

# 100 Years

and counting

A look back; our history  
and achievements.



**4Sight**  
vision support



# Message from the Chairman

For over 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 over 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 entered our second millennium it was a matter of some coincidence that we again found ourselves at a point where the Country is emerging from a period of

significant disruption, following the Covid-19 pandemic. There was again a need to restore some normality to our way of life but thankfully, while unprecedented in our lifetimes, circumstances were 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...

## Our first 100 years

During our first 100 years 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.

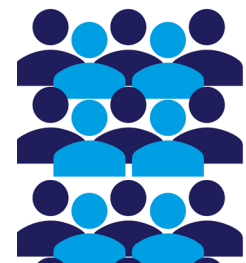




**1953** – 827 blind and partially sighted people (new partially sighted register introduced).



**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 clients:

“ 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 – 2021

Services we had introduced in the 1980s are still in place today – we have two resource centres and a network of locally based leisure and activities. Our home visiting service moved to become an Outreach Service and then Advocacy 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, and for different ages (children and young people, those of working age and older people). 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 clients and the increasing demand for our support, what hasn't changed, and in fact has become even more necessary since the pandemic, is the need to communicate. Moving from Braille and Moon in the 1920s to mobile phones and video calls in the 2020s.



Covid-19 was one of the most challenging times in the history of the charity, and for our clients who struggled due to the visual nature of social distancing. During the pandemic, there was no, or limited access to opticians and hospital eye clinics for several months, clients' sight deteriorated, in some cases irreversibly. In the early stages of the pandemic our traditional services were all paused and we took to the phones to check in with each of our clients and see what additional support they might need. We used the feedback received during this time to develop and reshape our services for the future, including strengthening our Vision, Mission and Values at the same time.

# Looking ahead...

## The next 100 years

### Where we are now

4Sight Vision support has been continuing to provide ongoing support in extremely challenging times, moving from the Covid-19 pandemic straight into a cost-of-living crisis which has had not only a huge impact on the people we support but also on the charity as a whole.

Due to the cost-saving information and the support we have provided through the cost-of-living crisis, particularly around supporting people to access the benefits and financial support that they are entitled to, we have also seen a large increase in demand for our support.



### Looking to the future

We have seen the highest amount of demand for our services and an increase in the amount of referrals we receive. Looking at current and future trends we anticipate this to increase a further 23% by 2032 (RNIB).

Knowing the ever-changing needs of our clients is extremely important to our work and the services we provide and we continue to gather feedback from the people we support to develop and reshape our services to be fit for the future.

Championing and campaigning for the needs and rights of blind and sight-impaired people continues to be a sector-wide priority. There has been a recent success with the campaign to stop train station ticket office closures which would have had a devastating impact on the lives of blind and sight impaired people across our county.

## I would like to make a one off donation of:

- ☐ **£34** - Could enable us to carry out a dedicated assessment to identify magnification, techniques and products to help with everyday tasks such as reading, shopping and preparing meals.
- ☐ **£19** - Could enable us to run one of our online activities, bringing people together to connect with and support each other. Activities include fun online quizzes, to practical tech advice.
- ☐ **£8** - Could enable us to send one of our informative newsletters, available in large print, audio or Braille, to 8 people.
- ☐ Other amount:

I enclose a cheque made payable to **4Sight Vision Support** ☐

**OR**

## I would like to make a regular donation by standing order:

every: ☐ month ☐ quarter ☐ year.

Please complete these details:

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sort code -- Account Number

Name of Account holder: \_\_\_\_\_

I authorise the payment on: \_\_\_\_\_ (date of 1st payment) and thereafter on the same date each month/quarter/year as stated above.

You can cancel this at any time by contacting your bank directly.

Our bank details: 4Sight Vision Support at CAF Bank Ltd. Account No: 00029420, Sort Code: 40-52-40

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Details:

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_



## Gift Aid it

**Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate!**

*(Please tick all that apply):* I am a UK taxpayer and I would like 4Sight Vision Support to treat this donation ☐, all my gifts in the last four years ☐, and all donations I make in the future ☐ as Gift Aid.

☐ I do not pay sufficient tax / do not wish to Gift Aid my donation.

I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/ or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify us of any changes to your name and address, or if you stop paying sufficient Income / Capital Gains tax or if you wish to cancel this declaration.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Keeping in touch

By making a donation the details you provide will be stored on our database. They will only be used to process and contact you in relation to your donation. In the future we would like to let you know about the vital work we do for people living with sight loss and opportunities to support us. We will never sell or share your data and we promise to keep your data safe and secure.

Please tick the boxes below to tell us all the things you would like to hear about and how you would prefer to hear from us:

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Post      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Future Events                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Email     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campaigns & Appeals               | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving a gift in my Will         |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please don't send me anything new |                                    |

Please return this form, along with any cheques to:

Fundraising Team, 4Sight Vision Support, 36 Victoria Drive,  
Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO21 2TE

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