



Spotlight

Autumn/Winter 2023

ISSUE 110

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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

The Editor

Essex Sight
40 Osborne Street
Colchester
CO2 7DB

01206 548196

Email: services@essexsight.org.uk

Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by 20th December



The Editor writes:

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of Spotlight.

Well, this edition has had me finely editing articles to make sure I can squeeze all the information in to the 20 pages at my disposal, and there is certainly plenty of it!!! From new sight centres to consultations, strategy launches to technology, there is definitely something to pique everyone's interest. It is also nice to have an article from Seable. We were concerned that the pandemic would have a huge impact on them, but we are pleased that their VI dedicated holidays are back and in demand!

We hope you will find the articles informative and of interest. Please feel free to share Spotlight with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide copies in Braille or on cassette.

I hope you will all continue to send your contributions, as your stories and experiences make Spotlight of interest to everyone. You can email articles to services@essexsight.org.uk

Editor

Community Support Team by Jonathan Dixon

They say the only thing you can rely on is change and that is very true. The charity is undergoing changes internally to ensure we continue to provide you with the best support we can for the future. This includes some of our sight centre locations and services, details of which follow below. There are changes proposed which will impact on your travel in the County and further afield with consultations open on the future operation of rail ticket offices and changes in access to the town and city centres across the County. There are more details on both in this issue, but I would urge you to have your say as these are significant changes and will impact VI people for generations to come.

Brentwood Community Hospital

Thanks to funding from the Malcolm and Beryl Crook Charitable Fund and the Essex Community Foundation, in a joint project with BASIS, our service at Brentwood Community Hospital has increased to twice a month with BASIS providing home visiting in the Brentwood area. We will be in the main reception area on the second Tuesday and fourth Thursday of the month 10am – 4pm. The venue is easily accessible, with free parking and the 808 community bus that has a circular route via the Community Hospital to Hutton Village and Brentwood Rail Station. If you hold a concession card, travel is free after 9am. If you can't travel and require a home visit, contact BASIS on 01268 522817.

Volunteering Opportunities

We are looking for volunteers to help in some of our sight centres and social events. You need to be a good communicator and enjoy talking to people, as you will engage with a variety of people. In the sight centres, you would be giving information about eye conditions, local support services, benefits, and demonstrating small low vision aids. In the Socials, it is to help serve refreshments and chat with VIP. Full training will be provided. If you, or someone you know, is interested please call us on 01206 548196 or email services@essexsight.org.uk to discuss what is available in your area. We welcome vision impaired people to apply.

Harwich Sight Centre – New Venue

Our Harwich Sight Centre has now relocated to Harwich (Fryatt) Hospital. You can find our staff and volunteers in Room 2 on the third Thursday of each month 10am – 12noon.

South Woodham Ferrers and Jaywick Sight Centres

Due to declining interest, both sight centres have now closed. However, we still have a home visiting service and there are sight centres in Maldon and Chelmsford and Clacton and Colchester. Special thanks go to both the Library and the Community Centre staff who made us feel very welcome and made a great deal of effort to promote our service.

New Social at Clacton Sight Centre

Due to popular demand, we have started a new Social to run concurrently with our monthly Sight Centre from 12.15pm – 2pm at the Brotherhood Hall in Clacton. Over 30 people attended the launch to hear an inspiring speech from Jill Allen-King OBE, Author and Pride of Britain Award winner who has dedicated her life to help improve the lives of other VI people.

You are welcome to bring along your lunch to eat at the venue, we just ask for a donation of £2 per person for tea/coffee and biscuits. The Brotherhood Hall 28 St Osyth Road, Clacton CO15 3BW, please note, access is via the side door from the car park and is wheelchair accessible.

Seable Holidays

At the time of going to press, spaces were limited. Seable have group holidays in Sicily from 15th – 19th October and skiing for all abilities from 17th – 22nd December. They also offer tailored holidays for individuals, couples, or groups of friends to Naples, Rome, Sicily, Florence, Bologna, Thailand, and Skiing in Slovenia. For more information contact Seable on 0203 375 6947 or email lucy@seable.co.uk or visit the website at <http://seable.co.uk> for details of upcoming or future holidays.

Meaningful Lives Matter

Cllr John Spence has launched the Essex County Council Meaningful Lives Matter strategy, which aims to support people with disabilities to have the best life they can. John has lived with sight loss for the past 30 years and knows first-hand how others can – quite understandably – focus on what disabled people cannot do, rather than what they can.

Following extensive consultation, the Council have learned that:

- people want to have good relationships.
- people want to live somewhere that feels like home.
- people want to stay healthy, well and safe.
- people want to do things that are important to them and their community and that help them to feel part of something. This might include working in a job or learning new things.

The strategy is not just a paper exercise, the County Council has £835m in the budget to spend over the next 3 years on services that support adults with a physical, sensory or learning disability and/ or autism. There is also £45m to support young adults aged 18-25 within the Transitions service, and £15m for in-house services such as Shared Lives, Short Breaks respite care and Short-Term Enablement.

Within the context of financial constraints, increasing demand, pandemic recovery and closer working with health partners, adults with disabilities are a priority for Essex County Council and the funding and strategy confirms their full commitment. A key part of this strategy will be delivering good outcomes efficiently within the financial resource available against rising demand. To ensure the sustainability of the strategy, any investments needed to support the action plan to deliver the strategy will be subject to a separate decision.

For more information on the strategy, which is available in a variety of formats, contact 0345 603 7630 or download it from the website

<https://bit.ly/47qSoNW>

Spotlight On

Rail ticket office closures at train stations – consultation period extended to 1st September 2023

Greater Anglia along with other train operators have listened to feedback and are extending the consultation deadline on proposals to change the way tickets are sold and customer service is provided at stations.

What is being proposed at Greater Anglia?

Greater Anglia, along with most other train operators, is proposing changes designed to improve customer service by providing more flexible roles for staff at stations, which, they believe would provide a better service and more assistance for customers.

The proposals form part of plans to modernise the railway and bring it more in line with modern consumer expectations, which reflect the reduction in usage of ticket offices over the past decade, as customers move to alternative ways of buying tickets. Most tickets are now bought either online or through ticket machines.

Under the plans, staff would undertake a new, more flexible ‘customer host’ role, providing advice about the best and cheapest fares, and supporting customers with other queries and accessibility needs, rather than being confined to the ticket office.

Customers would still be able to buy tickets from the ticket machine and online (as now), and colleagues would still be available at the station to help customers at certain times. Ticketing assistance would also be available directly from staff in Greater Anglia’s Customer Contact Centre, contactable via the ticket machine (24 hours a day).

Across the Greater Anglia network, it would mean that all 54 stations which currently have ticket offices would switch to the new model of retailing. At seven major stations a modern Customer Information Centre would be introduced and in the remaining 47 stations, some stations would have staff

available for similar hours to today, while some would have staff available for fewer hours, focused on the busiest periods.

All Greater Anglia stations involved in the proposals already have ticket machines, which also have an assistance button enabling customers to contact Greater Anglia staff based at the Customer Contact Centre in Norwich (24 hours a day), to gain guidance or assistance with ticket purchase.

However, a recent survey by the RNIB found that:

- Only 3 per cent of blind and partially sighted respondents said they could use a ticket vending machine without problems.
- 76 per cent said they would prefer to buy tickets from a person at a ticket office.

The Department for Transport claims the changes are part of “modernising the railway”, but modernisation doesn’t mean solely relying on apps and touchscreens. Modernisation means inclusivity and not leaving anyone behind.

Greater Anglia does have an Accessible Travel Policy, which commits to customers being able to board train without a ticket if the Ticket Machine is inaccessible to them. Customers can then buy tickets either onboard (if available) or at their destination station without a penalty.

To have your say on the consultation online, go to www.greateranglia.co.uk/consult. The information is also available in alternative accessible formats (Easy Read, large print, braille, audio, and British Sign Language) which can be ordered by contacting Greater Anglia Customer Relations, 0345 600 7245 (Option 8).

News and Products

New Online Group for Working Age People

WAVE (Working Age Vision Essex) is a new online group for blind and visually impaired people of working age. This is an opportunity to chat with others, not just about work and employment, but any other topic also. The meetings are held from 6pm - 7.30pm on the first Thursday of each month on Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/6469081170>

Meeting ID: 646 908 1170

One tap mobile

+442034815237

Game Day Vision

Andrew Birch is the director of an organisation based in Essex called Game Day Vision. Their aim is to pair blind and partially sighted people with sighted guides to help them safely attend sporting events. Andrew is registered severely sight impaired and a keen sports fan, so understands what it is like trying to attend large events by yourself and has set up this free service to try and make it easier for VI people to attend live sporting events.

As well as looking for potential clients they are also seeking volunteers. If you are interested in using the service or volunteering, please contact Andrew on 07814 388539 or email andybirch1986@gmail.com .

Essex Sight Annual Exhibition

Our second free annual exhibition will be held at Firstsight in Colchester from 10am – 2pm on Thursday 5th October. Following the success of our Spring Exhibition in Chelmsford, this is another chance to meet the major low vision equipment suppliers and find out about the latest products and services.

Firstsite is in Lewis Gardens, High Street, Colchester CO1 1JH. The venue is served by most buses with the nearest stops on East Hill or Queen Street. Firstsite is a short walk from Colchester Town (St Botolph's) railway station. There is the opportunity to drop off and collect and there are several public car parks within walking distance. For more information call us on 01206 548196.

Sight Action Havering – Information Day

If you live in the Havering area, then come along and see how SAH can help you at their Information Day from 10am – 3pm on Wednesday 6th September at YMCA, 29 Rush Green Road, Romford, RM7 0PH. Find out about support, services and equipment available locally in the Havering area for people with a vision impairment. Entry is free, parking is available, and refreshments will be available onsite.

For more information email www.sightactionhaverling.org.uk or telephone 01708 456832

Sight Village South-East

Sight Village, the UK's largest exhibition dedicated to VIP is returning to Kensington Town Hall for a one-day event from 10am until 5pm on Tuesday 7th November 2023. Learn about the latest products, technologies, and support services available from a wide range of exhibitors. The event is free to visit and pre-registration, although not essential, is recommended as it speeds up the arrival process. To pre-register, call the Sight Village team on 0121 803 5313/5310.

Quiz

Detective Work

Test your knowledge of 19 famous fictional detectives and one “real life” one.

1. What was the name of the housekeeper at 221b Baker Street?
2. What is the first name of the original DCI Barnaby?
3. Who was Inspector Morse’s Sargent?
4. What island did Bergerac live on?
5. What is the name of Regan and Carter’s boss in The Sweeney?
6. Who played Jane Marple in the original TV series from 1984 until 1982?
7. Who is the famous detective created by Raymond Chandler?
8. What is the surname of Vera in the TV series of the same name?
9. Who said the often-misquoted phrase “Do I feel lucky”?
10. Who says, “Just one more thing”?
11. What was the name of the detective who investigated Jack the Ripper?
12. What is the name of the first inspector in the “Death in Paradise” series?
13. In what city does Inspector Maigret investigate?
14. Name one of the FBI investigators in the X Files.
15. Which Scottish actor played Inspector Alec Hardy in Broadchurch?
16. Who played Marcella in the TV series of the same name?
17. What were the first names of Starsky and Hutch?
18. What nationality is Hercule Poirot?
19. Which actor (who also starred in the show) sings the title song in “New Tricks”?
20. Which actor is the star of “Luther”?

Technology

RNIB Technology For Life (TFL)

RNIB customers can now get one-to-one technology support by requesting a dedicated call back from the Technology for Life team. The new system will help to empower blind and partially sighted people to use the technology they want, in a way that suits them and their personal situation.

Your call will be tailored to your individual needs and is your chance to get one-to-one support from an expert and ask them all about accessible technology. Whether you have questions about a device you already own or want to discover the latest accessible technology and apps, the team are there to help.

RNIB is also growing their library of online resources, so their customers have access to tech support from a reliable, trusted source whenever they want it, in a range of accessible formats.

This support is accessible online through the technology hub.

What customers can expect:

- If you'd like support with technology (whether for yourself, a loved one, or someone you support), you can still contact RNIB by email, or by telephone, through the helpline
- When you call the helpline, you will be asked some questions about your tech issue – so you can be put in touch with the right person
- You'll either chat with a Sight Loss Adviser, who'll answer your question then and there, or they will arrange a time for one of the TFL team to call you back.

The changes mean a better and more consistent service for everyone who contacts RNIB for technology support by providing personalised, one-to-one support.

You'll get a call back as soon as possible. Their normal response time is by the end of the next working day. Your TFL adviser will use that time to review your issue, so they can help you faster during your call back. If you can't pick up the phone when your adviser calls, don't worry - you won't lose your spot.

If you're not available when your adviser calls, they'll try again – usually later that day, or the following day.

They'll also leave you a voicemail, if possible. It will include their name, reason for calling, and TFL's contact details. You can also email the TFL mailbox at tfl@rnib.org.uk.

The Technology for Life service is easy to use:

- visit **rnib.org.uk/technology**
- ask a question by calling **0303 123 9999**
- arrange a call back from one of the Technology for Life team.

Digital Mapping

SmartNE specialise in advanced location-based services, grounded in beautiful, interactive maps, and intuitive solutions for wayfinding, indoor positioning, and asset management. They recognise that there is much more to be done to support wayfinding for visually impaired users and would like to understand better, directly from users, the technologies that they use the most and find most useful, to see how they can embed or connect with such functionality within their own mapping software.

They would like to connect with a small group of interested people who might advise and act as a sounding block to their work.

If you are interested in helping them, contact Rowena on 01206 625201 or email rowena@smartne.com

Health and Entertainment

Healthier cycling and walking networks (LCWIPs)

LCWIPs are designed to create a network of sustainable, interconnected linking routes which enable more walking and cycling. They ensure a long-term approach is taken for planning future investment and are reviewed approximately every three years as part of the Government's Gear Change strategy. By identifying key routes and then installing high quality infrastructure, it is hoped that residents will have the confidence to use these routes thereby unlocking the potential to improve their health and wellbeing and decrease air pollution and congestion as well as boosting local economy.

Essex County Council are keen to hear your views to help them shape the future of your streets. We would encourage you to have your say as it is important to ensure that cycle lanes and footpaths remain distinct and separated by a kerb.

<https://bit.ly/45iaRKL>

Vocal Eyes

Vocal Eyes believe that blind and visually impaired people should have the best possible opportunities to experience and enjoy art and heritage.

Their mission is to increase those opportunities, make them as good as possible, and ensure that as many blind and visually impaired people as possible are aware of them, and that the arts and heritage sector know how to create them, and welcome blind people as a core audience.

For more information about what's on near you or to subscribe to the What's On guide email: enquiries@vocaleyes.co.uk or telephone 020 7375 1043.

Answers to quiz

1. Mrs Hudson
2. Tom
3. Sargent Lewis
4. Jersey
5. Haskins
6. Joan Hickson
7. Philip Marlowe
8. Stanhope
9. Dirty Harry Callaghan
10. Columbo
11. Inspector Frederick Abberline
12. Inspector Richard Poole
13. Paris
14. Fox Mulder or Dana Scully
15. David Tennant
16. Anna Friel
17. David and Ken
18. Belgian
19. Dennis Waterman
20. Idris Elba

Contact details

Helpline and office

01206 548196

(Carol Massey, Christine Pratt, Denise Sanders and Steve Massey)

Accounts/Administration

01206 548196

Tina Cox

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer

01206 548196

Christine (Colchester and Broomfield Hospital Eye Clinics)

Email: services@essexsight.org.uk

How you can support us

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However, donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer, please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will, please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

Gift Aid Declaration
On behalf of Essex Blind Charity
Registered Charity No. 1103732

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

Thank you!

Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code.....

I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:
Essex Blind Charity 40, Osborne Street
Colchester, Essex CO2 7DB

Are you on our mailing list?

If you are not already on our mailing list for Spotlight and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Memory Stick.....Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Colchester Eye Clinic contact numbers

To book or change a NEW appointment only
01206 487105 / 487106 / 487090

To enquire about or change a date for SURGERY only
01206 407109 / 407110

To book or change a FOLLOW UP appointment only
01206 487095 – Mr Mukherjee
01206 487098 – Mr Patel and Mr Bansal
01206 487092 Mr Dimitriou and Mrs Sella
01206 487091 Mr Radwan and Ms Murta

For any enquiry relating to Low Vision 01206 487103 / 487104

For any enquiry relating to Orthoptics 01206 487100 / 487101

For the EMERGENCY EYE CLINIC only 01206 286882

Please Note self-referrals are not accepted unless the patient is already under our care or has a pink card for the same condition.

Email the department on chu-ftr.ophtalmologydepartment@nhs.net

Broomfield Eye Clinic (Chelmsford)

Appointments - 01245 513900
Diabetic Eye Screening - 01245 516707
Age Related Macular Clinic - 01245 514899
Ophthalmology Surgery waiting list - 01245 514767

Essex Sight Centres

Brentwood Sight Centre
Brentwood Community Hospital
Crescent Drive
Brentwood CM15 8DR
Second Tuesday & Fourth
Thursday of each month
10am-4pm

Clacton Sight Centre
The Brotherhood Hall
28 St Osyth Road
Clacton-on-Sea CO15 3BW
Second Thursday of each month
12- 2pm

Harwich Sight Centre
Room 2, Harwich (Fryatt) Hospital
419 Main Road
Harwich CO12 4EX
Third Thursday of each month
10am – 12noon

Walton Sight Centre
Walton Community Centre
Standley Road
Walton-on-the-Naze CO14 8PT
Last Tuesday of month
11am - 1pm

Chelmsford Sight Centre
Chelmsford Central Library
Market Road
Chelmsford CM1 1QH
First Friday of each month
10am-1pm

Colchester Resource Centre
40 Osborne Street
Colchester
CO2 7DB
Open Mon-Fri 10am to 4pm

Maldon Sight Centre
Maldon Library, Carmelite House
White Horse Lane
Maldon CM9 5FW
First Tuesday of each month
10am - 1pm

**For more information or to book
an appointment tel: 01206 548196**
**Unless stated, an appointment is
not necessary, but you may have
to wait if we are with another
client.**