

Signpost winter 2020

The front cover of the magazine shows Anthony Roake running the virtual London marathon

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A Message from the Chief Executive

Welcome to the winter edition of Signpost. I hope it brings enlightenment in these dark winter days.

The COVID-19 restrictions are difficult and they heavily affect the people we support. Our aim is to deliver services and when we cannot do so safely we understand what impact that has. However, we are finding new ways to deliver support. For instance, assessments are largely carried out remotely and support is provided to young people and families via Zoom; including quizzes, competitions and life skills exercises disguised as games. The plethora of BSL videos on our Facebook page, so people who are profoundly Deaf are kept up to date, have received nearly 215,000 views since March!

Have a good Christmas everyone and hope for a better New Year.

Bob Hughes - Chief Executive

Contact details

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.

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Office Opening Hours

Although the doors at Sight for Surrey are not fully open due to the COVID-19 restrictions we are still open to take your enquiries over the festive season. Our opening hours are:

Christmas Eve – 9am to 5pm
 Christmas Day – Office Closed
 Boxing Day – Office Closed
 Sunday 27th December – Office Closed
 Monday 28th December – Office Closed
 Tuesday 29th December – 9am to 5pm
 Wednesday 30 December – 9am to 5pm
 Thursday 31st December – 9am to 5pm
 Friday 1st January – Office Closed

2021 Diaries

This year we have a range of three calendars and five diaries for sale. The three differently sized wall calendars all have large print for days and dates and ample space to write in.

The desk diaries come in three different sizes, A4 and two smaller sizes, with a week covering two pages. Our two differently sized pocket diaries both have a week covering two pages. You can order them by phoning our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 and placing the order with payment over the telephone.

Coping with COVID-19

Prior to lockdown, the vast majority of Sight for Surrey's services were conducted face to face so when lockdown hit us we had to make radical changes to our service provision.

Our specialist one-to-one service is one of the largest in the country and our workers regularly provide around a thousand hours of support each month to one of the most vulnerable groups in Surrey – the Deafblind.

Our Communicator Guides began essential shopping services, picking up medicines and food and delivering to the front door.

The support we received from the local community was fantastic; local sewing groups made cotton scrubs and gowns and even wash bags for clothes to be safely transported and washed between visits. A local school made and donated clear Perspex masks to enable the people we support to be able to see clear lip patterns of our workers.

Workers providing essential services were presented with the correct Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). This included appropriate PPE to continue communications effectively using clear speech, British Sign Language (BSL) and even hands on signing, a requirement if you are Deafblind.

Our dedicated office team began working remotely and ensured all the people we support are kept in regular contact, this could be via telephone calls or video calls. We also held our staff meeting via Zoom, with BSL translators and over 70 staff in attendance.

As restrictions change for some our service continues to adapt, workers are now able to provide visits in people's gardens and keep to social distancing rules. Our staff have been supporting people to sort through months of post, make important calls and we are now starting to support people to attend medical appointments.

Today our service continues and we keep adapting how we ensure people are safe and supported. We look forward to when we can start supporting people to get out into the community again.

One of the services which Sight for Surrey provides is rehabilitation training to support people with vision impairments to develop and learn skills. Recently these services have started to resume again through the innovativeness of the team, often in creative ways using technology.

Laura, a Sensory Specialist Worker recently used WhatsApp to demonstrate the PENfriend to a lady who had recently lost her sight. The lady recorded her voice onto sticky labels which she put onto food items in the fridge with their sell by date and labelled important medication boxes. After this she used the PENfriend to playback the recording for easy identification. Laura also covered chopping skills using a portable task lamp and a dycem mat to steady the chopping board. They explored using small and big knives, the knife guard and an onion chopper holder that Laura advised she buy online. To ensure the sessions went to plan, the client placed her mobile phone so Laura could see exactly what she was doing and could guide her through. They also covered frying onions and now the lady is cooking meals independently!

Face Mask Exemption Cards

Sight for Surrey has designed two face mask exemption cards that give an explanation of why an individual is not wearing a mask that can be printed off and worn and displayed.

Bob Hughes, Chief Executive of Sight for Surrey said "we have seen and read stories of Deaf people being abused by members of the public for not wearing face masks. We want to protect all the Deaf and hard of hearing people in Surrey from this abuse and hope these exemption cards will relieve the anxiety and pressure for Deaf people when out in the community during these times."

The exemption cards can be downloaded for free from our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk or email communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk to request an exemption card posted out to you.

Deaf Social Work Team

Sadly we have not been able to host our popular monthly Café for Deaf people due to restrictions on meeting. We now host a weekly, Thursday morning, Zoom Café open to all Deaf people in Surrey. The weekly sessions are a mixture of social chat and information share. An Interpreter is present to support with any telephone calls or letters – just like the physical café. Now people can make use of the private Zoom chat rooms for confidential meetings with members of the social work team and or the Interpreter. Our Zoom Café now features a list of guest speakers. Recently we had Tyron Woolfe from Deaf UK Sports join us.

One of the coordinators of our Interpreting team is also in attendance to support with questions on access to Interpreters and how to make best use of the time with them.

It has been a challenge for our Deaf Youth Group, not being able to meet, so we now host a monthly café style Zoom meeting just for them. The café is held in the evening and again mixes fun quizzes and activities, chat and information share

For more information on either group please contact the Deaf Social Work Team, contact details on page 2.

Fabulous Fundraisers

Fundraising is a vitally important source of income for Sight for Surrey so when all world-wide sporting events got postponed due to COVID-19, it left our London marathon runner and Ride London cyclist wondering just what to do.

Fortunately our fabulous fundraisers wanted to carry on regardless and Adam Pullen, from Oxted, designed his own Ride London route and got on his bike on Sunday 16th August and cycled a whopping 100 miles and raised £685 for us.

Adam said, “Sight for Surrey is an amazing charity and a large part of their life changing work depends on voluntary donations and I am pleased to be raising money for such a worthwhile cause”.

Adam’s fundraising page is still open so please do sponsor him at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/adam-pullen3>

Meanwhile Chertsey chap, Anthony Roake pounded the streets of Chertsey on Sunday 4th October at this year’s virtual London Marathon and raised £1,520 for Sight for Surrey.

Anthony’s son Lee, who has been partially sighted since birth and registered blind at six, has been helped by Sight for Surrey since he was three years old.

Anthony said "Sight for Surrey has been an inspiration to us all and I can honestly say without their expertise, guidance and vision Lee wouldn't have progressed and become the young man he is today".

You can still sponsor Anthony and support us to continue our work, please visit <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/anthony-roake>

Interpreting Services

After a brief pause to our interpreting service for the Deaf and deafblind when lockdown first descended on us, the service remained operational throughout lockdown and our coordinators were able to inform the Deaf community that British Sign Language interpreters were accessible via remote technology including Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

In situations where face to face and hands on interpreting were still required, for the deafblind, we ensured all appropriate PPE was worn including gowns, visors and gloves and importantly that people understood how to use it and remove it correctly and safely.

One of our Communicator Guides, Harry, recently accompanied a client to an important appointment at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. The visit involved travelling on public transport and required planning and risk assessments on the safest way to travel. It is situations like these that set Sight for Surrey apart from other organisations and show their determination to support the vision impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, even in times of great uncertainty.

Sandra Chenery, PA to the Chief Executive at Sight for Surrey, has organised 1-2-1 support for some of our Trustees to attend our Board meetings and tells us "lockdown and social distancing rules also posed problems for Sight for Surrey's Trustee board meetings. One of the Trustees, Russell, who is Deafblind, requires a hands on interpreter, and another has a vision impairment. We have overcome this by staff providing 1-2-1 support in full PPE during these important meetings".

Our Communications Team are available to help people explore their interpreting needs and find a safe, effective communication method. Please do contact us to discuss your needs, see page 2 for our contact details.

Virtual Befriending

When lockdown was first announced, our Adult Services team made thousands of welfare calls to clients, and it was recognised early on that many clients would benefit from a telephone befriender to help reduce social isolation, so a new service

was set up to accommodate this, using volunteers. Clients who wanted to receive a befriender call were matched with a local volunteer where possible. We currently have 30 volunteers calling over 85 clients and will look to increase this over the coming months and will continue operating this service, especially for our very elderly clients who find the service invaluable

One of our volunteers said “When I ring someone and they sound a little down by the end of the call they are laughing.”

If you would like to become a telephone befriender, please contact our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

New! Join the Sight for Surrey Lottery today!

Play Sight for Surrey’s new weekly lottery for your chance to **win up to £25,000** while supporting people in Surrey with a sensory impairment. Why not join today from as little as £1 a week! The more people that play the more money we receive.

Go to www.sightforsurrey.org.uk and click on the Get Involved section for more information on joining our lottery.

New equipment

Thanks to a grant from Leeds Building Society and Boshier-Hinton Foundation, Sight for Surrey has been able to purchase two new pieces of amazing equipment for our Resource Centre that will dramatically help anyone with a vision impairment.

The Vario Digital FHD is an amazing foldable video magnifier with outstanding image quality, large tactile button and turn dials with voice output. It also features a 15.6” full HD monitor with optical zoom from 1.3 - 45 magnification which make the Vario Digital FD easy to operate if you have a VI.

The Smartlux digital magnifier is the perfect reading companion if you are vision impaired, either at home or away. Weighing only 220g, the magnifier is super easy to use with just 3 buttons and 4 magnifications, 5x, 7x, 9x or 12x.

Sight for Surrey can get substantial discounts on both products. If you would like to book an appointment for when the Resource Centre is fully reopened to test either pieces, please contact our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Children & Young People's Service

The Coronavirus is affecting us all and continues to do so in many different ways. For the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) this meant all face to face activities, events and support through our children's services had to be delivered online.

The imaginative team came up with the idea of a fortnightly activities bulletin bursting with fun things to create, make, and of course, eat!

The first issue came out on Wednesday 1st April and here launched the fiercely fought sunflower growing competition. Tegan's sunflower won the competition at just over 264cm tall. Children were invited to register and were sent a packet of sunflower seeds from Sight for Surrey to plant themselves. Judging took place in August and the team received lots of entries. The first Bulletin also included a fun game to play, Sensory Snap, and instructions on how to make and decorate an Easter egg.

Eleven editions of the Bulletin came out and the CYPS team were inundated with ideas and involvement from families. Cooking with Carol was popular and many children and young people sent in pictures of their culinary creations before they were devoured.

The Parry family incubated and hatched chicks during lockdown, judging by the look on George's face it was a highlight.

Subsequent issues contained a variety of topics including how to make sun-catchers, papier mache objects, bird feeders, identifying birds by its song, and a cycling challenge.

As restrictions eased the CYPS team organised a day at Painshill Park, the sun shone and much fun was had by all.

If you would like copies of the previous Bulletins please [email cypsrec@sightforsurrey.org.uk](mailto:cypsrec@sightforsurrey.org.uk)

Seeing the Light

Tech support for people with a vision impairment is a growing area of support for Sight for Surrey, ably led by Gary Eady.

Our website (www.sightforsurrey.org.uk) now contains its very own 'ICT Handouts and Tutorials' page containing a vast array of downloadable tutorials in a wide range of topics including Windows 10 Accessibility, Microsoft Office with JAWS, Apple iPhone with VoiceOver, Android with TalkBack and Amazon Echo with Alexa.

We continue to try to offer more help and support and Gary is available for telephone consultations to get you up and running with new IT equipment or provide VI accessibility assistance with your current equipment.

If you would like to book an appointment with Gary please email geady@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call our helpdesk; contact details on page 2.

Recently Gary supported David Liversidge, a Director of CRM Capability at Barclays UK. David was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa in his late teens and had always known that his sight would decline to a level where he would need help but he thought that stage was far off into his retirement. A recent eye test revealed that his sight had deteriorated and subsequently had to admit that things needed to change.

Gary spent time over the phone explaining all the different tech options available to David like screen-readers and a wearable A.I. It has been a learning curve, but, ironically, David is now finding that he is more productive than he has been for years.

David told us, "The assistive technology I am getting to grips with include the ORCAM reader (pictured) together with the in-built functionality in MS-Windows, and I am looking forward to trying screen reading software like ZOOMTEXT as part of the equipment I have been recommended. As medical science and the assistive technology continues to develop, there is lots to be optimistic about. I only wish that I had raised my hand as a partially-sighted person sooner."

Extra E-news

There is always lots going on at Sight for Surrey, we are a busy bunch, and we would love to tell you more about what we have been up to as we just can't fit it all into Signpost! We have launched an E-news bulletin which will be emailed out 3-4 times a year. We would love to have your email address to ensure we can keep you up to date on new equipment, events, challenges and other exciting news. Please email communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk and ask to sign up to our E-news.

Christmas is coming!

Roll up, roll up it's the Sight for Surrey Christmas Raffle!

Can you believe we are heading towards Christmas already and we need your help to raise funds for us to continue our work. Raffle tickets are enclosed with your issue of Signpost. A book costs £10 and there are some fabulous prizes to win!

1st prize is £250, 2nd prize is a £50 John Lewis/Waitrose voucher and other prizes include a meal for two at The Plough pub in Effingham, entry for 2 at The Savill Garden, Silent Pool Gin experience, a Cook gift card, Denbies Classic Winery tasting tour and lots more exciting prizes.

Please help us sell lots of tickets to your family and friends. If you would like to order more books please call us on 01372 377701.

Shop 'til You Drop Online

Are you getting yourself geared up for Christmas and fancy a spot of online shopping? Please use Amazon Smile or Give as You Live and raise money for Sight for Surrey at the same time without spending a penny more.

Simply type in Amazon Smile into your search engine, or if you are using the Amazon app just turn on Amazon Smile. Continue with your online shopping as usual and at the end a percentage of what you buy will go to Sight for Surrey. Give as You Live, is equally as easy and you can shop from John Lewis, Waitrose, Curry's, B&Q, Argos & Boots. Just log onto <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/> join, shop and raise money for us!

Instead of writing and posting Christmas cards this year, join in with the 'Don't Send Me a Card' revolution this Christmas and raise money for Sight for Surrey. Simply visit www.dontsendmeacard.com, choose a charity (Sight for Surrey please!), compose the card, click send and donate the cost of sending your Christmas card to us, it is literally as simple as that!

Join our Sensory Steps Challenge

Are you the next Sir Tom or fancy a challenge to get you out and about more? Stride it out with Sight for Surrey's Sensory Steps Challenge today. Support our '2020 Year of Vision' and look after your mental health and wellbeing by setting yourself a steps challenge today and raise money for Sight for Surrey.

We all seem to love monitoring our steps, how far we've walked, run or cycled and the Sensory Steps Challenge spans all modes of foot transport, whether you've skipped, scampered or sprinted, it all counts towards your steps target.

Whatever your target, it is very important in the current health pandemic to remain healthy and active whilst keeping a 2 metre social distance from those around you, so set yourself a steps challenge today.

Simply set up a fundraising page and ask friends and family to sponsor you and help reach your personal steps or fundraising target. The challenge is not just for individuals. You can get your family, local sports club, work colleagues, friends and any other groups involved.

For more information visit our website.

Surrey Prepared & Priority Register

It is always good to be prepared in the event of an emergency and Surrey County Council is making it even easier for us all to be prepared with their website Surrey Prepared.

At Surrey Prepared you can download a guide on how to be prepared for a local emergency. It includes a list of all key contacts should a power failure occur. There is also a helpful downloadable household plan to help keep you and your family safe during an emergency. It also contains details of the Priority Register. If you are elderly, disabled, sick or have additional needs sign up to your gas, electricity and water services' priority register, which means in a utility loss you are prioritised and supported accordingly.

All downloads and information can be found at www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyprepared

Reach for the stars

Ellie Wallwork was supported by Sight for Surrey as a child, and she was only 11 years old when she landed her first role as a blind child in a short feature film. Ellie admits herself she was quite a precocious child but had a love of drama and music from an early age and it was in fact her piano teacher that told her about the audition for Imagine. "I never thought I would get the role", Ellie told Signpost "it was a really good experience and set the foundations for a career in acting.

Ellie got her 'big break' playing a blind girl in BBC's Dr Who in 2018. "It was the most intense experience." Ellie said "I felt out of my depth at first but everyone was so friendly and helpful and I even had my own trailer!"

When the 3 weeks of filming finished it was back to school and head down for Ellie's mock A-levels. "I worked so hard to catch up and was rewarded with 2 A* and an A." Ellie attended George Abbott school in Guildford which had a specialist VI department to support her needs.

Ellie is now studying English Literature at Leeds University and would love to break the social barriers and sink her teeth into a gritty LGBT VI acting role but rarely is there the opportunity. "Anyone with a VI that wants a career in acting, my advice to you is to never give up, I have shed many tears but it has made me stronger and more determined to succeed; now I just need to figure out what else I can do alongside the acting to make it a sustainable career!"

Leave us a legacy?

As a charity we rely heavily on donations but would you consider leaving a sum of money to Sight for Surrey to allow us to continue our help and support for those with a vision impairment or hearing loss now, and into the future?

After you have made provisions for friends and family, can you leave a sum of money to us? Please contact communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk to receive a legacy pack.

The help and support we provide takes place in many different shapes from assistance in filling in benefit forms to providing household items to help people live their life independently.

Ivy and John Lee from Reigate, who had been married for 61 years, first started receiving help from us in 2009 when Ivy's sight deteriorated. Over ten years Sight for Surrey helped Ivy and John and provided them with equipment to allow Ivy to remain independent in her home. These small acts were a huge help to the couple. So when making their will, they decided to leave a sum of money to Sight for Surrey to show their appreciation. Money like this will enable us to continue supporting people like Ivy and John for many more years to come.

Donations & a Big Thank You

COVID-19 has made it a tough year for Sight for Surrey as all face to face fundraising events and talks had to be cancelled. We are fortunate though to have been successful in applying for a number of grants from charitable foundations to allow us to continue providing help and support to people in Surrey that need us. So we would like to say a big thank you to the following funders:

COVID-19 Funding

- Walton on Thames Charity - £3,000
- The Edward Gostling Foundation - £5,000
- Mole Valley District Council Emergency Coronavirus Fund - £5,000
- Surrey Heath Borough Council COVID 19 Fund - £2,500
- Tesco Bags of Help COVID 19 Fund - £3,000
- The National Lottery Reaching Communities England COVID-19 Fund – £96,000
- Community Foundation for Surrey Coronavirus Response Phase 2 - £18,696
- Heathrow Communities Trust Covid19 Resilience Fund - £4,000

Children & Young People

- BBC Children in Need Small Grant – 3 year renewal - £9,386 a year to fund our Youth Worker
- BBC Children in Need Booster Grant for our Main Grant for Life Skills Habilitation Specialist - £2,000
- The Childwick Trust for supporting our Deaf Youth Group
- Woking Borough Council, £3,300 – ECLO & CYPS event

Benefits

- Community Foundation for Surrey – Hamilton Fund - £1,500
- Mole Valley District Council - £800

Thank you to all the community groups, Rotary and Probus Clubs, the WI and Masonic Foundation that have all supported us.

Be Screen Aware

It is no surprise in these current times we are spending more time glued to our screens than sleeping. Latest figures show that 90 per cent of computer users say they suffer from screen fatigue which includes headaches, sore or tired eyes and problems with close-up and long-distance vision.

By being screen aware you can help minimise your risk of suffering visual distress and keep your eyes feeling fresh and bright.

Follow these top tips to help minimise screen fatigue:

1. Wear your specs – If you have been prescribed eyewear for screen (VDU) use, make sure you wear it.
2. Take frequent breaks – give your eyes a rest by following the 20-20-20 rule. Look away from your screen every 20 minutes, for 20 seconds and focus on objects 20 feet away.
3. Create an eye-friendly environment – position copy documents at roughly the same distance as your eyes are from the screen to avoid having to continually refocus, and minimise any glare or reflections.
4. Customise your screen settings – position your monitor an arms-length away and keep your eyes level with the top of the screen. Select a font size of 12pts or above and make sure you have a clean screen.
5. Keep blinking – Your blink rate can fall by up to 60 per cent when working at a screen. For an instant refresh try closing your eyes and rolling your eyeball around behind the closed lid.
6. Stay hydrated – dehydration can increase symptoms of screen fatigue so remember to drink plenty of water.

And finally, make sure you have regular sight tests – once every two years unless your optometrist advises otherwise.