

Annual Report 2024-25



Our Sight Loss Saunter
at St Anthony's Garden

MySight York

live well with sight loss

R N I B
Visibly Better
Employer



Supporting local people throughout their sight loss journey

3

Our Year in Review from Scott Jobson, Chief Executive

4

Eye Clinic Liaison Service

5

Counselling Service

6

Equipment and Information Service

8

Groups, Activities and Community Connect

10

Volunteering

11

Befriending

12

Communication and Transcription

13

Finance

16

Thank You

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This year has been one of change, growth and opportunity for MySight York. When I look back, I feel enormously proud of how we have navigated challenges and embraced new possibilities while never losing sight of our purpose: to support people living with sight loss to live well, with confidence and independence.

A major milestone was our move to new premises. Relocating a charity while continuing to deliver services was no small undertaking, but our staff and volunteers rose to the occasion. The move has given us a more accessible and flexible space, much better suited to the needs of our clients and team, and one that will allow us to grow and adapt in the years ahead.

What has stood out most this year is the resilience of our community. Whether it is someone newly diagnosed at the eye clinic, a client accessing counselling for the first time, or a volunteer giving their time to run a group, the shared determination to adapt and thrive has been inspiring. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Service remains a vital link for people at the point of diagnosis, offering guidance and reassurance when the future can feel uncertain. Alongside this, our counselling, equipment and information services, and our wide range of groups and activities,

continue to provide both practical solutions and emotional support.

The success of our Community Connect project has also been a highlight. Working with local partners, we are helping to make York a truly sight loss friendly city. From accessible sport and leisure opportunities to sensory tours and cultural events, these initiatives are ensuring that people with sight loss can take part fully in community life.

None of this would be possible without our incredible staff, volunteers and trustees, whose commitment and compassion underpin everything we do. Nor would it be possible without the generosity of our supporters, whether trusts, donors, funders or those who have remembered us with a gift in their will. Thanks to you, we ended the year in a stronger financial position, giving us the stability to plan confidently for the future.

As we look ahead, our ambition is clear: to build on our strengths, extend our reach, and continue championing accessibility across York. With your support, we will ensure that blind and partially sighted people not only find the help they need but also the confidence and joy to live life to the full.

Eye Clinic Liaison Service

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer is a vital link between a patient receiving a clinical diagnosis and then being guided to help and support in the community.

Helen, our ECLO, is based within York Hospital Eye Clinic and she is there to help patients understand their eye condition, to listen and to signpost to services that can support patients in finding the practical and emotional support they need.

For patients coming to terms with being registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired things can feel overwhelming. The ECLO service is often a first port of call where patients can receive reassurance that they don't have to navigate the system alone.

In this reporting period, Helen has dealt with:

544 individual patients

1,900 overall contacts

214 Certificates of Vision Impairment (CVI)

817 onward referrals

The true value of the ECLO service however, is not demonstrated in

numbers but in the impact it has on patients who are facing huge challenges trying to navigate their lives with a visual impairment.

Patient A came to see Helen as she was having difficulty in managing day to day life.

She found food preparation very difficult and struggled with everyday tasks such as reading, taking medication and identifying trip hazards, leading to falls.

She had lost confidence to navigate outdoors with the support of her husband and found identifying kerbs and obstacles very difficult.

Helen was not only able to help Patient A with completing her CVI but also signposted her to MySight York Equipment Centre where she received advice on magnification, accessible technology, lighting and symbol canes.

Patient A said: "You explained so many different things to me and I came away from the appointment feeling positive and that there was so much help available."

Patient B had been registered as severely sight impaired (blind) in 2015 but a recent deterioration in her sight led her to seek additional advice from Helen as she had been told there was no further medical or statutory support available.

Helen explained the range of practical and emotional support available from MySight York and Patient B has now been assessed for a Home Visiting Volunteer to reduce her feelings of isolation.

She was also contacted about our regular activity groups and attended a Living Well with Sight Loss course, where she not only received practical advice but was able to meet others in a similar position to herself.

"When I saw Helen all these doors were opened that I didn't know were there. Without Helen I'd be sat there devastated. I felt like someone had put a light on. I can't thank you enough."

Counselling Support

Talking Space is our free counselling service available to support anyone affected by sight loss.

Our Counsellors have received training in sight loss awareness and they are there to support people in coming to terms with the emotional impact of sight loss. This service is open to family members too.

During the last year we moved premises but despite the logistical difficulties this posed, we were able to continue to provide counselling in community venues and online.

This vital service provides people with the space to talk openly and honestly about their feelings of loss and anxiety about the future and helps them to develop coping strategies.

"It's a safe peaceful place here. It's helped me to move forward and find myself again!"

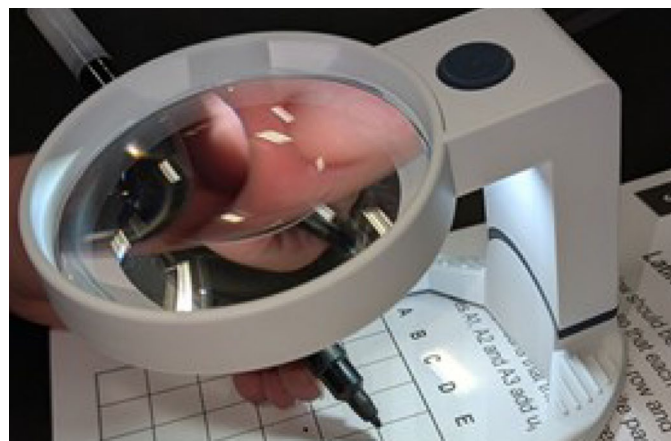
Equipment and Information Service

Our Equipment and Information Centre is at the heart of our mission to help people to “live well with sight loss”.

Here we can help blind and partially sighted people explore a huge range of equipment to assist with everyday living.

This includes items like talking clocks and watches, mobility aids such as symbol canes, a range of lighting and magnifiers, eyeshields and kitchen equipment.

Very often people request help to carry on reading as their eyesight worsens. Our Sight Support Advisers are on hand to show people the benefits of the RNIB Talking Book service and demonstrate the players for books on usb or how books can be downloaded or listened to on Alexa.



Coil Hi Power magnifier

Increasingly, we are living in a technological world and our Sight Support Advisers are there to support people in navigating this world.

We can help people with basic phone or tablets skills to make the most of the in-built accessibility settings on their existing product, as well as explore the more specialised software and apps available for those more technologically advanced.

Each appointment is bespoke to the client, they let us know the kind of help they need and we look for solutions together.

In the last year we had 1,405 contacts via our E&I Centre. The following are the stories of some of those people.



A Talking Book USB player by Synapptic

Client 1 wanted to call friends and family independently and reduce reliance upon his wife. He was struggling to use his existing telephone and keeping in touch with his wife when she left the house. She expressed concern that if he didn't answer he maybe unwell or had fallen making her reluctant to go out.

We explored a range of phones with Client 1 who chose a mobile phone which we assisted him to learn to use and pre-programmed with his favourite numbers. Both he and his wife described feelings of increased freedom, safety and independence.

Client 2 was struggling to prepare cooked meals and was becoming reliant on ready meals and snacking. She was striving to improve her diet and lose weight following GP advice.

“My experience with MySight York has been fantastic... it has quite literally been a game changer for me. It was a conversation I had with them that led to me having hope that I had a future in my desired workplace.”

Our Sight Support Advisers helped her to explore talking induction hobs, talking microwaves and a talking air fryer on display in the Equipment Centre. She was amazed by her ability to cook again, from scratch, in an air fryer and is now cooking varied, tasty and healthier food with additional cost savings as a bonus.

Client 3 enjoyed talking books and described this as her primary source of entertainment. She was struggling with changes and faults in the technology she used to access the audio library.

A home visit by a Sight Support Adviser allowed the opportunity to reset the functions and test the service, offering new ways to access books and gave Client 3 additional choice and freedom. This reduced her reliance on one system and boosted audio content for information, news and learning.

“I don't feel on my own because of MySight York, if I need anything I just ring and Deb helps me!”

Groups, Activities & Community Connect

Living well with sight loss means enjoying life to the full. At MySight York we run a wide range of groups, activities and events to try to cater for as many interests as we can.

These groups provide space for people to meet, talk, learn a new skill or take part in physical activity. The aim is to give people a social space, improve their wellbeing and keep them physically active.

Over this reporting period we:

- ran **23** different weekly, monthly or one-off groups
- had **1,532** attendances

Our groups are supported by volunteers who have all received sight guiding training and many of the groups are specifically adapted for people with sight loss to be able to participate.

“The chair exercise is not just exercise and fitness, its all about the development of wellbeing. You feel better when we’ve been together.”

We run an audio book group, adapted board games using easy to see or tactile boards and seated exercise and Tai Chi classes with tutors who are skilled in describing the exercises.

Very often people living with sight loss find it difficult to join regular community groups as they are not made accessible. Clients who take part in these groups report how much they enjoy the social interaction and increased sense of wellbeing.

A number of our groups run in a hybrid style which allows people who live further afield or are housebound the opportunity to join in. The Discussion group and Support with MySight group give people the opportunity to discuss issues specific to sight loss as well as more general topics.

The very popular Telephone Quiz, run by our fantastic volunteer Jo, is fun but also very competitive and our Knit and Natter group not only provides social connection but also beautiful knitted goods which adorned our tree in York Minster’s Christmas Tree Festival.

In 2023 MySight York began our Community Connect Project, funded by the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

The aim of this project is to work with organisations in York to try to create a “sight loss friendly” city.

Many of the groups and activities we run are part of this project, to allow people living with sight loss in York access to the same kind of leisure opportunities as those who are fully sighted by involving them as consultants in the project.

Some of the regular activities we can offer are: Visually Impaired Tennis, Blind Golf, and piano lessons for visually impaired learners. Some of the members of the VI Tennis group have gone on to take part, and win medals at, regional competitions!

Our Visually Impaired consultants have also given feedback and advice on a number of one-off events that have taken place as part of the Community Connect Project.

We worked with the National Trust to train staff and help them to create guided sensory tours at Treasurer’s House to give visitors the chance to explore this historic

property through sound, touch and storytelling. They became the first recipients of the “Sight Loss Friendly in York” award following their hard work to create a unique experience for VI visitors.

We have also worked with local partners to provide sensory storytelling sessions and “have a go” adapted cycling events for children and young people living with sight loss which they can participate in alongside their sighted family members.

There is also opportunity for learning with 1-1 tech support and courses run in collaboration with York Learning for groups to learn about accessible tech adaptations, as well as our Living Well with Sight Loss courses designed to give support and advice to newly diagnosed people.

“I have so enjoyed all the activities that I have been involved in, the railway museum visits, the golf and tennis. Thank you for all the encouragement and support...”

Volunteering

Volunteers are a vital part of our work and provide the support we need to run our services.

Our activity groups rely on volunteers who facilitate the sessions and ensure everyone gets a chance to fully participate. These volunteers show huge commitment to turn up every week and over time have formed real friendships with the clients they are supporting.

Our fundraising events need the support of volunteers to be successful, whether it be holding a collecting tin, manning a stall or indeed walking coast to coast to raise money. These volunteers help us to raise the funds so we can carry on providing vital support to blind and partially sighted people.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our Befriending Service and our Counselling Service, and of course our Board of Trustees. Very often volunteers describe how much benefit they receive from taking part.

There is a strong link between volunteers and service users and very often one leads to the other. Over the years clients find that they have received so much benefit

from a particular service or activity that they would like to give back by volunteering. And conversely, some volunteers find that they eventually reach a point where they are in need of the services they have supported.

Volunteers who are living with sight loss themselves often find that helping others gives them a new perspective on their own visual impairment.

To each and every one of our volunteers we want to say a huge Thank You! Whether you volunteer once or every week, you are the reason we can provide the services we do. Your help and support is greatly appreciated by everyone at MySight York.

"It keeps me grounded in the real world, not feeling sorry for myself and understanding the challenges of others."

"It gives me valuable experience and helps my mental health knowing that I'm helping others."

Befriending

One of the most important services that is supported by volunteers is our Befriending Service.

This service has been running for over 35 years and provides essential companionship and support on a one-to-one basis.

Clients and volunteers are carefully matched to ensure they share interests or would like to do the same kinds of activities. Some clients welcome just having someone to visit, others like to take the opportunity to go out for coffee or simply a walk with someone to support them.

The Befriending Service runs in two ways, it can be a regular home visit or telephone call. Often the people who request a Befriender find it difficult to get out and about on



A Befriending client and volunteer

their own, the volunteer provides regular contact to reduce feelings of isolation and increase wellbeing.

Many of our volunteers are part of the Befriending Service for years, sometimes with one client and sometimes with several clients. As one volunteer put it:

"Volunteering with (my client) has given me a great and dear friend."

To become a Befriender, volunteers undergo several hours of initial training, including sighted guiding skills and safeguarding awareness and then receive regular top-up training. This ensures the safety and wellbeing of both the client and the volunteer. One volunteer described the training as "Necessary, effective and good quality."

In the last year:

- **590 visits** or calls were made by volunteers
- **716 hours** of befriending time was given by volunteers

Communication and Transcription

As part of our commitment to helping blind and partially sighted people “live well with sight loss”, we strive to ensure that all communication with our clients is available in a range of accessible formats.

Our quarterly newsletter is available in Large Print, audio CD, audio USB, Braille, online and via our Alexa skill.

We send out newsletters to clients, their families and supporters, volunteers and local organisations in the format of their choosing.

In total last year clients received the newsletter in the following formats:

- **4,364** in large print
- **856** by email in a screen reader accessible document
- **204** by audio CD
- **156** in MP3 format
- **12** in Braille

We regularly receive positive feedback about our newsletter from clients both young and old.

One mum recently told us her 10 year old son loved receiving his newsletter. She told us:

“Edward loves reading about all the latest tech. He eagerly awaits each issue.”

The newsletter is an important means of providing our clients with information about the latest adaptive equipment available, tech tips for making the most of accessible technology, events and activities we are holding and news of what is happening in the local community.

Our commitment to accessibility also extends to providing a Transcription Service, primarily used by York and Scarborough NHS Trust to ensure they can comply with the Accessible Health Standard.

This service is in place so that patients can request their hospital correspondence in a format that is accessible to them, giving them control and ensuring confidentiality of their health information.

The Transcription Service is also available for use by local organisations, educational establishments and individuals.

Finance - Income

2024/2025	As at 31 March 2025	2023/2024
£23,470	Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group	£25,470
£119,764	Lottery Project	£138,523
£0	TPT Project	£29,675
£29,836	York Hospital (ECLO)	£28,415
£28,000	F M Muller Will Trust	£0
£8,664	Clothworkers Foundation	£0
£55,539	Donations and Gift Aid	£89,632
£165,690	Legacies	£20,344
£14,287	Community Fundraising	£4,510
£3,210	Income for Work	£4,940
£5,332	Sales of equipment and aids	£8,992
£680	Social and Group Activities	£1,734
£250	Sundry Income	£809
£799	Bank Interest	£3,550
£8,000	Other income	£657
£463,521	Total Income	£357,251

Finance - Expenditure

2024/2025	As at 31 March 2025	2023/2024
£294,217	Salaries	£253,827
£10,359	Rents, rates, Service Charge	£16,728
£9,505	Cost of equipment sold	£5,708
£10,271	Professional Fees	£7,585
£1,750	Independent Examination	£2,400
£34,308	Lottery Funding Overheads & Outreach	£48,198
£172	Depreciation	£0
£3,196	Staff IT	£1,700
£2,588	Insurance	£1,514
£120	Consultancy	£2,096
£14,163	Maintenance	£1,375
£1,189	Stationery and Photocopying	£1,094
£1,742	Sundry Expenses	£2,001
£412	Postage	£303
£643	Bank Charges	£936
£3,192	Newsletter	£2,107
£1,656	Phone	£1,065
£72	Social Activities	£159
£3,300	Benenden Funding	£198
£1,268	Expenditure on raising funds	£4,260
£14,522	Other costs	£4,292
£408,645	Total Expenditure	£357,546

Finance - Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025	2025	2024
Fixed Assets		
IT Equipment	£1,537	
Current Assets		
Stock	£9,554	£10,447
Debtors	£28,480	£42,058
Cash in bank and in hand	£183,538	£124,058
Total	£221,572	£177,211
Liabilities: Amounts due within one year		
Creditors and Accruals	£(15,074)	£(24,052)
Net Current Assets	£206,498	£153,159
Net Current Assets Less		
Current Liabilities	£206,498	£153,159
Represented By:		
Funds		
Unrestricted	£25,096	£42,676
Designated Building Fund	£0	£0
Restricted	£182,939	£110,483
Total	£208,035	£153,159

The full accounts for the year to March 2025 have been independently examined by Azets are available on the Charity's website mysightyork.org

As an independent charity the support of donors, trusts and grant providers is crucial to keeping our services and activities running.

We are extremely grateful to the National Lottery for their continued support, most recently with our Community Connect Project.

The NHS Humber and Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and York and Scarborough NHS Foundation Trust provide vital financial support for our Eye Clinic Liaison service and to our Equipment and Information Centre.

Thanks also go to:

Arlish and Chambers Charity

Masonic Charitable Trust

City of York Council Ward Funding

Duckworth Trust

York CVS

Clothworkers Foundation

Screwfix Foundation

Charles Brotherton Trust

Ulverscroft Foundation

Yorkshire Building Society

York Common Good Trust

York Racecourse

An enormous thank you to every individual who has supported us by making one-off or regular donations or donated via our pink elephant collecting boxes. Every penny makes a difference to the lives of the blind and partially sighted people we support. And, of course, huge thanks to all those who have chosen to leave us a legacy in their will.

These incredible gifts of kindness mean the world to us.

MySight York

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