



Registered Charity No. 211436

“Our vision is to support the  
vision of others”

97<sup>th</sup> Annual Report  
for the year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

## Trustees

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017

Hon. President	John Batchelor*
Chairman	Eric Mitchell*
Vice Chairman	Peter Jensen**
Secretary	James Grimshaw*
Treasurer	Robert Horner*

## Members

Doreen Flockton  
Alistair Ratcliffe  
John Mellor  
Robert Sergeant  
John Sowden  
David Fisher

\* Indicates a member of Executive Committee

\*\* Indicates committee member representing visually impaired

Chaplain                                      Rev Michael Wearing

## Staff

Director of Services	Tanya Stimpson
Admin Assistant	Leesha Metcalf
Receptionist	Christine Padgett
Home Visitor	Susan Richards
Home Visitor	Lauren Kaptain
Seat weaving/IT Tutor	Tanya Stimpson
Pottery Tutor	Kay Latto
ECLO	Nicole Brook

## Constitution

“To respond appropriately to the needs of the visually impaired people in the Harrogate district and in particular to provide and maintain a centre for social meetings and handicraft training for visually impaired people, entertainments, travel and holiday facilities and recreational health safety or occupational requisites to visually impaired people or their dependents.”

## **A note from the Chairman – Eric Mitchell**

I am sorry to record in this report the passing of Mick Walsh in July 2018. Mick was our Secretary from 2012 until his resignation in November 2017. As Secretary, almost all he did was unseen to members but what he did do was essential to the smooth running of our Charity and he did it with skill and energy. Mick was the driving force in changing our constitution to give our visually impaired members a say in how the charity was run. It was also he who came up with the slogan which we now use to promote our charity - 'Our vision is to support the vision of others'.

In 2016 we changed our name to Vision Support Harrogate District to reflect the inclusiveness of the work we do for all who are visually impaired. I am pleased to say that there are signs that this encourages new members.

The activities of the Centre and the charity as a whole continue to grow and flourish under the boundless energy of our Director of Services, Tanya Stimpson, and her team. Thank you to them.

I also recognize and give thanks for the invaluable contribution of our volunteers who give so freely of their time. The number of our volunteers is diminishing so some effort needs to be put into this area if we are to continue the much needed and much appreciated services we provide to the visually impaired in the District.

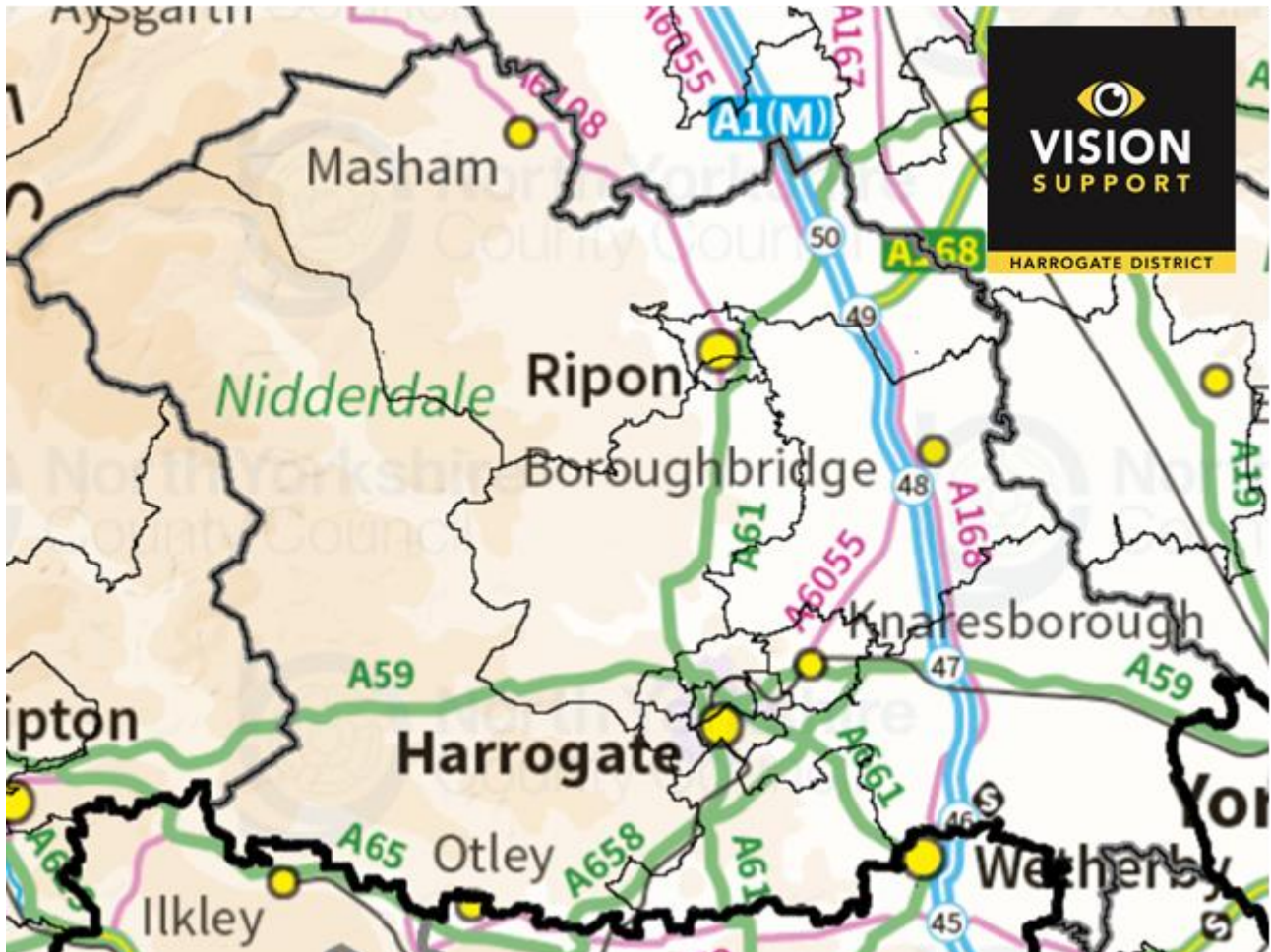
Finally I wish to recognize the massive contribution made by John Batchelor who has offered his resignation as President and Trustee. John has served our Charity for more years than anyone can remember offering his skills as Chairman, Vice Chairman and practical volunteer. In all that he has done he has had the welfare of others in mind and that has stood out clearly in his infinite enthusiasm to provide the right support for the visually impaired. Thank you John, we wish you well.

**Eric Mitchell**

Honorary Chairman

## Who can we help?

Our services are accessible to anyone over the age of 18 experiencing sight loss and who live within the boundaries of the Borough of Harrogate. However, if someone needs help and advice and lives in an area which has no help service we are happy to advise and signpost accordingly.



Membership and our services are free to join, for members, their families and carers, with the exception of items for sale in the Resource Centre, social meals out, activities arranged by third parties and outings.

The Vision Support Centre on East Parade is open Monday to Friday 9.30 am to 4.00 pm and there is a telephone answering service if no one is immediately available.

## **Life changing events**

Life can feel frightening and lonely if you are experiencing sight loss. There may be lots of questions you feel need answering and having to stop doing some of the things you once loved can be upsetting. Vision Support Harrogate District exists to support and advise people in our community who are or know someone who is experiencing sight loss.

One of our first points of contact, includes our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Service, offering practical and emotional support to those who are newly diagnosed with an eye condition or sight loss. By attending the eye clinics we are able to offer an essential support service, at a time when someone may be concerned about staying in work, driving, and managing at home with everyday tasks. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, along with our Certificate of Visual Impairment group sessions, which are held in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council Sensory Team, equip members of the public with the information they need to understand the benefits of being registered as sight impaired, what services, resources and benefits are available to them and where to turn to for help.

## **The Vision Support Centre – Russell Sergeant House**

Our charity has a drop-in Centre where we offer a vast range of regular activities which promote and encourage independent living and the learning of new skills. The activities we organise are also an opportunity to share experiences from one another and learn ways in which to adapt, in order to achieve. We do this through craft and education: IT tuition, basketry, card making, pottery, seat caning and knitting. Items made in these classes are sold at the Centre and at events to raise the funds to purchase more materials. Our clay sculptures are often exhibited to showcase the fantastic achievements of our members.



At the Centre we are able to advise on the benefits of technology for visually impaired people, we offer 1:1 tuition on touch typing, accessibility features, email, skype and many other apps that enable one to stay independent

and connected.

**Fact: Vision Support provides 32 activities and services to visually impaired people in the Harrogate District.**

## Health & Wellbeing

It is important to promote a healthy lifestyle, at Vision Support, we do this through encouraging participation in a range of health and wellbeing activities: Bowling, keep fit and line dancing, men's coffee morning, Friday afternoon entertainment and a bridge club. Our line dancers gave us a fabulous performance showing off their newly learned skills at our Christmas party, encouraging others to join their group.

## Staying connected in our community

Making sure that our members get out and about and stay connected with what is going on in their community is high on our priority list. Fresh air, exploration, experiencing new places is part of living that healthy lifestyle everyone should be entitled to. We help by providing companionship and services such as: Day trips, regular lunches and evening meals at local restaurants, theatre trips and regular group meetings in Ripon and Pateley Bridge.



## **A message from Elva, member of Pateley Bridge Vision Support Group**

The first Wednesday of each month a small cheerful group of Pateley V.I.P's (Visually Impaired Persons) meet at Tea-cups Auction Room Café, at 10.30 – 12 noon.

The meetings are led by one of the Vision Support Staff and we are able to discuss any practicalities and difficulties with daily living. The Vision Support Team brings us all the news from the charity and keeps us up to date with events and trips.

These meetings have encouraged us to join in events and trips which we have partaken of and enjoyed. We have gained confidence and made new friends. At the meetings we share experiences, local news and share knowledge of the history of our community.

A hot drink a chat, smiles and laughter, we look forward to our monthly meetings.

*Elva, member*



The Pateley Bridge Vision Support Group meet the first Wednesday of each month & the Ripon Vision Support Group meet every Tuesday.





Some of our walking group members and volunteers enjoying one of their monthly walks.



Some of our members and volunteers enjoying a day trip to Redcar.

## Spreading the support

Our regular newsletter is proving to be a great success and a useful resource for keeping our members and supporters informed about services, events and useful information relating to sight loss. We are always looking for new ways in which to spread the news of the support that Vision Support can offer in our community, we share our news and events on Facebook and Twitter, the more we post the more we hope to promote our services to an ever growing population of visually impaired people.

**Fact: Vision Support produces on average 2500 newsletters per year, that's a lot of paper folding!**

## Work experience

We were delighted to welcome a work experience student this year from a local college. A great deal was learned from each other, our young student, as well as learning skills for working, was able to learn some new skills to help her live independently with sight loss. Gardening, cooking, office duties and fundraising where just a few of the new skills that she learned with us. Our Vice Chairman



Peter taught her how to make Risotto and bake bread. The most important lesson she said she learned whilst working with us was meeting other visually impaired people who were working, have families and living independent lives, it gave her hope that she would one day be able to do the same. It was a wonderful experience, we hope that we can continue to offer visually impaired students work experience placements with us in the future.

Our work experience student arranged a visit from some local owls.

## Knocking down barriers

Due to rural isolation or mobility issues, not everyone is able to access our drop-in centre. To help alleviate loneliness and social isolation, we provide a helpline, telephone befriending, and a home visiting service. The visiting service is used as an essential tool for encouraging participation, signposting to outside agencies and supporting independent living. The Home visiting service also provides our members with the opportunity to talk about their eyesight and how it effects their daily living and generally how they are feeling at that present time.



Helping make one of our members smile, joining in the fun whilst promoting our MCF Award voting campaign on a Home Visit.

**Fact: Our two Home Visitors made 649 referrals this year on behalf of our members.**

## Volunteers

Vision Support Harrogate District would not have existed for 97 years without the dedication of our volunteers including our committee members. Some of our volunteers continue to have lead roles in running classes and activities. We are incredibly fortunate to have the volunteers and committee we do with a rich variety of skills and yet all with such giving and compassionate natures. We really wouldn't be able to provide the many activities, trips, services and fundraising events we do without their support, we give special thanks to you all. Thanks also extends to all of our Friday Afternoon entertainers and speakers who give their time for free so that our members can enjoy an afternoon treat every week.



Thank you most sincerely to you all on behalf of the members and staff for your help and support.



A photo of our wonderful craft volunteers

**Fact: Our Vision Support Centre volunteers devote between 2 and 14 hours each, every week.**

We give special thanks to Sara Horbury who very kindly continues to help with the organization of our finances and to David Pullman, our Independent Examiner, for all his efforts over several years on often complex issues and for so generously giving his time free.

Grateful thanks also go to Pat & Tony Hutchinson who open up their garden for us every year for our Rhythms & Blooms event and also to Beryl Wood and friends for their time, commitment and continued support with the various fundraising events they organize for our charity, thank you for all your support.

## Masonic Charitable Foundation



We were extremely pleased and proud to have been supported by the Harrogate Spa Masonic Lodge and the Masonic Charitable Foundation this year. Harrogate Spa Masonic Lodge nominated

Vision Support Harrogate District as part of the Grand Masonic Lodges' 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Awards Celebrations, where across the country the Masonic Lodges

were supporting 300 charities. After we were shortlisted as a charity they would like to support the Masons placed the final decision of who would receive the most monies to the public vote. After a tremendous amount of support from our members and their families, volunteers, staff and the local community we came joint second and were awarded a magnificent £15,000!



Through the year this money has been used to support and expand our Home Visiting Service, providing our home visitors with lots of resources to take on visits and the money raised has enabled us to put together a new Resource Room, filled with the latest in daily living aids, which has proved to be a very useful resource and extremely popular within our community.

Our grateful thanks go to Harrogate Spa Masonic Lodge, with special thanks to Mr. Anthony Morrell and Mr. Douglas Mills and to all the brethren who supported us in achieving this award.

Photo above: One of our lovely members helping promote our vote.

## **Supporters**

Vision Support Harrogate District relies on the generosity of individuals and groups from our local community as you can see from our income, Harrogate receives no government funding and Ripon only received a small contribution from North Yorkshire towards transport costs for members to attend the Ripon Vision Support Group. We are a very busy charity supporting a large audience of visually impaired people, through early diagnosis to supporting people in their own homes. We could not do this without the support of legacies from our friends whom we have sadly lost and donations in Memoria from friends and family members, we couldn't do it without the wonderful support of our donors, including local businesses and other charity groups, the public, our members, their families, volunteers and many of the churches who run coffee mornings and kindly donate money to Vision Support. We thank you for your generosity and support.

## **Contact us**

Russell Sergeant House,  
23 East Parade,  
Harrogate,  
HG1 5LF

[enquiries@vshd.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vshd.org.uk)

Helpline: 01423 565915



facebook.com/visionsupportharrogate



twitter.com/visionharrogate

[www.vshd.org.uk](http://www.vshd.org.uk)