



Working to make life better for blind and partially sighted people

Sight Action News

December 2017 Edition

Supported by the Highland & Islands Society for Blind People

Sight Action will be closed for the holidays from:

- **1.00 pm Friday 22nd December re-opening on Thursday
4th January 2018 at 9.00 am**

**Please remember that the Resource Centre is only open between
10.00 and 3.30. It is always a good idea to ring first.**

Very best wishes to everyone from all at Sight Action

Merry Christmas



In September, I was honoured to sponsor an event, and host Highlands and Islands Society for Blind People, Highland Blindcraft and Sight Action Scotland in the Scottish Parliament. There was a great turnout from the other MSPs and they got a chance to meet staff, volunteers and clients of all the organisations. The members had travelled from all over to come to the Parliament, so it was fantastic to have such a great event; we even gave some tours of the building after the reception! It was a real pleasure to highlight the work everyone does for people with sight issues across the Highlands and Islands. I have seen first hand the difference that they make across the region I represent, and it has been an honour to work with these charities over the years.

Rhoda Grant MSP

Representing the Highlands and Islands

IMPORTANT REMINDER

You will find included in the envelope with your newsletter two additional pieces of information:

- Information about the support groups in 2018
- A letter from us about the new **Data Protection Law**. On the back of the letter is a form which requires **your signature**.

Please sign it and then put the form in the self-addressed envelope which we have provided and return to Sight Action.

THE MACULAR SOCIETY'S NEW REGIONAL MANAGER

The Macular Society has recently appointed John Furze (a volunteer at Sight Action) as its Regional Manager for Scotland North West. John's area includes Highland, Moray, the Western Isles and Northern Isles.

For the last three years John has been assisting with digitising Sight Action's successful Talking Book Service and visiting service users having difficulty with IT matters, so is no stranger to Sight Action and a number of its service users.

John lives outside Inverness and may be contacted on 01463-214-190 or at john.furze@macularsociety.org. In addition to the established support groups in Inverness, Caithness and Orkney John is eager to set up new Macular Support Groups in Skye & Lochalsh and Shetland.

Of his appointment, John said, "These are exciting times for the Macular Society as it seeks to extend support to those suffering macular disease to the whole of the United Kingdom. My experience, working as a

volunteer with Sight Action, will be valuable in liaising with eye-care professionals throughout my area”.

UPDATES, ARTICLES AND STORIES

RAIGMORE HOSPITAL EYE CLINIC

Mark Forsbury, the RNIB’s Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO), since the introduction of the service in late 2015, has recently been appointed to the post of Service Manager, Eye Clinic Support Services (North Scotland). A new ECLO, Janet Syer, has recently started her induction into the role and will take over from Mark in early 2018. It is anticipated that this transition will coincide with the Eye Clinic Support Service having a dedicated room within the clinic.

Janet will spend time with Sight Action, during her induction, helping her to understand the role played by the Rehabilitation Team and services offered by our volunteers.

Both Janet and Mark will work to ensure continued collaboration between the two organisations for the benefit affected by sight loss.

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS (IIV)

Sight Action was really pleased to hear from Volunteer Scotland, at the end of October, that they had been awarded IIV following completion of a self-assessment checklist, development plan and 2 days of 1:1 and group interviews.

It was extremely good news and a big thank you to all the volunteers who not only took part in the assessment but all the volunteers who provide a huge amount of time to **Sight Action’s** service users.

HIGHLAND BLIND TANDEM CLUB

The Club looks forward to resuming its weekly evening tandem rides around Inverness from April to September 2018.

The Club meets at the Northern Meeting Park, Ardross Street on Wednesdays at 6pm, weather permitting.

The Tandem Club welcomes new riders as well as volunteer 'pilots' for next season. If you are visually impaired or know someone who is, and are interested in getting some weekly outdoor exercise on a tandem, then get in touch with the Club. You can contact Rod Murchison on 01463 230066 for more information, or leave a short message on this number.

ARCHERY CLUB

Anyone interested in trying their hand at archery may wish to know there is a new club starting up in Highland. Sight Action and Scottish War Blinded are working together with Bowhunter Archery in Ardersier to allow visually Robin Hood impersonators the chance to test their skills.

Sessions run from 90 minutes to 3 hours and the site provides all the required equipment as well as trained instructors. The site is well laid out for easy access with its own toilet and good parking.

To contact Bowhunter direct, please call 07753 426141, or you can call Jo Long on 07703 517936 if you wish to attend as part of our club.

Any Scottish War Blinded members attending will have the cost covered by the charity. All others will need to cover their own expenses.

POLICING IN INVERNESS

Police Scotland has a new team of nine officers working in Inverness from early morning until 11pm each night to improve safety and access across the city centre.

Sight Action has been approached so that police may get a clear understanding of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities and have asked how our visually impaired clients cope when negotiating their way around Inverness.

They are very interested in any feedback from our clients who have faced difficulties getting around Inverness safely. What obstacles get in your way? Does the shared space create problems for you? Is it street furniture, lighting, signs, bins, bollards, buskers or people sitting/lying/standing in shop doorways begging?

Have you had any bad experience when trying to get around? If so, the police would like to know about it. Therefore, if you have faced a problem for you to get around Inverness safely, please contact me and give me the details and I will then pass all your concerns/comments to the police so that they may resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Please feel free to tell me any difficulty you have had, no matter how small. It is important that all disabled people, and in particular those with a visual impairment, can move around safely without fear of bumping into obstacles, people or street furniture and without being harassed or slowed down by people who are begging or just sitting/lying in shop doorways or sitting at the seated areas intoxicated.

Making Inverness safer and easier for you to get around is very important to us and we will continue to work with Police and the Street Charter, as well as several other agencies to make this happen.

The information you give can, of course, be in confidence if you so wish but it goes without saying that the police can do more if they have as much detailed feedback as possible.

You can contact me by letter to the address below or my email at brenda.smart@highlandsensory.org.uk. You can also telephone the office on 01463 233663. If I am not in the office I will call you back as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing from you. Stay safe.

Brenda Smart, Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired, Client Services Manager, Sight Action, 69-71 Old Perth Road, Inverness IV2 3JH

BEAT THE BOGUS CALLER – POLICE SCOTLAND

Following these 8 steps can help protect you from becoming a victim of doorstep crime:

- Use the door viewer when answering the door.
- Check identification badges of anyone calling at your door.
- If you don't know the person who is calling and you're not expecting them, don't let them in.
- If you have a password with a company make sure the caller uses it.
- Never let people try to persuade you to let them into your home. If someone is persistent, ask them to call at another time and arrange for a friend or family member to be with you.
- Never agree to pay for goods or give money to strangers who arrive at your door.
- Don't keep large amounts of money in your home.
- If the person refuses to leave your door, dial 101 and ask for the Police.

IT TRAINING FOR BEGINNERS

Are you interested in learning basic IT skills such as emails, ordering your shopping? Then read on!

Nairn **BIG** (BEGINNERS INTERNET GROUP) holds a friendly informal social internet Group which is supported by Saltire Award students at:

The Youth Café
Nairn Community & Arts Centre
3.30 – 5.00pm – Tuesday (during term time)

Learn how to:

- Search the internet by using Google
- Use email, Skype relatives/friend, Facetime
- Share photos and videos
- Connect with social media, e.g. Facebook
- Order your supermarket shopping
- Research travel, outings
- Access music, radio

If you would like to attend some of these sessions please contact Sarah Shaw on 01463 233663.

Sight Action will arrange transport if required. Why not try a couple of taster sessions?

SENSORY ICONS COMMUNICATION ALERTS

How would you recognise if someone had a Sensory impairment?

Not everyone goes around with visible signs that they have any difficulty with low vision or hearing loss. People who use white sticks, guide dogs or British sign language are the minority; most people have what we call “hidden loss”.

One in 30 people in Highland alone will have low vision, this equates to around 9,000 people.

When the impairment is hidden, i.e. you don't have a large bandage on visible display, the general public often has difficulty identifying there are any problems and frequently make communication errors.

There was an incident in Lochaber where a person with speech impairment following an injury was informed to "call back when he was sober" by local authority services. Following this incident, Highland Council worked with the Lochaber Access and Disability group and SENSE Scotland to design an alert that could sit on Service Point reception desks. You may have already come across these at your local Service Point.

When a person needs help they point to the appropriate icon.

The principle of these alerts is being developed further by Sight Action, Highland Council and NHS Highland to be used on Highland Council electronic systems. NHS Highland have agreed to give all Council staff using them Sensory awareness training. The scope for use is endless when you think of it. Any data system could alert staff to your communication needs! This could mean you get appointments in a text size you can read – medication instructions also.

We will keep you updated as progress is made.

Gillian Mitchell
Client Services Manager

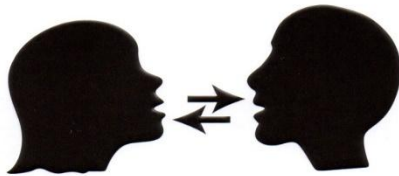
I would welcome support due to:



Hearing Loss/Deafness



Visual Impairment



Speech Impairment



Require Quiet Area

SIGHT ACTION STAFF MEMBERS

My name is **Cheryll Hilton** and I am the new Resource Centre Assistant here at Sight Action. I have taken over the post from Fiona, and Catriona before that. Big boots to fill.

Until fairly recently I worked in care providing support to people in the Moray area. As a result of this, I became steadily more aware of the difficulties facing our visually impaired community, and when I heard the post had become available I was lucky enough to be selected.

If you call Sight Action, it may well be myself you initially deal with and I am a good point of contact should you have questions about kit and equipment. I am also able to conduct low vision assessments, so please feel free to drop in here at Sight Action if you think you require one. If you could, please let me know in advance so that I can ensure I have set time aside to assist you.

I look forward to having the chance to meet you at some point. Until then, take care and have a Merry Christmas.

My name is **Sharon Lewis** and I joined the Sight Action Team in July 2017 as a Support Worker/Trainee Rehabilitation Worker.

My partner works as a Prevention and Protection Manager for the Scottish Fire Service therefore I had the opportunity of re-location from Wales to Inverness in 2015.

My background has been in Education for most of my working career. I worked as part of the Inclusion Team in Wales teaching Mobility and Orientation to children and young adults with a Visual Impairment. I also worked closely with families with pre-school infants as they learnt to adapt to life with a blind child.

During my late teens I worked as a Link Worker for Social Services providing 1:1 support for a young adult who had been blind from birth. She was an extremely talented musician and was living a full, active life. Her positive attitude inspired me and the rest is history.

I completed a qualification in both Welsh and English Grade 2 Standard Braille and then trained as a Mobility and Orientation Specialist.

I am delighted to be working for Sight Action. Meeting new clients and being able to provide help and support is the highlight of my working day and I hope to meet some of you in the future.

SIGHT ACTION CAMPUS

A new campus for training nurses in Inverness.

The campus for nurses' training has moved from Stirling University to the University of the Highlands in Inverness.

Sight Action worked closely with the lecturers to design training modules that will teach nurses about Hearing and Vision loss. These included practical workshops where the nurses have to perform tasks wearing glasses that simulate the eye conditions and ear plugs to simulate a hearing loss.

This year's intake of 165 students has already started these modules and the feedback has been very positive.

The new campus was recently opened by HRH Princess Royal, who mentioned these training modules in her opening speech. She stated that she had a friend who had an eye condition and had been unable to read her medication resulting in an admission to hospital after taking too much.

Having nurses in hospitals in Highland that understand the difficulties people encounter will hopefully improve the quality of care you can expect on admission locally.

NEW CAFE IN INVERNESS

Café 42, for CIG (the name came from Derek Brown – wanted to get away from the Death Café concept, so 42 seemed appropriate, as it was the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy ...)

Overall responsibility will be held by the NHS (Chaplaincy and Community Development)

The purpose of this new café will be to provide:

- A safe, comfortable space for conversations with no specific agenda

- Compassion and kindness
- Conversation will be facilitated by an appropriate person, with counselling/listening skills
- General topics could be end of life, death, bereavement, loss and its anticipation and life changes – the agenda will be set by attending participants
- A welcome to anyone wishing to attend, including unpaid carers and family members
- Teas, coffees and biscuits will be chargeable as the café needs to prove its sustainability

Referrals will be sought from CIG partners, including Social Workers, GPs and Voluntary sector agencies.

The Hospice will be involved at an early stage.

The intention is to open Café 42 once a month at the Mac Café, MacKenzie Centre, Culduthel Road, Inverness.

We recognise that change within the attending group, and even changes to the aims noted above, might be inevitable.

The Café will seek to work in partnership with all relevant statutory bodies and the Voluntary Sector.

Volunteers helpers, who will operate the café's provision of teas, coffees etc could be students (social care, nurses, medical students) or anyone with an interest and/or skills in the field.

There is an aspiration that this model of community and self-help could be replicated across the Highlands.

NEWS FROM WESTERN ISLES SENSORY CENTRE (WISC)

Well, it's all change here at WISC. Ishbal, who as you may know, has taken on an extra role as the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) which

means she will attend some clinics each month where patients can talk to her in confidence.

We have been joined by Dawn in WISC who is settling in well to the team. You will meet her in the office. Sadly Shirley has left us and moved off the island with her family. I would like to thank her publically for all the help she gave me over the many years she worked for us in WISC. I will miss Shirley but it's nice to welcome Dawn to this small team.

Both support groups will continue for another year. If you are interested in joining please call WISC where you can get all the information you will need to join the VI Group.

Raymond Smart

Rehabilitation Officer

Hello, my name is **Dawn** and I started work at Western Isles Sensory Centre in July 2017. I still class myself as a bit of a “newbie” as there is a lot to learn working for Sight Action. So far, I have learned that Sight Action is great to work for, as they invest in the employees and I've already done training courses that keep me up to speed in this very specialised area. Here in the Western Isles, we are a small team of two – Ishbal and myself. I'm thankful to have Ishbal here as she is very knowledgeable and she is happy to share her knowhow with me. My background is in Nursing. I have a Diploma in Learning Disability Nursing and a Degree in Mental Health Nursing. Over the last 20 years I have worked in community settings and hospital settings, nursing people who have learning disabilities or a mental health diagnosis and, at times, both. I enjoyed nursing but after getting married and having the children, I left my career to be a mum. I love being a mum, it's great, but when the children went to school I felt it was time to get back into the workforce. I saw my job advertised online and I thought it looked like something I would enjoy. I felt I had some skills I could take to this post and what a great opportunity to learn new skills too. So far, so good, I'm enjoying my job!

NEWS FROM CAITHNESS

DRAUGHT BUSTING CAITHNESS

Free draught proofing and energy advice service is available to anyone in Caithness who is:

- In receipt of unemployment benefits
- Retired/pensioner
- A carer
- Has a support worker
- On a low income
- In fuel poverty
- Living with a disability

A fully qualified, disclosed Energy Advisor will undertake an assessment of the needs/issues in your property to reduce carbon emissions, reduce fuel bills, improve living conditions, increase disposable income and help eradicate draughts/dampness.

You will receive **free** energy saving measures that may be required as part of the Energy visit. Please contact the energy advisor, Paul Bremner, at:

paul.bremner@pentlandenergy.co.uk

Direct number: 01847 807 116

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/draughtbusting_caithness

<http://www.pentlandenergy.co.uk>

Items that can be fitted:

Free hot water tank jacket, free draught excluders for door/windows, free external door/window seals, free LED bulb, free radiator reflector panelling. A smart energy monitor will also be fitted and loaned as required.

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES
COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY
DINNER TO YOUR DOOR

What is Dinner to your Door?

It is a new service from Dementia Friendly Communities (DFC) in association with Helmsdale & District Community Association (H&DCA). Dinner to Your Door will prepare and produce hot meals twice a week for the local community. This complements the meals provided in the Helmsdale Well-Being HUB on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Who prepares the food?

The meals will be produced by our Chef, Margaret Finlayson, using locally sourced ingredients.

How are the meals delivered?

The meals will be delivered by DFC staff between 12.00 and 14.00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Where can I see the menu and prices?

Copies of the menu and prices are available in the Helmsdale Well-Being HUB and in the DFC Office in the Community Centre.

How do I order?

You can order in person at the DFC Office in the Community Centre or by phoning 01431 821 655.

How do I pay?

You can pay by cash or cheque made payable to Dementia Friendly Communities CIC.

SEE CLEAR

Helping the elderly, blind and partially sighted.

With an ageing population there are more and more people across the UK who struggle to carry out simple tasks such as adjusting room thermostats due to deteriorating health and eye sight.

Being unable to carry out simple tasks can be demoralising and take away personal independence. **See Clear visual aid thermostat sticker** enables the user to enjoy better control of their room thermostat and therefore household temperature. Designed to make controlling the temperature of heating easy, they are compatible with both heating and cooling systems, and are applied directly to a thermostat dial; instead of using small indication numbers it converts the temperature range into easy to see sections. Divided into four separate colour zones with the added feature of embossed markers, See Clear stickers are easy to use making them an ideal product for the elderly and those with visual impairments.

See Clear stickers are quick to apply and simple to use, enabling older and visually impaired people to see the temperature zones and adjust the setting themselves; supporting continuing independence and reducing unnecessary call out costs.

See Clear visual aid stickers come with an adhesive back and once the protective back is removed, can be applied directly to the dial of the thermostat. For those requiring assistance, there is a fitting service available or a new thermostat can be supplied with a sticker already attached.

There are still a large percentage of manual thermostats installed within homes across the UK. These come in a range of makes and models. With this in mind, the same clear and simple concept has been adapted to ensure See Clear stickers are compatible with a range of thermostats including: Honeywell, Drayton, Danfoss and Seitron to name but a few.

For further details:

- visit our website www.seeclearproducts.co.uk
- email seeclearproducts@hotmail.com

LOOKING AFTER YOUR EYE HEALTH

Evidence shows that over 50% of sight loss is preventable or treatable. Having a regular eye test (at least every two years) will check the health of your eyes and identify any problems that may be treated before they become serious.

You may already have a diagnosed eye condition, received treatment or have ongoing medical appointments for this. You may have been informed that there is currently no medical treatment that would help. It is still important, however, that you visit your optometrist for a routine eye examination at least every two years.

Occasionally, people experience unexpected changes in their vision. The following **may** indicate that immediate medical attention is required:-

- Shadows or a curtain-like disappearance of vision which is painless but may be associated with flashing lights or an increasing in seeing black specks or blobs (floaters)
- Eye injury or pain
- A suddenly blind and painful eye which causes sickness and general feeling of being unwell
- Seeing halos or rainbows around light
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision
- Sudden hazy or blurred vision
- Red crusty or swollen eyelids

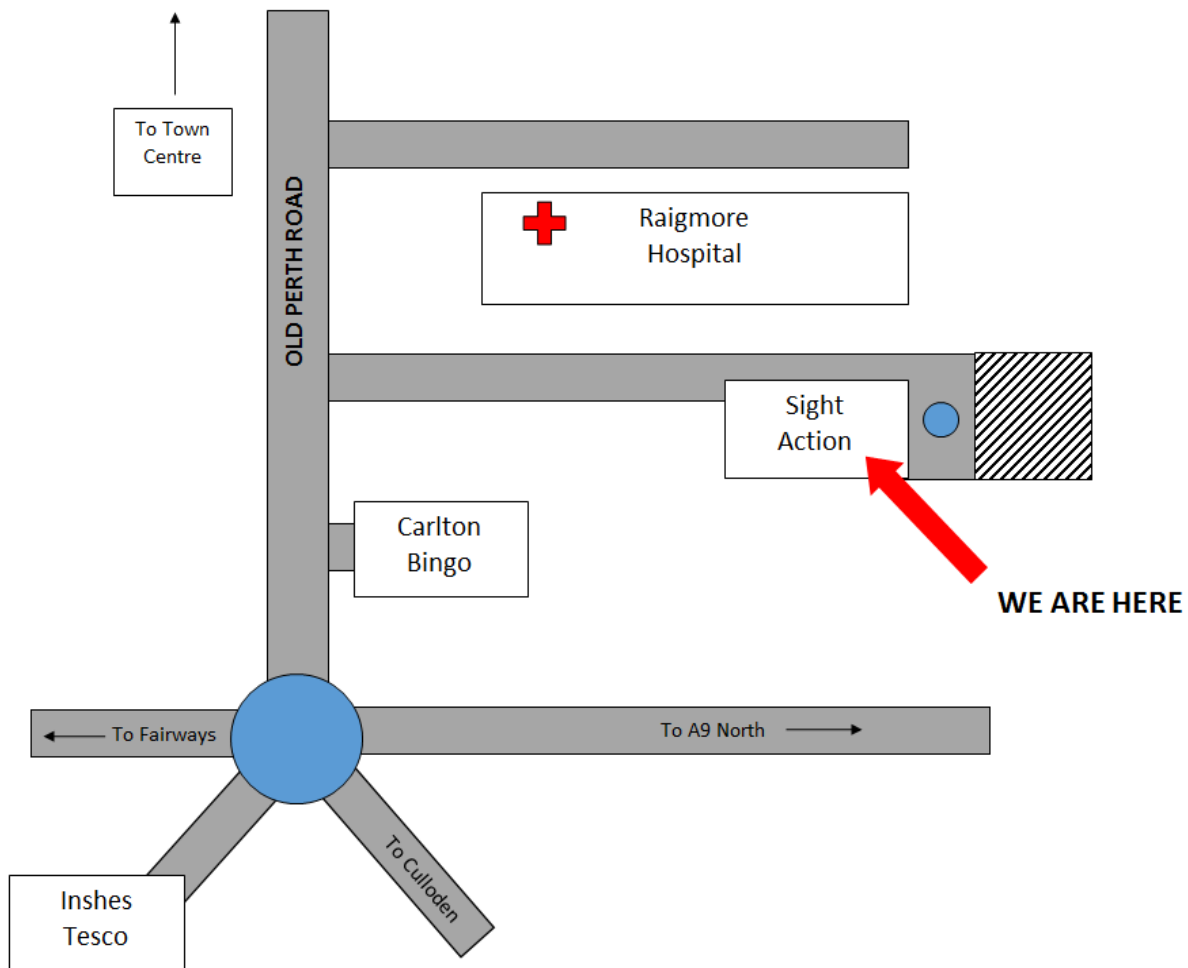
You should report to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

Other symptoms may not be emergencies but still require examination from your eye doctor or optometrist. These include:-

- Lines and edges appearing wavy or distorted
- Squinting because of light sensitivity or glare
- Blurred or double vision
- Seeing spots or ghost like images
- Dark spots in the centre of your vision
- Eye strain and/or frequent headaches

If you are worried about any changes in your vision you should seek advice from an optometrist, or your GP.

HOW TO FIND US



**SIGHT ACTION, BEECHWOOD HOUSE, 69-71 OLD PERTH ROAD,
INVERNESS, IV2 3JH**

TEL: 01463 233663

EMAIL: admin@highlandsensory.org.uk

WEBSITE: www.sightaction.org.uk