

100 Years

A look back in
history and celebration



100
1921 - 2021

4Sight
vision support



Message from the Chairman

For 100 years and without interruption, 4Sight Vision Support or West Sussex Association for the Blind as it was originally called, has been supporting blind and sight impaired people living across our County. During this time, volunteers have been giving their time and talents, whatever the circumstances, to sustain this effort and help people living with sight loss to lead a more productive and independent life. For 100 years the charity has been loyally supported by local government, trusts and foundations, local businesses, individual bequests and countless contributions from members of the community that have made this work possible. **This is a fantastic track record and one that is truly worthy of a huge celebration.**

The charity was founded just after the first world war at a difficult time when many had suffered bereavement and hardship. As we enter our second millennium it is a matter of some coincidence that we again find ourselves at a point where the Country is emerging from a period of significant

disruption. There is again a need to restore some normality to our way of life but thankfully, while unprecedented in our lifetimes, present circumstances are probably not as difficult as they were in 1921.

It is against this background and with rising levels of sight loss across our community that I know we have a huge job to do in the coming years. Technology is helping with diagnosis, treatment and resources to help those who have irreversible eye conditions. We are all aware that this is part of the answer, but facilitating social interaction and increased confidence will remain key ways we will continue to help the sight impaired as we move into our next 100 years.

Norman Boyland,
Chairman



Where it all began

Championing the rights of visually impaired people.

In 1889 Ben Purse founded The **National League of the Blind (NLB)** to campaign for the rights of visually impaired persons. But it wasn't until 1920, after strikes, public meetings in Trafalgar square and disruptions to meetings at the House of Commons, that parliament finally passed the **Blind Persons Act 1920**.

The **Blind Persons Act 1920** was the first disability-specific legislation to be passed anywhere in the world. It provided a pension allowance for blind persons aged between 50 and 70, directed local authorities to make provision for the welfare of blind people and regulated charities in the sector.

Founding 4Sight Vision Support:

This new Act led to the formation of West Sussex Association for the Blind (now 4Sight Vision Support) on 28th October 1921.

Our aims then, were to:

- Create a register of blind people residing in West Sussex.
- Assist in obtaining pensions.
- Obtain employment as far as possible for blind people who needed it.
- Distribute books in Braille and Moon type among blind residents.
- Visit and read to the blind.



Looking back

The past 100 years...

During our 100-year history we have seen some significant changes- from our way of life, employment opportunities, methods of communication and the growth in technology.

Here are a few of the highlights:

1920s - Braille, based on a tactile military code called night writing developed by Charles Barbier, was later expanded on by Louis Braille. Moon type which used embossed symbols mostly derived from Latin and the wireless radio.



1928 – An Austin 7 was purchased to enable our Home Teacher to make home visits to people in more isolated areas of the county.

1950s – VHF radios, quickly followed by tape recorders, took off!



1924 – 208 blind people in the county.

1926 – As a result of our campaigning, under the **Wireless Telegraphy Blind Persons Facilities Act 1926** – blind people were able to obtain free wireless licences.

1930s – Talking book machines available – roughly the size of a small suitcase.

1945 – 455 blind people in the county.

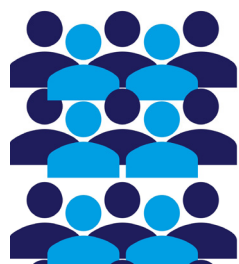




1953 – 827 blind and partially sighted people (new partially sighted register introduced).



1980s – saw the invention of the compact disc (CDs) for playing music/stories, the birth of the internet and laptop computers took off with businesses.



1986 – 3,300 registered blind or partially sighted people.



2010 – tablet computers such as the iPad, offering portable, touch-screen systems for accessing the internet, to communicate etc took off!

1960s – Large print books became more readily available and Libraries began stocking Ulverscroft books.



1970 – 1,830 registered blind or partially sighted people.



1990s - mobile phones, now a little more practical in size, began to take off. The first USB technology was launched as a rewritable storage device.

1991 – 4,358 registered blind or partially sighted people.





2011 – 7,865
registered blind or
partially sighted
people.



2020 – Video and
teleconferencing such as Zoom
and Teams became vital methods
of communication, as the country
switched to a remote way of
working and socialising during the
Covid-19 pandemic.

Here's what technology has
meant to one of our members:

“ Thank you so much for
helping me with my tablet. I never
thought I would be able to speak
with my family in Australia with it.
I feel so happy now, knowing I can
talk to them whenever. ”



2016 – Amazon develops and
launches its first Artificial
Intelligence (AI) device –
known as Alexa; enabling us
to listen to music and news
headlines, set timers and write
shopping lists all with
voice-activated commands.

Accessible technology has
opened so many doors for
people living with sight loss.
Technology can now read
documents out loud, recognise
currency, faces and
surroundings as well as helping
people keep in contact with
loved ones.

**We can only begin to imagine
what it might enable us to do
in the future.**

Our services

1921 - 1945

At the start, our work centred around four key areas:

Home Workers Support

– A national scheme run by the NIB designed to maintain and monitor the self-employment of blind people who worked at a trade from their own homes, such as basket making, machine knitting, wood chopping and boot repairing. Our role locally, was to seek out and recommend suitable blind people for inclusion in the scheme, oversee the provision and maintenance of tools and equipment, carry out inspections, support workers in clerical aspects e.g invoices and receipts and help workers to sell their goods at fetes.

Home Teachers Service

– Provided help and training which enabled blind people to remain independent. The Home Teachers made regular visits, supporting with securing pensions or

hospital tickets, relieving distress and practical teaching either in reading Braille or Moon, or in one of the Home Workers occupations. In 1925 the teaching of Braille and Moon made up half of all lessons given. When the wireless became widely available, the Home Teachers would instruct on how to use them.

Trips and holidays

– In the 1930s we began taking people on summer outings to Littlehampton and Midhurst, initially by car, and later by coach.

Financial support

– Grants were provided to cover membership fees to the National Library for the Blind, travel expenses to the hospital, rent and hardship as a result of failing to obtain a blind pension.

1946 - 1970

After the second World War, as financial assistance and matters of employment became nationalised our role in supporting blind people changed, too. In 1950, with the introduction of the Welfare of Partially Sighted Persons Scheme, the Government asked local associations to set up a register of partially sighted people in their county. This marked the start of our service provision for people with 'partial sight'.

We began helping with the provision of pieces of equipment such as personal brailers, VHF radios and talking book machines and introduced our first newsletter 'Contact'. As teaching Braille, Moon or handicrafts reduced to just 4% of visits, Home Teachers became Social Welfare Officers for the Blind focusing on more general welfare support. We employed our first Mobility Officer with the aim of helping people gain independence and become more active participants in society.

1971 - 1995

In 1977 the Association split from social services, turning us into an independent charity rather than a voluntary sector of the County Council. This led to the creation of a new constitution and strategy.

Area Committees were formed to create a new volunteer network to deliver local activity. A home visiting scheme was introduced, and resource centres were opened to offer a place to drop-in and access our support. An increasing amount of accessible equipment had become available – such as talking watches, telephones and scales – we began to play an invaluable role in advising on and selling these pieces of equipment.



We continued to offer trips and holidays, including a river boat holiday on the Thames. Through our campaigning work we lobbied to increase the concession on a colour TV licence and with the introduction of Disability Allowances, we began providing advice and support on how to access this benefit.

1996 – present

Services we had introduced in the 1980s are still in place today – we have two resource centres and a strong network of locally based leisure and activity clubs. Our home visiting service moved to become an Outreach Service with highly skilled members of staff, rather than volunteers, meeting the need for more specialist knowledge and support on a broad range of topics. These include: advice on eye health, low vision, benefits and concessions, equipment aids and what is now a growing range of accessible technology devices and systems.



While the type of support we provide has had to adapt to meet the changing needs of our members and the increasing demand for our support, what hasn't changed, and in fact has become even more necessary in the past year, is the need to communicate. Moving from Braille and Moon in the 1920s to mobile phones and video calls in the 2020s. Championing and campaigning for the needs and rights of blind and sight impaired people continues to be a sector-wide priority, too. Feelings of isolation continue to be felt keenly and our volunteers are still playing a vital role in helping us reach out and support people across our county.

Looking ahead

The next 100 years...

After one of the most challenging years in the history of the charity, we are using what we have learnt during this time and the feedback we have received from our members, to develop and re-shape our services to be fit for the future.

Starting with a strengthening of our Vision and Mission as a charity and the key values running through everything we do.

This has led to the creation of a new 'Future Services Plan' which will see us reshape our services to offer our members more specialist, tailored levels of support.

This will be supported by a new Fundraising and Communications Strategy to help us deliver on our promise.

Further details will be shared in a separate communication going out this summer. All members and anyone currently on our newsletter distribution list will receive a copy of this in the same format they currently receive our newsletter.

If you do not wish to receive a copy of this, please notify our fundraising and communications team on: 01243 828555 or fundraising@4sight.org.uk.



Celebrate and fundraise with us!

Could you help us raise £100k for 100 years!

At 4Sight Vision Support, fundraising starts at home. Over the years the team have taken part in all manner of fun, challenging and sometimes daring feats to raise much-needed funds to ensure we can continue to be there for our members, including: tandem bike rides, abseils, virtual rambles and family Santa dashes, to name a few.



We would love it if you, your family, friends and neighbours joined our team, taking on one of our planned fundraising activities below, or by organising or participating in an event or challenge of your own. The Fundraising Team are on hand to provide support, advice and guidance whatever way you choose to support us this year!

Well-being Walk

Saturday 26th June 2021

Please find a leaflet and registration form enclosed with your newsletter.

100th Anniversary Ball Autumn 2021

Join us for a sophisticated evening of celebration, with three course meal, drinks, dancing and entertainment! More details to be announced in June. To register your interest please email fundraising@4sight.org.uk

200 Club - £500 draw

Make sure you renew your membership / sign up for one of the remaining 60 numbers to be in with a chance of winning this one-off £500 this summer.

Join the 1004100 campaign!

Follow in the footsteps of Captain Sir Tom Moore and be one of the 100 participants to join our challenge! **The aim: to do 100 of something to raise £100!**

There are a hundred (or more!) things you could do to raise funds for us, here are just a few ideas:

- Sell 100 cakes or cuppas at a cake sale / coffee morning.
- Walk, swim, cycle, hop, skip or crawl 100 metres, km or miles...
- Sell 100 items
- Stream / vlog for 100 hours
- Host a 100 question quiz
- Make and sell 100 crafty creations

For more info, or to get involved with any of the activities listed, please contact the Fundraising Team on: **01243 838001** or email: **fundraising@4sight.org.uk**



Fundraising Officer, Julie Branson, her husband, Lewis and 1 year-old daughter Sophie, will be walking 100 miles in 100 days this year!

Julie said:

“As a new family in March 2020 and with a global pandemic on top (!), walking became our staple. If we could do nothing else each day, we went out for a walk in the fresh air together! With Sophie on the cusp of taking her first steps, we thought what better way to continue to keep active as a family and raise vital funds for 4Sight Vision Support.”

