**COVID-19 August 2020 Newsletter**

We hope to be with you soon but in the meantime let’s have a cuppa and a biscuit by phone!

01243 828555

**CEO's Message**

“Dear members, Our condensed version of the newsletter this month includes information which we believe is most pertinent to you at the moment. In September, we intend to provide you with a detailed update regarding which face-toface services we will be able to safely resume as COVID-19 restrictions hopefully begin to ease further. In the meantime, thanks to the sterling efforts of the Fundraising and Outreach Teams, the generosity of various Trust

Funders, West Sussex County Council and the local community, we have included a few surprise additions in this special edition, which we hope will bring you a little comfort and joy! We are still here to support you – so as Karen and Kirstie say, please do pick up the phone and call them for a chat – they would love to enjoy a virtual cuppa with you! As ever, please stay safe and well and we look forward to welcoming you again soon.” With my best wishes, Nik

**Getting out and about**

**Face masks and coverings**

On 24th July it became mandatory to wear a face mask or covering when going to the shops, supermarket, banks and takeaways. This is in addition to wearing a mask on public transport and in NHS settings. Here are a few tips from The World Health Organisation (WHO) on how to wear and store your face mask/covering appropriately. Please note some people are exempt from wearing a mask. For a full list visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Wash your hands before and after touching your mask.

Cover your mouth, nose and chin and adjust the mask so there are no gaps on the sides.

Avoid touching the mask when wearing it, and use the straps to put it on and take it off.

Store in a clean plastic, resealable bag after use and wash the mask at least once a day.

**Something to consider…**

Senior Outreach Worker, Kirstie, says: When I first wore my mask, I found it restricted my peripheral vision which I rely upon to get around. I would suggest trying your mask on at home first and seeing if, or how, this affects your vision and maybe get used to navigating your home wearing the mask first.

**Tip**

To prevent your glasses from fogging up while wearing your face covering wash them in soapy water – but avoid those with a citrus base which contain damaging fruit acids or those with softeners which leave a residue.

**Using public transport**

As well as wearing a face covering, you should aim to sit 2 metres apart, or 1 metre, if this is not possible. Standing is not permitted and it is recommended you sit behind people rather than face-to-face. Some journeys may take longer than usual so leave plenty of time.

**Helping Hand Scheme**

If you are feeling nervous about using public transport again, then why not apply for a FREE ‘Helping Hands’ card. The yellow card has a brief written instruction for the driver to make them aware of any assistance you might need. These can even be used anywhere you might want to explain your requirements quickly and discreetly without having to verbally communicate them. Call 01273 886200 or email helpinghand@buses.co.uk

**Daily Living Aids**

Please contact us if you would like advice, or to purchase, one of the following daily living aids which may help you to feel more confident when out and about and highlight to others that you have a visual impairment.

Symbol Cane:

These lightweight, aluminium symbol cane’s fold into three or four sections, ideal for storing in a bag when not in use. £14.00

Vision Impaired lapel badge:

Shaded eye symbol, metal, 2.5cm diameter pin fastening badge to alert others to visual impairment. £1.50

**Services & Support / Key News**

**TV Licences – the guidelines have changed**

From 1st August, if you are aged 75 or over, you are only eligible for a free TV License if you receive Pension Credit. If you are registered blind or severely sight impaired, then you qualify for a 50% blind concession. You should have received a letter from TV Licensing explaining the change and how to set up a new license, if not, then please contact them on 0300 790 0368 or visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)

**Opticians are now opening**

If you have not visited in a while or are concerned about your eye health, please get in touch with your local optician to arrange an appointment.

**Benefits, Concessions and Registrations**

If you would like more information on what other benefits may be avaliable to you, if you are registered as Sight Impaired (SI) or Severely Sight Impaired (SSI), please contact us on 01243 828555.

We can send you a 'Benefits, concessions and registrations' booklet by post. Benefits include, but are not limited to:

• Blind person's tax allowance

• Blue Badge Scheme - car parking

• Disabled Persons Railcard

• Free or reduced bus travel fare

**Libraries – phased re-opening**

West Sussex libraries have begun a phased re-opening. While it is still not currently possible to go in for browsing, they have reopened their library catalogue for reservations. Alternatively, you can complete an online ‘Staff Select’ form and let their staff choose for you. It is currently still possible to use their Essential Delivery Service and have your chosen books or audio books delivered to your door at a pre-arranged time. Please note, information correct as of 28th July, please visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/libraries for updates.

**RNIB Phone Support**

Phone Groups – a 6 week phone group with info and advice on a range of topics. Calls last 60-90 minutes and are also available to family and friends. Befriending Service – a 12 week online or phone group where RNIB connect individuals together for conversation and peer support. Each group has a trained facilitator and they take place on the same day/time each week. To book a place contact the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999 or email helpline@rnib.org.uk

**Stay Connected:**

Moved house or changed your phone number recently? Please let us know if any of your personal details change so that we can continue supporting you in this time of uncertainty.

Call: 01243 828555

Email: enquiries@4sight.org.uk

**Remembering Keith**

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of one of our members and volunteers, Keith Partridge.

Keith was an inspirational character, who despite his various disabilities, including sight loss, was determined to live as full a life as possible. Many members, volunteers and staff remember him with great fondness and describe him as having a ‘heart of gold’.

Keith was a real character, who when attending first class sporting fixtures such as Sussex County Cricket matches, was always keen to make himself known to the players. He had a great love and knowledge of classical music and frequently attended concerts at the Brighton Dome, where he was known by many staff and performers. Keith played an active part in fundraising and participated in our annual sponsored walk for many years, raising thousands of pounds for the charity.

Keith will be sadly missed by those of us who knew him.

Rest in peace Keith

**Honour someone’s life with a gift in their** **name**

Donating or fundraising in someone’s memory is a very special and meaningful way to remember them – honouring their life and helping to support other people with sight loss at the same time. We’re always very touched to receive this type of support. To find out more visit: www.4sight.org.uk