

Vision & Hearing SUPPORT

OCTOBER 2021 NEWSLETTER



image Description: Karen and Jocasta running

Karen's Great North Run Challenge

The Great North Run made a return this year, and Vision and Hearing Support's Karen Mallett decided to pick up her running shoes and participate, along with her guide runner Jocasta Williams, to raise funds for equipment that will make the services at Vision and Hearing Support even better. Then she decided to do two more half marathons! Read more about Karen's story, and the equipment she's aiming to acquire on page 4

Featured

Become a Trustee

We are looking for individuals who are visually impaired, deaf, Deaf or hard of hearing, or have experience in social services, finance or health to help inform our services as a trustee. For an informal discussion about becoming a trustee, contact sarah.french@visionandhearingsupport.org.uk or 07796 816607

People stories

The staff at Vision & Hearing Support are lucky enough to work with some amazing people, some of whom were kind enough to let us share their stories. In this newsletter, you can read about the impact that Vision & Hearing Support's services are making in the local South Tyneside and Gateshead community.

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Welcome

Welcome to the October 2021 Vision and Hearing Support newsletter, where you can read about the impact that Vision and Hearing Support has had on the community, as well as the impact that the community has had on us. Over the course of 2020/2021, VHS have worked with over 4000 individuals, and carried out over 300 personal assessments. A survey we conducted found that as a result of this work:

92% reported being able to live more independently

89% reported feeling less isolated

91% reported feeling more confident and empowered

95% reported an improvement in emotional health and wellbeing.

In addition to this, our Team of Volunteers helped us make over 3,000 telephone support calls during the pandemic. These calls helped us make sure our clients were safe and well whilst providing regular, friendly conversation for those most isolated. A survey that was carried out about these phone calls found that:

92% reported that the calls made them feel less isolated

92% felt their emotional health/wellbeing had increased as a result of our calls

94% wished for the calls to continue after lockdown

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Welcome

We have adapted our services to respond to the needs of our clients, as many people were reporting experiencing social isolation and loneliness. As well as increasing the number of people who were receiving telephone befriending calls, a 'peer to peer support' service was also set up, in which people who signed up for the telephone befriending service could choose to be paired up with each other, rather than one of our volunteers. This was a big help for many people, as it meant they got to socialise with somebody their own age, so some strong bonds have been formed.

Here are some quotes from some of the people who have benefited from the peer to peer support service:

"We have such a good laugh. We feel

like we have known each other for years. Every time we call it lifts me up a little bit "

"They are so lovely to talk to and I enjoy my calls with them a lot"

"I always look forward to the next call with them.""

" It's lovely to chat with someone about the old times, we have so much in common and have gelled very well."

We have also increased the team's capacity by recruiting Kirsty Elliot and Rebecca Miller to the enablement team which will allow us to provide support to even more people.

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Karen's Great North Run Challenge

After it was unfortunately cancelled last year due to the pandemic, the Great North Run made a Covid-safe return to the UK this year and once again, Vision and Hearing Support's Karen Mallett decided to partake with her guide runner Jocasta Williams. Karen and Jocasta set out to raise £1500 for digital equipment that will make the services at Vision and Hearing Support even better.

Karen has been doing amazing work at Vision and Hearing Support within her role as a vision support worker, in which she supports blind and partially sighted people to live independent lives through digital solutions and visual demonstrations. Karen was aiming to raise enough to buy a Ruby 7 HD which is a portable video magnifier that has up to 24x

magnification, 20 high contrast colour viewing modes and a whole range of features that make it possible for spotting, reading, writing, distance viewing and enjoying hobbies that otherwise might not be accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted.



Image Description: The Ruby 7 HD device being used to magnify a medication box

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Karen's Great North Run Challenge



Karen and Jocasta after the run, standing in front of a sign that reads 'I did it!'

As well as already raising enough for the Ruby 7 HD, Karen also beat her personal best this year! Karen's running journey began in 2015 when she was asked to do the Great North Run without ever having ran a step. Over the past 6 years, her running has come on leaps and

bounds, and she managed to shave her personal best down by almost an hour. Her first time was 3 hours and 21 minutes, whereas this time she did it in 2 hours and 31 minutes!

And as if that wasn't enough, Karen also decided to do two more half marathons and keep her fundraiser open for these runs, to continue raising funds for Vision & Hearing Support to get new equipment. After raising enough for the Ruby 7 HD, Karen now aims to acquire an Optelec Compact 10,



The Optelec Compact 10 device being used by a man to magnify a newspaper

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Karen's Great North Run Challenge



image description: Karen and Jocasta running

Our mission at Vision and Hearing Support is to empower those with sensory loss to live independent lives, and a magnifier is an amazing piece of equipment that will provide some of that independence to our

clients. If you would like to help Karen reach her goal of £1500 and change lives in the process, you can visit her fundraiser by going to [virginmoney.com/karengreatnorthrun](https://www.virginmoney.com/karengreatnorthrun), or you can send a cheque to Vision and Hearing Support at

The Bradbury Centre for sight, Unit 2b, Stonehills Business Complex, Shields Road, Pelaw, South Tyne & Wear, NE10 0HW

On the next page, you can find a poem that was written by a client named William (Billy) who has given us permission to share it.



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Poem

**They gather by the old Town Moor
awaiting the starters gun,
sixty thousand competitors
attempting the Great North Run
from elite athletes to amateurs
putting themselves to the test,
hoping to get a record time and beat
their personal best.**

**Wheelchair racers and disabled
runners need no motivation,
raising funds for charity they
deserve our admiration;
the route is lined by Geordie folk
cheering on the throng,
no matter where you've come from
you'll feel like you belong.
There's always celebrities in the race
you're sure to get a glimpse,
they won't be surrounded by
minders this run is not for wimps;
thousands take on the challenge
while wearing fancy dress,**

**I did once as Sylvester the cat,
I'm not ashamed to confess.
Super girl and batman you could
see running over the bridge,
a gorilla or a werewolf or
somebody carrying a fridge;
two runners dressed as a chicken
and egg, who'll finish first,
some watch from pubs on route,
running creates a thirst.
I've said I'll do it one more time and
run from Toon to Shields,
when you cross the finish line, a
feel good factor it yields;
but given the choice, I'd sooner use
an engine or go by pedal,
why torture ourselves by running,
what do we want, a bloody medal?**

- by William (Billy) Burrell,
Vision and Hearing Support client

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Jeff's Story

In April 2016, Vision and Hearing Support's Pat Moody was allocated a referral for a man named Jeff. Pat carried out an assessment of needs, which is a service provided by Vision and Hearing Support that considers all aspects of a person's life and helps us create a bespoke action plan to meet their needs.

After advice was given, and the necessary aids and adaptations were issued to Jeff, the appropriate referrals were made. One of these referrals was an internal referral to the welfare advisor at Vision and Hearing Support, Pauline Kemp, who supported Jeff in applying for the appropriate benefit entitlement.

Jeff was very grateful for the help he received from Pat, Pauline and the staff at Vision and Hearing Support

so he has stayed in regular contact and considers the staff to be friends.

Just before Christmas last year, Jeff was advised that he would have to find alternative living arrangements, as the accommodation he lived in at the time was going to close. This was



An image of Jeff sitting down, holding his new home card and houseplant

Jeff's Story (cont)

inconvenient for Jeff, especially at the end of a year that was challenging for all of us due to the pandemic. But he was able to talk through his concerns and fears with Pat and Pauline, and Jeff was one of the last people to leave his accommodation, to make sure that his new home was right for him.

Recently, Jeff moved into his new home and invited both Pat and Pauline along to see it. Pat and Pauline brought a card and a houseplant, and Jeff wrote them a poem

With Jeff's consent, here is the poem:

Cannon and Ball, Morecambe and Wise

**And lots of other gals and guys
Now I'll tell you of another two
And what I say is really true.**

**Names can wait for just a while
Thinking of them just makes me smile**

**So I will say without delay
Thank goodness they're both miles away**

**Listen to the chit and chatter
Natter natter natter natter
With all the hot air they let fly
I could get my washing dry**

**And when they get together again,
Two paracetamol will kill the pain
So without further ado
Pauline and Pat, it's you**

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A hole in one at last!

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my role in Rehabilitation is when a plan comes together (little nod there to a 'Team' that were heroes of mine on 80's TV). No one expects though for a plan to take nearly two years!

The gentleman I worked with, realised he needed something to aid his mobility and orientation when outside in his community and came to me to ask my advice. I always have a good chat with people, preferably in their home environment, to discuss what their goals will be, as there are numerous options there to help. Rehab Workers don't go straight to the long cane option, however this time, it is what was agreed upon as he was preparing for when his vision may inevitably change.

We started brilliantly until yes you know it, the pandemic hit our shores. Little by little though we managed to work together, and he was able to practise using his long cane at work and at home the times I was not able to be with him.



A close up image of a golf club preparing to hit a golf ball.

Did I mention his goal? He wanted to walk from his home to his local Golf Club under his own steam - no help. And this involved a very busy road junction. And we got there! We reached the stage he could comfortably go to the clubhouse-

A hole in one at last! (cont)

And return home, with my just observing him from a distance.

Waiting with anticipation for him to inform me he had done this journey on his own took a while though as unfortunately his fellow Clubhouse members 'insisted' on seeing him home safely!

Mr T (not his real name, just harking back to the 80's again) knew what he wanted and achieved his goal. He has the confidence to travel, knowing he does not have to rely on others to help him and knows he can rely on Rehab if he wants further advice and training.

Written by Mike Sutton,
Rehabilitation Officer



Low Vision Optometrist Opportunity

We are recruiting a low vision optometrist on a consultancy-per-clinic basis to join the team at Vision and Hearing Support in delivering a quality support service.

For an informal discussion, or to find out more information about the role, please contact

07949790004 or
stephanie.cairns@visionand
hearingsupport.org.uk

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People Stories

A gift has got to be shared

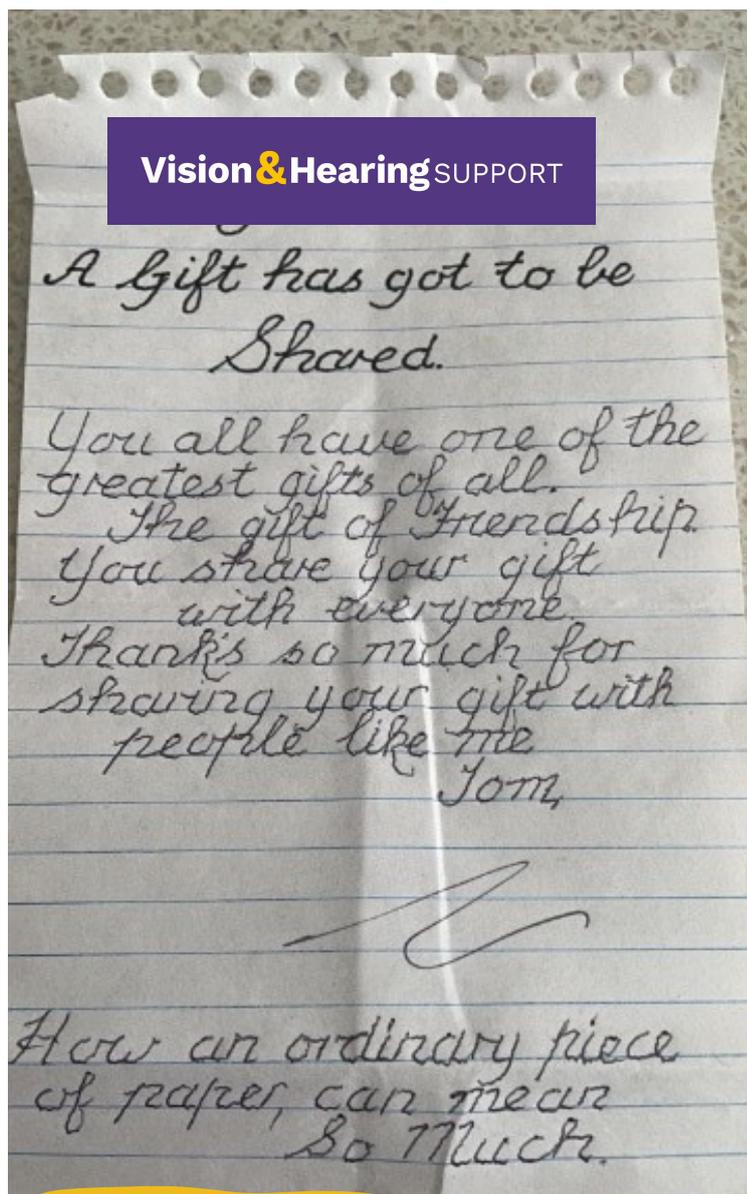
"You all have one of the greatest gifts of all. The gift of friendship. You share your gift with everyone. Thanks so much for sharing your gift with people like me, Tom

**-
How an ordinary piece of paper can mean so much"**

I first spoke to Tom last July when his wife had recently passed away due to Cancer. Since then we have formed a lovely friendship. We speak every week and I visit now and again. Tom has had input from most of the staff at Vision and Hearing Support and really appreciates our help.

-Kirsty Elliot
Enablement Officer

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A photo of Tom's handwritten letter. The words he wrote are to the left.

Note: This letter was addressed to 'Sight Services' and that part has been modified to reflect our name change

People Stories

Here is another letter from a client who was kind enough to make a donation after receiving help from our staff:

Dear Vision and Hearing Support People
please accept this my donation in appreciation of the help given for myself. The staff have been absolutely wonderful to me and helped me a lot.by making phone calls on my behalf to the DWP and also filling in those awful forms. I have also had phone calls asking how I am and if everything is ok in these crazy times we are in just now.. it is appreciated a lot. Thank You.

Received 24.04.21

Quotes

"I've been struggling with my sight loss for months and didn't know who to go to for help. After Susan from VHS took my referral, I will sleep so much better tonight knowing that I will get some help"

"It has changed my life being able to listen to books again. I don't know what I would do now without them. I think these are amazing"

"What was written on those forms did wonders. I was awarded the enhanced rate of both components of PIP for double the length of time. "

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Attend a Support Group

In October we will be offering a new support group for the families and carers of people with sight loss.

The group will run fortnightly, and will give you an opportunity to talk to other people with similar experiences to your own. The sessions will be mostly informal, but will be guided by our sight loss counsellor, who will be able to answer questions, and help you explore your worries and concerns.

In each session, we will start with an informal discussion, which will lead to a more structured exploration of the issues that are important to the group. Sight loss can be a traumatic experience for carers and relatives, and this group will provide support, and strategies to enable you to overcome your

fears and worries. To learn more, or sign up, please email:

Claire Campbell
claire.campbell@visionandhearingsupport.org.uk

We will also be offering a new Wellbeing group for our service users. The group will run fortnightly for five sessions. We will explore the emotional impact of sight loss, including overcoming anxiety and depression, and re-discovering your sense of self. The group will be facilitated by our sight loss counsellor, who will provide a safe, supportive space for you to share your concerns.

The group will have a new topic for each session, and will provide time for group discussion on a range of wellbeing topics. To find out more, or book a place, please contact the above email address

Cyber Security

Throughout the Pandemic, lots of us have turned to technology and the internet for everything from home schooling, talking to loved ones, to even attending concerts. We are lucky to have so many digital solutions, but unfortunately, this has led to an increase in the number of scams and fraud levels. It's now more important than ever to stay protected while you're online. Here are some tips for cyber security to bear in mind.

Protect your network

It is important to protect your home network so that neighbours or people passing on the street can not access your internet. This

is as simple as adding a password to the router, which come preset on some devices but isn't always the case. This password should be hard to guess.

Strong Password

Having a strong password will prevent people from guessing your password and accessing sensitive information, a strong password should include caps, numbers and symbols to make it hard to guess

Example:

Weak – flower123

OK – FlowER123

Strong - #FlowER123A#

continue 

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Cyber Security

Two factor authentication

Two factor authentication is a second set of secureness which provides peace of mind. Sometimes you will be asked to set up TFA as part of an account. TFA adds an additional layer of security by contacting an app on your phone to make sure it is you accessing your accounts.

Web Links

Never open web links from people you do not know. These links could lead to malicious websites, which are unnoticeable to many people, but could download malware or viruses. Even links from a friend may be untrustworthy, remember to check for their cyber certificate
->

Cyber Certificate

Every secure website has a security certificate which can be identified by the lock icon by the web address, or in any web address starting with http:// or https://
A website without a security certificate is more likely to compromise your safety online

Firewall

Having a firewall will secure your home network by managing network traffic, blocking any unwanted or unsolicited access
The firewall validates access based on predetermined rules and assesses incoming traffic for malicious items such as malware.

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Cyber Security

Antivirus

Antivirus software is pretty much a standard with modern technology and generally comes preinstalled. Antivirus is important as it will protect your computer from any threats such as viruses. It can also scan every file on your PC to ensure no threats have managed to succeed. Systems using Windows will get Windows Defender, but there are alternate antiviruses to use

Keep updated

Make sure to keep all your software, antiviruses and operating systems up to date. This is important as updates are frequently released to ensure the software has the best security

practices and is up to date with new threats. This applies to any technology, including mobiles.

Email Phishing

Phishing is where you receive an email which looks to be very convincing, but it is actually fake and will lead to a website similar to the real one which asks you to input your details to log in. This allows hackers to get your details relatively easily, and more. There are types of phishing dedicated to building up a bond with the user to make them seem more trustworthy, which relates to sharing carefully, as they could use information you share.

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Cyber Security

Share Carefully

When using social media, be sure to be careful with what you choose to share. Some personal information can be used against you, such as for impersonation, fraudulent activity, etc.

-Brian Harrison
Digital Assitant

Veteran's Brunch

9th October, 6th November, 4th December 2021

Join ACTS for an over 50s Veteran's brunch club. Have a chat with old and new friends over a bacon sandwich and a hot drink. For more information, or to book, call 0191 4566903

App Recommendation: Be My Eyes

Be My Eyes is a free app that connects blind and partially sighted people with a volunteer for visual assistance. Volunteers simply sign up, and when someone requests assistance, the first available volunteer will be contacted. Once connected, a video call starts, allowing for the user to voice their requirements and get assistance based on their needs. This could be for anything, from identifying which tin contains what food, to more complex instructions such as directions or reading a recipe

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Notices

Free Accessible Classes

If you have a disability or a long term condition, you can attend a FREE accessible course in Sunderland, provided by Tailored Leisure and Co. The classes included will be: yoga, boxercise and seated strength. If you are interested, contact us

You can get in touch with Vision and Hearing Support to discuss how we can best help you and meet your individual needs at:

contactus@visionandhearingsupport.org.uk
or
01914785959

Our Services

Here's a quick overview of the services we offer

- Enablement assessment/ support plan
- Rehabilitation
- Digital (equipment, demonstration, cyber security)
- Welfare benefits
- Employment skills
- Counselling
- Low Vision
- Volunteering
- Living Well with Sight Loss

Thank you

We would like to give a massive thank you to everyone who has donated to Vision and Hearing Support. Your generosity is very much appreciated!