overall description of the environment captured by the camera, offering context and understanding of the surroundings
- **People Recognition:** Can recognize faces and announce the names of people the user has previously saved
- **Currency Identification:** Identifies different denominations of banknotes, making financial transactions easier and more secure
- **Colour Identification:** Announces the dominant colours in the camera's view, assisting with tasks like choosing clothing
- **Handwriting Recognition (Preview):** An evolving feature that attempts to decipher handwritten notes and documents
- **Light Detection:** Informs the user about the level of light in the environment
- **Image Exploration:** Allows users to explore photos by tapping on the screen to hear descriptions of different elements within the image

Seeing AI is now available on both iOS (App Store) and Android (Google Play Store). Visit our website for details of other apps.



SCAN ME
FOR GOOGLE LIVE



SCAN ME
FOR SEEING AI



CHARITY GOLF DAY

Join us for a tee-rific charity Golf Day on Friday 11th July with our partners Guildford Lions at Clandon Regis Golf Club, near Guildford, set in the spectacular Surrey Hills.

Swing your clubs into action for a worthy cause at just £90 per person for eighteen holes, Stableford Competition style. Your entry includes coffee, or tea and a delicious bacon roll on arrival plus a delightful 2-course lunch.

Secure your spot now for an unforgettable day whilst raising funds to support people in Surrey who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted and deafblind.

Arrival from 8.30am

Breakfast Bacon Rolls

Shotgun start 10am

Lunch Two course meal

Ben attended the golf day last year and said,

"Carving some time out for me to spend time with friends and family whilst helping support a local charity was a lovely thing to do and we all had a great day."

**LOTS OF GREAT
RAFFLE AND AUCTION
PRIZES TO BE WON!**

**AND A £10K HOLE IN
ONE COMPETITION!**



Whether you want to play individually, or get a team together, our golf day caters for everyone. So, what are you waiting for, get booking!
Email **GuildfordLionsGolf@gmail.com** to sign up and secure your spot!



BRAILLE CHALLENGE UK HEATS

Earlier in the year the UK heats of the International Braille Challenge took place at Woking High School.

Blind and vision impaired students from primary and secondary schools across the country were invited to participate in the heats which saw students challenged with various Braille reading, typing and comprehension tests testing their speed, accuracy and understanding. Entry categories include Apprentice, Freshman, Sophomore Junior Varsity and Varsity.

In-between the Braille challenges, students took part in lighter hearted Independent Living Skills lead by the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) team from Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey. Everyone got to make, bake and taste a variety of sweet and savoury treats, practising measuring, mixing and munching!

Mrs Lock, Head of VI from Woking High School said,

"The Braille Challenge is an inclusive event as it is open to blind and vision impaired students. Students need to show resilience and engagement, and we are seeing that in abundance!"

All entries were marked and then submitted to the US for assessment alongside entries from the US and Canada. The top 10 in each category will be invited to the finals in Los Angeles in June. Last year two young women from the UK made it to the finals, and Hayley, who we support, won her category. We are keeping everything crossed for the UK entries this year!

MEET UP AND CATCH UP

Join our award-winning monthly Meet Up Catch Ups.
Enjoy a relaxed and informal drop-in, make new connections,
have a chat, cuppa and a biscuit or two!



Epsom 10am - 12pm

Epsom Library | 6 Epsom Square
Epsom KT19 8AG

**Every 3rd
Tuesday of the
month**

- 17th June
- 15th July
- 19th August
- 16th September
- 21st October
- 18th November
- 16th December

Fetcham 10am - 12pm

Rentwood | School Lane
Fetcham KT22 9JX

**Last Tuesday
of the month**

- 27th May
- 24th June

**No MUCU
in December**

- 29th July
- 26th August
- 30th September
- 28th October
- 25th November

Godalming 10am - 12pm

Wilfrid Noyce Centre | High Street
Godalming GU7 1DY

**Every 1st
Thursday
of the month**

- 5th June
- 3rd July
- 7th August
- 4th September
- 2nd October
- 6th November
- 4th December

Merstham 10am - 12pm

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

Weekly, 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

**Every 3rd
Wednesday
of the month**

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

Oxted 10am - 12pm

Oxted Library | 12 Gresham Road
Oxted RH8 0BQ

**Every 2nd
Wednesday
of the month**

- 14th May
- 11th June
- 9th July
- 13th August
- 10th September
- 8th October
- 12th November
- 10th December

Our Meet Up Catch Ups have grown from strength to strength and we are hearing wonderful stories about friendships and getting to meet some amazing people.

James, aged 90, has recently started attending the Epsom Meet Up Catch Up. James was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration early in 2024 after he noticed he was having difficulties with his sight. He said, **"I found it very hard to come to terms with my diagnosis and that I was going to lose my sight, and I had to stop driving, it was a real hammer blow to me.**

I now catch the bus to Epsom and it is a 2-minute walk to Derby Square. Everyone at Meet Up Catch Up was very welcoming and wanted to have a chat. I have really enjoyed meeting other people that have a similar outlook in life."

James has also been into the resource centre to see Tony and has been issued with a task lamp and anti-glare glasses. James said, **"The anti-glare glasses are amazing, I can see more clearly with them on, where as before I could not see the detail. I use the task lamp at home, and I take it to my weekly art class. I am very independent and like to do all my own cooking and the task lamp helps with this as I can see things more clearly."**

It was a dark day I found out about my vision loss but with the support of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and other organisations I have turned my life around!"





SIGHT AND HEARING LOSS AND DEMENTIA

Both sight and hearing loss may become more common with age. Their symptoms can sometimes resemble the early signs of dementia, which can make it harder to understand what's really going on.

For someone living with dementia, these additional sensory problems can lead to increased confusion and difficulty communicating.

For example, a person might become disoriented or struggle to follow conversations. This overlap can make it challenging to tell whether symptoms are due to dementia or sensory loss. As a result, diagnosing dementia in someone with sight or hearing issues can be more difficult - and vice versa.

There are several causes of sight loss in people with dementia, such as:

- Eye conditions (e.g., cataracts or macular degeneration)
- Other health conditions (e.g., stroke)
- Normal age-related changes to the eyes

Additionally, dementia can affect the brain's ability to process visual information, which means someone may have vision problems even if their eyes are physically healthy.

While dementia doesn't directly cause hearing loss, it can impact how a person understands and processes sounds. Hearing aids are often recommended to keep the auditory pathways active. However, people with dementia may still struggle to process what they hear. This might appear as if they're not hearing properly, when in fact they may just need more time to process what's been said. Using shorter, simpler sentences can help.

Visit **www.dementiauk.org** for more information about dementia.

HELPED BY HEARING LOSS TEAM

An estimated 18 million people in the UK have hearing loss and in the last year we helped the people of Surrey on 453 occasions with hearing loss support.

Our teams visit individuals in their home and undertake a needs assessment offering practical advice, equipment and solutions to help them manage their hearing loss.

One lady we supported recently, Rosina, told us about the support she received from Caroline, one of our Hearing Loss Advisors and how it had transformed her life!

"I wore standard NHS hearing aids for many years but as my hearing deteriorated, I found myself missing conversations with family and friends. I hadn't been able to clearly hear telephone conversations or the TV for many years but then Caroline visited me. First, she suggested I change my hearing aids to a Bluetooth version,

change my mobile to one that was compatible with my new blue tooth hearing aids (Samsung) and get a TV streamer, which she provided, that plays the TV straight into my hearing aids. Because of my mobility problems I have to spend more time at home, watching TV or on the phone to friends.

With Caroline's advice and the brilliant equipment I am now using it has been a lifeline for me.

Caroline has really helped me, she has stuck with me and made sure I get all the help and equipment I need; I am so grateful for all her help and support, she has literally transformed my life!"



CHRIS McCAUSLAND

Our CYPs team organised a trip to the Chris McCausland comedy show at Dorking Halls for a group of blind and partially sighted young adults we support.

The group, all over 18 years old, thoroughly enjoyed the show and even got to meet Chris after the show. The



group were all on cloud nine after meeting Chris.

Sophie said, "The show was amazing. It's the first stand-up comedy performance that I've been to and I loved it! I'm a huge admirer of Chris, and even more so now that I've met him. I find the way he copes with his blindness truly inspiring."

Lee said, "It was a fun day with lots of laughs! Chris was so kind, friendly and funny!"

FUNDRAISING

Every year many businesses, schools and clubs choose a charity that will benefit from their fundraising efforts.

We are very fortunate to have been supported by Manor House School, Guildford Lions, St. John's School and Enterprise to name a few. The fundraising efforts that these organisations go to are a massive help, but with rising costs we need more support.

So, if you or someone you know, works for a local school, business, golf club or other organisation that would be interested in nominating us as their charity to support then please contact our fundraising team, who can help with the planning and organisation of any fundraising events or activities.



Our website contains our fundraising pack which contains handy hints and tips on creating a number of fundraising activities. To download our fundraising pack please visit **sightforsurrey.org.uk/get-involved**.

Or, if you would like to hold a fundraising event, please contact us on **fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk**.



VOLUNTEERING

Many people think volunteering is for people who are retired, or not working, and although these groups do make up some of our volunteers, we also have a few younger people who want to give some time to helping others. Take brothers Lewis and Robbie, who live in Leatherhead, and who have both signed up to be volunteers with us.

Lewis told us, "Having volunteer experience really helps when you are applying for first jobs, or with your personal statement for university, it shows you do things outside of school and studies. It's a great thing to do and I really enjoy it."

Robbie learnt about us when he worked for Specsavers in Leatherhead and saw some promotional material about us in-store and then looked us up. He told us, "I come into the office and do administration volunteering

which is giving me good experience of working in an office. I also help at the events. I like helping people and it's good fun."

We have a number of volunteering opportunities available including home visitors, befrienders, drivers and helping at our events.

Drivers need to bring people to our offices in Fetcham, or to one of our community hubs. Mileage is reimbursed at 45p per mile.

If you are interested in finding out more about our volunteering opportunities then please visit **sightforsurrey.org.uk/get-involved** or drop an email to **volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk**

Vision Zone 2025

Solutions for Low Vision



Would you like to find out more about assistive technology, Support, Services, Groups, and much more?

Our Vision Zone events bring together a variety of excellent services and charities covering your local area.

No matter what your sight loss condition we are here for you. Whether it's just to gain knowledge or hands on experience with new technologies to aid you in your day to day and hobbies, entry is free to our events, and our friendly staff will greet you with a warm welcome.

Tuesday 30th September – 11.00 to 14.30

Christ Church, 23 Waterden Road, Guildford, GU1 2AZ

Macular Society
Beating Macular Disease

 **synaptic**


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