



Registered Charity No. 211436

**“Our vision is to support the  
vision of others”**

98<sup>th</sup> Annual Report  
for the year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

## Trustees

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018

Hon. President	Pauline Nolan*
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  
Mary Kirk

\* Indicates a member of Executive Committee

\*\* Indicates committee member representing visually impaired

Chaplain	Rev Michael Wearing
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## Staff

Director of Services	Tanya Stimpson
Admin Assistant	Leesha Metcalf
Home Visitor	Susan Richards
Home Visitor	Lauren Kaptain (until October 2018)
Home Visitor	Charlotte Seaton (from October 2018)
Seat weaving/IT Tutor	Tanya Stimpson
Pottery Tutor	Kay Latto
ECLO	Lauren Kaptain (from October 2018)

## 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**

We are a charity that relies on voluntary donations and as we move ever closer to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date the charity was first formed I can report that whilst we still struggle to meet our year on year expenses we do have a solid financial foundation which will underpin our future. This will enable us to continue supporting the visually impaired of Harrogate District for many years to come.

Our Eye Clinic liaison services are the first port of call for many people when they are first advised that visual impairment is an issue they must address. It has always been valued by patients but it is becoming more and more appreciated by Harrogate Hospital. The hope is that this may translate into a financial contribution towards the service we have provided free of charge for many years.

The activities of the charity continue to grow and flourish particularly the home visiting service and activities aimed at younger members. A big thank you to our Director of Services, Tanya Stimpson, and her team.

Last, but certainly not least I pay tribute to our dedicated volunteers for their invaluable contribution. They give their time and expertise, without which we could not provide the much needed and much appreciated services to the visually impaired of the District.

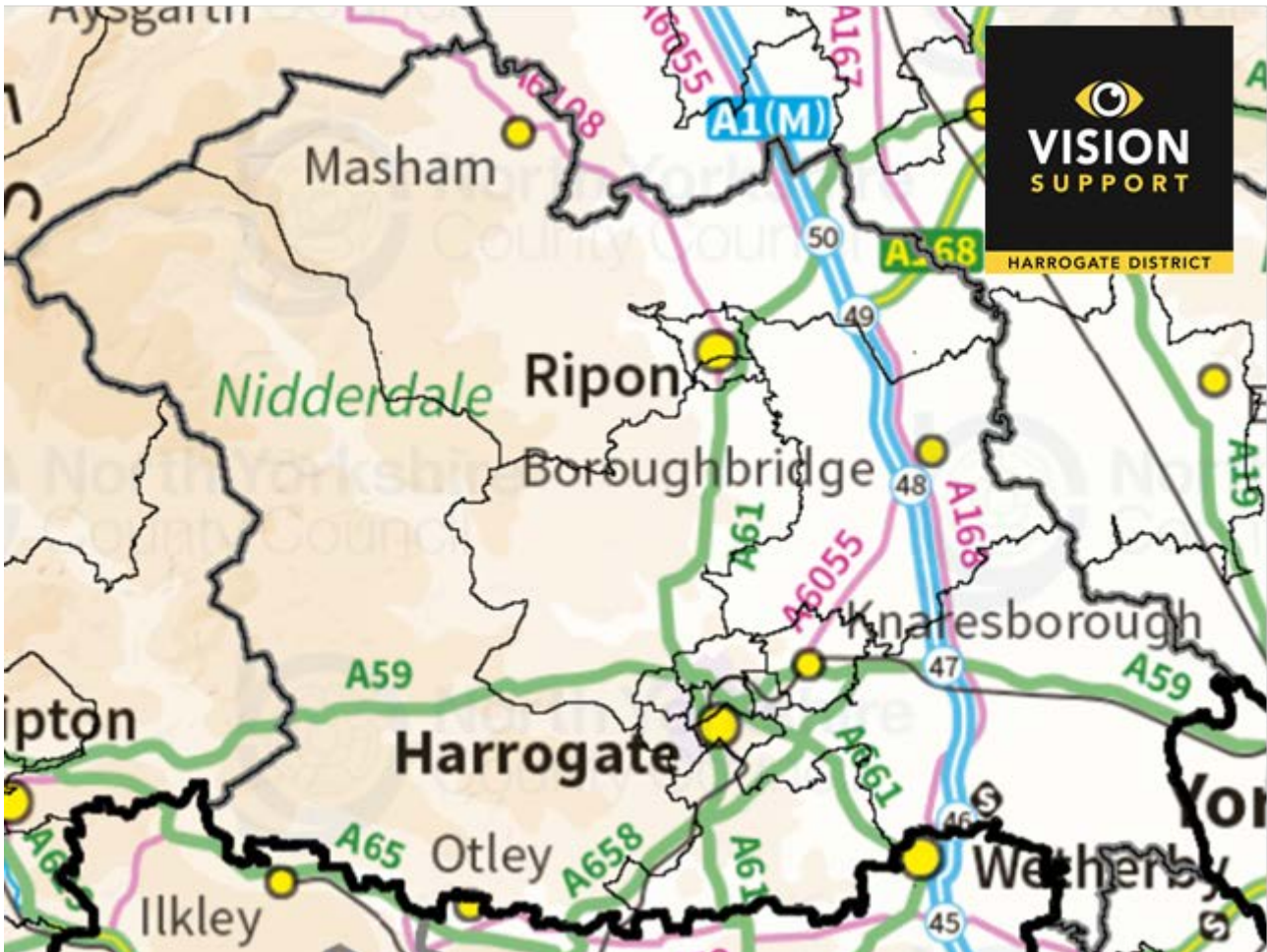
*Eric Mitchell*

Honorary Chairman

5 October 2019

## Who can we help?

Our services are accessible to anyone over the age of 18 experiencing sight loss, 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**

When diagnosed with an eye condition or with the prospect of losing your sight, there may be a number of issues you have to face, at Vision Support Harrogate District we are here to help people deal with these issues, we can do this by advising, supporting and listening to the needs of people making sure that they receive the help and resources they need.

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 more time to patients through 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 appointment 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.

### **Lauren Kaptain talks about her role as an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer -**

“It has been a privilege to take on the role of Eye Clinic Liaison Officer over the past year. My core focus is on providing emotional and practical support to anyone in our district dealing with a serious eye condition or living with sight loss.

I am here to help folks navigate all the non-clinical aspects of their eye care journey. To deal with that unsettling sense of: “What now?”, which can linger after being told – for example – that one’s vision is unlikely to improve or will deteriorate over time.

Most days, I attend clinics at Harrogate Hospital, meeting patients in the Outpatient Eye Clinic and on the Phoenix Unit. It is so rewarding when I am there in the corridor just as a patient leaves an appointment in need of some

emotional support, or if a consultant knows I am there and requests for me to meet privately with a patient who has just been certified as sight-impaired. I have also enjoyed visiting patients on wards throughout the hospital, as increasingly, staff in other departments are requesting help in supporting their VIPs (or visually impaired persons/patients). I hope to continue building the role so that it is a more constant and reliable presence. In addition to patients referred to me via Harrogate Hospital, I receive referrals from opticians, organizations such as RNIB or AgeUK, ECLOs at other hospitals, or people who self-refer by phoning or visiting our centre. I have even just received a referral from a GP!

The sooner we can chat with anyone who is living with a serious eye condition or adjusting to sight loss, the better we can equip them with the information, tools and emotional support they might need to stay in confident control of their life. There are just so many little things that someone would never really know about, which are not always easy to find, but which can make a massive difference. It is so fulfilling spending one-on-one time with folks, really listening to them, and then taking any action I can, or simply giving them the right information at the right time, to empower them for the journey ahead.”

### **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, craft 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, we are very grateful to The Great North Art Show for once more, inviting us to exhibit our sculptures at Ripon Cathedral, this could not be achieved if it wasn't for our pottery tutor Kay and pottery volunteers, Pauline Nolan, Cheryl Elias and Steve Cobb .

## Pictures of sculptures created by Vision Support members



## Level playing field

We want our members to have the IT skills to be able to make the most of learning and working environments, to maintain their independence, compete in today's job market and have the same opportunities as sighted people. 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 and the latest desktop, tablet and mobile phone accessibility software that enables one to stay independent and connected. The world is changing into a digital environment, many applications are filled out online, payments are to be made online, even doctors appointments and prescription repeats are all accessed via technology, it is even more important than ever before that we support our members by teaching IT skills or helping them access and fill in the information they need.

Picture below of electronic magnifiers and I.T. equipment.





## 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, dancing and line dancing, bridge, coffee & crosswords morning, walking group, games and entertainment afternoons.

Picture of some of our line dancers



## Staying connected in our community

Vision Support also has two satellite groups one in Ripon who meet on a Tuesday morning 10am – 11.30am, at Lister House and one at Pateley Bridge who meet the first Wednesday of each month, 10am – 12pm, at Teacups Café, Auction Mart. These groups provide an

opportunity for members to support each other as well as receive support from Vision Support Services.

**Peter Lewis talks about his experiences of being a Pateley Bridge group member.**

“My name is Peter, and I have been asked by Tanya to contribute to the A.G.M on the nature and function of the Pateley Bridge branch of Vision Support Harrogate District, thank you Tanya.

First, I think I should tell you something of myself and explain how I came to know about Vision Support.

I came to Pateley Bridge 34 years ago, not long after my arrival, I went to an optician for an examination which resulted in a referral to hospital and a diagnosis of Glaucoma. I have subsequently been treated for age related Macular Degeneration. My treatment has included the implantment of a pressure valve and a corneal transplant to my left eye. It was during a visit to the eye clinic in Harrogate that I met a young lady from the Vision Support Centre, who made the introduction to Vision Support. What I discovered was a group of about 9 or 10 ladies, some of which I know as members of the Wilsill lunch club and others as church attendees.

I think my meeting at the clinic was my lucky day.

The group and a member of the support team meet on the first Wednesday of each month at a local café called Teacups. We talk about local events like the Pateley Show and coffee mornings at St Cuthbert's from which we draw benefit. We also plan for future events and outings including those organised by the Centre. In the recent past we have arranged, shopping trips, coffee mornings, visits to stately

homes and animal parks, meals out and summer and winter entertainments and much more...

But it is not all tea and cake!

There is another serious side, we help each other, we share experiences and give encouragement to people who are perhaps having problems which are causing them distress. We know there are people in and around Pateley who might benefit by joining us and so we are planning, with the support of the Centre, a poster campaign to raise awareness of our existence. I have begun the distribution of posters and secured the support of the local pharmacist, the doctors are next on my list, wish me well!" **Peter Lewis**

The young lady that Peter met in the Eye Clinic, is Lauren Kaptain, Vision Support's Eye Clinic Liaison Officer. We employ Lauren to emotionally and practically support people who have been diagnosed with a serious eye condition and or sight loss.

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.

Sue Richards Home Visitor with member Kirsty on a boat trip in Whitby. Pateley & Harrogate members at Newby Hall.



## **A message from John Mellor, Ripon Vision Support Group organizer**

“The Ripon Group continues to meet every Tuesday at 10am in Lister House, a care home of the British Legion. We met in April and May 2018, had our traditional Summer break from June to August and recommenced our new year into 2019. Our programme has an important weekly core of hot drinks and biscuits and an opportunity to have a good chat with friends. The organised activities largely divide between talks over a wide range of topics and opportunities to join visiting musicians in very enjoyable sing-songs.

In the Spring of 2018, we were entertained in learning the history of the planting of daffodils along the roads leading into Ripon with the appropriate title, ‘Daffodil Delights.’ At the time of all the difficulties in Salisbury there was a talk on ‘The History of Chemical Weapons and Porton Down.’ One talk was by a Member of the Macular Society talking about the most common reason for sight loss in the over 70s. By popular demand 4 separate sessions were devoted to being entertained by musicians covering something for most tastes.

In the Autumn of 2018 with an audience having an average age of 85-plus, a talk on Dementia Forward had considerable relevance. The emphasis on diversity was maintained by talks on Bird Migration and the Railways around York.

Musical tastes were satisfied by visiting musicians including young students of Outwood Primary Academy Greystone with programme of Christmas music. The final meeting of 2018, graced by the presence of the Mayor of Ripon, was our traditional Christmas lunch at the Spa Hotel.

Through the Winter of 2019 a talk on Foodbanks emphasised a need met in Ripon as in most other towns and cities of our country. The need to support charities in distant countries was illustrated by a talk on Development Work in Mexico. Closer to home we enjoyed a talk with samples about the Oldest Sweet Shop in the World and the replacing of biscuits by pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

We are grateful for the support from the many who have entertained us through the year. We have maintained our numbers with 15 – 20 present at meetings. Again we are grateful for all the work of those who week by week have helped in the kitchen and with our administration and supported our

Members. We look forward to our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday later in 2019 and are delighted that our Group has been chosen as the Ripon Mayoral Charity of 2019/20. With support from Tanya we look to a future of greater interaction with Visitors from Harrogate offering advice on technical advances and other matters for those with sight issues.”

## **Spreading the support**

Our regular newsletter continues 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.

## **In the community**

We understand that it can be difficult for people to walk into the centre and ask for help, it is a big barrier sometimes to cross the threshold. To try and break down this barrier we have been ‘popping up’ all over the district, bringing resources, leaflets, advice and information to a variety of locations in order to support our visually impaired community. We have spoken to and helped people in our local supermarkets, shopping centres, doctor’s surgeries, market stalls, hospital, community centres and libraries. We hope that we have made a difference to some people by being more accessible to them. We plan to hire more volunteers and attend more events next year.

Leesha, vision support advisor, with our popup display



## Work experience

We continue to offer work experience placements to members and local students. We have been very lucky this year to have one of our members Kirsty Holmes working with our team. Kirsty has been invaluable to us, organizing our Resource Room, keeping everything priced correctly with the Penfriend and producing braille labels. Kirsty will also Braille the newsletter for anyone who wishes to have a copy and makes Braille greetings cards to sell. Not forgetting the support and hard work Kirsty provides helping ensure that everyone receives a copy of the large print newsletter. Thank you Kirsty for all of your hard work and commitment to helping us at Vision Support.

We are also very grateful for the support and friendship of our work experience student, Amy, who helps members in the pottery and papercraft class. Thank you, Amy, you are a joy to be around and our members, volunteers and staff are so grateful for the support you give them.

## **Outreach services**

### **Home Visitor report – Charlotte Seaton**

“I have been in post for nearly a year! And it’s flown by. There’s two home visitors, Sue and myself, Charlotte: similar, but certainly not the same! The Home Visit scheme aims to provide a friendly and supportive home visit service.

At one end of the scale, we can provide effective and practical solutions to those living with visual impairment. And at the other end of the scale (and everything else in between) can do referrals to, via our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Lauren, to the Low Vision Clinic, to North Yorkshire County Council Sensory Team, social services, other voluntary agencies – all with the aim of making life living with a visual impairment that bit easier. But only with the written consent of a members. And that’s a very important point, not only because of the new Data Protection Act 2018, but because at the center of the Home Visit service is YOU. We’re not visiting you to talk at you. We are there to listen. We are not permitted to make decisions on your behalf or impose our opinion on YOU. It’s all about helping a member to remain as independent as possible, especially so for those members who may find getting out and about difficult.

Over the last year, I have visited some 300 members. One visit in particular stands out. Edith, who is 95, vehemently independent and not someone who asks for help. Through ‘guided’ conversations, it became apparent that Edith was struggling with aspects of living alone, worsening visual impairment and had recently developed a balance problem, which meant she’d had a number of falls. I had picked up on a remark that Edith made that “other people always seem to get help”. Whether Edith was aware or not, she had indirectly asked for support. It’s something that the Home Visitors pick up on. With Edith’s written consent, I made referrals to North Yorkshire County Council for a home needs assessment (these are free of charge and in Edith’s case also included an occupational assessment), a referral to Food Angels (Harrogate’s equivalent of meals on wheels) and a referral to Harrogate Borough Council for a Lifeline.



On my next visit to Edith the difference in her overall demeanor was striking.

Her eyes were shining bright, she was smiling, and she was sounding very positive, with a good dollop of zing in her voice. Edith told me she'd been visited by lots of people and that "she didn't feel forgotten anymore."

Living with visual impairment is an emotional journey. It changes over time, perhaps due to a bereavement, loss of independence: the list would be endless. It can be an isolating journey, which in turn can cause loneliness and a sense of being forgotten. While we can't be a 'cure-all' to someone's needs, we certainly can be a productive, worthwhile and enriching part of their life's jigsaw."

## **Volunteers**

Knowing how busy life can be, with more households relying on family members to provide care at home, child care and working longer, we are so fortunate despite the pressures of everyday life, to have a team of volunteers who are so committed and devoted to the work they do for us, providing friendship and support to our members. In fact, our volunteers are leading activities and services, it doesn't seem enough to just say thank you. We truly could not provide our members with the activities and services we do if it was not for the dedication of our wonderful volunteers, we couldn't run our classes, trips, fundraising events, coffee mornings, committees or parties. Our members are so grateful for everything you do for them and we offer our whole-hearted thanks for everything you do to support our charity work.

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.

## **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 local businesses displaying our charity boxes, and other charity groups who raise money for us, the public, our members through regular giving and home collection boxes, 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

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