

# SIGHT CONCERN

Services Newsletter - November 2020



## Welcome

Now, more than ever, we want to keep in touch with you and reassure you that we are here to support you.

The whole team at Sight Concern Worcestershire was involved in a huge effort to contact every visually impaired person on our database during the first lockdown and we were able to offer a wide variety of practical and emotional support.

Many things were unknown in those early days, including how long the pandemic would continue to affect and restrict our lives; if you were contacted earlier this year and said that you didn't need support but would appreciate it now, please do not hesitate to contact us on **01905 723245**. Even though so many things seem to have slowed down in recent months, Sight Concern Worcestershire has kept moving, changing and adapting.

## Speaking of change...

The Sight Loss Advisor covering the Wyre Forest area, Sandra O'Donnell, has recently left us. She was sad to leave and we were certainly sad to say goodbye to her. We have not yet recruited to Sandra's old post because of current restrictions but will still offer the same level of support to all of our Wyre Forest clients, of course. If you would like to speak to a Sight Loss Advisor, please call **01905 723245**. Sandra's old mobile number will no longer work or take messages. We look forward to hearing from you!

## **Positive news**

You will no doubt be aware of the roll-out of a vaccine for Covid-19. The NHS has identified priorities for the roll-out of the vaccination and will contact people in due course; according to the guidance available when writing this newsletter, there is no need for you to contact anyone to make an appointment. Many of the vaccines will be administered in dedicated hubs. If you need support to arrange transport to a hub, do please contact us.

## **The show must go on**

We were delighted to be able to start seeing people for low vision assessments at the Bradbury Centre again once the first lockdown eased but are also very proud that we were able to support people with telephone assessments throughout the lockdown.

We will continue telephone assessments during lockdowns or for people who prefer not to come into the centre. If you would like to know more about low vision assessments and aids which can maximise any vision you may have remaining, please contact us.

## **“You’re on mute!”**

One of the most used words of 2020 must surely be “Zoom” and if you have taken part in any sort of online meeting, you’ll probably been caught out by being muted or unmuted at the wrong time! We have been working with South Lakes Sight Advice and Support 4 Sight Essex to provide monthly online and telephone meetings on the second Thursday of the month from 14th January 2021. These will focus on health and wellbeing, inspirational people, leisure activities and information and advice specifically tailored for people with a visual impairment. The speakers confirmed so far are below. If you would like to join us, please email [conference@sightconcern.co.uk](mailto:conference@sightconcern.co.uk) to request the link to join online.

**Continued...** You can also dial in from your home phone to join the session; dial 0203 481 5237 and enter the meeting ID 458 043 7872 when prompted. January 14th– a dementia champion will be talking about sight loss and dementia /February 11th – The Blind Poet, inspirational speaker and poet/ March 11th – Dee Jones from Sense Adventures (more about Dee later).

### **Our new group phone calls**

We know that many of you value our Sight Loss Support Groups, particularly for the opportunity to talk to other people with a visual impairment. We are going to be hosting fortnightly group phone calls to give you the opportunity to chat informally to other people with a visual impairment in the same way you might have at the Sight Loss Support Group. We would love you to join us, even if you have never been to one of our Sight Loss Support Groups. The first call will be on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 from 10-11am. All you need to do is call 01905 915165 and enter the PIN 555555 when prompted. The calls will then continue every other Tuesday. Two of our sight loss advisors will join the call but it is very much intended to be an opportunity for you to chat to and support each other. If you need any further information or support with joining the call let us know.

### **Come in and join us!**

We have created the 'Sight Concern Worcestershire– Support' Facebook page and moderated discussion group to provide a safe online space for people living with a visual impairment and their carers. Our Sight Loss Advisors will be part of the group and provide discussion topics, answer questions and share up-to-date information. We want this space to connect people and so that they can support each other.

If you would like to know more, join the page and send us a message or contact us at [info@sightconcern.co.uk](mailto:info@sightconcern.co.uk).

## Technology advice and support

If you are interested in using new technology to communicate with loved ones or make other aspects of life a bit easier, don't forget that we have a digital technology advisor. He can give you advice and support with all sorts of gadgets and gizmos including mobile phones, computers, tablets and smart speakers (such as Alexa).



If you would like a chat with him, please just let us know on 01905 723245.

## Zooming around Worcestershire

We would like to know if there is an appetite for regular online meetings which are for Sight Concern Worcestershire specifically, so we need you to tell us what you think. Please email [conference@sightconcern.co.uk](mailto:conference@sightconcern.co.uk) or telephone us on **01905 723245** if you think you might be interested and tell us the sorts of things you would like the meetings to be about.

## Telephone befriending service

Our telephone befriending service has been a huge success since March. We have bucked the trend by continuing to recruit new volunteers and the team is currently speaking to 94 people on a regular basis. We are also able to offer email befriending for those who prefer not to use the telephone.

One of email befrienders has found that it gives the opportunity to "mull things over" and to fit the conversation in with daily life (e.g. not having a call interrupted by a delivery arriving). Please do contact us if you would appreciate a regular call or email from a volunteer befriender.

## Thinking about mental wellbeing

Dee Jones and Sense Adventures have diversified from guided walks, short breaks and retreats, and now offers a range of online experiences specifically tailored for the visually impaired too. Experiences include yoga, chocolate making, Indian cookery and creative writing. Dee would love to give you more information about these; you can call her on 01684 891796, email her at [dee@senseadventures.co.uk](mailto:dee@senseadventures.co.uk) or have a look at her Facebook page.



Marc Norton is visually impaired and training to become a sound healing practitioner. He is eager to bring the benefits of sound healing to other people with a visual impairment. Sound healing is a technique which has been around for thousands of years and uses instruments such as gongs, crystal bowls, Tibetan bowls, drums and vocal toning to bring about relaxation, reduce stress and alleviate anxiety. If you would like to know more about sound healing and the sound baths which Marc offers, please contact him on 07402844589 or at [madhava71@hotmail.com](mailto:madhava71@hotmail.com)

Your sight loss advisors also have access to a wide range of other resources and information to support your physical and emotional wellbeing. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need some advice or support.

## Every little helps

Like so many other charities, our fundraising activities had to stop in March and we do not yet know when or how we will be able to start fundraising again. We are very fortunate to be funded by the National Lottery and other generous supporters so have been able to carry on providing much-needed support during this time. However, there are some easy ways in which you can support us. If you shop online, please consider using [easyfundraising.com](http://easyfundraising.com) or [giveasyoulive.com](http://giveasyoulive.com); if you register with these sites and choose Sight Concern Worcestershire as your charity, we will receive a donation every time you shop at one of the many retailers signed-up to the scheme. Retailers include Argos, John Lewis, Just Eat, insurance providers, eBay, Tesco, Boots and a wide variety of others. Amazon operates a similar scheme called Smile and you can choose us as your charity when shop with them. You can also make a donation to us via our website at [sightconcern.co.uk/fundraising.donate-now](http://sightconcern.co.uk/fundraising.donate-now). We appreciate every single penny donated to us.

## And finally...

The trustees and all of the staff at Sight Concern Worcestershire wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We know that it has been a challenging year for many and we are proud to have been able to support so many of you to face those challenges.

We look forward to continuing to support you next year and hopefully being able to see you again. Our thanks go to our volunteers and staff team who have worked so hard this year and to you - we would not be here without you!

*Happy Christmas!*

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