



2017 Impact Report

The difference we made

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Reg. charity no. 1140483 | Company no. 7432897

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Officials and staff

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| President | Lord St. Oswald DL |
| Chair | Linda Broom |
| Trustees | Pat Bennett, Bridget Lockyer, Alan Kriens, Jim Morris, Andrew Patterson, Dr. Norman Waddington |
| Chief Executive Officer | Hayley Grocock |
| Staff team | Jo Brook – Community Coordinator Nicola Ellis – Administrator & Service Support Nicola Ford – Sight Loss Advisor Beverley Poppleton – Operations Manager |

About us

Wakefield District Sight Aid was formed in 1869. We are here to support all adult visually impaired people, their families, carers and sight care professionals across the Wakefield district.

Our mission is to:

- Help anyone affected by sight impairment to improve their confidence and independence
- Improve our services to meet the growing needs of the people in the district
- Remain economically viable

Our vision:

We believe that visually impaired people in our community should have access to the same opportunities and quality of life as fully sighted people. We want to support all blind and partially sighted people across the Wakefield district area, raise awareness about good eye health and care, and reduce social isolation.



Chief Executive's welcome

Welcome to our 2017 Impact Report which I hope will give you a flavour of the difference our work has made to the lives of visually impaired people across our community over the past year.

I joined the charity at the end of September 2017, and was astounded by the amount of excellent work being done to support around 1,000 members and a wider group of stakeholders across the district. From home visits and equipment demonstration days, to community outreach work, social trips, and befriending, it soon became clear that the range of both practical services and wider wellbeing-focused activities being delivered was far larger than one might expect from a small staff team all working part-time.

I am hugely proud of, and grateful to, our dedicated and passionate team of staff and volunteers, who are constantly striving for our organisation to do more and do it better. The fantastic feedback we receive on a daily basis from our members is testament to their hard work and commitment.

Our work would not be possible without the donations we receive, in particular the legacy donations which have been very generous this year and allow us the luxury of being able to plan for the future.

For a small charity, we have big plans, and I can't wait to write to you next year with news of the progress we have made.

Hayley Grocock

Chief Executive Officer



Supporting people with sight loss – practical services

A key part of what we do is providing practical services to people following diagnosis or deteriorating eyesight, and ongoing needs-based support.

Advice and support

Our office-based support is available Monday to Thursday by phone and in person. We have a variety of resources and materials available in the office, a Reading Hub with facilities for reading documents, and a range of demonstration equipment which can be ordered through us. Our staff team is always here to offer advice and discuss our members' needs.



Home visits*

Through this service we are able to assess for, provide, and advise on the use of certain safety equipment. During 2017 we made 316 visits (up 8% on the previous year) and issued 355 pieces of equipment (up 32% on the previous year).



Referrals for talking books and talking newspapers*

Talking books and newspapers are often a lifeline for our members, particularly if their eyesight deteriorates and watching television or reading



* These services are made possible with the kind support of Wakefield Council, as a result of a service agreement we have with them which partially funds these services.

physical books and newspapers becomes difficult and frustrating. Over 300 of our members are registered with talking books and/or newspapers.

Administration of British Wireless for the Blind Fund equipment*

We continued to provide equipment supplied by British Wireless for the Blind Fund which enables people on certain qualifying benefits to enjoy a variety of recorded media in their homes for free.



Equipment Demonstration and Advice Days

These popular events continued to be well-attended, attracting 262 visitors during 2017, an increase of 19% on the previous year. Referrals to our home visiting service increased by over 200% and referrals to partner agencies increased by 666%. Equipment sales remained consistent, with 112 sales made.



Campaigning and awareness-raising on sight loss related issues

As the only charity providing direct services to visually impaired people in Wakefield, we believe it is important that we represent our members' interests regarding relevant local matters. In 2017, we applied pressure to local bus route operator Arriva Yorkshire when they decided, without consultation, to re-route one of their buses so it no



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longer stopped outside our Parkside Centre premises. We collected hundreds of signatures as part of a petition against the changes, liaised with local Councillors, and gained valuable coverage in the Wakefield Express. Arriva Yorkshire listened to our views and we were thrilled when they announced that they were reinstating some stops in Outwood, including the one outside our office on the 110 bus route. This campaign was largely led by one of our visually impaired volunteers and members, Neil Newton.

Case study: an example of our holistic approach

We met Mr. C (85) at a recent Equipment Demonstration and Advice Day. He had attended these events some years ago, but had noticed deterioration in his vision over the past few months. His primary interest was in talking books.

A home visit was arranged, with the purpose of ensuring that all relevant services and equipment were offered to Mr. C.

Mr. C reported that he was struggling to watch television, and no longer enjoyed reading books due to his poor sight, which he was finding frustrating. A Boom Box [sonic portable USB player] was demonstrated and issued, and an application for RNIB Talking Books was completed.

Whilst on the visit, we enquired about how Mr. C managed in the kitchen. Tactile Markers were fitted to the oven dials, washing machine and microwave, as Mr. C was struggling with using the equipment on the correct settings. A Liquid Level Indicator to assist with making hot drinks was discussed, and deemed not necessary at the moment as Mr. C is happy with the contrast of the dark liquid against his white cups, but will get in touch again if this becomes problematic in the future.

Supporting people with sight loss – wider wellbeing services

Community outreach work to reduce social isolation

During 2017 we concentrated on expanding our network of coffee mornings by working with Community Anchor partners at The Cluntergate Centre in Horbury, the St. Swithun's Community Centre on Eastmoor, and the St. Giles Centre in Pontefract. We held 31 coffee mornings (vs. 5 in 2016), which welcomed 374 people. A big thank you to our partners for helping us do this.



We organized three social trips – to Batley Mills, Hull City of Culture, and Winthrop Gardens – and held our first ever Christmas lunch for members. These events were attended by 133 people.



Befriending service

Our befriending service is fantastically valuable for members who may find it difficult to get out and about. The service is run by three volunteers, who make regular calls or visits to people who may not be able to attend our other social groups, or who are feeling isolated. During 2017, 179 conversations or face-to-face meetings took place, up 40% on the previous year.

Quarterly newsletter

This is distributed to over 1,000 members and stakeholders locally, and includes the latest news about what we've been up to as a charity, forthcoming diary dates, relevant sight loss

related news from the local, national and international media, a quiz, and signposting to other services and events of interest. In addition, all our members receive a birthday card every year, as a little reminder that we are here for them.

Signposting to other services and support

We work closely with Wakefield Council and other local organisations and groups, so that we can promote each other's services and make sure that our members get access to the full range of opportunities and support that are available in Wakefield. If you know of something going on locally that our members might be interested in, please get in touch as we'd love to feature it in our newsletter and other communications channels.



Partnerships with relevant organisations

We believe very strongly in the power of collaboration and welcome opportunities to partner with other organisations. During 2017 we were proud to work with our friends at RNIB to host a four-week Living With Sight Loss Course, and two Online Today courses centred around helping visually impaired people get the most from the internet.



Your support

Words are insufficient to express our thanks and gratitude to our supporters whose donations help us to provide direct support to so many local people with sight loss. Without your donations and generous gifts in wills, we simply couldn't continue to operate.

We are proud that every penny we receive is spent in Wakefield and improves the lives of local people.

Donations

Donations during 2017 totalled £10,578, an increase of 34% on the previous year.

Donations may be given through regular standing orders or one-off payments in cash, by cheque, and online through Virgin Money Giving or direct through Facebook.



During 2017, local people and businesses supported us by filling a whopping 96 collection boxes! If you or a business you know would like a collection box, please let us know.

Charity of the Year

We were fortunate enough to have been chosen as a Charity of the Year by several organisations during the year, including the Mid-West Yorkshire Keep Fit Association who raised an amazing £500. We have also loved working in partnership with our local primary school Rooks Nest Academy, where the children have enjoyed learning about equipment to help visually impaired people and have supported us by baking delicious buns for our outreach events.



Corporate support

Local businesses continue to support our work in a variety of ways, through fundraising, donating prizes for our annual Christmas Draw, and allowing us to publicise our services in their premises.

We welcome opportunities to work more closely with corporate partners, and can also offer advice on how to make your business more accessible for visually impaired people, so for an informal chat about how working together could add value to your business, please call us on 01924 215555.

Legacy gifts

Remembering Wakefield District Sight Aid in your Will not only allows us to continue to provide the valuable services detailed in this report but it also helps us build plans for the future.

Every penny you choose to leave us has the potential to have a massive positive impact on someone's life.

A huge thank you

Nothing you have read about in this report would be possible without the dedication and hard work of a very special group of people: our volunteers.

Throughout the year, our volunteers gave freely of over 1,200 hours of their time and they never expect anything in return. Volunteer support is vital to the running of many of our core services and means we are able to attend many more external events than we'd be able to get to as a staff team alone, ensuring the interests of visually impaired people are being represented far and wide across the district.

All our Board members are volunteers, and half of our Board have visual impairments themselves. We remain grateful for their wisdom and commitment in driving this amazing charity forward.

We always welcome approaches from people who are interested in volunteering with us, and would love to hear about your skills and how we could support you in making a

difference in your local community. Please do contact the office for an informal chat about our opportunities.

A final word from our members

We hope this report has given you an insight into the difference our work has made to the lives of local people living with sight loss. But, don't take our word for it! Here are some comments from our 2017 Member Survey:

“Thank you for all your care and support.”

“Please keep your newsletter coming, it is very good.”

“Just to say that you do a great job and it is good to know you are there if my condition gets worse over time.”

“I can't fault the service that you and your fabulous colleagues offer, how can you improve on perfection?”



This report was published May 2018.

If you would like this report in an alternative format, please contact us in the office to discuss your requirements.