

YorView

The newsletter of
MySight York



We have moved!
A very warm welcome to our new premises on
Merchangate from all at MySight York!

MySight York
live well with sight loss

Autumn 2019

Reg. Charity No: 1159188



**YorView
is the Newsletter of
MySight York**

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From the Editor...

Welcome to the first YorView written at Merchantgate! It's been heartening to see that, once the dust had settled, things got pretty much back to normal. The Equipment & Information Centre is busy, 1 to 1 technology and counselling support are up and running, groups are meeting and our new Community and Impact projects are underway. There is a real buzz about the place, which I hope you will come and share.

This is a full edition: we have lots of news to share, both local and national, and we're delighted to introduce a new column from local mum Karen Newell, aimed at children, families and carers.

Please consider joining us at one of our upcoming events. Our AGM on 22nd October is your chance to have your say. We'd also be delighted to see you at our Christmas Social on 11 December. More details of both events inside.

It seems extraordinary to be writing about Christmas in September, but we all send you our warmest wishes for the festive season when it arrives. In the meantime, do pop down and visit!

Deborah

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From the Chief Executive



MySight York on the Move.....

The week commencing 22nd July was one of the hottest of the year. This was the week MySight York moved out of Rougier Street to our new premises on Merchantgate. The lift was broken and we were faced with the mammoth task of packing and moving offices, meeting rooms, the Equipment and Information Centre, store rooms, kitchens, transcription equipment and most of the fixtures and fittings.

Hughes Removals arrived on the 24th and in temperatures in excess of 38 degrees, moved us across town. The guys worked incredibly hard and we supplied copious amounts of water, orange juice and lollies in an attempt to keep them hydrated and on their feet. Incredibly they managed to pack everything and deposit it at

Merchantgate in one day.

The MySight York team were then left with the herculean task of moving in. Shifting furniture, desks and filing cabinets, setting up the new E & I Centre, filling up the storerooms, kitchen and meeting rooms—the list goes on. Alongside all this let's not forget all the planning and logistical organisation that had to happen to get the alterations and building work carried out, the IT and new server installed, a new phone system up and running and the place redecorated. The team performed a miraculous transformation in less than five days of blood, sweat and tears.

Our thanks must go to Hughes Removals who did everything with tireless good nature and a cheeky sense of humour. Our sincere thanks too to a team of gentlemen from the Rotary Club who dismantled and reinstalled cupboards for us and provided new kitchen cabinets for our Equipment and Information Centre. We also owe a big thank you to volunteer Martin Butcher who worked extremely hard helping us fit out the technology room, put up shelves and install things on walls, and whose cheery good nature kept us

going when things looked impossible.

Most of all, I want to thank the wonderful MySight York team who worked until their bones ached and then worked some more. We finally opened our doors on 1st August as planned, exhausted but proud and happy with what we had achieved.

Our new premises are a big improvement on Rougier Street. They are more central and accessible, they provide a better working environment for the team and we have more room for activities and meetings. If you have not already done so, please come and visit us and see for yourself.

Karen

Annual General Meeting - Tuesday 22nd October 2019

This year our AGM will be at the National Centre for Early Music, St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, YO1 9TL. The Centre can be accessed via Percy Lane from Walmgate, just past the Spread Eagle pub. Staff will be on hand on Walmgate to help guide you if you are unsure.

Refreshments will be available from 10.30am and the meeting will commence at 11. After the formal business there will be a short presentation on our latest projects. We will finish with a buffet lunch.

Places must be booked in advance: please call 01904 636269 to confirm attendance and book your lunch.

Please note our Merchantgate offices will be closed all day.

MySight Christmas Social

This year we would like to do something different to celebrate Christmas with our members. Rather than having a formal Christmas lunch we will be holding a social event at our Merchantgate premises.

Please come and celebrate the season with staff and friends. All are welcome to join us for light refreshments and Christmas festivities.

**Wednesday
11th
December,
12 to 2pm.
Please let us
know if you
are coming!**



Accessible Voting

With the prospect of a general election looming, it seemed timely to revisit the issue of provisions for visually impaired voters.

In May, the High Court ruled that provisions for people with visual impairments were unlawful, as they did not permit people to vote independently and in secret. This ruling was supported by research by RNIB which found that only one in four visually impaired voters felt the current system allowed them secrecy and independence.

Shockingly, almost two in three people who did not vote said they would have done so if the system had been more accessible. The judge went so far as to describe the current system as 'a parody of the electoral process'.

The latest case, brought by Rachael Andrews, argued that the

Tactile Voting Device that is provided for visually impaired voters was unsatisfactory. A TVD is a sheet of transparent plastic that sits over the ballot paper to indicate where to put your mark. However, a voter who cannot see the names of the candidates on the paper still requires the support of another person to tell them which name is where on the paper. By law, polling stations must display a large print copy of the ballot paper, and you can take a copy into the booth for reference, but your vote must be marked on the standard print copy.

This system is significantly behind those used in other countries, where systems such as audio voting booths and telephone voting are common. The Government now has to provide an alternative to enable voters to engage in the process — watch this space!

New Rules on Electric Vehicles

We're pleased to announce that new rules are in force to ensure that electric vehicles emit a noise when reversing or travelling below

12mph. All new types of 4-wheel electric vehicles (including cars and vans) must be fitted with the device, which should help to reduce the risk to pedestrians who rely on audible cues to alert them of approaching traffic.

RNIB project aims to improve emoji accessibility

Emojis can be fun and offer a quick way to convey emotions. However, their complexity and level of detail can make them inaccessible for people with sight loss. An RNIB project has now developed eight prototype redesigns, chosen from the most-used emojis of 2018. Currently at the stage of user

testing, the new designs include more prominent eye shapes and more distinct outlines with the aim of making them more accessible to visually impaired users.

This is good news for users of mobile technology. It comes hot on the heels of the launch of a range of emojis representing people with disabilities including cane users, wheelchair users and guide dogs.

Good Food Talks

Following our piece on the Good Food Talks app (www.goodfoodtalks.com) in May's edition, we are delighted to have some positive feedback about this app from one of our members.

Trevor popped in to say that, while eating at Pizza Express in York, he was offered the accessible menu on a tablet. He found it easy to use and said it made the whole experience of eating out much more enjoyable. This is great news, and we're delighted that Pizza Express is embracing this terrific simple bit of technology!

Volunteering Opportunity

Healthwatch York are currently looking for Community Champion Volunteers. They are especially in need of patient assessors who will look at the environment in NHS settings and suggest improvements. Patient assessors can be anyone who uses the building – as a patient, relative or carer - and don't need any particular expertise or knowledge. If this sounds like you, you can find out more about the role here:

<https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/HW-Community-Champion-Role.pdf>

For more information on Healthwatch York, see: <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/>

New Interactive Railway Map

Earlier this year the Rail Delivery Group produced an online map that is designed to assist travellers with disabilities plan their journeys. The Interactive Rail map lists the main accessibility features and facilities at every station on the National Rail network. You can use your mouse or the +/- buttons to zoom in on the station(s) you want to use, or use the Search box to identify a particular location. Clicking on a station then brings up a 'pop up' box which lists the facilities available.

For example, clicking on 'York' brings up information such as the location of accessible toilets and changing places, which platforms have step-free access, and the availability of train access ramps and wheelchairs. It also tells you

how to reach the National Rail Museum without using steps.

The map also contains useful information about support from station staff, such as the times when assisted travel is available and the relevant contact numbers. Another potentially helpful feature is information about the nearest station at which there are more facilities, should a particular station not meet your needs.

The new 'Access Map' is billed as being compatible with existing accessibility features on Apple, Android and PC. An app is currently under development, which will obviously greatly increase its usefulness to travellers on the move.

To try the map for yourself, go to: accessmap.nationalrail.co.uk

Change to Blue Badge rules

As of August 2019, the Blue Badge parking scheme, which enables drivers and passengers with disabilities to park closer to their destinations, has been expanded to take more account of hidden disabilities and psychological effects. You can now apply for a

badge if a journey may cause you serious psychological distress, a risk of serious harm to health or safety, or if you have very considerable difficulty (mental or physical) in walking. The scheme already applies to anyone who is registered blind (Severely Sight Impaired) or whose mobility is severely restricted.

A Life in the Day

Ian Wood wrote to us about a piece of design technology that has transformed his life

Hello, I am Ian Wood. I am a 41 year old wheelchair user who also has a visual impairment. My overall condition is mitochondria disease.

I get up to all kinds, from wheelchair skiing in the winter to canoeing on the river in the summer. In the last few years I have been involved in wheelchair basketball and athletics. (I don't actually do either of these any more - one only has so much time and energy!) I enjoy going cycling with my home visiting volunteer from MySight York. We ride for 2-4 hours at a time each week. I have a piggy back tandem which I use for this.

I also help fundraise for an organisation called Remap. Remap are a charity who make bespoke items for disabled people. They made a camera for me called Roovision. Roovision is a virtual reality head video screen with a camera attached to a helmet. (You can see Ian wearing Roovision on the right.)

I mainly use Roovision when I

go to watch football. I am a devoted Liverpool fan and Roovision enables me to see the action on the pitch. I have a pool of five friends who go with me to the football. When we go to the match we park a few streets from the ground. I sit so far down the ground on the front row so I can see either way. We then travel home. On occasions I have also used Roovision in town to find shops.

If you need any bespoke item or gadget to do an activity, do get in touch with Remap to see if they can help (call 01732 760209, or visit remap.org.uk). If you would like me to show you Roovision let the MySight staff know and I can arrange to bring it in to the office.



By Deb Wheller and Jade Burniston

Moving to Merchantgate has given us the chance to create a larger kitchen where you can explore equipment to help in making drinks, storing, preparing and cooking meals and baking. Here are few of the items we have available.

A **Liquid Level Indicator** helps you know when your cup or glass is full. Hooking on to the side of the cup, it emits a series of beeps or vibrations to indicate that you are nearing the top, while allowing space for milk. When the device starts beeping or vibrating rapidly it is time to stop pouring altogether. There will still be a safe space between the top of the liquid and the rim of the cup. £8.99

Talking Food Thermometer

A thermometer that announces the temperature in degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit in a clear female synthetic voice. It also has a 42 point LED display. The device turns itself off after ten minutes so you won't waste the battery. £21.50

Talking Induction Hob

This hob unit sits on your worktop and plugs into a standard mains socket. With all functions spoken in a clear male English voice, simple

tactile buttons and easy-to-clean surfaces it is safe, easy to use and efficient. For safety it also turns off immediately when a pan is removed. The hob is warm but not hot to the touch so avoids any risk of burning. You can select either power level or temperature and there is also a timer.

Single unit £75.00, Double £140.00

Talking kitchen scales announce the weight of your ingredients in imperial or metric units. A tare function allows you to zero measurements before adding more.



Talking Kitchen Scale and bowl with clear male English voice and adjustable volume £41.95

Talking Kitchen Scale with LCD display, male English voice, easy-to-see jug and grip handle. Measures weights or liquids £46.99

Non Slip Chopping Board

This small board has three raised sides to stop food from sliding off the board. A non-slip ring around the bottom stops it from moving across a work surface and keeps it steady. There is also a 4-pronged food holder attached to the edge of the board to secure food while you chop. This is suitable for soft fruit and vegetables as well as things like cheese and bread. The board comes in red, yellow and white, ensuring good colour contrast with the item being chopped. It is also dishwasher safe. £19.95



BBC Good Food App

This free accessible app contains over 10,000 recipes. It is available on the Android Play Store, Apple App Store and Windows Microsoft App Store, and can be used with Zoom, Talkback and Voiceover. The app requires an email to sign in and then allows you to search recipes by category, key word or ingredient.

Recipes give prep time, cooking time, difficulty level and serving size, as well as nutritional information. You can then look through all the ingredients and their amounts. There are step-by-step cooking instructions and even suggestions of dishes that go well together. You can save and rate recipes and create your own collections. BBC Good Food has something for everyone, be it sweet, savoury, vegetarian or vegan. Once started you'll be spoilt for choice for dinner!

Gill Porteous wrote to us with the following kitchen tip:

'Using a strong metal skirt hanger, clip your book open on the recipe page and hook it on your kitchen door handles. This helps to bring the book to a readable level and keeps your hands free for your magnifier.' A brilliant idea: thank you Gill!



York author and mum Karen Newell introduces a new column aimed at young people and their families

Let's Play!



Hands up, how many homes are full of beeping, flashing, vibrating bright toys? Mine for one!

As a mum to a 9 year old severely sight impaired boy and his 11 year old sister I can admit that our home has often resembled Toys R Us or a Sunday car boot on many occasions. However at times during my son's early days I felt lost within this sea of toys. How will he read, how can I support his play, I wondered. I questioned all my professional and personal experience as I came to terms with my son's visual impairment.

I was commissioned to rewrite the RNIB Toy and Play Guide in 2016 which was a great honour and was

my first piece of paid work before I set up not-for-profit organisation ToyLikeMe with Rebecca Atkinson. We were committed to giving the Play Guide a full makeover, sharing what I had learned with my son and stressing that there are many ways to play. We wanted the guide to celebrate and share positive images of children playing and useful advice and information for families.



You can download a copy from the RNIB website:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/family-friends-and-carers-resources-parents-blind-or-partially-sighted-children/lets-play>

or ask at My Sight York's Equipment & Information Centre.

There are other guides too including Messy play and Children's parties. Copies of these are also available online - see:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/messy-and-muddy-guide-outdoor-play-children-vision-impairment>

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/parties-and-playdates-including-child-vision-impairment-social-activities>



However good a guide may be, nothing can beat the support of a real live person. Meet York's new teacher for Vision Impairment, Abi Hall.

"Hi, I'm Abi Hall and I'm City of

York's new Senior Teacher for Vision Impairment. I taught at Hob Moor and Hob Moor Oaks Schools before specialising in Vision Impairment. Alison Bailey, CYC's Registered, Qualified Habilitation Specialist, and I make up the Vision Support Team.

We support families in the home, as well as professionals in a variety of educational settings. We teach highly specialist skills, such as braille, independent living skills and using accessible technology. If you would like the support of the specialist teaching team you can seek a referral from your child's Orthoptist."

My Sight York is looking at how best to support our younger VIP's so do get in touch and help them develop a more comprehensive service for children and families.

Stop press!

Great news for Lego enthusiasts (and who isn't a Lego enthusiast?): Lego have now introduced audio and Braille instructions for their most popular kits.

Instructions for the first 4 sets can be found here: <https://legoaudioinstructions.com/>

Get your creative juices flowing this Autumn at one of these Arts workshops...

Theatre Sensory workshop

Imagine If...theatre will be bringing their new audio-described show to York Theatre Royal on Wednesday 16th October. *Jadek* is the true story of a young Yorkshire woman moving in with her blind 94 year old Polish grandfather.

To help you discover more about the show, MySight York will host a free one-hour sensory workshop on Wednesday 2nd October from

11.30-12.30. The workshop will introduce the play's characters and give you the opportunity to explore props and costumes. (You can attend the workshop without any obligation to attend the show itself.)

Please note that booking is essential for this event. Please call Caroline Robertson on 01904 731124, or email caroline.robertson@mysightyork to reserve your place.

Creative Writing Workshop

MySight York member Anna Baldwin has organised a workshop for budding creative writers. Here she outlines what's planned:

'Professional short-story writing teacher, Alan Gillott, will be making a guest appearance at MySight York on October 11th to run a creative writing workshop. This event is open to anyone with sight loss (and their escorts).

Alan will give us some 300 word stories to read in advance, and then show us how to achieve the same telling effects in our own attempts at the genre.

The session will run from 10.30-12.30, and costs £3.50 including refreshments and room hire (escorts go free). Should be good!

Please contact Anna on 01904 637196 or baldwinyork@btinternet.com for more information and to book.

Audio Described Performances at York Theatres

Theatre Royal
(tel 01904 623568)

Jadek
Wednesday 16th October 7.45
(See left for a free sensory workshop about this performance)

Sleeping Beauty
Thursday 16th January 7.30 and
Saturday 18th January 2.30

Grand Opera House
(tel Freephone 0800 912 6971)

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat
Friday 4th October 5.00

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
Saturday 4th January 12.00

Christmas closure

The MySight York offices will close for the Christmas holidays at 3pm on Monday 23rd December 2019. We will reopen at 10am on Thursday 2nd January 2020.

We wish everyone a very happy and peaceful Christmas!



MySight Access Group

The next meeting of the MySight Access Group will take place on Thursday 24th October at 1:00pm. We expect to have a speaker from York Human Rights Disability Forum. More details will be available nearer the time.

Please contact Eleanor Tew on 01904 593653 or eleanor.tew@talktalk.net for more information.

Vanessa Camp and Chris Wilson welcome you to MySight York's group for people living with Charles Bonnet Syndrome



Do you see things that aren't there?

Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) is a condition that causes people to see images that are not real. These 'visual hallucinations' are caused by loss of sight – but not everyone with low vision develops the condition. For those who do, CBS can be frightening and debilitating – not least because it may be mistakenly confused with the onset of dementia. For this reason people can be unwilling to speak about it.

Esme's Umbrella is a national campaign group working towards a greater awareness of CBS. It was set up by Judith Potts in memory of her mother Esme who had CBS. She created Esme's Umbrella in order to pool information, support and research, and to broaden the understanding of CBS amongst those who live with it and professionals.

Over the last 18 months, Judith has worked hard to encourage people to set up local support groups for CBS, known as Esme's Rooms. MySight York set up a local Esme's Room in June 2018.

You may be living with or supporting somebody with CBS but not be sure if Esme's Room is for you. It is common for people to feel isolated and unsure about talking about the condition or nervous about meeting new people. This group aims to make you feel welcome and offer you reassurance and support. One of the attendees describes the group like this:

"It was great to speak to people who have the same problems and could understand."

Esme's Room is facilitated by Vanessa Camp (Senior ECLO) and volunteer Barbara Capaldi and meets on the last Wednesday of each month from 10:30 to 12:00 at MySight York. Why not come along and give us a try? You will be assured of a warm welcome.

Regular Activities

This is a list of regular activities for the coming months and the usual dates on which they take place. Dates when there will be no activity are noted. Activities resume after the Christmas break on Thursday 2nd January 2020.

Full monthly lists are available from Caroline Robertson on 731124 or on the Events page of our website: www.mysightyork.org

Tai Chi

Weekly on Mondays 13:15 – 14:30

No session on 28th October

Booking essential

Book Group

1st Tuesday of the month

10.30-12.00

Exercise

Weekly on Thursdays 10:30-12:00

No class on 26th December

Knitting

2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month

10:30-12:00

No knitting on 22nd October
(MySight York AGM)

Boccia

Fortnightly on Fridays 10.00-11.30

No Boccia on 27th December

Boccia

Fortnightly on Mondays 9.30-11.15

Games

3rd Wednesday of the month

10:30-12:00

Discussion

4th Wednesday of the month

10:30-12:00

No Discussion in December

Support with MySight Group

First Wednesday of alternate months 10.30-12.00

Meeting on 6th November

No meeting in January

Mobile Technology Group

1st Thursday of the month

12:00-2:00

1 to 1 Technology Support

Mondays

Booking required

Esme's Room

Last Wednesday of the month

10.00-12.00

No meeting in December

SocialEyes

3rd Monday of the month

11:00 - 12:30

Fundraising News

Mike Hickman gives an update on all MySight York's fundraising activities

Alongside the premises move in late July, MySight York has continued to be busy with fundraising and income generation activity, raising vital funds for the 6,000 people living with sight loss in York. This includes our recent participation in Remember a Charity in your Will week, with promotion from the great Len Goodman!

As you may have seen on social media or heard on Minster FM, MySight York was entered for the SkyBet Ebor Community Fund on 24th August, with our horse, Mustajeer, winning the £5,000 prize!

We also delivered our first successful MySight Out and About trip to Selby Superbowl on 23rd July – even while moving out from Rougier Street! This successful initiative, supported by North Yorkshire County Council, allowed groups from MySight York and Selby District Vision to enjoy bowling and a buffet lunch – huge thanks to Selby Superbowl for all their help in making this happen. We hope there will be further Out and About trips later in the year and we are already sourcing the funding to allow this to happen.



Don't forget the many ways to support MySight York when shopping. Let family and friends know about Give As You Live, where they can shop at over 4,300 stores *and* donate money to us, at no extra cost! Visit

<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/mysightyork>

for more information.

Additionally, with Christmas just round the corner, don't forget Amazon Smile -

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1159188-0>.

Finally, a regular request in my newsletter articles: if you know of anyone we could approach for further funding support (or who is interested in approaching us!), please do contact me at

mike.hickman@mysightyork.org

and I will be happy to speak to you. It would be great to build on our win with the Ebor Community Fund!

If you are interested in fundraising for MySight York in any way, whether that's by supporting a collection or throwing yourself out of a plane (see right!), please get in touch: 01904 636269 / hello@mysightyork.org

Sky Dive

Beth Greaves, her mum Alison and friend Maddy did it! They jumped out of a plane and raised over £1100 for MySight York! A huge thank you to all three of them—you did something amazing!



L to R Beth, Maddy and Alison

Dates for your diary

Thursday 14th November
Hospital Stall

Saturday 7th December
Carol singing in Coppergate

Monday 16th December
Carol singing at York Railway Station

Diary dates

All events take place at MySight York unless highlighted in blue

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| October | | |
| Wed 2nd | Theatre Sensory workshop (see p.14) | 11.30-12.30 |
| Wed 9th | MySight Offices closed for staff training | All day |
| Fri 11th | Creative writing workshop (see p.14) | 10.30-12.30 |
| Tues 22nd | AGM—National Centre for Early Music (MySight offices closed all day) | 10.30-2 |
| Thurs 24th | MySight Access Group meeting (see p.15) | 1-2.30 |
| November | | |
| Thurs 14th | Hospital Stall | 10-4 |
| December | | |
| Sat 7th | Carol Singing in Coppergate | 11-1 |
| Mon 16th | Carol Singing at York Railway Station | 11-1 |
| Wed 11th | Christmas Social – MySight offices | 12-2 |
| Tues 24th to Thurs 2nd January | MySight offices closed for Christmas | |

We are grateful to the Feoffees of St Michael Spurriergate for their generous support in the production of this Newsletter.

**A very happy
Christmas
from all at
MySight York!**

