<Name>

<Address 1>
<Address 2>

<Address 3>

<Address 4>

<Postcode>

<Date>

Dear <MP name here>

I am writing to you, my local constituency MP, to ask for your urgent help in supporting a local charity that has been providing vital services to our community for over 100 years; but whose continued work is now under threat.

**4Sight Vision Support** is a local charity who have provided free information, advice and specialist services to blind and partially sighted residents, their families, and carers, across West Sussex since 1921. For over a century, they have provided invaluable support to generations of West Sussex residents with sight loss. Today, 4Sight Vision Support actively supports over 3,000 people in West Sussex – and provides unique services that are not available from any other provider, council or NHS department.

<Optional paragraph where appropriate>

As someone with sight impairment myself I know only too well the benefit this charity delivers. I have been fortunate to have been supported by 4Sight Vision Support – and my quality of life has been greatly affected by the excellent, professional support work this charity tirelessly delivers. My life would have been very different without this charity here to help me.

There are 36,200 people living with sight loss in West Sussex, with 6,564 people (17.3%) registered with a certified disability. This number is likely to rise to 44,500 by 2032. Our county – and constituency – has a significantly more ageing population than other parts of the country, resulting in a higher prevalence of sight loss (4%), compared to the national average (3.2%). And, as you will know, NHS Sussex has this year identified sensory impairment as a Health Inequality.

4Sight Vision Support works in partnership with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) who, in 2021, published with the charity’s support a Visual Impairment Needs Assessment (as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) which identified numerous inequalities across West Sussex relating to low vision services. Since 2021 4Sight Vision Support has also worked with other voluntary partners to help support and implement WSCC’s Adult Social Care Strategy.

However, for the last four years, 4Sight Vision Support has received no West Sussex County Council funding at all; and is now facing closure of core services that are of fundamental importance to thousands of local people with sight impairment. This sets West Sussex apart from neighbouring Counties and other areas of the Country where local government support for such services is made available to similar sight loss organisations.

A regular funding grant of up to £100,000 per year from WSCC was discontinued in 2019 – and since then 4Sight Vision Support has been fighting to maintain its vital support services independently. The pandemic, inflation and present austerity have reduced the charity’s reserves to a dangerously low level. A renewed funding support package from the public sector is urgently required to help prevent loss of the support this charity provides to the blind and partially sighted community in West Sussex – over 36,000 people.

The cost to WSCC and our local NHS, having to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people directly, will be far, far higher than the original £100,000 annual County Council grant that was progressively withdrawn. WSCC continues to recognise the efficacy of 4Sight Vision Support’s services; perversely, they continue to promote these services as ‘their’ services to those with sight loss; even though they are no longer making any contribution towards them.

The services that will be lost include 4Sight Vision Support’s extensive and well-regarded information, advice, advocacy, and benefits service – utterly vital for blind or partially sighted people who cannot navigate communication channels that are devised for fully sighted people. Also at threat are a range of local services that bring those with sight loss together, reducing social isolation in our communities. And, increasingly relevant today, West Sussex stands to lose the charity’s Accessible Technology Service, which gives local blind and partially sighted people the skills to use and benefit from online and digital tools which are vital for everyday living.

I hope you agree with me that blind and partially sighted residents of West Sussex – and your constituents – deserve equal support to those in other counties in the South East. Please, use your powerful voice and influence to convince WSCC to change this perverse, short-sighted situation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Yours sincerely,