



Registered Charity No. 211436

“Our vision is to support the vision of others”

105th Annual Impact Report

for the year ended

31st March 2026

Trustees

From 1st April 2025

Chairman	Robert Horner*
Vice Chairman	Peter Jensen* **
Secretary	James Grimshaw*
Treasurer	Sara Horbury*

Members	Alistair Ratcliffe
	John Mellor
	Mary Kirk
	Stephen Kirk

* Indicates a member of Executive Committee

** Indicates committee member representing visually impaired

Staff

Director of Services	Tanya Stimpson
Administrator	Sue Campagna
Receptionist	Claire England (October 2025)
Outreach Vision Support Advisor	Sue Richards
ECLO	Helen McGrath

Constitution

“To respond appropriately to the needs of 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.”

Welcome & Overview

Over the past year Vision Support Harrogate District has continued its dedicated mission to empower, connect, and support visually impaired individuals across Harrogate, Ripon, Knaresborough and the surrounding rural areas. Through vital core services, community activities, and local fundraising, we have worked to ensure no one in our district faces sight loss alone.

- **133** people new to sight loss being supported through our Eye Clinic Referral Service
- **1800** Telephone Befriending calls
- **6885** Face to face member interactions with timetabled activities
- **941** members currently being supported through our sight loss advice services
- **92** New members joined Vision Support Harrogate District

Our Core Support Services

Throughout the year our staff and volunteers delivered essential practical and emotional support:

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) Support

Helen provides advice, guidance, and emotional support to individuals at the point of diagnosis in hospital eye clinics and through direct ophthalmologist consultants referrals. Where our service differs from the 'normal' ECLO services is that rather than a 'one off' appointment our service continues this vital emotional and practical support throughout the patients eye care pathway ensuring they are waiting well for and during treatment and are fully supported through the registration process and beyond.

What do I need to know about sight loss?

The big question when registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. This is where our aptly named 'What you need to know about sight loss' sessions provide the answers. Designed to be ready for you when you are strong enough and ready for the answers. This may be at diagnosis, to help you feel in control of your journey, maybe a bit later when you are facing a challenge or a barrier as your sight loss begins to affect your life, or maybe if your sight loss or level of registration has changed. These sessions introduce you to the local people and services around you that can support you. Hosted by our eye clinic liaison officer Helen, North Yorkshire Sensory Team specialists and the NHS Low Vision Clinic team members, this course provides you with the information you need to get back on your feet.

NYC Sensory Team & NHS Low Vision Clinic

We work very closely with North Yorkshire Sensory Team and Harrogate Hospital Low Vision Clinic, by working together we can ensure that there are no gaps in eye care pathway for our sight loss community and they can be reassured that we continue to work together so they can receive the very best support available.

Independent Living & Technology Assistance

Our Vision Support Advisors provide the time and space to demonstrate and advise on specialised daily living aids to build confidence with everyday tasks. Advice may be provided on a 1:1 basis or in small group sessions on accessible software, apps, mobile and wearable devices and PC.

Befriending & Welfare Visits

To reduce isolation and keep community members connected our Outreach Vision Support Advisor Sue, heads a team of 'lived experience' telephone befrienders. This service promotes friendships and helps our team assess and identify any needs or issues that our members are facing. Sue can then visit them at home to discuss their options and next steps, referring to appropriate organisations.

Information & Advocacy

At any point a member may come across an issue, barrier or change in circumstance, our team is available to support, liaise for and direct members to essential local and national resources, benefits advice, and community health services.

Fun Activities & Social Highlights

Encouraging participation and keeping our sight loss community vibrant and active is at the heart of what we do. Led by a tremendous team of sighted and 'lived experience' volunteers, our week is full on:

Social Gatherings & Clubs

Weekly catchups, including our popular Soup & Pud Club, Ripon Club, Coffee & News sessions, Crosswords, Bridge Club, Dominoes and regular fish & chip lunches bring members together for great peer support, friendship, food and conversation. Our evening social group continues to thrive and is a wonderful opportunity to get involved if you are unable to access our daytime services.



Members enjoying lunch together at Soup & Pud Club **Leisure & Wellbeing**

It's not all sitting around and eating at Vision Support Harrogate District, we want everyone burning the calories after their lovely lunches and treats. Our wellbeing activities include, Keep Fit, Line Dancing, Yoga, Walking Group, Disco Dancing & Carpet Bowls. We like to try our hand at new activities too, enjoying a Blind Cricket taster session, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. We'd like to give thanks to **Peter & Kate Hammond, Harrogate Cricket Club and the Yorkshire Vikings Cricket Club** for arranging the taster day, it really was an incredibly successful day.

Crafts & Skill Building

There's plenty of opportunity to be creative with many crafts sessions to choose from including pottery, knitting, basketry, papercraft, mixed media and seat weaving. We're always looking for a new project to get our creative hands on. Our amazing sculptors had another successful year selling their artwork through an exhibition in Harrogate and our incredible sculptor Jess earned herself a showcasing space at The Sculpture Gallery in the Corn Exchange in Leeds. A big thank you to **Newmedica Leeds Eye Health Clinic & Surgical Centre** for sponsoring Jess and to **The Churchill Foundation** for sponsoring our pottery class.

Festive & Seasonal Fairs

The annual Christmas Fairs held in November and December and our Spring Fair showcased member and volunteer made crafts, knitted goods, and homemade soups and cakes bringing together our local supporters. We would like to thank everyone who helped on the day, donated prizes, baked goods and beautiful crafts.



Members enjoying their weekly activities, including pottery, weaving and bowls.

Day trips & Walks

Our members have enjoyed some amazing days out this year, Kiplin Hall, The Piece Hall, Otley, Wentworth Woodhouse, Whitby & Teeside Shopping Park. We are so lucky to be able to borrow 'free of charge' minibuses from the wonderful '**Happy Wanderers Ambulance Service**' which enables us to keep the costs down for our members, making the trips accessible to all.



Our walking group enjoy a challenge

Community Support & Fundraising

Our work would not be possible without the incredible generosity of local partners, grant makers, and supporters:

Vision Support Harrogate District relies entirely on the kindness, generosity, and active involvement of our local community to keep our doors open and our vital services running. As an independent local charity, we receive no direct government funding for our day-to-day operations, meaning every service we offer, from our hospital support and home visits to our social clubs and technology training, they are funded through donations, legacies, local business sponsorships, and dedicated fundraising. Whether through financial contributions, gifts left in wills, corporate partnerships, or the priceless time given by our incredible volunteers, it is your ongoing support that ensures we deliver this vital support.



Members, staff, volunteers and supporters complete the Nidderdale Sponsored Walk

Community Support & Fundraising List

- **The Buses and Boots Walking Club:** Each participant walked 105 miles in February to mark our 105th Anniversary, raising an incredible £2,000! Special thanks to ECLO Helen and Mandy from Harrogate Hospital Eye Clinic for joining.
- **Ripon Specsavers:** Hosted an in-store static marathon bike ride to fund taxi transport for our Ripon Vision Support Group.
- **North Yorkshire Speak Up Grant:** Funded safe-space sessions to discuss accessibility, communication, and delivery challenges with community and NHS organizations.
- **Community Beacons Project:** Provided training for staff to support individuals navigating both cancer diagnoses and sight loss.
- **Harrogate Deaf Society:** Funded 3 new hearing loops to improve accessibility for D/deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors.
- **Rotary Ripon Rowers:** Donated an accessible food mixer for our Soup & Pud Club and cooking activities.
- **Taylor Jones:** Ran the Altra Yorkshire Marathon, raising an amazing £1,847.
- **Newmedica Leeds Eye Health Clinic & Surgical Centre:** Sponsored member Jess's artwork exhibition at The Sculpture Gallery in the Leeds Corn Exchange.
- **Local Businesses & Volunteers:** Generously donated vouchers, prizes, and venue support across the Harrogate district.



Taylor Jones, Altra Yorkshire Marathon & Member Jess showcasing her Sculptures.



Tanya and Helen attend the first of the Community Beacons Events funded by Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre

"Vision Support Harrogate District remains deeply grateful to all our members, staff, volunteers, and local partners whose dedication keeps our community vibrant and connected."



Buses and Boots Walking Group and Vision Support Members

How can you help?

Businesses & Groups

- Store/staff room collection boxes
- Staff team challenges
- Store events
- Donations of prizes
- Volunteering Day
- Sponsor an activity or service

Individuals & Families

- One off or regular donations
- Home collection boxes
- Gifts in wills
- 100 Club membership
- Sponsored challenges (small or large)
- Supporting events: Attending, donating handmade items and cakes or prizes.

Sector Representation

Tanya was approached by Greatest Hits Radio North Yorkshire to be interviewed as part of their Sound Bites to comment on the effect of the change in parking laws on the sight loss community after meeting the North Yorkshire Mayor and joining the campaign headed by Zero Carbon & Disability Action Yorkshire on behalf of the districts residents.

Volunteering

We would also like to extend our deepest, most heartfelt thanks to our extraordinary team of 57 volunteers, whose unwavering dedication, warmth, friendship and energy remain the true heart of Vision Support Harrogate District. Whether leading weekly activities, assisting on day trips or providing a friendly voice on telephone befriending calls, their generous gift of time and compassion makes everything we do possible and ensures another successful year of empowering our sight loss community.

There is change in the air

We are incredibly lucky to have such a devoted team of volunteers, sadly this is not the norm volunteering dynamics are undergoing a significant shift across the charity sector, requiring organisations like Vision Support Harrogate District to rethink how we engage, recruit, and retain volunteers.

Moving Beyond the Traditional Retiree

Historically, the charity sector relied heavily on individuals who retired at 60 and possessed the spare time, mobility, and inclination to commit to fixed weekly shifts. As pension ages rise and people remain in the workforce longer, this traditional volunteer pool is shrinking. Today's retirees often step back later in life, sometimes with physical limitations or a desire for greater flexibility rather than long-term commitments.

Our core of regular volunteers thankfully, remains the backbone of our service, we are incredibly lucky to be able to rely on our current volunteer workforce, in the future this will no longer be sustainable throughout our service delivery. Meeting the evolving needs of our visually impaired community requires us to modernise our approach.

The new word on the street: Micro-Volunteering

To bridge this gap, we are required to evolve our future roles around modern schedules and the fear of over commitment.

Volunteer viewpoint

Lynda, volunteers for 13 hours per week as a Services Administrator, Quiz Master & Day Trip Guide.

“People do not need to fear commitment. We are adapting and are happy to interview anyone who can spare an hour or two now and then.

As a volunteer of several years I can say you'll never be bored. You may learn a new skill, you'll have your eyes opened and you'll certainly make new friends.”

How can you help?

Whether someone can spare two hours a week, a few hours a month, or occasional help for events, like our annual fairs, blind golf tournaments, joining a coffee rota, or walking challenges, every contribution makes a direct impact. Flexible models ensure that people with full-time jobs or family commitments can still participate seamlessly.

Work Experience & Student Placements

Welcoming students, young adults, and career starters into our volunteer framework brings vital energy and mutual benefit:

- Students bring digital fluency, modern perspectives, and enthusiasm that help innovate and inspire the whole team.
- For students, volunteering with us offers meaningful, practical experience, developing empathy, communication skills, and real understanding of accessibility, inclusiveness and charity administration.
- Bringing younger volunteers into contact with our members and services encourages an interest in a career in the sight loss sector, securing the future of services for generations to come.

Our Door Is Always Open

Adapting to modern living doesn't mean changing our core mission; it means opening more doors for people to be part of it. Whether you can offer a steady weekly commitment or a few sporadic hours when your schedule allows, we want to hear from you.

We welcome anyone interested in making a difference to reach out for an informal chat, together, we can find a role that fits into your life and makes a huge difference to ours.

Work Experience Student Viewpoint

“What has my time at Vision Support been like and what have I learnt through this work experience?”

I came into this experience with a very narrowminded view of what life is like with vision loss. I hadn't had firsthand experience or any understanding of what it must be like. When I walked in my perspective shifted and became much clearer. Before this experience, I subconsciously linked this different way of living in a negative light. It's a vital lesson that this place has taught me; a lesson that everyone should learn at some point in their lives. We often associate the different way as the most difficult without ever really understanding what that different way would be like. By changing this mindset, we can take this new perspective into everything we do. When facing a challenge, instead of looking for the exit we can find a new perspective. Vision

Support not only changes people's lives but they prove this point with heaps of accuracy. That your life doesn't stop when you lose your sight. They show that the stereotypes of being visually impaired- that its a constant barrier against everything seemingly normal- is in stark contrast of reality here.

When I first visited, I immediately noticed the atmosphere as being one that brings a smile to each face that enters. Through joining in on activities such as basketry and knitting, I found out how incredible these people are. As I struggled being able to weave, someone whose whole sight had been lost was weaving the most beautiful basket. The activities are not average; they are in some cases extremely challenging. They have a variety of activities from Pottery, Chair caning, Knitting, Basketry, Audiobook club to line dancing and many more classes that offer unique opportunities.

I came into here hoping to help people but it turns out I was the one who was educated and taught.

Vision Support is definitely a beacon of light for people in the community. It is a place where they can gather and talk to people going through similar situations as well as have a good natter whilst exploring new activities that are always open to try. I soon came to the realisation that this place is a real support system that helps people come out of their shell, find new friends and simply enjoy life. This place doesn't feel like just an organisation, it feels like a family. This can be shown by the Soup club where they all sit and have a meal together or the Coffee & News group where they all read this weeks newspapers.

I am extremely grateful for my work experience to have been with Vision Support. I haven't just learnt new skills, I have found the truth of how people are supported to become the best versions of themselves. This is through the effort of the team who work to help to make people feel understood, To the volunteers who help everything run smoothly and teach amazing classes and to the members who choose to come every week with big smiles on their faces and lots of effort to put into what they do. I would say to anyone who is looking for a placement for work experience who is keen to stop looking through the lens of misconceptions of what life is like with sight loss, to go to Vision Support. Your life definitely does not stop when you lose your sight and Vision Support are vital in helping people find that out. Living with a vision impairment doesn't put your life on hold, it just makes you navigate it differently through a change of perspective. I have witnessed people with vision loss doing activities I never thought possible. It's you realize that the word "impossible" is a stand in for a solution we haven't found yet. I am walking away from this experience with such respect for the amazing work done at Vision Support and I hope there are many more like me to come for work experience here."

Members always get the last word

"My Journey with Sight Loss and the Support I Received

I first realised that I was losing my sight in 2022, around six or seven months before I retired. That same year, I was diagnosed as severely sight impaired. It was a difficult and unexpected

time, particularly because I had never imagined that, as I approached retirement, I would also have to face losing my sight.

Because I had, as I put it, “ticked every box” in terms of my sight loss, I was invited to attend a New to Sight Loss session at the Vision Support Centre on East Parade in Harrogate. I had driven past the centre many times, but I had never known what it was or what support was available there.

I attended the meeting and found it quite emotional. I became very upset, but one of the members of staff took the time to speak to me about what I was experiencing and offered me an appointment to talk things through in more detail. That conversation was extremely helpful. I was given information about the services and support available to people living with sight loss, much of which I had never even realised existed.

I decided to keep returning to the centre, and I am so glad that I did. The staff have been amazing. They have helped me understand what support is available and, more importantly, helped me realise that losing my sight did not mean that my life had to stop.

I was introduced to a range of practical services and support. For example, I was directed to the library, where the husband of one of the volunteers helped me apply for a Blue Badge and a disabled person's bus pass. I was also offered and accepted white cane training through social care. These were things I had never considered before, simply because I had no idea what support was available to someone who was losing their sight.

The centre has also given me opportunities to remain active and socially connected. I attend social evenings when I can and have been on visits to many different places—some of which I had never even heard of before. I have thoroughly enjoyed these experiences and have made many new friends along the way.

Three of those friends—Paul, Carol and Brian—have become particularly good friends, and we enjoy going out together and exploring new places.

The people at the centre are a huge part of what makes it such a welcoming place. Tanya, the centre director, is always cheerful and welcoming. I don't think I have ever seen her without a smile, even when she isn't feeling well.

Helen, the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO), has also been a tremendous help. On several occasions, she has helped me obtain appointments or letters that I have needed, particularly when arranging things for my travels. Having someone who understands the difficulties associated with sight loss and knows how to navigate the support available has made a real difference.

Sue O, Sue R and Ann are always cheerful and ready with a “good morning.” It may sound like a small thing, but being greeted warmly when you arrive is a lovely way to start the day.

Linda also helps out on Fridays, and then there is Kim, whose cooking skills never cease to amaze me. Considering her own sight loss, I am always impressed by the meals she prepares. Sometimes I think she should give us cooking lessons—not only to show us how to make the

food, but also to demonstrate the techniques, equipment and adaptations she uses to prepare meals safely and independently.

There have also been two receptionists during my time at the centre, and the current receptionist, Claire, is another person who always brings a smile to the place. She is cheerful, friendly and welcoming, and I don't think I have ever seen her without her jolly face.

Looking back, I wish that everyone who is newly diagnosed with sight loss could understand just how much help and support is available. When I was first diagnosed, I knew absolutely nothing about the services, benefits, equipment, training and social opportunities that could be available to someone living with sight loss.

The support I have received has helped me become more independent, stay socially active and, perhaps most importantly, realise that sight loss does not have to mean giving up the things you enjoy.

So, to Tanya and the whole team at the Vision Support Centre: thank you. Thank you for the information, encouragement, friendship and practical support you have given me. You have helped me discover a whole range of opportunities that I never knew existed.

Please keep doing the great work that you are doing. It makes a real difference to people like me.”

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