

Signpost Winter 2023/24

Issue 16

The front cover of the magazine shows a picture of Celebrity Chef Yvonne Cobb and Emma Burton.

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Welcome to the winter 2023/24 edition of Signpost

This year has flown by fast, and I cannot believe that we are approaching Christmas! I am very grateful for your support and involvement this year.

I would like to share our new 'Big Four' strategic objectives with those of you who have not been involved in our strategy development work (thanks to those of you who have!) These objectives will guide our work over the next 5 years:

- Remove barriers to enable every blind, vision impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind person in Surrey to overcome challenges to live full and independent lives.
- Enable more people, faster, to achieve their aspirations and goals.
- Ensure every blind, vision impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind person in Surrey has the support they need to use modern technology.
- Set our charity up for the future by building capacity, capability, efficiency and resilience.

Please let me know what you think by emailing:

communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Finally, I know Christmas can be a lonely time for many. If you would like a bit of company please join us for a Christmas Day 'chitchat' on Zoom from 10am to 11am on the 25th December. If you would like to join, please email us at communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk so we can send you the joining link.

Wishing you a lovely Christmas and a happy and healthy 2024.

Clare

Clare Burgess, CEO

P.S. 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 it will play the latest edition.

Contact details

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Text: 07860 026 269

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Website: www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

This edition of Signpost has been sent to you as someone who requested information from us. If you would like Signpost in a different format, please let us know. If you'd rather not receive our magazine, you can unsubscribe by emailing gdpr@sightforsurrey.org.uk or contacting our Helpdesk on **01372 377701**.

Para Dressage

Nicky Greenhill started riding at eight years old, little did she know that riding would become her career and hobby, even with a diagnosis of Stargardt Macular Dystrophy.

This rare eye condition affects the central vision and causes progressive sight loss. Nicky coped at school and college with large print and competed in show jumping without any allowances for her sight loss. In 2010 Nicky started competing in dressage, but her deteriorating eyesight made that impossible, until a friend told her about Para Dressage.

Nicky said, "I was competing for a year before I was selected onto Team GB Podium Potential Squad. It was a great group to be in as I was surrounded by other disabled people so that helped me accept my sight loss."

Being on the squad meant Nicky attended training days, "they looked at your nutrition, fitness and psychology," Nicky told us, "I attended two or three events in Europe and a major Championship each year."

Due to the popularity of Para Sports, places on the GB Team reduced and Nicky is no longer part of the GB Para Team.

Nicky was put in touch with Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey after Para Cyclist, Lizzi Jordan, told her about the technology support she was receiving from the charity.

"As I am not actively competing in Para Dressage, I am thinking of other career paths, so I decided to increase my IT skills to give me other options."

Nicky has received several one-to-one sessions with Gary Eady, our Tech Trainer on JAWS, a computer screen reader programme that speaks out the written text. "Gary is great and good at explaining things, I just need to practise more."

To book a session with Gary please call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Deaf Coffee Morning with celebrity chef Yvonne Cobb

The new venue for the Woking Deaf Coffee Morning was launched by celebrity Deaf TV Chef Yvonne Cobb!

Yvonne first explained to the group that she comes from a third generation of Deaf people, and her children are bilingual, they hear and sign. As Yvonne grew up, she signed and spoke, her Mum signed and her Dad spoke. "I had a brilliant teacher in primary school, Miss Glasgow, she looked after me, and supported me to pass the 11+ and secure a place at Mary Hare Grammar School," Yvonne told the audience. She then went to Brooklands College in Weybridge to study Business Management and onto the University of Central Lancashire and gained a degree in Business. It had a strong Deaf cohort and support including interpreters and note takers.

Yvonne then went on to explain her career journey. After starting a family at 26 she needed to find a job that could combine family life. She got a part-time job at Deafax as a training manager and ran several businesses of her own whilst raising a family at the same time. Yvonne said "It fitted in well with looking after our kids, I taught over 500 Deaf people whilst I was there. When the kids got older, I wanted to work for myself, so I started a baby signing company. I then decided I wanted to be closer to my mum in Gloucestershire, so I decided to give everything up and move there, which is where I still live now."

Yvonne qualified as a BSL assessor but her friends kept telling her she was a good cook and so she decided to set up her own Deaf cooking company, Yumma Foods. Deaf people would come and learn how to cook. During the pandemic they moved online. This was a turning point as more and more people could see what Yvonne was doing plus she was blogging about cooking. "It was mind blowing to think how many people were watching me," said Yvonne.

"BBC's See Hear programme then headhunted me saying we want you to come and audition tomorrow. My husband had to drive me to London whilst I read the script and there, I met the other presenter, Julian, who was fantastic. They invited me to be a presenter which I am still doing today.

I then got a slot on ITV's This Morning as a Chef. I was the first Deaf Chef on the programme, and I cooked Chicken Chimichangas. I was then invited to cook on BBC's Morning Live and I am still there today."

Yvonne concludes, "I am very proud that I was the first paid Deaf presenter on mainstream TV, and fingers crossed we can roll this opportunity out to more Deaf people".

The new venue for our monthly coffee morning is Christ Church Woking, Jubilee Square, Woking. It features a lovely café serving food and drinks and a spacious room overlooking the town square.

To find out dates for the rest of the year and 2024 please visit our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Christmas Opening Hours

If you need to contact us over the festive season, our opening hours are:

- Friday 22nd December – Open 9am to 5pm
- Monday 25th December – Closed
- Tuesday 26th December – Closed
- Wednesday 27th December – Open 9am to 5pm
- Thursday 28th December – Open 9am to 5pm
- Friday 29th December – Open 9am to 5pm
- Monday 1st January 2024 – Closed
- Tuesday 2nd January 2024 – Open 9am to 5pm

Christmas Carol Concert

Get into the Christmas spirit at our fully BSL interpreted and accessible Christmas Carol Concert at St. Andrew's Church, Cobham on Tuesday 5th December at 7pm. A beautiful blend of traditional and modern Christmas carols will be sung and signed at the candlelit concert. Manor House School Prep Choir will also be performing a Christmas song.

Complimentary mulled wine and mince pies will be served at the end of the service and tickets to our Christmas raffle will be available to buy. Tickets for the night are available through our website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Roll-up for the Christmas Raffle!

Christmas Raffle tickets are enclosed in your issue of Signpost, a book of 10 costs £20 and all proceeds go towards supporting our community in Surrey.

There are lots of prizes to be won, 1st prize is £250 and 2nd prize is afternoon tea at Nutfield Priory Hotel & Spa.

Please help us sell lots of tickets to family and friends.

If you would like us to fill in the ticket stubs for you, please call our Helpdesk with your credit card details and we will do the rest!

To order more raffle tickets, call 01372 377701 or email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Rapid sight loss

Jamie Ward is Head of Training and Development at Channel 4 and was diagnosed in May 2022 with a rare sight loss condition called Leber Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON). LHON is a mitochondrial (transmitted from mother to child) inherited degeneration of the retinal ganglion cells (RGCs) which leads to acute vision loss and predominantly affects young male adults.

Whilst having an eye test in April 2022 it was found Jamie could not read a couple of lines on the chart with his left eye, a week later Jamie was unable to read the eye chart. Six weeks later LHON was confirmed, up until then Jamie had had 20/20 vision in both eyes.

One of the distressing aspects of the eye condition is that approximately six months after the onset of the symptoms, the disease spreads to the second eye, which Jamie started noticing on 30th November.

By the end of January 2023 Jamie had lost all his vision and got in contact with the charity after being registered severely sight impaired.

Jamie told us, "Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey have been enormously helpful, providing me with mobility training which has been life changing. I can make my own way to my local high street, the gym and train station. Channel 4 have been brilliant. The DWP and Access to Work were good in the end, after the initial delay in processing my application. Channel 4 stepped in and provided me with a screen reader and training on how to use it, made a lot of adjustments and provided me with various bits of technology to help me continue doing my job."

In addition, Jamie has received tech support from our IT Trainer, Gary Eady, with voiceOver on his iPhone, which he says has taken him to the next level."

Meet Susanna Deaf Social Worker

Susanna MacDonald has worked for the charity for five years, firstly as a Deaf Community Officer and is now training to become a Deaf Social Worker. Here Susanna tells us about the difference between the two roles and how she is getting on.

"As a Community Officer it is more involved with organising the community side like coffee mornings, as well as answering general enquiries from Deaf people. As a

Social Worker there are opportunities to work closely with individual clients to create a support plan that is person centred.

I decided to retrain as an opening arose within the charity to become a Social Worker which was too great to pass by. It will give me greater depth of skills and knowledge on how best to work with Deaf people for optimum outcome.

I have enjoyed the theory and models as well as learning about the legislation and acts that support the system and keeps clients safe. Also, how important self-care is. This is something I feel passionate about as if we look after ourselves well, we will work better and contribute to society,” said Susanna.

Susanna concludes, “Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey has given me mentors and support to enable me to have enough time to attend university, do my studies and expand my knowledge. I wouldn’t have been able to do this course without their support.”

If you would like to come and work for us then please keep an eye on our website for new roles and jobs www.sightforsurrey.org.uk/work-for-us.

Student Phone Befriender

Edan Pickering is 20 years old, lives in Dorking and is a student at Coventry University. Edan decided to join the charity as a Volunteer Phone Befriender as he had heard how the charity was in desperate need for volunteers. Edan was matched with a service user who he calls once a week for around 20 minutes. “We have a great chat about our week, it’s so easy to fit in around my student life and studies, it’s not a task at all.”

Steve is an award winner!

Steve Plowman has been a volunteer for the charity for nearly 20 years and last year became a Volunteer Trustee. Steve was nominated for a Reigate & Banstead Volunteer Award and won! Steve said, “After the initial surprise, it was really nice to win the award, I am very grateful and proud to have been nominated. I get so much from volunteering; I have met some wonderful people and made some great friends. Having hearing and sight loss myself it has done wonders for my confidence, self-esteem and sense of well-being. Why not give volunteering a try? The charity is skilled at making sure your experience as a volunteer is a positive one. They will match your skill set to the appropriate role and provide training where required. You will be amazed at the benefits of volunteering.”

We have lots of different volunteering opportunities from Home Visitors, Phone Befrienders, Drivers, Events Volunteers to Technology Support.

If you know of anyone that could spare some time to become a Volunteer then email volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 and ask to speak to our Volunteer Team.

Keep Warm this Winter

We know that energy prices have risen in recent years and this winter many people will be worried about being able to afford their heating and electricity bills. Did you know, if you are eligible, there is financial help available through various government payment schemes like Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payment. To find out more visit www.gov.uk/warmthiswinter.

Top tips for keeping your home warm:

- On a sunny day make sure curtains or blinds are open to harness the warmth from the sun's rays
- Don't block in radiators with sofas or other large pieces of furniture that will absorb the heat
- Keep the bathroom door open when you shower so the steam can help heat your house
- Make sure long curtains don't cover your radiators
- Use draft excluders around doors and windows and don't forget to draft proof pet flaps and letter boxes if you can

Smart Meters

A smart meter can help you take control of your energy use. You don't need to pay to have one installed and you don't need to have an internet connection to use one.

A smart meter comes with an in-home display that shows how much you're spending, so you can take steps to save energy around your home and predict your bills.

Ask your energy supplier for a smart meter. You will find their contact details on your energy bill.

BSL Fest!

A magical day was had by all in Guildford during BSL Fest, a family friendly event designed to showcase and celebrate BSL with the public.

Guildford High Street was buzzing with the Deaf community on a cold but busy Saturday, there was dancing, signing choirs, BSL signed stories and entertainment galore. We were there with our Deaf Team, to highlight the work we do and meet local Deaf individuals, and families, and let them know about our services.

It was great to see The Mayor of Guildford using some BSL in his opening speech and meet many Deaf Influencers, like the Deaf Punk Chef, Scott Garthwaite, pictured above with Emma and Sam from the charity, as well as Jazzy Whipps, Deaf Influencer.

Jane Andrews from Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey said, "we had over 60 people visit our stall, and two members of staff were interviewed, via their interpreter, for Radio Woking and Surrey Hills Radio, giving Deaf people the same opportunities as hearing people, which is what we strive for every day."

If you are Deaf, or know of someone who is, and would like to find out about the help and support we can provide, then please contact us on:

Text: 07860 026 269

Skype: [sensory.services](https://www.skype.com/people/sensory.services)

FaceTime: [dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/dutysw@sensoryservices.org.uk)

Email: info@sensoryservices.org.uk

Meet Up & Catch Up 2024

Why not join us at one of our Meet Up and Catch Up events.

Our next Meet Up and Catch Up event is on Tuesday 28th November 2023, 10am to 12pm at our offices in Fetcham.

More dates will be added throughout the year so please keep a check on our website or sign-up for our e-news (via our website).

There is no need to book, just turn up ready to drink tea, or coffee, meet new local people, and have a good chat. BSL Interpreters will be available.

Dates for 2024 are as follows:

Fetcham, 10am to 12pm

Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, KT22 9JX.

Every last Tuesday of the month

30th January, 27th February, 26th March, 30th April, 28th May

New Haw Library, 10am to 12pm

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

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month

17th January, 21st February, 20th March, 17th April, 15th May

Oxted, 10am to 12pm

The Place @ Oxted Library, 12 Gresham Road, Oxted, RH8 0BQ

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month

10th January, 14th February, 13th March, 10th April, 8th May

Dorking & Bookham Talking newspapers

Dorking & Bookham Talking Newspapers (TN) have joined forces to give people with a vision impairment a free weekly talking newspaper service.

Each Talking Newspaper still produces its fortnightly recording, alternating with their Talking Newspaper neighbour to give a weekly production, but instead of each looking at only the nearest town and villages, both are taking stories now from the Dorking and Leatherhead area.

To receive Dorking Talking Newspapers, free of charge, please contact enquiries@dorkingtalkingnewspaper.org.uk or phone 01306 885382.

If you live in Leatherhead, Bookham Talking Newspapers can be found at www.bookhamtalkingnewspaper.org.uk or by calling 0300 030 1120.

To find your nearest Talking Newspaper visit www.tnf.org.uk.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It provides practical and financial support for individuals with disabilities or physical and mental health conditions. The programme offers assistance in the form of grants to help pay for practical support with work, such as British Sign Language interpreters, note takers, or adaptations to vehicles or computers. Access to Work also provides support for managing mental

health at work including tailored plans and one-to-one sessions with mental health professionals.

Iain, works for us in our Benefits Team and applied for Access to Work to fund a British Sign Language interpreter as Iain is Deaf. The application process can take up to six months, but the charity supported Iain at the outset of his employment with an interpreter.

Iain tells us, “The process for claiming back is really simple, it is all done online now. I simply upload my interpreter’s invoice to my Access to Work account and they pay them directly.”

As well as Iain, the charity has other staff who have successfully applied for funding for Access to Work including support workers, transport to work (taxis), software, computer equipment, and other office equipment. It can also include specialist training for any software or equipment, and adaptations to an employer’s premises to account for someone’s disability.

To find out more please visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work.

Coronation Award Winner Gets a Radio Show

Lee Roake from Chertsey, who has been supported by the charity since he was three years old, has bagged his own radio show following his nomination for The Coronation Champions Award!

The awards were designed to celebrate and recognise volunteers across the UK as part of The King’s Coronation Celebrations. Lee was one of 500 selected out of 2,000 applications for the volunteer work he does for our Children and Young People’s Team. Lee received a coronation pin and certificate and attended the Coronation concert. He then received an invitation to attend a Surrey Coronation Award Winners reception at Loseley House hosted by our President, Michael More-Molyneux, along with eight other Surrey Coronation Champions. Lee had a terrific evening.

The icing on the cake came later for Lee though, when after going onto Surrey Hills Radio to talk about his award nomination, the radio station invited Lee back to co-host a show and asked him if he would like to present his own regular radio show!

Lee told Signpost, “Being a radio presenter is a dream come true and the start of a new chapter in my life. I am over the moon and can’t wait to see where this takes me.”

Lee's Dad, Anthony, told us, "I am very proud of him and the young man he has grown into. He thinks of others before himself, when he has so much to overcome. Without the support, help and guidance of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey he wouldn't be where he is today."

Snow Centre Fun!

Eight young people supported by the charity's Children and Young People's Team had a day out at the Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead recently trying their hand at skiing. The group spent two hours on the slopes, being taught and encouraged by instructors from Disability Snow Sports UK. A minibus transported the group from our offices in Fetcham and everyone enjoyed the journey as it gave them an opportunity to have a good catch up with each other.

The experience of skiing on real snow was a real treat for them all, giving them a chance to learn a new skill as well as confidence and proof that they do not need to be held back by their disabilities.

The entire event was generously funded by the Farnham Lions, which couldn't have taken place without their support. Much fun was had by all.

"It was great, I really enjoyed it. I felt safe and I was able to have some care free fun."

Firm Friends

Two young girls, supported by the charity, that met on the day The Duchess of Edinburgh visited our offices in Fetcham have hit it off immediately and become firm friends!

Since the day the girls met, they have been writing to each other using their Habilitation Specialist, Carol, as the courier. They arranged to meet at the Woking gym event that the Children's Team organise every year for vision impaired children and their families who access our services. Their excitement at meeting again was a joy to witness. Parents have swapped contact details so that they can arrange play dates in the future for the two girls.

If you have a child with a vision impairment and would like to access our services, then please get in touch with our Children's Team on cyp@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer

An Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) provides those recently diagnosed with an eye condition the practical and emotional support they need to understand their diagnosis, come to terms with their sight loss and maintain their independence.

When attending an eye clinic, people may not be able to take in or fully understand the information about their sight condition during their appointment and may not know what questions to ask. This is exacerbated by increasing demand and capacity challenges in hospitals where staff have little time to sit with an individual at the point of diagnosis to explain things more fully.

ECLO's provide essential support by liaising with patients, hospital staff, and our own sensory specialist workers. ECLO's have the time to dedicate to patients following consultation so that they can discuss the impact the condition may have on their life and the support available.

We have three ECLO's working in hospital eye clinics across five hospital trusts in Surrey.

- Ashford & St Peter's Hospital - Thursday AM
- Royal Surrey Hospital - Tuesday AM
- Frimley Park Hospital - Monday PM
- East Surrey Hospital - Wednesday PM
- Epsom Hospital - Friday AM

At what can be an emotionally traumatic time, the ECLO service can help provide this essential support when it's needed most.

You can contact our ECLO team at info@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Be a Challenge Fundraiser

Have you been helped and supported by Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and want to give something back? Then why not consider taking on a challenge fundraising activity and raise money for us?

If not you, why not challenge your children, grandchildren or even a neighbour to set themselves a fundraising challenge to help support the charity that has supported you?

From epic bike rides, like RideLondon Essex, London to Brighton and Ride Reigate, through to running the Royal Parks Half Marathon, we have access to charity places in a host of fundraising challenges. All you need to do is commit to raising valuable funds.

We appreciate sporting challenges are not for everyone so how about a sky dive, wing walk, sponsored silence or bake sale?

There are many challenges out there for you to choose from. To chat through your fundraising ideas with one of our friendly fundraising team please call us on 01372 377701 or email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

2024 Diaries

Keep yourself organised in 2024 with a large print diary. Features include a new colour scheme for greater contrast whilst still offering plenty of space for your important commitments. Available in A3 wall size, A4 and A5 desk size and a handy pocket size. To order yours call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701.

Equipment Open Day

On Tuesday 25th July we held an Equipment Open Day at St. Mary's Church, Fetcham and showcased equipment and gadgets we stock at our Resource Centre in Fetcham.

Visitors were able to speak to Tony Greene, Resource Centre Coordinator, as well as representatives from Surrey Age UK, Surrey County Council and other equipment providers. Attendees got to try out new equipment such as magnifiers to help them read letters and packaging and other text that is small and difficult to read.

Other popular equipment available to try included task lamps, UV shields, tinted glasses and electronic reading machines.

Positive feedback from the day included meeting Tony, having tea and cake, chatting with other people and the shared sentiment of not feeling so alone.

Our Equipment Open Day will be returning in 2024, please keep an eye on our website for further details, or you can sign-up to our monthly e-news by emailing us at communications@sightforsurrey.org.uk.

To book an appointment at our Resource Centre please contact Tony Greene, Resource Centre Coordinator, on 01372 377701.

Elizabeth leaves us a legacy

Elizabeth Licence was supported by Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey for many years and was also a volunteer at the office helping where she could. Volunteering gave her a sense of purpose and allowed her to socialise instead of sitting at home on her own, which was so important. Elizabeth left a gift to the charity in her Will as she appreciated all the support she received over the years and wanted to ensure support could continue for future generations.

We have teamed up with Will experts, Guardian Angel, to offer free help in writing your Will. Please contact Guardian Angel on 0800 773 4014 quoting 'Sight for Surrey.'

Become a monthly donor

Thanks to the kindness and generosity of our supporters, we provide services to thousands of children, young people and adults who are blind, vision impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing, or have combined sight and hearing loss.

Through our charitable projects, we aim to help people to live fuller, more independent lives through projects such as Community Engagement, Volunteering, Assistive Technology and our community-based Eye Clinic Liaison Officers. To help us continue providing support we need regular monthly donations.

Could you give a regular £5 donation to support our local community? Please email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk or call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701 to speak to the fundraising team.

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Advert by Professional Vision Services Ltd

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. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we are offering a new consulting service bringing a range of products to your home to discuss and assess your needs. All staff have been vaccinated and PPE will be worn.

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

- Scan text and reads aloud
- Portable/battery operated
- Voice change, speed and pitch
- Save options ideal for books

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

Please call us on 01462 420 751 to book your no obligation FREE appointment with one of our qualified Low Vision Specialists. We offer trial periods and a 30-day money back guarantee.