

Signpost Spring/Summer 2021

The front cover of the magazine shows a picture George Parry, aged 6, in a chef's hat after taking part in a Zoom cooking event organised by the Children and Young People Services team at Sight for Surrey.

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Welcome to the summer edition of Signpost

As the UK slowly and cautiously comes out of our third lockdown and shops, restaurants and gyms reopen, we are also planning our reopening.

We are gradually increasing the face to face services we deliver. The vision impaired rehabilitation team have resumed vital, non urgent mobility sessions, the Communicator Guides are increasing visits and are able to offer support with a wider range of activities and the Hearing Loss Advice Team are resuming non urgent equipment visits. Rentwood will gradually reopen for colleagues and to deliver services.

2021 will be tough for many, but we are starting the year in a good place thanks to the unwavering generosity of our supporters. However we do still need your help so we can continue to provide our services. So, if you can set up a regular monthly donation, please contact us via one of the methods below, it would help us enormously.

Bob Hughes, Chief Executive.

Our contact details

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A virtual royal connection

Sight for Surrey Chief Executive, Bob Hughes, virtually attended The Earl and Countess of Wessex's visit to the Mary Seacole Centre at Headley Court, where Their Royal Highnesses thanked the staff for their hard work during the pandemic.

Bob said: "It was a privilege to attend on behalf of our front line staff who have done so much to support people with sensory impairments during the pandemic. The Earl and Countess were effusive in thanking the many people from so many organisations who have made such a difference."

Keep Cool!

As summer approaches and the days get warmer, it is important to remember these top tips on keeping cool:

- Stay out of the sun, especially between 11am and 3pm.
- Drink plenty of fluids like water, low fat milks, tea and coffee. Avoid alcohol or mix it with a soft drink.
- Wear loose, cool clothing and a hat and sun glasses if you go outside.
- Have cool baths or showers and splash yourself with cool water throughout the day.

The whole wide world went ZOOM!

One thing that many people have been forced to master this year is the use of Zoom as a way of talking and keeping in touch with colleagues, family and friends. Whether you love it or hate it, Zoom is here to stay, but how do you learn to use it, especially if you have a vision impairment?

Our technical guru, Gary Eady, has written a series of tutorials, including the use of Zoom, which are all free to download from our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk. Gary recently held two masterclasses on Zoom; one on the subject of Amazon Alexa and the other on the subject of Smartphones. Nearly 100 people attended! The feedback we received was fantastic including “very informative and I look forward to any further sessions that you may be able to organise”.

Let's Talk Tech!

Following the success of the masterclasses we are introducing a series of new webinars called *Let's Talk Tech*. The sessions will run on the last Wednesday of each month and will cover the following:

- 26 May, 11am - 12:15pm - Synaptic, the Smartphone app
- 30 June, 2pm - 3:15pm - Screen Readers
- 28 July, 11am - 12:15pm - Windows 10 Accessibility

To register, please email info@sightforsurrey.org.uk, or contact our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Keep a look out on our website and e-news updates for other subjects and dates later in the year. If you want to receive our e-news updates 4 times a year, then email communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Our Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) have been busy on Zoom as well. From talent competitions, making mother's day gift boxes to cooking classes, Zoom is changing the way services can be delivered and people can connect!

Our front cover star, George, who is severely vision impaired and has a diagnosis of Rathke's cyst of the brain, DYRK1a Syndrome, Autism and is currently non-verbal, has been attending the CYPS family events since he was just three years old with his Mum, Hannah. She told us "Throughout lockdown Sight for Surrey has put on events via Zoom. George has really enjoyed these sessions and has been really engaged throughout. George is easily distracted, however he has engaged in Zoom activities for 1hr+. He has particularly enjoyed the cooking sessions and loves seeing his friends on the group call."

Steve is a volunteer for Sight for Surrey and has dual sensory loss; he has found some positives from the pandemic and use of Zoom. He told Signpost, "As someone with dual sight and hearing loss, not having to battle with travelling is a huge bonus, it's not easy travelling, finding people, locations, shopping or finding a free seat in a café!"

"I can see better on a PC screen than in real life plus I have a headset and can hear everyone much better than sitting around a table with people and only getting 75% of what is said. When on Zoom I am much more an equal and interact just like everyone else."

We have also been holding our board and staff meetings on Zoom. In March, 74 members of staff joined the latest staff meeting with two BSL interpreters signing for our Deaf staff.

The Jury's IN!

After many years of battling the Ministry of Justice, it has finally been agreed that Deaf people are allowed to sit on a public jury with their interpreter.

An historic and out of date rule prevented more than 12 people in the jury deliberation room. So Deaf people using British Sign Language and requiring an interpreter were left out of jury service.

The President of the British Deaf Association took the case to court in 2017 and after many years of going back and forth, the green light was given in March 2021 which now allows an interpreter into court and in the jury deliberation room.

Joe Collins, Deaf Community Officer at Sight for Surrey said, “we have been fighting for this case for many years, we are thrilled as a community that this has finally been acknowledged and approved. Our hands are very powerful tools to us”.

Cooking club

The Deaf Youth Group met up recently online for a culinary cooking lesson with Yvonne Cobb from Yumma Foods. The group cooked ‘Cheesy Meatballs’ and the end results looked thoroughly delicious!

Yumma Foods offers nutrition education and fun cooking classes to Deaf people in British Sign Language. The group had great fun especially enjoying the eating at the end! Further information about the online cooking lessons can be found at www.yummafood.co.uk. To join our Deaf Youth Club please contact the team on Skype, FaceTime or Text (contact details on page 2).

Spotlight on an ECLO

Justine Jasper is our lead Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) at Sight for Surrey. She works in hospital eye clinics across Surrey and supports people diagnosed with a vision impairment helping them to understand their eye condition and signpost them to services that allow them to continue living and operating independently, whether at home or at work. Here Justine talks about her role and how the service has been impacted during the health crisis.

What does an ECLO do?

ECLOs have knowledge on eye conditions and local and national services, offering dedicated individual support to anyone diagnosed with a vision impairment. ECLOs act as an important bridge between health and social care and are central to the support and wellbeing of patients in eye clinics.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Most definitely meeting patients and helping to make a positive difference to their lives.

What skills do you need to possess to be an ECLO?

You need to like people, have empathy, be able to actively listen and provide emotional and practical support, including knowledge of specialist equipment available, to help people as they come to terms with managing their sight loss.

What has changed in the way you work during the pandemic?

Where and how I work, and processes take much longer. I contact people by telephone or Zoom, but I don't have the face to face contact that is so important. I look forward to being in clinics again soon.

It's good to talk

When lockdown came into force in March 2020 Sight for Surrey's face to face volunteering scheme was put on hold. However we were acutely aware that for some people our volunteers were one of the few people some service users saw each week. We quickly turned our face-to-face volunteering service into a telephone befriending service to help reduce social isolation during the pandemic. Abbey Walters joined Sight for Surrey as a volunteer befriender during the pandemic and here she tells us about why she got involved.

How and why did you get involved in volunteering?

I started volunteering during the first lockdown. I really wanted to help those impacted by the loneliness and isolation of shielding. I knew just how tough this can be, as my sister was also going through it at the time (she is partially sighted and undergoing treatment at the moment). When Sight for Surrey sent out an email asking for phone befrienders, I signed up immediately!

What do you enjoy most about it?

I always have a smile on my face after I've had a phone conversation with either of the two amazing women, with whom I speak to each week. Both of them have such interesting stories to tell and fantastic outlooks on life.

I find the benefits are very much mutual. They lift me up when I'm feeling low, which helped especially in the run up to our wedding in October; a turbulent time, to say the least! They teach me so much: last year, they taught me how to make hanging baskets; something I will definitely repeat this year!

How often and how much time do you spend being a telephone befriender?

I probably spend around 2 hours a week on the phone. The time flies!

Here are a few quotes from more happy clients!

"She is lovely. We talk about all different things. I am very isolated and because of Covid can't see my family so her call is one of the highlights of my week"

"My mother loves getting the call once a week from Sight for Surrey and has built up a good relationship with the lady who rings her, it makes a big difference".

It has been widely publicised that people's mental health has suffered greatly during the pandemic. There are many support groups and services out there and we encourage you to reach out to one of the services below if you are struggling with your mental health.

- **Samaritans** offers listening and support 24/7 to anyone who is struggling to cope or who needs someone to listen. [Call 116 123 for free.](#)

- **Mind** helps people take control of their mental health by providing high-quality information and advice. Call 0300 123 3393 or visit www.mind.org.uk.
- **Signhealth** supports people who are Deaf and experiencing a crisis. Text 85258 for free and immediate support.

The magnificent seven

For the last four years, Sony Europe has organised a running and cycling challenge for their employees, helping them to keep fit, healthy and active and earn money for a charity of their choice.

During 2020, even with lockdown and group restrictions, a team of seven Sony employees rode an impressive 16,700kms over nine weeks, when rules allowed, and won €3,000 which they chose to donate to Sight for Surrey.

A huge thank you to team members; Simon Gale, Stephen Carpenter, Tetsuo Nomoto, Andy Quinn, Peter Harris, John Jordan and Adam Parkinson for their support. The magnificent seven cycled anywhere and everywhere they could across Surrey.

Dunattor School raises the roof!

Year 7 pupils from Dunattor School in Reigate picked Sight for Surrey as one of the four charities to raise money for during the month of February. Pupils set themselves a variety of challenges including washing cars, bake sales, half marathons, swimming, litter picking and even running 5km in an inflatable dinosaur suit! The year group raised £2,569.22 and we received £642.30 which will go directly to supporting blind and vision impaired children and young people.

Sight for Surrey's Habilitation Specialist, Carol Perryer, also attended a virtual assembly for the year 7 pupils giving them an insight into the work she does with vision impaired children. Thank you to Dunattor School Year 7's and everyone that supported them.

Mother's Day boxes

Thanks to funding from BBC Children In Need and Surrey County Council's Short Breaks funding, the Children and Young People Services (CYPS) team organised a family Zoom for the children and young people they support, to make unique 'Mother's Day Gift Boxes'.

The children all received a kit that included the wooden box and lots of tactile decorations like stickers, beads, pompoms, glitter glue and some wooden decorations. Some of the children were independently decorating their boxes and other children had some help. Some beautiful boxes were made, which made many Mum's Mother's Day that extra bit special.

Next the 11UP group got together on Zoom to decorate coasters using mosaic tiles. Fi Branford from the CYPS team said “I have never heard the 11UP group so quiet from how much they were concentrating. It was wonderful how engaged everyone was and all the children are developing really high levels of confidence from this group which is great to see.”

Grace’s talking scales cake

13 year old Grace, who is severely sight impaired, recently baked a Victoria sponge cake independently using a set of talking scales. Talking scales are a great piece of kit, available from the Resource Centre at Sight for Surrey, that allows people with a vision impairment to weigh out ingredients independently. We think the cake looked amazing and bet it tasted delicious too. Grace has been receiving help and support from Sight for Surrey since 2018 including mobility lessons and habilitation training.

Cooking without fear

According to author Simon Mahoney, losing your sight is dreadful, losing it entirely is devastating and losing your wife and best friend so there are no eyes in your home is pushing the bounds of endurance. For former Royal Marine, Simon Mahoney, giving up was not an option, he had two dogs and a cat to look after.

His new book, ‘First Catch your Rabbit’, a nod to Mrs Beaton, his mother and the absolute need to get your ducks in a row, outlines how to cook what you want, when you want, a major element in the path to independence and reclaiming your life after sight loss. This is not a cook book, the recipes are merely a vehicle to demonstrate various simple techniques and safety tips, but a survival manual for working in the kitchen when you are blind. There are, however, thirty nine steps leading from making a cup of tea to a roast chicken dinner for four.

First Catch Your Rabbit is available as both a book (£7.50) and an E-book (£6.50) from Amazon.

We have a team of Sensory Specialist Workers at Sight for Surrey who can provide support and guidance to assist people with vision impairment learn new strategies and techniques to manage essential food preparation and cooking skills. Simply call the Helpdesk for more information.

Reader Give-away!

We have one copy of 'First Catch Your Rabbit' signed by the author himself to giveaway to one lucky reader! Please email communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk or send your name and address to Sight for Surrey, Signpost Giveaway, Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, KT22 9JX. Closing date 30 June 2021.

Cooking to the rescue!

During lockdown so many of us have turned to their kitchens to cook, bake and create. Cooking is a great way to relieve stress and fill the hours locked down at home.

The CYPS team at Sight for Surrey have been tasking the children and young people they support in their Bulletins to make and create a vast array of culinary delights. From savoury to sweets, cakes to canapes we have baked, made and eaten it all!

The CYPS Bulletin that started last May included a 'Cooking with Carol' section written by Senior Habilitation Specialist, Carol Perryer. Each Bulletin gave readers a different recipe to try at home each month.

From frittatas to flapjacks and cookies to carrot cake the team and the children got weighing, mixing, cutting, cooking and of course, the best bit, eating!

For younger children, baking is a great way to hone basic Maths skills by doing something as simple as counting eggs and measuring. It also encourages an adventurous palate and helps them to explore with their senses.

The Sight for Surrey Resource Centre has a wealth of kitchen equipment for people with a vision impairment. From talking microwaves, scales, measuring jugs and timers, you won't be able to get a word in! The liquid level indicators and boil alerts are also great kitchen gadgets that will help you be safe. Please call our Helpdesk and ask for the Resource Centre to discuss any of the above equipment.

Now that's cricket!

The Surrey Cricket Foundation is the charity partner of the Surrey County Cricket Club and has a vision impaired cricket team based at Frimley Phoenix Cricket Club, Hawley and are calling out for new players to join. The team play at Hawley in the summer season and train at Fernhill School during the winter. For anyone keen to get involved please email surreyvicc@gmail.com, call 07958222414 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/surreyvicricricket/>. All the sessions are free and for all cricketers that are B1, B2, B3 or B4 classified.

The Foundation is also working towards setting up a Pan-Disability hard and softball cricket team. For anyone keen to develop their skills in this area, please email Gavin Reynolds, Disability@surreycricket.com or message 07725 203962. This is a new team and they would welcome those who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The Foundation also runs 7 x Super 1s Hubs across Surrey and helps cricket clubs offer a Disability session during the year. To find out more, please email disability@surreycricket.com.

The overall aim is to enable more people from all backgrounds in South London and Surrey the opportunity to take part in cricket and reach out to those within our communities who have a disability.

A perfect picnic

A cold but bright sunny spring day was the perfect tonic for the first CYPS family get together post lockdown. The group met at Denbies Vineyard in Dorking and did a 40 minute walk around the vineyards, which included some pretty steep inclines. Everyone made it round and enjoyed the fresh air and being out together in a group for the first time in many months.

After the stroll, the group sat down outside at Denbies for a socially distanced snack and drink, all very kindly donated by Co-op in Bookham. Rahel and Grace then broke into song and their sweet voices were a joy to listen to as they sung a couple of tunes from The Greatest Showman score.

I would walk 1,000 miles

Jeff Prosser, son of Baroness Prosser, Labour Life peer in the House of Lords, has been fundraising for Sight for Surrey by taking part in a virtual 1,000 mile walk from Lands End to John O'Groats and has raised £1,000.

Baroness Prosser was recently diagnosed with Macular Degeneration, and has been receiving advice and support over the phone from our technical guru, Gary Eady. Baroness Prosser is now looking forward to visiting our Resource Centre to try out various pieces of equipment that will enable her to live independently as her sight deteriorates.

Jeff told Signpost, "we were blown away by the level of expertise and wide range of support that Sight for Surrey has provided my mum. It is my hope that this money will make a difference to someone with a sight or hearing loss".

Shop Co-op and raise funds for us!

Whether you're stopping off to stock up on a few store cupboard basics or doing your weekly shop at Co-op you can support Sight for Surrey at the same time too.

To ensure your shop supports the work of Sight for Surrey you need to log onto www.coop.co.uk/membership and register to become a Co-op member. If you are already a member, just log into your Co-op account and change the charity you support to Sight for Surrey.

We will receive 2p from every £1, of selected Co-op products and services until November 2021.

Run, run, run

Do you know someone that missed out on a place at this year's London Marathon? We have 4 places up for grabs at this year's virtual race, on Sunday 3rd October, when 50,000 runners will have the chance to be part of the biggest marathon anywhere in the world!

Runners have 24 hours to complete the virtual race at their pace, wherever and whenever they want. A special Virgin Money London Marathon app records your run every step of the way. To be part of record breaking history and secure your place, email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk . All you need to do is commit to raising a minimum of £200 and pay a £28 entry fee to secure your place (+ £10 if you live outside the UK).

The benefit of a legacy

Sight for Surrey provided support and guidance for Eileen & Alan Hartwell when Eileen was struggling to care for herself due to Macular Degeneration. Our help allowed Eileen to access additional services which provided her with personal care support when the eye condition made it impossible for her to look after herself. The couple lived in the same house in Ashted from 1953 until Eileen sadly died in 2013 and her husband Alan in 2020. Sight for Surrey was delighted to hear at the start of the year that Alan had bequeathed a generous donation to Sight for Surrey in his will as a way of saying thank you to the help and support we provided his wife.

Will Writing

Writing a Will is something many of us put off. It can be a bit daunting, but it is very important to do. Sight for Surrey has teamed up with the Will experts, Guardian Angel, and are offering a free Will writing service, worth over £90!

The online service is easy to use and there is no hard sell or pressure. Once you have expressed your wishes in your Will, it will be double-checked by a Guardian Angel expert.

Leaving a gift to us will help us continue providing help and support to those with a sensory impairment for many years to come. Visit www.gawill.uk/sfs and remember to use the code SFS-FREE at checkout. If you would rather speak to a member of the Guardian Angel Team in person, please call 0800 773 4014 to arrange an appointment.

Donations & thank you.

2020 was a tricky year for everyone but we are fortunate to have been successful in a number of grant applications that have allowed us to continue helping and supporting the people that need us. So a big round of applause and our heartfelt thanks goes to:

- COVID-19 Funding
- The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust Charity Survival Fund
- Heathrow Community Trust Resilience Fund

Supporting our ECLO work in hospitals across Surrey

The following organisations provided funds to support the work of our ECLOs across Surrey:

- Community Foundation for Surrey - Pargiter Trust Fund - £3000
- SCC Members Allocation - Cllr Amanda Boote - Woking - £750
- Tesco Bags of Help - £4000
- Woking Borough Council - £1750
- Reigate & Banstead Borough Council - £3000
- Spelthorne Borough Council - £2500
- Aspire Voluntary Grants - £1500
- Toyota Fund for a Better Tomorrow - £1750

Learn new IT skills

If you think you are past the point of being taught how to use new methods of communication, and you have a vision impairment, then read on!

Elaine started attending the Sight for Surrey Communication classes a few years ago having no IT skills at all. The classes took place once a month in Redhill and focused on teaching people with a vision impairment new IT skills and Braille.

Elaine had never used email before, nor owned or used a smart phone, computer or tablet. With the help of the Communications team and our resident IT expert Gary Eady, Elaine now owns a smart phone and tablet, sends emails and chats with her daughter and granddaughter on WhatsApp and Zoom.

During the pandemic this has been a lifesaver for Elaine as it has meant she can keep in contact with family and friends who she hasn't seen in person for over a year. Elaine has also benefited from various pieces of equipment from our Resource Centre including a large print diary and talking scales.

Elaine told us "I was devastated when I started to lose my eyesight but the practical and emotional support I have received from Sight for Surrey has been amazing. It has enabled me to keep in contact with family and friends, especially my 5 year old granddaughter. We chat and play games and the Synaptic software program has opened up lots of avenues making IT easy and accessible for me as a person with a vision impairment."

Join our sponsored walk

Sight for Surrey are joining Dorking Rotary for a 4 mile sponsored walk around Holmwood Common on Sunday 12th September. Adults and children of all ages can take part and raise valuable funds to help us. Registration is £5 per adult, children under 18 are free but can ask friends and family to sponsor them! To register your interest, please email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

End of Signpost Spring Summer 2021