SENSORY SERVICES BY SIGHT FOR SURREY

Issue 22
Winter 2026/27

SIGNPOST



IN THIS ISSUE:

A Trip to Buckingham Palace	pg 4
Strictly Ballroom	pg 8
Our Winter Appeal	pg 11
Community Hubs 2027	pg 14-15

WELCOME to the Winter 2026/27 edition of Signpost.

We have had a very busy year including moving to our lovely new centre in Ashtead, launching our new website, continuing to offer a variety of services and support, attending numerous events and groups across East Surrey and West Surrey, contributing to important campaigns, and welcoming the launch of the Thomas Pocklington Trust's new Sight Loss Council for Surrey www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk.

In this edition, we are launching our Christmas Appeal, featuring Amy, who is supported by our children and young people's team.

Our theme, **'No One Left Out This Christmas'**, reflects our commitment to ensuring the people we support feel included, connected and empowered. Through our Community Hubs, befriending and home visiting services, and events in the community, we help people build friendships, enjoy new experiences and feel part of their community.

This Christmas, your donation could help someone feel included, take part in an activity, enjoy a festive event or simply have someone there to offer friendship and support.

Please donate to our Christmas Appeal today. Whatever you can give, your support can make a real difference and help ensure no one is left out this Christmas.

With very best wishes

Clare

Clare Burgess, CEO



Contact details

Voice Line 01372 377701
Text 07860 026 269
FaceTime dutysw@sightforsurrey.org.uk
Email info@sensoryservices.org.uk
Website www.sightforsurrey.org.uk

Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey
Bridgehead House
215 Barnett Wood Lane
Ashtead | Surrey | KT21 2DF

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 contact our Helpdesk.

Registered Charity Number 1121949

Christmas OPENING HOURS

Our opening hours over the festive season are:

Thursday 24th December	**9am to 5pm**
Friday 25th December	**CLOSED**
Saturday 26th December	**CLOSED**
Sunday 27th December	**CLOSED**
Monday 28th December	**CLOSED**
Tuesday 29th December	**9am to 5pm**
Wednesday 30th December	**9am to 5pm**
Thursday 31st December	**9am to 5pm**
Friday 1st January	**CLOSED**
Monday 4th January	**9am to 5pm**

2027 DIARIES

Back by popular demand the 2027 diaries are in stock! We have our usual selection of large print diaries including an A3 wall calendar, A4 and A5 desk size and a very handy pocket size. To order your diary please contact our Helpdesk, our contact details can be found on page 2.



NEWS FLASH!

Our New Website Is Live!

We're delighted to announce the launch of our brand-new website! With fresh colours, updated photography, clearer information and streamlined navigation, it's now easier than ever to explore our services, find support and get involved.

We've also updated our online referral forms to make getting in touch even simpler.

Take a look at our new website, visit **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk**



A RIGHT ROYAL DAY OUT

We were delighted to receive 40 free community group tickets to Buckingham Palace, giving members of our Deaf group and children's team the chance to enjoy two memorable visits to this iconic royal residence.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed discovering more about the Palace, its fascinating history and the lives of those who have lived and worked there over the years. From glorious gold furnishings and incredible works of art to sweeping staircases and beautiful ballrooms, there was so much to explore and admire.

The visits were thoughtfully adapted to ensure accessibility for everyone. Our Deaf group was supported by a British Sign Language interpreter, while those with vision impairment had opportunities to explore fabrics and textures through touch, alongside clear visual descriptions of each room. It was fascinating to gain a glimpse into royal life and hear stories, traditions and scandals from across the generations. The smiles, enthusiasm and wonderful feedback showed just how much this special opportunity meant to everyone, creating memories that will be treasured for years to come.

Amy, who visited with our children's team, said:

"I was so excited to visit Buckingham Palace. I have always been interested in the monarchy and their heritage, and to have this experience was really a dream come true. The staff were so welcoming and considerate of my needs. Having it just for us made a massive difference and allowed me to really absorb the information and history. Thank you for such an unforgettable day!"

KEEP WARM THIS WINTER

As the colder months approach, it's important to look after yourself and stay warm. Here are some simple tips to help you stay comfortable and healthy throughout winter.

Layer up

Wear several thin layers rather than one thick layer, and don't forget a hat, scarf and gloves when heading outdoors.

Keep moving

Gentle exercise, such as walking around your home or stretching, can help improve circulation and keep you warm.

Enjoy warm meals

Soups, stews and hot drinks can help warm you from the inside.

Heat your home safely

Keep your main living room warm during the day and close curtains at dusk to help retain heat.

Stay connected

Check in with friends, family or neighbours, particularly if you live alone.

REMEMBER
staying warm is important for your wellbeing this winter.

IS YOUR HOME READY FOR DIGITAL VOICE?



The old analogue phone network is scheduled to close in January 2027, so now is the time to prepare for the switch to Digital Voice.

You may already have been contacted by your phone provider. If so, please take action promptly to help avoid disruption to your service.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

Don't delay

Arrange your switch as soon as possible.

Confirm your appointment

If contacted, make sure you confirm your appointment.

Respond promptly

Provide any information requested by your provider.

Haven't been contacted?

Get in touch with your provider to discuss your options.

Stay connected – act now!

LIVING WITHOUT LIMITS:
AN INTERVIEW WITH TOBY ADDISON

Blind footballer, content creator and disability advocate Toby Addison is passionate about challenging perceptions of blindness, empowering young people and showing what is possible when you embrace opportunity.

Having lost his sight during his teenage years, Toby has represented England in blind football and built a substantial social media following through his honest and engaging content.

Following his recent talk at our children and young people's technology session, we caught up with Toby to learn more about his journey and advice for young people living with sight loss.

Can you tell us about your sight loss journey?

"I was diagnosed with rod-cone dystrophy at a young age. My eyesight deteriorated slowly throughout childhood before declining rapidly during secondary school. By 16, I had lost all usable vision, which significantly affected my social life, education and mental health.

Being blind isn't a significant barrier to my day-to-day life, and I'm proud to say it doesn't stop me living a fulfilled life, something I never thought possible growing up."

How did you become a content creator and disability advocate?

"After graduating from university, my first TikTok post discussing my blindness went viral, gaining over one million views overnight. People began asking questions about blindness, and answering them became the foundation of my content.

I soon realised I was reaching not only disabled people, but the wider community too. Messages from followers describing the positive impact of my content helped me understand that I was making a genuine difference."

What does representing England in blind football mean to you?

"Football has always been a passion, and playing for England is one of my proudest achievements. I played mainstream football before losing my sight, so discovering blind football meant being included again in the sport I love.

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine wearing an England shirt. Yet every day, I get to live that reality."



What message did you hope to share at the technology session?

"When I was losing my vision, I was reluctant to embrace accessible technology, which affected my independence. I wanted to share my experience and encourage young people to adapt to the world of vision loss, including learning to use technology that can transform everyday life."

How does accessible technology support your independence?

"My phone's screen reader helps me work, pursue my interests and maintain an active social life. Apps such as Seeing AI and Be My Eyes have boosted my independence with everything from navigation to housework."

What advice would you give young people?

"Take pride in setting goals and don't be afraid of uncertainty or failure. My England manager once told me, *Take the handbrake off.* Learning to play without fear transformed my football – and my outlook on life."

Toby's story reminds us that sight loss does not have to define what someone can achieve. Through sport, technology and advocacy, he continues to inspire others to embrace their potential.

Follow Toby @blindtobes



Image credit; Alicia Clarke
Left to right: Volunteer dancer & Deborah

DEBORAH TAKES TO THE BALLROOM

For Deborah, dancing has always been more than learning steps – it has brought joy, confidence and a real sense of achievement.

Deborah has experienced sight difficulties from a young age and wore glasses with a prescription of 16 dioptres at school. She started ballroom dancing at just four and a half and continued throughout her childhood, before giving it up at 16.

Years later, after losing her sight, Deborah never expected dancing to become such an important part of her life again. That changed when a vision impaired friend introduced her to Step Change Studios, an accessible dance company. Inspired to give it another go, Deborah rediscovered her love of ballroom dancing and has never looked back.

Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey has supported Deborah to maintain her independence in everyday life. This has included providing practical equipment such as bump-ons, liquid level indicators and a colour detector machine. These tools have helped Deborah manage everyday tasks with confidence and independence.

Now every Saturday, Deborah travels to London for her weekly dance sessions, where she develops her skills, learns new routines and challenges herself by entering competitions.

Competing as a vision impaired dancer has given Deborah the opportunity to put her hard work and dedication into practice. She has already enjoyed fantastic success, won medals and shown that sight loss does not have to stand in the way of pursuing the activities you love.

Deborah's story is a wonderful reminder that it is never too late to rediscover something you love – and perhaps even win a few medals along the way!

For more information visit;
www.stepchangestudios.com

DEAF CAFE DATES FOR 2027

Our popular Deaf Cafés will continue throughout 2027, providing a welcoming and informal space for Deaf people to meet, catch up, make new friends and enjoy a chat over a cuppa.

Whether you're a regular attendee or have never been before, everyone is welcome. Come along, meet others in the Deaf community, share experiences and enjoy some friendly conversation.

We look forward to seeing you in 2027!

Redhill 10am - 1pm

The Redhill Deaf Café will continue on the second Tuesday of each month.

Redhill Methodist Church
Gloucester Road
Redhill
RH1 1BP

- 12 January
- 9 February
- 9 March
- 13 April
- 11 May
- 8 June
- 13 July
- 10 August
- 14 September
- 12 October
- 9 November
- 14 December

Woking 11am - 2pm

The Woking Deaf Café will continue on the third Monday of each month.

Woking United Reform Church
White Rose Lane
Woking
GU22 7HA

- 18 January
- 15 February
- 15 March
- 19 April
- 17 May
- 21 June
- 19 July
- 16 August
- 20 September
- 18 October
- 15 November
- 20 December



GILLIAN'S JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENCE

Gillian was not surprised when her sight began deteriorating and she was diagnosed with Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD), as both her mother and sister had experienced sight loss.

After attending her local Macular Support Group, Gillian discovered Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey and a home visit assessment was arranged. Our Sensory Rehabilitation Worker provided practical equipment to make everyday tasks easier and help her remain independent.

Gillian also met our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO), Justine, at her local macular support group and learned more about the support available. Our ECLO has continued supporting Gillian during her hospital appointments and helped her navigate her sight loss journey and registered her as Severely Sight Impaired (SSI).

Gillian has enjoyed amateur dramatics since university and continues to act despite finding it difficult to learn lines now she can no longer read easily. Our mobility support has also helped her build confidence using a long cane, which she describes as "invaluable".

More recently, Gillian visited our Resource Centre, where she met Keith, our Technology Expert. He introduced her to Meta Ray-Ban Smart Glasses, which she hopes will help her read letters and menus independently, reducing her reliance on others.

Gillian says:

"They really are such a fantastic charity and help me remain independent so I can continue doing the things I love, like taking the train to London and going to the theatre with my daughters."

From practical equipment and mobility support to ECLO advice and assistive technology, the right support is helping Gillian remain independent and continue doing what she loves.

For more information about the support available, visit **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk**



NO ONE LEFT OUT THIS CHRISTMAS



Christmas should be a time for everyone to feel included – a time for family, friendship, laughter and making special memories. But for children and adults who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, joining in with activities that other people take for granted can sometimes be difficult.

This year, our Christmas appeal tells the story of Amy, who has CHARGE syndrome, which affects her sight and hearing and causes difficulties with her balance.

Amy knows what it feels like to be left out.

"There are some activities that my friends do that I can't do and I feel left out."

With our support Amy has developed confidence and independence through specialist mobility training and practical support. She has also enjoyed activities including gymnastics, ice skating, watersports and indoor skydiving in safe and supportive environments.

At one of our events, Amy met Violet. What started with exchanging letters has grown into a close friendship.

"If it was not for this event, I never would have met her!"

Now, one of Amy's favourite things about Christmas is the charity's Christmas party, where she gets to see friends, have fun and feel included.

Our Christmas appeal will help us continue providing specialist support, equipment, training and activities for children and adults with sight and hearing loss and the Deaf community.

Look out for our Christmas appeal letter with this edition of Signpost.

If you can, please consider making a donation to help others build confidence, make friends and enjoy experiences they might otherwise miss out on.

Visit our website to make a donation; **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk**

Amy's message is simple:

"Together, we can help make sure no one is left out this Christmas."

LET'S TALK TECH 2027

Our Technology Team is back with another year of Let's Talk Tech, a friendly and informative webinar series designed to help you get more from your technology.

The sessions take place via Zoom and cover a range of accessible technology, digital tools and practical tips for everyday use. There will also be plenty of opportunities to ask questions.

The 2027 programme includes:

Wednesday 27 January

Synapptic

Discover Synapptic, an app designed to make Android smartphones easier to use, with large print, high-contrast colours and spoken menus.

Wednesday 31 March

NVDA Screen Reader

An introduction to NVDA, a free screen reader for Windows, including navigating your computer, reading documents and using email.

Wednesday 26 May

AI Apps

Find out more about artificial intelligence and how apps such as Google Gemini, Siri, Seeing AI and Be My Eyes can help in everyday life. We'll also look at some of the safety considerations when using AI.

Wednesday 28 July

Smart Glasses

Explore how smart glasses can help with reading text, recognising objects, describing surroundings, sending and reading messages, and accessing support.

Wednesday 29 September

Windows 11 Accessibility

Discover built-in features including Magnifier, high-contrast settings, larger mouse pointers, dictation and Narrator.

Wednesday 24 November

Smart TVs

Explore accessibility features available on Smart TVs and how they can make viewing easier.



Sessions are usually held from 11am–12.30pm.

To book, call the Helpdesk on 01372 377701 or email technology@sightforsurrey.org.uk, stating which session you would like to attend.

DISCOVER OUR NEW RESOURCE CENTRE

Our Resource Centre, based at our new centre in Ashtead, offers a wide range of equipment designed to make everyday life easier for people living with sight or hearing loss, and members of the Deaf community.

From practical aids around the home to equipment that supports greater independence, there is a variety of solutions to explore. This includes talking and vibrating clocks and watches, magnifiers, CCTV, magnification systems, talking scales, liquid-level indicators and other useful kitchen gadgets.

Our friendly team can help you discover solutions to suit your individual needs, whether you are looking for ways to make reading easier, manage everyday household tasks or feel more confident and independent.

We understand that choosing the right equipment can feel overwhelming, particularly with so many options available. That is why we encourage people to visit, find out more about the equipment on offer and discuss what may work best for each person.

Our aim is to help people maintain their independence, enjoy everyday activities and continue doing the things that matter most to them.

If you would like to find out more or arrange an appointment to visit our Resource Centre, please contact our Helpdesk by phone on 01372 377 701, by SMS text on 07860 029 269, or email: info@sensoryservices.org.uk.

Our team will be happy to help.







CONNECT, CHAT AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS

Looking for a friendly place to meet others living with sight loss and hearing loss? Our Community Hubs run monthly from 10am to 12pm, offering a welcoming space to share experiences, enjoy a laugh and a cuppa, and connect with people in similar situations.

Why not come along and discover the friendly faces waiting to welcome you?

James told us:

"The team at the Hub make me feel special and cared for. I've made so many friends — and we laugh for the whole two hours!"

Community Hub Dates for 2027

Godalming	New Haw	Ashtead
Every 1st Thursday	Every 3rd Wednesday	Every last Friday
Wilfrid Noyce Centre High Street Godalming GU7 1DY	New Haw Library 28A The Broadway New Haw Addlestone KT15 3HA	Bridgehead House 215 Barnett Wood Lane Ashtead KT21 2DF
7th January 4th February 4th March 1st April 6th May 3rd June 1st July	20th January 17th February 17th March 21st April 19th May 16th June 21st July	29th January 26th February 19th March * 30th April 28th May 25th June 30th July **NB one week earlier due to Good Friday*

Oxted	Epsom	Merstham
Every 2nd Wednesday	Every 3rd Tuesday	Term time - Thursdays
Oxted Library 12 Gresham Road Oxted RH8 0BQ	Epsom Library 6 Epsom Square Epsom KT19 9AG	Merstham Village Hall Station Road North Merstham RH1 3ED
13th January 10th February 10th March 14th April 12th May 9th June 14th July	19th January 16th February 16th March 20th April 18th May 15th June 20th July	7, 14, 21, 28th January 4, 25th February 4, 11, 18, 25th March 22, 29th April 13, 20, 27th May 10, 17, 24th June 1, 8th July

CELEBRATING OUR WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS

A heartfelt thank you to the people who make such a difference. Our volunteers play an invaluable role in supporting our work and we were delighted to celebrate their dedication at a special Volunteer Thank You event.

The gathering brought volunteers together to enjoy delicious food, share conversations and relax in our garden. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces enjoying each other's company and celebrating the difference they make to our charity and the people we support.

A highlight of the day was a Q&A with James and Bill, two men we support, who shared personal insights into how much volunteer support means to them in their daily lives. Their heartfelt reflections were a powerful reminder of the difference volunteers make, helping people feel connected, supported and more independent.

A special thank you goes to staff member Claire, who generously supplied beautiful flowers from her allotment. The stunning blooms brought colour and warmth to the occasion and were artfully arranged by teams of corporate volunteers from Croudace Homes and Opus Technology, supported by Hazel, Chris and Nicola from the charity.

Whether providing companionship, driving people to activities or supporting events, our volunteers make a lasting difference to the lives of people living with sight and/or hearing loss and the Deaf community across Surrey.



To every one of our volunteers:

Thank you for everything you do. We couldn't do it without you!

To find out more about becoming a volunteer visit **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk**



MAKING A SPLASH THIS SUMMER

Alongside providing mobility and daily living skills training, our children and young people's team organise a fantastic programme of fun activities and events throughout the year.

These experiences give the young people we support opportunities to try something new, build confidence, make friends and, most importantly, enjoy themselves!

This summer, the team organised an exciting water sports day at Heron Lakes, where children and young people could get involved in a range of thrilling activities. From paddleboarding and kayaking to swimming, speed boat rides and whizzing across the water in doughnut-shaped inflatables, there was something for everyone to enjoy. After an action-packed day, children and their families had the chance to relax, chat and connect over a delicious family barbecue. A huge thank you to Croudace Homes for providing volunteers who kindly took charge of the cooking on the day.

We would also like to thank Access to Adventures for their fantastic support in organising the activities and ensuring the children and young people had a safe, inclusive and memorable experience.

Events like these help create opportunities, friendships and treasured memories, but they are only possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

Could you help us create more memorable experiences for children and young people?

To make a donation, please visit **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk** or call our Helpdesk on 01372 377701



A FANTASTIC DAY AT WEST BYFLEET GOLF CLUB

We would like to say a huge thank you to West Byfleet Golf Club for choosing us as its Charity of the Year and for supporting us throughout the year.

The club organised a fantastic programme of fundraising events, helping to raise vital funds while bringing members and supporters together. One of the highlights was the Captains' Day, hosted by Captains Jonathan Jackson and Shirley Doune.

It was a wonderful full-day event, with plenty of opportunities for golfers and guests to enjoy themselves, socialise and support a great cause. Several members of our team attended, including our CEO, Clare and Chair, Christine, and it was fantastic to meet so many people who had generously given their time to support us.

With around 26 teams taking part, the day was a busy and lively occasion, with golfers enjoying a full day of activities, including meals and refreshments. The fundraising continued off the course, with a tombola, raffle and auction, giving everyone the chance to get involved and help raise even more for our charity.

We are incredibly grateful to Jonathan, Shirley, the club members and everyone who has taken part in various events throughout the year. Their generosity and enthusiasm have made a real difference to the people we support.

Thank you, West Byfleet Golf Club, for an unforgettable year of fundraising and friendship!

If you would like to hold a golf day in aid of us, or choose us as your Charity of the Year, please email **fundraising@sightforsurrey.org.uk**

MAKE A DIFFERENCE THAT LIVES ON

Writing your Will is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure your wishes are respected and your loved ones are cared for. A gift in your Will, however large or small, can help us continue supporting people who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind for generations to come.

Your kindness today could help someone live independently, build confidence and feel connected to their community long into the future.

We have partnered with Octopus Legacy, to offer a FREE Will-writing service, with your Will written and checked by experts saving you over £150.

Miss Thompson from Dorking, who we supported for many years, used this service to get her affairs in order, and very generously left us a gift in her will.

It's a simple way to gain peace of mind knowing your affairs are in order, while creating a legacy that will live on for many years to come.

By providing for the next generation, you can help ensure that children, young people and adults receive the specialist support they need to live independently, build confidence and feel connected to their communities.

To find out more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact us or visit **www.sightforsurrey.org.uk/get-involved/leave-a-legacy**

Or call Octopus Legacy on 0800 773 4014 and mention us.



Read with Greater Ease with the Traveller HD



Enjoy a smoother, more natural reading experience with Slide & Read technology.

The Traveller HD is a lightweight video magnifier designed to make reading easier for people with low vision. Its unique Slide & Read mechanism allows you to glide the screen smoothly across a line of text, helping you follow words and sentences more comfortably – particularly if you find it difficult to keep your hands steady.

The large 13.3-inch full-colour HD screen displays clear, sharp text, while continuous magnification lets you adjust the size to suit your needs.
Key features:

- Lightweight and easy to use
- Unique Slide & Read mechanism
- Large 13.3-inch full-colour HD widescreen display
- Continuous magnification from 2.4x to 30x
- Adjustable viewing modes
- Ergonomically tilted screen for comfortable reading.



Special Offer
RRP: £1,495 Now £1,345 – **save £150!**

To book your FREE home demonstration call your local consultant on 0800 145 6115 to discover how the Traveller HD could help you read with greater confidence and independence.

Demo model also available at Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey. Call 01372 377701 to book a Resource Centre appointment.

Visit **www.lowvisionshop.co.uk** for more information.

enhanced vision | Freedom Scientific | Optelec | SCHWEIZER