

SIGNPOST SUMMER 2026 - Issue 21

The front cover of Signpost magazine features a portrait of Thomas on a colourful background. Thomas's story is featured on pages 6 and 7.

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Welcome to the Summer 2026 Edition of *Signpost*

This edition brings together key developments, reflections, and highlights from across the charity. We hope you find it both informative and engaging. The past few months have been full of activity out and about right across Surrey.

Alongside this, we've also been planning and preparing to move our centre to Ashted. We are delighted to have taken this exciting step after so many years of searching for a new base.

You will find enclosed with the printed version of this edition of Signpost, tickets to our summer raffle. Please sell as many tickets as you can to friends and family to help us make this a huge success, so we can continue enabling and empowering children and adults who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. Your support truly makes a remarkable difference.

Thank you for reading, watching and listening to Signpost

Best wishes
Clare

Our Contact Details

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Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, Bridgehead House, 215 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashted, Surrey, KT21 2DF. Registered Charity Number: 1121949.

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 by contacting our Helpdesk.

Local Government Reorganisation

From April 2027, Surrey County Council and the 11 District and Borough Councils in Surrey will be closed and replaced with two unitary councils, East and West Surrey. This is a major step in reshaping how councils are structured and how services are delivered across the county.

This means the current two-tier system – where county, and district and borough councils share responsibilities – will be replaced by a unitary council only. In a unitary model, one council is responsible for all services in an area.

Surrey County Council leadership have shared that the ambition is to have a Mayor, who would lead a Strategic (or Mayoral) Authority. This has not yet been confirmation from central government that a Mayor for Surrey will be put in place.

The new East Surrey council will replace these existing councils:

- Elmbridge Borough Council
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Tandridge District Council

The new West Surrey council will replace these existing councils:

- Guildford Borough Council
- Runnymede Borough Council

- Spelthorne Borough Council
- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Waverley Borough Council
- Woking Borough Council

There will be no immediate changes to how residents access services. Council offices and community spaces will remain open, and services will continue as usual.

To keep up to date with the latest news on Local Government Reorganisation visit [Future Surrey – Surrey LGR Hub](#)

We've Moved!

After over 50 years at Rentwood, School Lane, Fetcham, we're excited to share that we have moved to a new property in Ashtead.

Our new base is Bridgehead House, 215 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2DF from May 2026.

The new premises, owned by Surrey County Council (SCC), is a two-storey building and it has been refurbished, and we will be the sole occupants.

Bridgehead House is ideally located just a six-minute walk from Ashtead train station, with excellent bus links to Leatherhead, Dorking and Epsom. Nearby there is a selection of local shops, including a greengrocer, deli, pub and newsagent, with more amenities a short walk away.

All of the charity's services and contact details will remain unchanged and our support and services are operational throughout the move period for those we support out in the community, in their homes, and via our Helpdesk and Duty teams. Face to face appointments at the new centre are expected to begin around the end of May.

Clare Burgess, CEO, said:

"We're delighted to have moved to a centre in Lower Ashted just three miles from our existing base in Fetcham. This marks an important and positive step forward offering increased stability for the charity and an environment that better suits the children and adults we support across Surrey, our volunteers and staff teams. I look forward to welcoming you to our new home!"

Summer Spectacular Raffle – Win Big While Making A Difference

Get ready to make this summer spectacular while supporting a truly meaningful cause!

Our exciting summer raffle is packed with amazing prizes from an Afternoon Tea for Two, an overnight hotel stay, shopping vouchers to fun-filled family days out.

Every ticket you purchase not only gives you the chance to win but also helps raise vital funds supporting children and adults with sensory impairments, making a real difference in their lives.

Whether you're feeling lucky or simply want to give back, now is the perfect time to get involved. Tickets are only £2 each, a book of ten costs £20, the full list of prizes can be found on our website. If you would like us to complete the tickets stubs, please contact our Helpdesk, page 2 for contact details, who can take payment over the phone.

Don't miss out - grab your tickets today, spread the word, and join in the summer fun!

For more information contact fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk or visit our website sightforsurrey.org.uk.

Thomas's Sight Loss Journey

Thomas was born with a cleft palate and hypertelorism (widely spaced eyes) and mum Tamzin was told by doctors there would be some other health challenges for him, but they could not predict what. At six weeks old when seeing their geneticist, Thomas was referred to an ophthalmologist at Great Ormond Street and there started Thomas's sight impairment journey.

Thomas's sight has gradually deteriorated over the years and a few years ago he was referred to another ophthalmologist who registered him as Severely Sighted Impaired.

Thomas is very short sighted and has an unusually stretched retina and therefore is more at risk of having a detached retina. The retina in his left eye is being held in place with a cataract, and as the positioning is awkward, doctors don't want to operate.

In November 2024, Thomas complained his vision was getting worse in his right eye. He was admitted as an emergency patient at Moorfields Eye Hospital and had his first operation which involved weighing down the detached retina with oil. Everything was stable but Thomas noticed a short time later something was not quite right so returned to hospital where it was confirmed his operation hadn't been a success. So, in June 2025 they weighted down his retina again and this is where Thomas stands today.

Tamzin tells us, "Thomas will need to go back into hospital to remove the oil eventually, but they are keeping it in for now. When they remove the oil we will need to assess what vision he has in his right eye. The longer the retina is detached, the higher the chances are that his sight will not be restored. He can see silhouettes in his right eye but that is it."

Thomas started receiving support from the charity just before he started secondary school. Carol, Senior Habilitation Specialist, taught Thomas

the route from his home to the train station, how to board the train safely and then the route from the station to school as well as putting other strategies in place for navigating around the school.

Thomas attended his first social event with the children and young people's team recently, indoor sky diving, and really enjoyed it.

So, what does the future hold for Thomas? He tells us, "I need to get my GCSEs and A-Levels and then I would like to get an Apprenticeship with British Airways."

Tamzin concluded, "The last few years have been hard and without the support of the charity I really don't know where I would go for help. What we have always wanted is for Thomas to go out and do life, no matter what life throws at you, and that is exactly what the charity has helped us to achieve for him."

The Power of Volunteering

Our home visitor volunteers play a vital role in supporting people who are blind, partially sighted, hard of hearing, deafblind, and the Deaf community in their homes, replacing loneliness and isolation with companionship, understanding and meaningful contact as shown by the story below.

Jessie is a home visitor volunteer and visits Doris in her home once a week, the two have a great bond and enjoy each other's company.

Jessie told us, "As my children grew up, I realised I had time on my hands, and I wanted to use my free time in a meaningful way. I looked around for volunteering opportunities and discovered Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey. I wanted to do something that connected me with others and the local community, as I had recently moved to the area.

I thought volunteering would mainly be about giving my time, but what surprised me is how much I've gained from it as well. That's what makes the experience so rewarding."

Doris is 94 years old, and lives alone and was finding herself becoming isolated due to her Macular Degeneration. “I look forward to Jessie’s visits as being on my own sometimes I don’t see anyone all day so it’s wonderful to have someone to talk to. I really do enjoy it very much. It is so lovely to have a home visitor each week.”

We have lots of other volunteer roles, including drivers, support at events, phone befrienders and more! If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please visit our website sightforsurrey.org.uk or email volunteering@sightforsurrey.org.uk

Help With Hearing Loss

Nigel contacted the charity after learning about us whilst attending a hearing aid maintenance clinic. Nigel only has 5% hearing in his right ear, so wears an Oticon hearing aid.

Nigel told us, I got in contact with Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey to find out what help and support was available as I was struggling with several things including hearing the TV, the doorbell and telephone conversations. Rachel came to visit and brought along a TV Adapter which connects to my hearing aid so the sound from the TV streams directly into my hearing aid, which is fantastic. She also set up my iPhone so it connects to my hearing aid and I can take calls and hear more clearly on my mobile.

“If I am sitting around a table with a group of people, I really struggle to hear conversations, so Rachel also brought along a connect clip which was helpful when I attended a meeting with a dozen or so people. We were all sitting in a semi-circle, and I positioned the clip in the middle of the table. If one person at a time speaks, I can hear them clearly, but if multiple people are speaking then it’s more difficult.”

For help and support with your hearing loss, and to find out more about the equipment available, please contact the Hearing Loss Team via one of our contact methods on page 2.

Hear Here Clinics

Hear Here clinics are community-based, volunteer-led services in Surrey and surrounding areas, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford, Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and the NHS. They provide free, local maintenance for NHS hearing aids, including cleaning, re-tubing, and battery replacements.

The clinics are typically held in churches and community buildings, offering basic hearing aid maintenance and advice to support hearing aid wearers to get the best from their devices.

Hearing Champions at the clinics provide a range of services depending on the resources available within their area, including:

- Checking the hearing aid is working properly
- Re-tubing, ear mould cleaning and battery replacement
- Checking the fitting of the hearing aid in the ear
- Advice on maintenance and cleaning of the hearing aid
- Advice and support on making the most of the hearing aid
- Information and signposting to other services and useful equipment

The service is free and available to anyone with a 'behind the ear' NHS hearing aid. Training and the provision of sundry supplies is funded by the local NHS audiology departments in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford.

You can find details of your nearest Hear Here Clinic by visiting <https://cofeguildford.org.uk/hearhere/>. Or call 07827 567014 or email hearhere@cofeguildford.org.uk

Sightforsurrey.org.uk Gets a Makeover!

Watch out, coming very soon is a new look for our website sightforsurrey.org.uk.

We have been working hard behind the scenes on creating a new website with you in mind, combining a clear, fresh design with easy navigation to help you find exactly what you need, faster.

The new website features a navy base colour with yellow writing and curved boxes and it features real-life photographs of many children and adults we help, volunteers and staff from the charity.

Whether you're on the website to explore our services, fundraise, donate or connect with our team, we're excited to have you with us and look forward to being part of your journey.

At the top of the website there will be four boxes to take you straight through to donate, contact us, make an online referral and a new search function, so whatever you are looking for you should be able to find it.

Our ICT Handouts and Tutorials page has been streamlined and each topic now has its own section where all the usual handouts and downloads are available.

As you would expect, we have adhered to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), a set of technical standards that improve the accessibility of web content, websites, and web applications for people with a wide range of disabilities.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone who took part in our website focus groups to help shape the look, feel and functionality of the new site.

Deafblind Friendship Group Get Techy

Our Deafblind Friendship Group came into the charity's offices for a Ray-Ban Meta Master Class. Gary, Access Technology Trainer, brought along a pair of the glasses for the group to try on and experience. Everyone gave them a go including Marjorie who is 94 years old and Russell, one of our Trustees who is Deafblind.

So, what are Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses?

Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses are eyewear that combine classic Ray-Ban designs with Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered features for hands-free communication, media capture, and real-time assistance. They allow users to interact with Meta AI, a conversational assistant, using voice commands like 'Hey Meta' to make calls, send texts, control features and get answers without touching a phone.

Clare, a Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses user said, "I wear the glasses every day, they are an essential piece of kit for me. I get them to take photos, send and read texts, record reminders, and check details like what a poster or sign says. I literally would not be without them, and I cannot wait until Live AI comes to the UK so we can use them for things like keeping an eye out for a certain bus at the bus stop rather than needing to prompt them to look and see what a particular bus number is every time one pulls up."

Evie, another Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses user said. "I use my Ray-Bans in the shops to tell me what product I am looking at and how much it is. I call and message my friends through them."

For more information on Ray-Ban Meta glasses or to book a visit to try a pair out, please email technology@sightforsurrey.org.uk

Communicator Guides

Tony has been a Communicator Guide for just over two years and loves his job.

Tony said, “I support six people who have vision and hearing impairments every week taking them out to the shops, for a walk or out for a coffee, I do similar activities each week, but I really like it and get loads of satisfaction from the job; it is very rewarding helping others.”

“I used to have a really stressful job and worked long hours, but now I work 20 hours a week with the greatest people.”

Val said, “I look forward to Tony’s visits, we go out for a walk around Brookwood Military Cemetery, which is just so peaceful, we listen to the bird song and try and identify them, then Tony and I have a good chat and put the world to rights. Then he either takes me to the shops, or we go out for a coffee.”

Last year Tony also supported a man to enable him to go and watch Crystal Palace in the FA Cup semi-finals at Wembley.

Do you have dual sensory loss and would like to find out more about having a Communicator Guide to support you?

Please contact us on 01372 377701 or email info@sensoryservices.org.uk.

Connect Bus Service

Connect Bus Service operates using accessible minibuses, with journey bookings handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Smart software dynamically groups customer requests in real time to optimise routes.

When you book using the “leave at” option, the system considers your preferred departure time alongside other nearby requests. It then combines these into shared journeys, scheduling pickups within a 10-minute window before or after your chosen time.

If you need to arrive by a specific time, such as for a train or appointment, the “arrive at” feature is ideal. The software generates the best journey options to get you there on time.

The Connect service operates Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm and Saturday 8am to 6pm.

You could use the Connect Bus Service to come to one of our Community Hubs which run across six locations in Surrey once a month. For more information, please visit surreycc.gov.uk.

Resource Centre Visit

Tony Lighting brought his mother, Billy, into the Resource Centre several times between 2006 and 2016 and we issued her with various pieces of equipment from magnifiers to talking clocks to help her live life independently as she had Macular Degeneration.

Fast forward 10 years and Tony is back at the Resource Centre but this time for himself as Tony too has Macular Degeneration.

We issued Tony with a Vision Impaired lanyard, Halo Lamp and Mobilux Magnifier and tells he us, “the equipment has been great and really helped me out.”

Community Hubs

Join our award-winning monthly Community Hubs. Enjoy a relaxing drop-in, make new connections, have a chat, cuppa and a biscuit. Remaining dates for 2026 can be found below:

Epsom

10am to 12pm, Epsom Library, 6 Epsom Square, Epsom, KT19 9AG
Every 3rd Tuesday of the month

- 21st July
- 18th August
- 15th September
- 20th October
- 17th November
- 15th December

Fetcham

10am to 12pm, St. Mary's Church, 10A The Ridgeway, Fetcham, KT22 9AZ. Last Friday of the month. No hub in December

- 31st July
- 28th August
- 25th September
- 30th October
- 27th November

Godalming

10am to 12pm, Wilfrid Noyce Centre, High Street, Godalming, GU7 1DY.
Every 1st Thursday of the month.

- 2nd July
- 6th August
- 3rd September
- 1st October
- 5th November
- 3rd December

Merstham

10am to 12pm,

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

Thursdays, term time only

New Haw

10am to 12pm, New Haw Library, 28A The Broadway, New Haw,

Addlestone. Every 3rd Wednesday of the month.

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

Oxted

10am to 12pm. Oxted Library, 12 Gresham Road, Oxted, RH8 0BQ.

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month

- 8th July
- 12th August
- 9th September
- 14th October
- 11th November
- 9th December

Benefits Advice

Applying for benefits can feel overwhelming, especially if you're unsure where to start or what you're entitled to. With different forms, eligibility criteria, and supporting evidence to consider, the process can quickly become confusing.

However, understanding how the system works, knowing your rights and preparing the right information can help ensure your application is as smooth and successful as possible and our Benefits Team can help you with all that!

“Thank you so much for your help with my mother’s application for Attendance Allowance –she has been awarded the higher rate. I am very grateful to you for your detailed advice – I might have managed to get the lower rate on my own, but your insight really helped us to develop the application.”

“A billion thank you's for your support with James’ DLA application - I felt so overwhelmed and didn’t know where to start.”

For help and advice contact our Benefits Team via the Helpdesk, on 01372 377701.

Save Money on Your Insurance!

Thanks to our partnership with Premiums for Purpose, taking out an insurance policy - whether for your car, home, travel or pet - will generate a donation to the charity at no extra cost to you.

When you purchase a policy, Premiums for Purpose donates 50% of the commissions directly to us!

To get your free no-obligation quote visit <https://ppfs.co.uk/sight-for-surrey/insurance>.

Free Stop Smoking Service

One You Surrey supports residents towards a healthier and smoke-free life. With access to free quit aids, like e-cigarettes, nicotine replacement patches and gum. Their personalised services includes 1:1 sessions with experienced stop smoking mentors, and online support.

Visit www.oneyousurrey.org.uk/programmes/stop-smoking to start your journey.

Dual Sensory Loss Support

Eric was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration years ago but it hadn't impinged on him until last summer when he started to find it increasingly difficult to read books, newspapers and magazines, and he was still working as a tax accountant.

After visiting his local opticians, he was referred to hospital, and they confirmed his eyesight was declining rapidly due to Macular Degeneration and he gave up his driving licence. At hospital he also met our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, Cathy, who took Eric under her wing and referred him onto other support services offered by the charity including rehabilitation, technology support and hearing loss support.

Eric was issued equipment by one of our Sensory Support Workers including a task lamp, talking clock, liquid level indicator and bump-ons to help him manage his sight loss at home. A referral was also made to our Technology Team and a large magnifier was loaned to Eric.

Rachel from our Hearing Loss team also visited Eric and set up his hearing aids to connect with his mobile phone, so now phone calls and conversations are direct into his hearing aids.

A Technology Volunteer is also booked to visit Eric's home to show him how to enable all the accessibility features on his computer to help him continue his work.

Eric said, "I had no idea so much help was available for my sight and hearing loss through the charity and I am very grateful."

If you, or someone you know needs help and support with their sight or hearing impairment, please visit our website, sightforsurrey.org.uk, and make an online referral.

Love Your Eyes

Workplaces, schools and community groups will embrace a fun, simple way to raise awareness this summer about eye health while supporting those living with a sensory impairment and the Deaf community. The campaign, called “Love Your Eyes”, invites people to simply wear sunglasses this summer and make a donation to us.

After all, protecting your vision is something we can all get behind - sometimes literally, through a pair of stylish sunglasses.

Don your shades, donate and help make a lasting difference. To sign up visit sightforsurrey.org.uk.

London Landmarks 2027

We have guaranteed places in The London Landmarks Half Marathon on Sunday 11th April 2027. This is a central London closed road run that is the only half marathon to go through both the City of London and Westminster!

From cultural landmarks and heritage to the city's quirky and hidden secrets, runners get to explore the capital on a route like no other!

The event starts on Pall Mall, finishes by Downing Street, and has fabulous views of London's most iconic landmarks including Big Ben, St Paul's Cathedral, Nelson's Column, the Gherkin, the Shard, the Tower of London and the London Eye.

Scan the QR code to register your interest:



If running is not your thing please visit our challenge events page on our website, sightforsurrey.org.uk, for more ideas.

Gifts In Memory Raises £35,000

Brian was a kind and generous man who lived in Surrey. He loved football, was a referee in his spare time and a season ticket holder to Arsenal. His other passion was horse racing; he owned horses with his son and had a grade one winner at Ascot that was a highlight of his life.

Brian, who sadly died in August 2025, had wet and dry Macular Degeneration. He first noticed a dramatic reduction in his sight in 2010 and commenced the injections in his right eye, but he had already lost the sight in his left.

During Covid the injections got cancelled and when he was invited back he had lost the sight in his other eye and was registered as Severely Sight Impaired.

When Brian was told of his sight loss he was supported by our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) at East Surrey hospital.

Karen, Brian's daughter, contacted us to request IT support in particular making his iPad and PC accessible, she also signed him up for Talking Newspapers, and he enjoyed attending the Community Hub in Oxted.

Brian also had hearing loss, so the team came and set up a loop system and connected his TV and audio description on his television. Ensuring access to everything he loved to do was vital.

Brian and his wife had made their funeral wishes clear - to only have family flowers and that donations would go to charity that had supported them - and they chose us as they knew how much donations made to a small charity.

Daughter Karen said, "Our amazement was the amount of money it raised, over £35,000, Dad would have been overwhelmed."

Money raised will fund free places to care home staff to attend our Breaking Down Barriers workshop and contribute towards our ECLO service.

To find out more or to book a place on our Breaking Down Barriers workshop please visit our website sightforsurrey.org.uk.

If you would like to leave a gift to us in your Will, or organise an in-memory donation, please email fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk

Advert - VISION ZONE 2026

Solutions for Low Vision Event

Find out more about assistive technology, local support services and more.

No matter what your sight loss condition, we are here to help you gain knowledge and hands on experiences of new technologies.

Exhibitors include; Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, Thomas Pocklington Trust, England and Wales Blind Golf, Mary Frances Trust, County Care, The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, Chore and Challenges, Driving Miss Daisy, Synaptic, Orcam and Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper

Thursday 25th June, 11am to 2pm. Fairfield Centre, High Street, Leatherhead, KT22 8AH. Free entry.

www.lowvisionshop.co.uk