

YorView

The newsletter of MySight York

Winter 2021



Our walking group got back to nature with a slow, sensory walk supported by York Bike Belles. Details of more events coming up on page 15

MySight York
live well with sight loss



Reg. Charity No: 1159188



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

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Editor: Barbara Fairs

From the Editor...

Well I don't quite know how this has happened but apparently it's nearly Christmas again! It has been yet another strange and extraordinary 12 months but we are approaching 2022 with a sense of optimism and renewed purpose.

We have two new members of staff to introduce to you in this newsletter, Helen Flett who is our new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer based in York Hospital, and Jenny Allott who is our Fundraiser. We are delighted to welcome both to MySight York.

Vicky Smith has exciting news about face to face meetings for some of our activity groups as well as offering new events, such as another walk in collaboration with York Bike Belles and a "living book" event at York Explore.

We are also taking part in the Big Give again this year where, for one week only, your donation can be doubled in value. Full details are on Page 5.

However you are celebrating this year may we wish all our readers a very happy Christmas!

Barbara

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From the Chief Executive

Seasons greetings!

As we enter the festive season we reminisce on last year whilst peer forward with a new vision and indeed a new normal.

Our new normal is a new way of 'being open', which isn't quite like it was before. Even though we have always remained open through the pandemic, it has been with varying levels of restriction. Currently, we are open for appointments. We are open for small groups and activities. And we are open for small pieces of equipment, advice and information.

Planning your visit to MySight York and booking in time to explore our equipment and products, is arguably, the best decision someone needing advice could make. You can explore in a safe, confidential and supportive environment, with expert guidance at hand.

In the New Year we will continue to operate a hybrid model with a considered approach, experience now telling us how resilient this way of working is, especially with shifting government guidance.

We will:

- Retain a telephone befriending service whilst re-engaging people in their homes and outside.
- Continue to provide specialist equipment direct to peoples' homes whilst offering a place for face-to-face appointments.
- Continue to connect members together (face to face and digitally)
- Continue to provide Eye Clinic support at York hospital, over the phone and in person.

Sadly, we are working with the knowledge that a new lockdown could occur again. But if that should happen we'd still be operational. This new flexibility and fluidity is something I'm extremely proud of, because it shows how committed and inspiring our members are; changing and adapting to new ways of working and engaging with us.

So let's be proud of our achievements of a busy 2021 but say goodbye and now a warm welcome to 2022...our best year ever...together.

Scott

Fundraising News

The Big Give Christmas Challenge – One donation, twice the impact! If you are planning to donate to MySight York this year, please consider again, donating during the Christmas Challenge week.

For seven days, it offers our supporters the opportunity to have their donation doubled! If you donate £10 to us, we receive an additional £10 from our generous pledgers, who have already agreed to support the campaign earlier this year. This total is then matched to ‘Champion Funding’. This means that every donation (up to a total of £2,000) will be matched, giving us the chance to raise £4,000.

The Christmas Challenge is the UK’s biggest digital match funding platform, bringing together charities, philanthropists and public donations, to achieve more together. The campaign launches at midday on Tuesday 30th November and runs until midday the following Tuesday, 7th December.

If you would like to donate please visit the online donation portal: <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, click ‘donate’.

In short:

Why give – your donation will be doubled

When to give – midday 30th Nov to midday 7th Dec

Where to give – <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/>

So:

Save the date - midday 30th Nov to midday 7th Dec

Tell people about it - increase the impact

Donate - And help us to continue supporting people living with sight loss in York.

NB: Donations received outside of the Christmas Challenge dates will not be doubled. If you have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact Scott on 01904 636269 or scott.jobson@mysightyork.org



theBigGive

CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE

30 NOV—7 DEC 2021

Dot and Notch Bank Cards

Certified by RNIB, Nationwide building society has begun issuing recycled bank cards with a 'dot and notch'. These cards include a series of dots that distinguish between debit and credit cards, and on the card's side is a notch that indicates which way around the card needs to be inserted into card machines and ATMs.

The new design will also have clearer contrasts between fonts and the card background, making

important information, like the account type, more identifiable. These cards will be the new standard for all customers, rather than the exception and will be issued as the old one expires. However, as the new versions are rolled out, members will be able to request a replacement card ahead of their expiry date, should they want one.

NatWest and First Direct also provide dot and notch cards, let's hope more banks join the initiative before too long.

Alexa, open RNIB Talking Books

RNIB Talking Books are now available through Alexa-enabled devices, such as Amazon smart speakers using an Alexa skill, as well as through their usual library services.

Once you start accessing Talking Books through an Alexa skill, you'll be able to get reading straight away as your books will be with you instantly. You'll be able to open any of the books on their Online Library through simple voice commands, and you can make immediate changes to your reading

lists when you want to, without having to wait.

You'll need to be a registered RNIB Library member and have access to an Amazon account. You'll also need to have the Alexa app downloaded to your phone or tablet or have an Alexa-enabled device.

For more information download the factsheet; <https://bit.ly/3EpTrOS> If you are connected to the internet, have a smart phone, tablet, or computer access, and you'd like to talk about introducing a smart speaker in your tech set up please get in touch.

Letters From Santa

RNIB and Santa are collaborating to make sure more children with a visual impairment can receive a festive letter this Christmas.

RNIB's 'Letter from Santa' scheme helps make sure children receive a letter in their preferred reading format, whether that's braille, audio, or large print. The deadline for letters in these formats is 1 December 2021. For more information and to order a letter visit; <https://bit.ly/31e0Xhq>



A Photo of Santa holding a letter

Christmas Party

This year we'll be celebrating with a quiz, raffle and entertainment, including the chance to see Scott in his new Christmas jumper! The experience will be a virtual one, via telephone and zoom, so we can invite as many people as possible.

Don your party hats on the 22nd December. The event will open at 2pm and can be enjoyed until 4pm

Braille Course 2022

The Braillists next free Braille for Beginners course is now open for registration. Starting on January 11th, and running over eight Tuesdays from 6-7pm. The grade 1 braille programme will equip blind and partially sighted adults with the skills to read and write braille letters, numbers and punctuation

The course, which will take place on Zoom with a telephone dial-in option for those with limited or no access to the internet and will be delivered by a highly qualified tutor with extensive experience of teaching braille to adults who are losing their sight.

For more information, and a link to register, visit <https://www.braillists.org/beginners/>

To be included, please contact vicky.smith@mysightyork.org or call 01904 731124



Scott in last year's Christmas jumper

Volunteering—a Massive Thank You

By Catherine Bamford, Volunteer Manager

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is seeing the difference our fantastic volunteers make to our clients. Without volunteers we wouldn't be able to provide all our services. I am extremely proud of our volunteers, some of whom have been unable to volunteer, or volunteer in the way they would like during the pandemic.

Their help, whether it is with our activity groups, Keeping In Touch phone calls, visiting home visiting clients, delivering equipment or are waiting patiently to restart community fundraising, is very much appreciated. On behalf of everyone at MySight York 'Thank You!'



A photo of Scott Jobson and Catherine Bamford

Christmas closure

The office will be closed from 3pm on Thursday 23rd Dec 2021 until 9am on Tuesday 4th January 2022.

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.

Visual Impairment Awareness Training

Move the Masses, Move Mates

Move the Masses, as a York based charity offers Wellbeing Walks, events and a project called 'Move Mates' where they pair people with one of their trained, friendly, local volunteers to meet regularly for a walk. These regular walks boost people's confidence as well as improving physical and mental health outcomes.

Earlier this month we delivered Visual impairment Training to the Move Mates, where Christian Waite, MySight York's Activities & Volunteer Coordinator, was able to provide his own lived experience as a person living with sight loss and give examples from his own day-to-day life of what

obstacles can be encountered and devices we can use to help.

Attendees said:

"It will help with having greater understanding of what someone's needs may be, the right questions to ask to assist them with walking".

"I now understand how to discuss with my 'Movemate' how light affects her and levels of concentration".



Osbalwick Cub Scout Group

In working towards their Disability Badge, the Osbalwick Cub Scout Group were given an idea as to what life is like living with sight loss. It was brilliant seeing so many raised hands, they had question after question on all of the topics we discussed throughout our stay.

From the Rotating Cone underneath the crossing button, to how to use a Liquid Level Indicator and even an adapted football. We included a mix of items people living with sight loss may need through their day. A very positive evening and one that can hopefully inspire the cubs to pass on their new found knowledge on to their friends.

New in the E&I Centre

Large print diaries and calendars for 2022

Finding the right diary and calendar is not always easy. If you need lots of space to write in and big easy to see dates, the choice we have is worth exploring. We have several designs to choose from with white paper used to reduce ink bleeding and provide good contrast.

This year the RNIB calendars and diaries have a bright green eco-friendly cover.

A3 landscape Calendar Hang on your wall or foldaway like a book on your desk. Each month is prepared in a grid format with room for notes **£6.00**

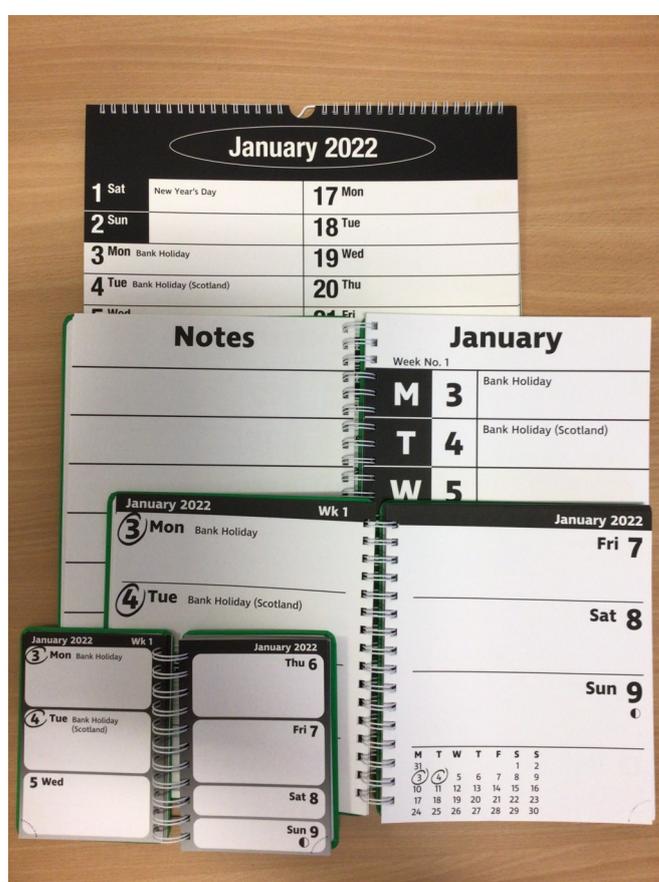
A3 portrait wall calendar, 2 columns with black numbers on white paper, one month per page **£5.50**

A4 diary One week over two pages with space for notes. **£9.00**

Desk diary one week over two pages with space for notes. Each corner has a small tear off so you can locate the most current week quickly **£8.50**

A4 Braille desk diary comes in a blue A4 loose-leaf ring binder. Each page shows one page per week with room for notes and appointments **£8.50**

Refill packs of plain braille paper available **£3**



From the VIP range all with yellow covers

A3 Portrait Wall Calendar White numbers on black background. One month per page with a notes section and forward planner **£7.60**

A6 Pocket diary white numbers on black background, a week to view. Fits comfortably into a pocket or handbag **£6.30**

A5 Midi diary White numbers on a black background with a week to view **£8.30**

A4 Desk diary white numbers on black background one week to view and space to make notes **£10.30**

Puzzle books to entertain and challenge from **£8.99**

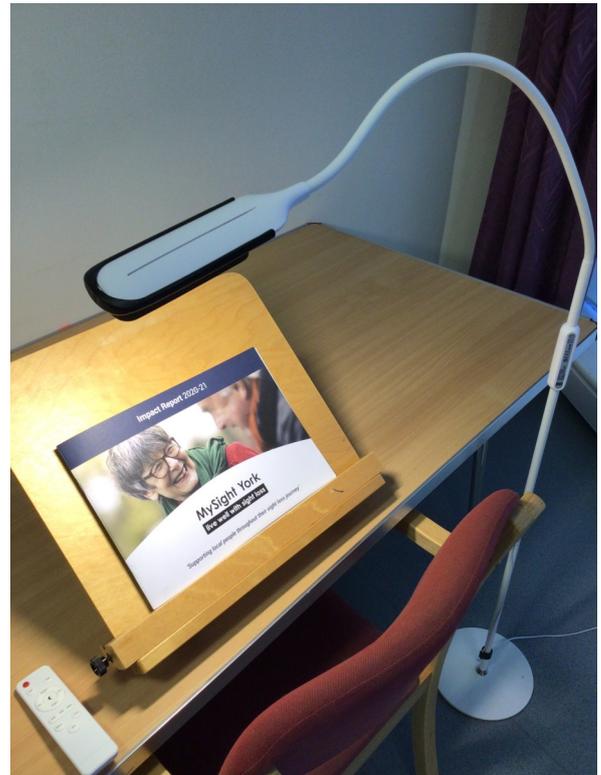
The RNIB Lumina Plus floor lamp

This new light is in a modern minimalist white design, it has five different colour temperature settings, five brightness levels and an optional slider to focus the light, enabling you to adjust for exactly the lighting you need.

You change settings with tactile buttons on the lamp pole or a remote control unit make turning the light on and off, adjusting the colour temperature and brightness easier. Both the slider and controls are black and contrast clearly with the white of the lamp pole and arm.

A night light feature allows you to choose a warm glow when not in

use. It also has a remote control to give you flexibility when choosing the light settings.



RNIB Bookaroo Bean Bag Reading Rest

This new reading rest will hold your book, phone or tablet at the exact angle you need. Made from soft leather effect PU it is available in 3 bright colours, turquoise, pink and orange and has a zipped pocket to hold cables



Welcome to new Staff Members

We are delighted to welcome two new members of staff to the team. Below Helen Flett, our new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer introduces herself

“My name is Helen Flett, and I am delighted that I have been appointed as the new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer for MySight York. I will be taking up the post from 1st November 2021.

I come from Liverpool, where I have lived and worked all my life, but I have recently moved to York with my family.

I have spent most of my working life managing a user led self-advocacy charity for adults with learning disabilities where I have had the pleasure of supporting people to be empowered, have a voice, make informed choices and take control of decisions that affect their lives. I have been involved in the development of several projects that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and have helped to address the health inequalities they face.

I have always enjoyed working directly with people and I was attracted to MySight York as it is a charitable organisation that aims to make a real difference to the

lives of people with sight loss. I am looking forward to joining the team, learning new skills and most of all, providing practical and emotional support to the people who use the ECLO service.

I am really looking forward to my new life in York, it is a beautiful city, and I am excited to have this wonderful opportunity. Can't wait to meet you all."



Photo of Helen Flett

If you are under the care of the Eye Clinic and would like some emotional or practical support then please ask for an appointment with Helen.

We are also delighted to welcome Jennifer Allott to the team, to help secure funding allowing us to continue delivering first class services

Jennifer Allott joins us with a huge amount of experience and passion for what we do. She says: “I am really looking forward to joining MySight York as a fundraiser. My role will be to secure money to support the organisation’s brilliant work.

I am one of those people who never really thought about sight or sight loss and took eye health for granted. That changed in 2011 when my son was diagnosed with a childhood eye cancer. He was supported through treatment by two amazing charities – the Childhood Eye Cancer Trust and BucksVision.

I’m excited to join a charity where I can play my part in helping other people to lead an active and fulfilling life with sight loss and encourage everyone to think more about the experiences of those living with sight loss.

Over the years I’ve been lucky to work with some wonderful charities and I have really seen what a difference small local charities can make to their communities. Most recently I have worked at Age UK York. Before that I worked at

Citizens Advice at local and national level. I’ve also had experience commissioning services in local government.

What I am most looking forward to is meeting all the people involved in MySight York– people who use the services, volunteers, employees and supporters. It’s only by really seeing the difference made by MySight York that I can communicate this to the charitable trusts and foundations who can support what we do”.

I’m sure all of our members would like to join us in welcoming Jenny and Helen into the MySight York family.



Photo of Jenny Allott

Update on Activities

By Vicky Smith

We are still able to offer a selection of our usual activities in a different way, some telephone, zoom or even face to face. These are:

Telephone

Virtual Discussion Group – a mixture of pre-arranged topics over the phone such as history or current affairs, and exciting guest speakers. Social discussion group. Fortnightly on a Wednesday 10:30 – 11.30 By group telephone call

Support with MySight - Group telephone call. A place for those living with sight loss to share knowledge tips and ideas about making the most of the sight they have. Occasional guest speakers too. 3 groups to choose from Monday and Thursday monthly

Mix of Face to Face and Zoom Tech Group – an opportunity to get support with your iPhone or your iPad, social media, email, anything IT you may need. Share information and help each other.

1-1 Tech Support Apple – one to one support with iPhone or iPad only.

Access Group – Meet to discuss all matters access across the city

Face to Face

Chair Exercise Group – a weekly seated exercise group hosted by a qualified instructor, Kevin from Xercise, Haxby. A great keep fit opportunity. Weekly on Thursday 10:30 -12

Mix of Face to Face and Telephone

Book Group – we currently run an exciting and varied audio book group, which meets 1st Tuesday of every month between 10:30 – 11.30 via Group telephone call or face to face.

Esme's Friends Support Group

Our support group for anyone who experiences visual hallucinations as a result of sight loss (also known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome). This group is currently running by telephone on the last Wednesday morning of every month. Please let us know if you are interested . A warm welcome guaranteed!

Call Vicky on 01904 731124 or Vicky.smith@mysightyork.org

Collaboration with York District Bowls Club

Playing weekly Boccia is a fun and exciting precision ball sport, similar to bowls or petanque. The aim of the game is to throw leather balls – coloured red & blue – as close as possible to the white target ball (jack). Followed by an optional time for refreshments and a chance for a catch-up. Most recently, MySight York has met with the organisers and worked in consultation with the players to discuss ways to increase the club's accessibility for individuals with low vision and recommendations to the volunteer coaches to learn how to best support participants through MySight York. A group have started back, mask wearing and sanitizing between bowls and have felt safe enough to relax into their bowling chairs and enjoy themselves. For interest on a Wednesday afternoon, please call 01904 731124 or email vicky.smith@mysightyork.org



Collaboration with York Bike Belles

Monthly walking on sensory walks, book groups or even rickshaw rides is all a part of the 'York Bike Belles' collaboration, 'Out and About Project'. York Bike Belles is an award-winning charitable organisation working to make York a healthy, green and kind city, where residents of all ages and abilities can walk and cycle to get around. Working with York Bike Belles we can deliver safer, outdoor activities.

The next walk, on the 16th Dec, is to take place in the city centre through the York Bike Belles Walking Book Group. This group is unique in that it doesn't focus on one book, but a whole theme; which will be music. There will be a stop at a cafe en route for those that wish to reward themselves.



If you are interested in volunteering to help oversee activities or provide sighted guiding, please contact Vicky.smith@mysightyork.org

By Imogen, our Occupational Therapy student on placement

Hello my name is Imogen and I am an occupational therapy student from York St John University and I am currently completing a role emerging placement at MySight York. I am registered blind and have a dual purpose guide and medical alert dog called Sam who escorts me through placement each day. I also in my free time do a lot of art work, poetry and I facilitate arts workshops for other disabled people.

A role emerging placement means working in a capacity and place where an occupational therapist does not currently work, so it is about embedding occupational therapy theory into my work at Mysight York, hopefully enabling us to reach the best outcomes for clients.

I was asked to put together a storytelling workshop for 'All Aboard' MySight York's current children's literacy project in collaboration with York Explore and advised by ToyLikeMe and funded by LNER.

I knew straight away which story I'd choose: Julia Donaldson's 'The

Gruffalo'. I love this book because of all the different animals and how it follows little mouse's journey to stumbling upon a terrifying Gruffalo! I also think it's really important that visually impaired children have access to the same popular books as their sighted friends, so The Gruffalo was a good choice.

To make the story accessible I turned some lap trays into a forest floor, filling them with fake autumn leaves. Each child had their own mouse toy who wandered through this forest.



When the different animal characters appeared I showed them props representing the animal - such as a fluffy boa for a fox tail and a feather for the owl. Each child having their own tray and props worked really well as they were able to act out the tale while I read.

I even visited the Gruffalo dentist who was able to provide me with some spare Gruffalo teeth to show the children... strangely they looked, felt and tasted just like sugar cubes!



After the story telling the children were invited to make their very own Gruffalo to take home. We used scented pens that were purposefully stinky- with scents like 'old sock' and 'barn'. For the infamous prickles all over the Gruffalo's back we used mini pegs. Everyone then took home all their props in a storytelling bag to relive the tale at home.



I really look forward to doing more workshops and am looking forward to taking part in the upcoming "See MyStory" with MySight York's event on the 27th Nov 1pm – 3pm, where we hope to raise further awareness of visual impairment and what visually impaired people can achieve.

Nestled in the Marriott room at York Explore are a collection of living, breathing, human books ready to tell you what life with a visual impairment is really like. Ideal for employers, educators, families with visually impaired children and anyone wanting to broaden their understanding of disability. Free event, donations appreciated. Get your tickets at this link <https://bit.ly/3GPuQoR>

This event is part of York Disability Week. Now in its 5th year, the twenty two events in York Disability Week, 27th Nov to 4th Dec, offer something for people of all ages, disabled or not. Mainly led by disabled people and free to attend, some events are online and some are in-person only. If anyone needs support to take part, they can contact us and we'll try to help. www.yorkdisabilityweek.org

Energy Saving Support and Advice

We all know that energy prices are going up which can be a real worry with the winter approaching.

If you would like free support on energy issues York Energy Advice can help anyone in York; on low income, aged 65 or over, or experiencing a long term physical or mental health condition or disability. They can offer:

- Help with switching energy supplier
- Tips on reducing energy use to save money on bills
- Installation of energy-saving measures

Call them on 01904 922249, or go to their website

www.yorkenergyadvice.org.uk

Ofgem also produce a handy, easy read leaflet about managing your energy which includes information on switching suppliers, smart meters and energy saving tips. It can be downloaded from <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/information-leaflet-how-save-money-and-use-less-energy-easy-read>

It includes helpful tips for saving energy such as:

- Using a timer for heating and hot water so they only come on

when required

- Closing your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows
- Try to fill your washing machine or dishwasher before using. A full load uses less energy than two half loads
- Don't leave appliances on standby or phones and laptops on charge unnecessarily
- Turn off the light when you leave a room and use energy saving lightbulbs
- When boiling a kettle, only boil the water you need
- Turn taps off fully, a dripping tap can waste enough water to fill half a bath in a single week

If you are struggling to pay your bill then contact your supplier to find out how they can help. They can work with you to agree a regular payment plan and may suggest schemes and grants to help with money you may owe them.

You can also contact the City of York Council Benefits and Contributions Advisers who can support all residents to claim the benefits they are entitled to. Call them on 01904 552044 Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm or visit www.york.gov.uk/BenefitsAdvice

Apps and Hardware Corner, by Dinos Constantinou from the RNIB Technology for life Team

We asked RNIB's resident technology expert what new mobile phone applications are out there, to make accessing smart phones easier for someone with a visual impairment. Below, Dinos tells us: "In my every day work I often get asked the question 'is there an application to make my phone easier to see and use?' I am not a person that recommends software until I have tried it, or should I say, asked my father to long term test it. I have used the Simple Launcher app on my father's phone for two years now. It is an Android launcher that is completely free of charge and one I can wholly recommend.

It has a very easy-to-use interface designed with simplicity at heart, with no pop-up advertisements, which can be very confusing. Some of the standout features of this app include large fonts and icons to view and operate with ease from the get-go. It also has a Control Centre that makes it easy to find the general settings, as well as weather settings, a safety lock, and it makes it easier to uninstall unwanted apps.

Simple Launcher is also convenient for making phone calls by adding contacts to your home screen. It also features a big red SOS button for making emergency calls; this however will require inputting from the Control Centre. It also has the added feature of allowing you to personalise your Android Phone Home Screen. Finally, you don't have to worry about moving apps or deleting them with the edit-lock switch. It also means no longer worrying about accidentally changing the layout, or inadvertent pocket dials". If you'd like to know more about this app or have any other questions around technology, information can be found by visiting RNIB's resource hub on their website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/practical-help/technology/resource-hub>

Alternatively, Dinos and the team are available Monday to Friday, 9am until 5pm and can be reached on 0303 1239999 or tfl@rnib.org.uk

Simple Launcher
Logo



Christmas Events

Christmas in York is back with the return of St Nicholas Fair on 18th November.

The Alpine chalets selling Christmas gifts and treats will be returning to Parliament Street, along with Thor's Tipi, or you can pick up a bargain at the Shambles Market then stop for some tasty international street food at the Shambles Food Court.

York Minster will be hosting a Christmas Tree Festival and Winter Village by the South Piazza from the 18th November until the 6th January and there will be a traditional carousel fairground ride in King's Square, providing festive fun for children and adults alike.

If you prefer something more traditional then you can enjoy York Minster Choir performing their Christmas Carol Concert on 9th

and 10th December or Carols by Candlelight at Holy Trinity Church Goodramgate on the 9th and 16th December. The annual Community Carol Concert also returns to York Barbican on 12th December and Michael Le Belfrey Church will be hosting the Big Christmas Concert on the 3rd and 10th of December.

And of course the pantomime is returning to York Theatre Royal after a year touring local venues around York.

There will be two audio described performances of Cinderella on Sunday 12th December at 1pm and Tuesday 14th December at 7pm. And the Grand Opera House York has an audio described performance of Dick Turpin Rides Again, starring none other than Berwick Kaler, on Saturday 8th January at 2pm.

