

# YorView

The newsletter of  
**MySight York**



**Jackie Watson hasn't let sight loss limit her passion for cooking. Join her as she shares her top tips in York Disability Week — details inside.**

**MySight York**  
live well with sight loss

**Winter 2020**

Reg. Charity No: 1159188



# **YorView is the Newsletter of MySight York**

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## **From the Editor...**

The world seems to be changing at an alarming rate at the moment. I have had to revise some of the information in this Newsletter even since it was submitted, and I know there is a risk that it will be out of date again before too long. (Luckily, some of my colleagues have a loose interpretation of the term 'deadline', which makes this less of a problem in their case.)

It's the same with our services: we have learnt to be very flexible with what we can offer and how we provide it. We are all hoping to be able to welcome visitors back in person before too long (as we had started to do, on a trial basis, before the second lockdown). Until then, I hope we can support you, whenever you need us, either online, on the telephone, or at your doorstep.

This is a big edition but I hope that you will find something of interest: whether that's news of our own activities, updates on equipment or a Christmas event that you might enjoy... Whatever we offer you, I wish you a very happy and safe Christmas and a more settled New Year.

**Deborah** <sub>2</sub>

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# From the Chief Executive



Ho ho ho...Season's Greetings everyone!

At the time of writing we find ourselves in lockdown for a second time. So by the time of reading, I presume everyone has been immunised and the world economy is booming!

Failing my crystal ball, like many organisations in 2020, we hope for the best but prepare for the...less-best. Which is why our new plans have an essence of inbuilt-creative-wiggle-room.

We are steadfastly committed to our aim of fully resuming face to face support for our members. However, until we can meet unrestricted, we will (like so many people with a visual impairment), adapt and find solutions to seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

We are also absolutely committed to keeping everyone safe and following government guidelines (again whatever they are at the time of reading). For now, that means most staff at MySight York working predominantly from home, contacting clients:

over the phone – via our Advice and Information service, our Keeping in Touch project and various discussion groups

on Zoom – enjoying quizzes, exercise classes and support groups

on the doorstep – via our Home Connections equipment delivery activities

and via our website and social media – please follow us on Twitter and Facebook at @mysightyork

As an organisation, all staff are much better equipped than ever before, to communicate more effectively from any location. We have new telephonic software linking computers and headsets to our main phone line. We have cloud based systems to ensure our data and information is safe, secure and accessible from anywhere. We have webcams and video conferencing, with encryption and passwords, safeguarding everyone's privacy and confidentiality.

We have, therefore, never been more available and prepared to help with enquiries, offer support, receive new referrals or simply be a friendly listening ear.

If you're finding your sight condition increasingly challenging, don't wait, pick up the phone and call us on **01904 636269**. If you need help with eye health, money and benefits, technology, equipment or any topic relating to living with sight loss: we are here for you.

I am very excited to be able to announce a new project that we have recently started. Over the coming weeks, we are hoping to telephone every member of

MySight York for 3 main purposes: to check in and check how you are faring under the current restrictions; to ensure that we have the correct information for you and are still communicating with you in the most appropriate way; and to ask your views on the areas of service delivery that you feel are most pressing for you. Thank you to all those who have already taken part in this survey, and thank you in advance to those who agree to do so in the coming weeks. The results will be invaluable to us in our forward planning.

Let me finish with a message to our outgoing Chair, Jim Wallace: You have, over the past 7 years, tirelessly given your time and resources to MySight York. By any measure, we have improved our services immensely on your watch, particularly with our rebranding, finances and premises move. On behalf of the entire team, thank you for everything.

To all our members, volunteers, staff and Trustees: I hope you have a wonderful end to 2020 and start 2021 with unbridled optimism. I for one am very excited to see what next year brings, and moreover what we bring to it!

Scott

## DWP Review of PIP claimants

The DWP has announced a review of PIP claimants to identify people who are owed a repayment.

This is in response to a Supreme Court decision in July, which found that the DWP had not been awarding the correct points to some claimants who need support to engage with others face-to-face.

Some claimants will have missed out on the standard daily living component since April 2016 and will be entitled to a repayment of around £13,000. Others who claimed more recently, or who should have received the enhanced

rate, will also be entitled to smaller but still significant amounts.

However, according to the organisation Benefits and Work, not everyone who is eligible for additional payments will be contacted, so it is important to check. They have created a useful 7 minute video explainer, which you can find here:

<https://vimeo.com/460200942>

We can support you with PIP applications, so if you are considering applying, please contact us for advice in good time before the deadline.

## 'Please give me space'

In August we reported on the 'Please give me space' initiative, which highlights the difficulty faced by many blind and partially sighted people when social distancing.

The government's indicator badges are still available. These read 'Please give me space. Be kind. Thank you for your understanding'. There are print and mobile phone

versions, in various different colours. For more information, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/please-give-me-space-social-distancing-cards-or-badges>

You can also purchase a range of badges and other products from the Hidden Disabilities store (the people behind the popular Sunflower Lanyard). To see the full range, go to:

<https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/shop/please-give-me-space.html>

## New Audio Play released

'Bomb Happy' is a new verbatim audio drama commemorating the 75th anniversary of VE day through the experience of five York-based Normandy veterans. The play is divided into three parts, so you can listen to the whole thing or break it into sections. It is available online for free until 30th December, although there is the option to make a donation if you wish.

We are particularly pleased to publicise this work as we had

connections with one of the veterans whose words are featured, the late Bert Barritt.

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLwcNCS\\_I1pZhl3rxIFy0rA?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLwcNCS_I1pZhl3rxIFy0rA?view_as=subscriber)



## Children and Families Survey

Karen Newell writes: "I am appealing to all those families with children and young people with a vision impairment to look out for a questionnaire to find out what MySight York could do for you.

This is a great opportunity to have your say on how MySight York could make your life easier. Are you overwhelmed by the technology on offer? Are you

looking for suggestions of toys or books for your child to enjoy? Need support on educational or other issues? Let us know.

The survey monkey can be found here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/38TNX69>

and will also be shared on our Facebook and Twitter pages. There is a prize draw too, so grab a cuppa when you have a spare ten minutes and share your thoughts."

## E-scooters hit York streets

You may have spotted the ranks of electric scooters that have appeared recently. Indeed there is one opposite our offices on Merchantgate. These are part of a trial scheme that could eventually see 1,000 escooters on our streets.

The scooters can be rented on validation of a driving licence. They can travel at up to 12.5mph, although they are speed-limited in certain parts of the city.

We have already expressed concern about the potential impact on blind and partially sighted people. Concerns relate to the



scooters' silence, parking or obstruction on the pavement, their relatively fast speed and behaviour such as pavement riding.

We want to gather your feedback on your experience (good and bad). Do you feel e-scooters are the way forward for our city? Is this the green transport solution we need? Do let us know.

## New Accessible TV Guide

Freeview has launched an award-winning Accessible TV Guide, which is available at Channel 555 on supported Freeview Play TVs. The guide aims to make it simpler for viewers with visual impairments or hearing loss to find what they want to watch. You can choose from options such as Text to Speech navigation, or search for programmes with audio description. For a video demonstration of the guide, visit: <https://rb.gy/whywau>

## Christmas Closure dates

**MySight York will be closed from 3pm on Wednesday 23rd December 2020 until 9am on Monday 4th January 2021.**

**If you require support during this time, please contact City of York Council's Adult Social Care team on 01904 555111. If you have an urgent out-of-hours enquiry, the Emergency Duty Team can be contacted on 01609 780780.**

## York Disability Week

York Disability Week runs from 28th November to 5th December, centring around the United Nations International Day of People with Disabilities on 3rd December. The programme contains something of interest to a wide range of audiences, from arts to employment and politics to bingo. There's even a 'Grease: the Musical singalong' - surely worth a try? Even better, almost all of the events are free.

This year MySight York will be hosting two events. On Monday 30th November, Sally Chignell (below) will be running a fun and informative virtual eye health quiz. Join her on Zoom or by telephone from 2-3pm to put your knowledge to the test.



On Wednesday 2nd December, 10.30-11.45am, keen cook Jackie Watson (seen on the front cover) will be sharing her top hints and tips for successful cookery and baking with sight loss. Jackie will also be demonstrating some of the equipment she uses in her kitchen. If you see her use anything that piques your interest, do get in touch with our Sight Support Advisors, Deb and Jade. They have a wealth of knowledge between them and will be happy to help you get into (or back into) the kitchen.

Please let us know beforehand if you would like to join either of these events.

Another event that is potentially of interest: Visually impaired marathon runner Charlotte Ellis will be sharing her inspirational story of success in conversation with Radio York's Elly Fiorentini on Tuesday 1st December, 6-6.30pm.

To see the full programme of the week's events, please visit :  
<https://www.yorkhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/York-Disability-Week-programme-DIGITAL.pdf>

# Report on MySight York's AGM

By Barbara Fairs, with thanks to Hon Secretary Jean Haywood

This year's AGM took on a different appearance as continuing Covid-19 restrictions meant we could not meet face to face. Instead we held our AGM via Zoom with 44 people joining either online or by telephone.

During the meeting Jim Wallace, Chair, spoke about the previous year's achievements: rebranding, moving to new premises and the increasing demand for our services. Over 1,200 people benefited from support of one kind or another from our Equipment and Information Centre, and more than 1,700 patients accessed our support service at York hospital.

Scott Jobson then gave his first report as Chief Executive and outlined how the staff have adapted to the current situation. Examples are the setting up of the Home Connections service to deliver equipment to clients' doors, and the adaptation of the Lottery Community project to keep in touch with those who may feel isolated or just want to hear a friendly voice in an uncertain world. Much of this was made possible by the

outstanding efforts of Mike Hickman in the Income Generation office.

Scott also spoke of our plans for the phased re-opening of the Merchantgate office, with an appointment system to allow clients to visit in a Covid secure environment.

The meeting was also a chance to say thank you and farewell to Jim Wallace, our outstanding Chair for the last 7 years. Jim is replaced as Chair by Martin Fawcett (you can find out more about Martin on page 22). The following were re-elected as Trustees at the meeting: Jean Haywood (Hon Secretary), Annette Gamston, Anna Baldwin, Eleanor Tew, Marc Taylor, Mark Hudson, Paul Broadberry, Barbara Capaldi, David Gawthorpe and Harry Bell.

The minutes of the meeting will be sent to all who attended or gave apologies, but if anyone else would like a copy then please contact [barbara.fairs@mysightyork.org](mailto:barbara.fairs@mysightyork.org) or call Barbara on the main office number: **01904 636269**.

# From the Equipment & Information Centre

## How can you access support during COVID-19? Deb Wheller guides us through the options and casts an eye over the latest equipment

As government guidelines change, our message remains the same: If you are struggling with your sight in any way, please get in touch and together we'll agree the best way to help you.

- You may want advice and information by phone or email.
- You can have equipment sent to you by post.
- You may choose to use our Home Connections doorstep delivery and collection service
- After discussion, and when permitted to do so, we may agree to arrange a free one hour appointment with a sight support advisor in a COVID safe environment.

We have a number of measures in place to keep visitors safe.

You will be offered a set appointment time. We will ask you to complete a pre-appointment screening questionnaire. You may attend your appointment alone or with only one other person. You will see a single member of staff, who will be wearing PPE. On

arrival we will take your temperature and ask you to wash/sanitise your hands. We will collect Test and Trace data or you can book in using the MySight York QR code. We will request you wear a face mask throughout your appointment, unless this is difficult for you. And we will have increased cleaning measures in place before and after your appointment.

We think of this as an A,B,C of support:

- A Ask: Call **01904 636269** or email [hello@mysightyork.org](mailto:hello@mysightyork.org)
- B Benefit: Spend time discussing your needs with a member of the team
- C Connect: with the right service for you



## 2021 diaries and calendars now in stock

### From RNIB (blue covers):

#### **A3 portrait wall calendar £5.00**

2 columns with black numbers on white background, weekends white on black, one month per page.

**A4 Diary £8.50** One week over two pages with space for notes

**Desk Diary £8.00** One week over two pages with space for notes

**Pocket Diary £6.00** With space for personal details, special occasions, forward planning and 30 addresses.

We're pleased to see that RNIB has removed all plastic from their range this year. Great news!

### From VIP large print products:

**A4 desk diary £10.25** Yellow cover with white numbers on black background and space to make notes. One week to view.

**A4 Jumbo diary £21.00** A limited edition offering two days per page to give plenty of room for notes.

**A5 Midi diary £8.25** White numbers on black background with

space for notes. A week to view.

**A6 Pocket diary £6.25** Hard yellow cover fits into a pocket or handbag. White numbers on black background. A week to view.

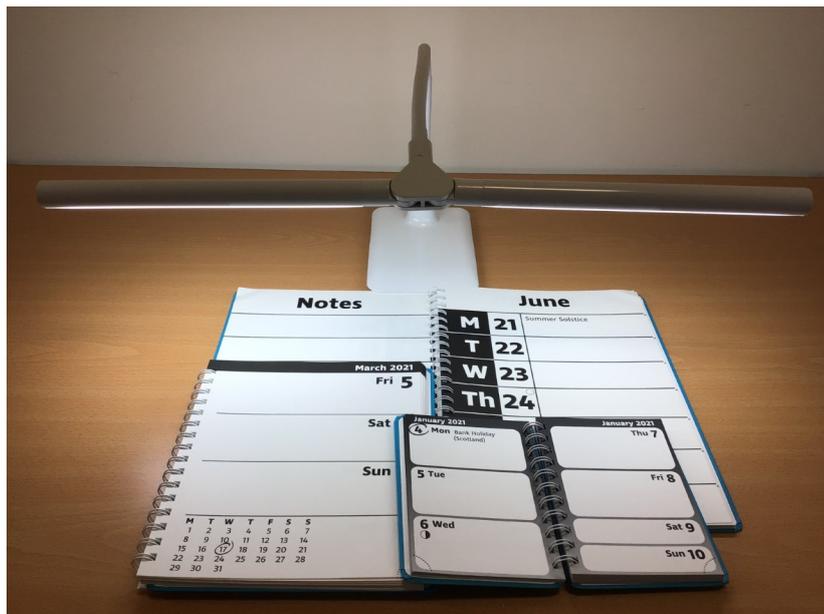
**A3 Portrait Wall Calendar £7.50** One month per page with a forward planner and notes section.

**Kero Talking timer from RNIB £12.49** This new white talking timer can be set for up to 24 hours. It announces the time in hours, minutes and seconds with an additional LCD display (1.9 cm high). It speaks the time as you set it and you can check the time remaining using the talk button. It has four black tactile buttons: hour, minute, talking and on/off, as well as a magnet and fold-out stand.



## RNIB New Duolight £44.99

The Duolight has two lamp heads on top of a flexible arm. Each lamp can be positioned separately, producing either a concentrated light when placed together or a wide light when spread apart. Each lamp head has 28 Daylight LEDs and offers four levels of brightness with easy to locate dimmers. Here you can see it being used to illuminate a selection of diaries.



## New RNIB Talking microwave

This microwave oven is easy to use. There are no complicated menus or features and only four tactile controls. You just select the cooking power, the minutes and seconds and press start to cook. You can also pause at any time.

There are 5 cooking power modes:

Low – 90W

Defrost – 270W

Medium – 450W

Medium-high – 630W

High – 900W

This oven is fully talking, with a clear male voice and adjustable volume. As well as announcing the

power and time as you set them, it alerts you to the time remaining, with a countdown during the last 10 seconds. It also tells you when cooking is completed. There is an automatic alert when you open and close the door (and a warning to beware hot contents).

The time remaining is also displayed on an LCD display. Instructions for use are available in large print, audio and braille.

Colour Silver. Oven capacity 25 litres. Power rating: 900 watts. Size: 51 × 32 × 37cm (20.8 × 12.6 × 14.57 inches).

# Activities update

## Feeling fed up of lockdown? Caroline Robertson may have the solution

How are you managing with the increased restrictions put in place to try to control coronavirus?

With the country currently once again in lockdown, are you starting to feel a little cut off from others? As the days become shorter and the weather colder, opportunities for outdoor activity may also be increasingly limited.

**MySight York's activity programme** may be able to help.

We can offer various opportunities to socialise and chat over the telephone with other MySight York members. Perhaps a book group or a discussion group covering varying topics chosen by you might be of interest? We also have small Support with Sight Loss groups where people can discuss the challenges they face as a result of sight loss and share ideas and tips for overcoming them. For the more active among you, we also host a weekly Zoom exercise session.

Maybe talking in a group isn't for you? If not then our **Keeping In Touch** telephone service might be just the thing. This pairs you up

with a trained volunteer for a regular call and a good old chinwag.

### Finally...

It's a MySight York tradition to host a members Christmas party each year. And this year will be no exception! OK, so it will be a little different because you will join us by Zoom or telephone but we still intend to have some fun. Singing, a quiz and of course our famous Christmas raffle. Bring your own sherry or alternative and a Christmas themed cake or pie.  
**17<sup>th</sup> December, 1 to 2.30pm.**

If you would like to get involved with any of these activities, please get in touch with Caroline on **01904 636269** or email [caroline.robertson@mysightyork.org](mailto:caroline.robertson@mysightyork.org)



# Consultation and Engagement

## Sally Chignell's update on activities in the community

As we are continuing with restrictions for longer than anyone originally imagined, MySight York are resuming our work helping people to put their views to organisations in the York area to promote accessibility for people with sight loss.

City of York Council recently hosted an engagement meeting for our members, looking at the impact of the footstreet extensions that were put in place to encourage social distancing in the city centre.

In summary the topics raised were broadly in line with the council's work to date, with generally positive feedback about footstreets, and the additional proposal that barriers around outdoor café furniture would help. Views ranged over the following issues:

**Bicycles**—these are an ongoing challenge, often competing for space. How can we find a resolution for mobility cycles whilst ensuring that footstreets are still safe and secure?

There was discussion of the '**path of least resistance**', with a

consensus that quality of access is a key consideration. How can we better identify routes and make people aware of the best route for their particular journey? Would an accessibility app be helpful to some people?

**Pavements** – our members appreciate York's character and want to retain its features, but how do we adapt 'medieval' to make it as accessible as it can be?

These views were used by the council to inform their public brief, which was published on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

We will be holding Access meetings regularly to keep members informed about current engagement activities and to give everyone the opportunity to put their views across to the powers that be. We welcome new members and voices; if you would like to be involved in future meetings, please contact Sally by email at [sally.chignell@mysightyork.org](mailto:sally.chignell@mysightyork.org) or on **01904 731127**.

**We all want to make this Christmas-with-a-difference as special as possible. Karen Newell shares her top tips for families.**

## **We wish you a Tactile Christmas!**

Christmas time is a feast for the senses, from the pine trees, the spices, the lights and decorations to the snow and song. It is a time to indulge your senses and experience everything you can, which is great for our VIP's.

Just a few adaptations can make your Christmas extra special and it doesn't have to break the bank!

### **Tactile Decorations**



A few sticky stars turn a relatively bland bauble into a decoration that is good to touch and look at. So burst open your craft box, grab the glitter, glue, felt, wikki stix, pipe cleaners and get creating. You

could even gift them to family too.

More ideas at

[www.wonderbaby.org](http://www.wonderbaby.org)

Why not extend this tactile pleasure to your cards and presents too? Brown paper decorated with stickers and wrapped with tinsel looks and feels so inviting. (RNIB sell a great set of brightly-coloured Christmas stickers with Braille and large print messages.) You could even add a bell for extra audible fun.

Some parents decorate gift bags, making it easier to access the gift. For children who do not like the sound or feel of wrapping paper you could decorate and personalise a hessian or felt Christmas sac.

**A Tactile sensory book** will offer all the sensations of Christmas at the tips of your fingers. The branch of a pine tree or artificial tree with infused pine scent; the shiny tactile red and gold present (colours offering good contrast for children with visual impairment); bells and fluffy snow and many more possibilities... This can also be

placed in a basket if your child would prefer a rummage! For more ideas, see [www.pathstoliteracy.org](http://www.pathstoliteracy.org)



Sensory Trays also offer a real feast of touch and smell. Grab a low sided tray and a large table cloth underneath to catch the mess. Fill the tray with dyed scented rice, glitter, pompoms, candy canes, baubles, beads, pine branches, a miniature Christmas tree or whatever takes your fancy. Add a scoop and let the fun begin. More ideas at [www.theimaginationtree.com](http://www.theimaginationtree.com)

## Present time

It is often a good idea to have a list of suggestions to help friends and family buy the most appropriate present for your child. I found RNIB's First Play Guides very helpful in navigating the mass of plastic and flashy lights. I asked a few parents what their best toys were and here are their top 10 suggestions:

**Bop It Original** is always a hit. We had great fun with the 'make your own sounds & moves' edition.  
**Ipad** – the most used tech in our house.

## Alexa

### Click Clack Track

Casdan **Satnav steering wheel**  
Leap frog **Icecream or cooker toaster**

Bright starts **silly spout whale**

**Tonie Box** – a story telling box activated by figures

Best **Games** include 3D Snakes and Ladders, 5 second rule, Giant Beetle (from RNIB)

**Books** – an Audible subscription or *Off to the Park* by Child's Play

And for stocking fillers: what could be better than a spot of messy play—slime, playdoh, gloop or putty! Happy Christmas!

More ideas at [www.rnib.org/play](http://www.rnib.org/play)

# A Guide to the NHS Test & Trace App

## Jade Burniston takes a whistlestop tour of the new App

The NHS Covid 19 App enables anyone over the age of 16 to be alerted if they have had any contact exposure to Covid19. You can also 'check in' to places that have a QR code available. You can check your symptoms and book a free test if necessary. Once you have a test result you can enter it on the app - however you don't need to do this if you booked the test using the app.

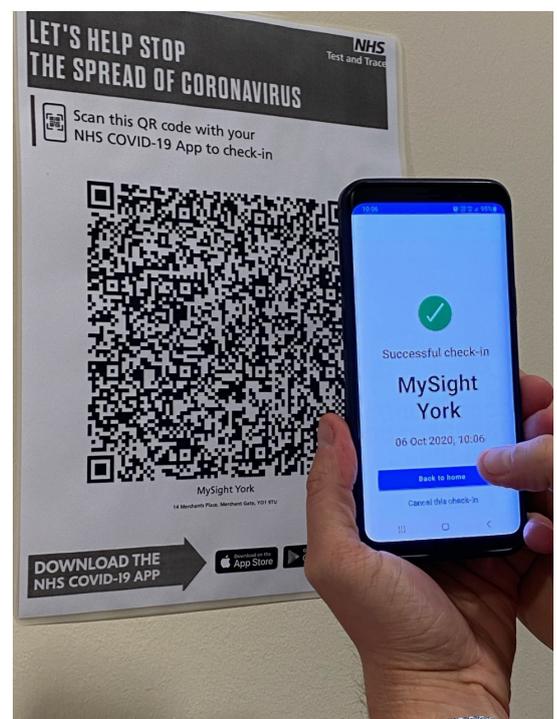
This app is available to anyone who has access to the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. It is free to download and can be used with accessibility features such as Voiceover, Zoom and Talkback. It doesn't require any personal data, just the first line of your postcode. Once this is inputted, the app can tell you what alert level and restrictions your postcode falls under.

The app also links to the latest advice and guidance from the government, by redirecting you to the GOV.UK website. There you can also find information about how the app works and what happens to your data, as well as information on policies. You can find answers

to common questions and give feedback via a dedicated page.

As you may have heard, there is currently a bug with the NHS app. It will sometimes tell you that you have been exposed to Covid and an alert will pop up. If this happens and another alert pops up saying there has been no exposure, then this was the bug manifesting, and the app hasn't recorded any Covid exposure.

Although this bug can be quite frightening, it is something the developers are working on and will be fixed soon. However the rest of the app works perfectly fine and can be very useful if you are going out and about.



# A visit to the Optician

We asked Christian Waite to share his recent experience at Specsavers



You can still book an eye test, either by telephone or online. The Specsavers website offered a broad choice of times with availability up to 2 weeks in advance. For safety, a short questionnaire about recent coronavirus symptoms has to be completed beforehand.

You must attend your appointment 10 minutes before schedule to allow time for the pre- test checks. On arrival I was greeted by a member of staff at a desk placed directly in the main entrance. The desk had a plastic shield between us. There were far fewer people in the shop than normal which made communication much easier.

I was sent to the upstairs waiting

area where I was greeted by a very cheerful member of staff dressed in full PPE. They immediately showed me to the camera to photograph my eye. This required the chin to be placed on a rest. I felt this was carried out excellently: I was greeted by the lemon scent of the anti-bacterial spray as I put my chin in place! The optician wore a mask, face shield, apron and gloves and I felt safe and protected at all times. I was then guided to a seating area to await the vision test.

Within a couple of minutes another optician in the same PPE arrived. This was the only part of the appointment where I encountered a slight problem, as my mask caused the various lenses to steam up quite regularly. We got around this by me wiping the lens with a tissue. Other than this slight hiccup this part of the test felt much the same as previously.

When I left, the optician walked with me to the door. I really appreciated this as it brought a sense of human connection. Overall I would say the experience was an enjoyable one. I got my eye test and I really did feel safe through the whole process.

# Fundraising News

**We're grateful to everyone who has supported us during recent months. Mike Hickman and Lizzy Powell explain how you can help.**

## **The Big Give Christmas Challenge – One donation, twice the impact!**

If you are planning to donate to MySight York this year, please consider donating during the Christmas Challenge week. Starting on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December, #GivingTuesday, MySight York are taking part in this year's Big Give Christmas Challenge. Here's how it works:

Every donation made through the Big Give Christmas Challenge online portal between midday on 1<sup>st</sup> December and midday on 8<sup>th</sup> will be doubled using match funding from those who generously pledged to support the challenge in August this year. Additionally, we have been promised "Champion funding" which has doubled our match funding pot again.

So, if you donate **£10** to us, we receive **£20**. Our pledges and Champion Funding mean that every donation up to £2,000 will be matched, **giving us the chance to raise £4,000**. With Covid-19 still

impacting on the community fundraising programme, this will make up for some of the shortfall caused by cancelled events.

## **How do you get involved?**

First of all, save the date!  
**#GivingTuesday, Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December from midday onwards.**

The online donation portal is <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/>. You will need to search for us under the name MySight York in the "Find a Charity" box and then - between 1st December at midday and 8th December at midday only, you will be able to make your donation. (Donations received outside of the Christmas Challenge dates will not be doubled).

Save the date and pass it on! One donation during Christmas Challenge week will have twice the impact on our 1,200+ members in the York community.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me:  
[mike.hickman@mysightyork.org](mailto:mike.hickman@mysightyork.org)

2020 has been a very unusual and challenging year for all of us. We have had to band together to keep afloat the things we care about. Since the last Newsletter we have received a wonderful total of £1,083 in individual donations as well as an overwhelming amount of financial support from local businesses:

Lush, York  
Betty's York  
Waitrose  
Fulfordgate Working Men's Club  
Topsy Fox, Haxby  
Studio 21 Hair

We are also enormously grateful for donations in memory of the following: Colin Fidler, Raymond Mosey, James Wilson, Joyce Wilson, Muriel Acomb.

Christmas fundraising looks a little different this year, however there are still ways to get involved. **'Don't Send Me a Card'** is an environmentally friendly way to generate funds while sending season's greetings to your friends and family. Purchase your cards at [www.dontsendmeacard.com](http://www.dontsendmeacard.com)

From 1st -12th December, we are asking our supporters to get in the Christmas spirit and raise money

by wearing a Christmas Jumper for 12 days! Even better, donate using the Big Christmas Give link and your money will be doubled! Send us pictures of yourself in your festive gear for our Social Media - you might even spot a few staff members getting involved too!

Anyone attending our virtual Christmas party (see p14) will be entered into a raffle to win a festive hamper. The raffle is free to enter, but if you would like to donate, please do so using our Text Giving numbers: Text MYSIGHT followed by the amount you wish to donate (e.g. MYSIGHT5= £5) to 70490.

We need stamps! If you, or someone you know, have stamps you wish to donate, please get in touch. Thank you to Harry Bell for doing just this.



Please get in touch if you have ideas for virtual fundraising activities or events:

[lizzy.powell@mysightyork.org](mailto:lizzy.powell@mysightyork.org)

# Meet the Chair

## New Chair Martin Fawcett talks rugby, painting and his ambitions for MySight York with Deborah Cairns



### Tell us a little about yourself

Well I'm Martin Fawcett and I'm very proud to be the new Chair of MySight York. I'm originally from Hull and over the years have lived in many places in the UK. Recently my wife Beth and I were fortunate enough to spend a year living and working in Copenhagen. We have recently moved to North Duffield, a few miles to the east of York. We are still knee deep in packing boxes and struggling to remember where we have put anything.

As for so many people, the last few months of coronavirus have

changed many things. My wife and I both work in Financial Services (I'm a project manager) and have been working from home throughout. I actually started a new job in lockdown, just like Scott, our Chief Executive. In my case, I still haven't met a colleague face to face yet!

Outside work, I like sport, especially Rugby League - I'm a season ticket holder at Hull Kingston Rovers. We also like to head to the Dales or parts of North Yorkshire. I'm looking forward to doing more of that in the coming months. I do also like running. My brother once said that I'm designed more for long distance lorry driving than running, but I have persevered and completed a few half and full marathons over the years. Spending more time at home has also given me the chance to get the paint and canvasses out. I think it's fair to say my efforts are not for sharing.

### What drew you to MySight York?

A year or so ago, I was feeling I wanted to do something a little more fulfilling and tangible. My dad is registered partially sighted and

about 3 years ago I had a trabeculectomy for a glaucoma condition. That's meant I've spent a bit of time at the eye clinic and seen how important it is. As so often happens, MySight York were looking to add to their Board of Trustees around the same time. It's been so illuminating meeting people and hearing how everyone's experience of living with sight loss is so different.

### **What do you see as our main challenges/opportunities?**

Clearly at the moment the pandemic is a significant challenge. For so many people who relied on support and engagement from charities, this provision has been compromised. I've been privileged to be part of so many discussions this year with volunteers, staff and members who have shown not just how the challenge can be responded to, but how vital our continuing support is.

For any charity, there are always many challenges relating to funding, provision of services and sustainability. In many ways though I see the way everyone has responded to the tasks ahead, as being the immediate opportunity too. Often how people respond in difficult circumstances is a fantastic

indicator of how we can take advantage of the future. In so many ways, crisis brings creative thinking. I think that with the support of the Board, members and a great team, we can ensure that the same commitment, innovation and responsiveness remain deeply embedded in the DNA of MySight York for years to come.

### **What do you want to achieve as Chair?**

There are many things I'd like to achieve, but honestly I see what's ahead of us as a team effort. We want to create the conditions for the organisation to continue to flourish. There are many things we can do, some we could, and some we should. I'd like to support us working through all those discussions. Diversity in all areas is also a key driving feature of groups that excel in the world today. We have great attributes already and it's vital we don't lose the best ones and bring in new ones just as good.

At the recent AGM, Anna Baldwin thanked Jim Wallace for all his work in his time as Chair, and for leaving MySight York in a better position. At the simplest level, if I could achieve something similar in my time I would be very happy.

# Christmas Events in York

## Barbara Fairs has some bright ideas for festive celebrations

Christmas this year may be very different but these events will still bring festive cheer to the streets of York.

St Nicholas Fair has been cancelled but you can still support local businesses by buying festive gifts from the comfort and safety of your home at the Virtual Christmas Market: <https://www.visityork.org/whats-on/christmas/virtual-york-christmas-market> .

For those who want to venture out, The History of Christmas in York walking tour takes in many beautiful City locations and charts the evolution of Christmas customs from Roman and Viking times to the traditions we know today. Tickets cost £10 for adults, £5 for children and £8 for ages 13-17 and 65+. Tours must be booked in advance at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/york-christmas-tour>

If you want to travel further afield, Castle Howard are hosting “Wish Upon a Frozen Star”. The Walled Gardens will be transformed into an enchanted world, with festive illuminations and immersive sounds culminating in an epic story projected onto the façade of the House. There will be artisan food and drink vans along the route and

a shopping outlet where you can buy gifts and decorations. Tickets and information can be found at <https://www.castlehoward.co.uk/whats-on/christmas>

One big change is to the Theatre Royal pantomime, which will be taking to the road and visiting all of York’s 21 wards. It could be coming to a community centre or church hall near you and you also get to choose which panto you see. Will it be Dick Whittington, Aladdin or Jack and the Beanstalk? Either way, the usual music, magic and chaos will ensue. Tickets can be purchased from [www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk) where you will also find details of dates and locations. There are also plans for an online broadcast for those unable to attend in person.

Cinderella at the Theatre Royal and Dick Turpin Rides Again at The Grand Opera House have both been postponed to 2021. Anyone with tickets will have the option to transfer their booking.  
Happy Christmas!

