# Sight Life logo

# Sight Life Newsletter

# February 2021

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## A message from the Chair of the trustees

I have hijacked the front page, as I want to let you know about some important information. Sight Life’s trustees are carrying out a governance review. This will eventually lead to a different relationship with the RNIB, our parent charity since 2009. The review is looking at a range of options, including full integration into RNIB and a return to operating as an independent charity.

We have a lot to consider, especially in light of the uncertainties caused by the coronavirus pandemic. At the end of the review we want to choose the model that works in the best interests of blind and partially sighted people in south Wales. That means as well as providing the services people want, it must also be sustainable and financially viable. We will make a decision about our direction later this year. Completing the move to a new way of working is then likely to be a gradual process. RNIB is supporting our transition to a new structure and we remain part of RNIB Group in the meantime.

Please don’t worry – there aren’t going to be any changes immediately. If you have any comments or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

John Sanders

Chairman, Sight Life

## News from the Director’s kitchen!

Well, as you’ve probably guessed, I’m still working from my kitchen. I hope that you are still staying safe and well during these very challenging and uncertain times. Little did we know when we sent out our summer newsletter that we would still be in lockdown all these months later. Our staff and volunteers are still working from home. We are still contacting members by telephone making ‘keeping in touch’ calls and more regular tele-befriending calls. Though we can’t see you we are still here for you – we’re available via telephone for general queries and advice, so please don’t hesitate to call us on 02920 398900.

Like lots of organisations, we have had to find alternative ways of supporting our members through these difficult times. Our range of telephone support and interest groups has increased – you’ll find a list of what’s available further on in the newsletter. Please contact us from time to time to find out what’s going on so you can get involved. You can also keep up to date via our website and social media. Also, please get in touch if you have changed your details or if you have a new email address. Email is our preferred method of contact as it is more cost effective and a speedier means of communicating. But if you’re not on email, don’t worry – it’s always good to talk!

I will keep you updated with the latest developments but in the meantime, please stay safe, follow government guidelines and we will look forward to seeing you, hopefully, in the near future.

Best wishes

Michelle Jones

Interim Director Sight Life

## Did you see anyone?

John Sanders describes one of the minor challenges of being out and about during lockdown.

The pandemic has had tragic consequences for many families and our hearts go out to all those who have lost relatives and friends. Even if we have been spared the worst, COVID-19 affects all of us in small ways. One small impact for me is that more people out exercising means more chance of mistaken identity.

Yes, of course it’s healthy and understandable and overall a good thing that people are walking more. But when you can’t see faces unless you’re very close, it can make life difficult. This morning a jogger shouted a friendly “Hello John!” across the road when I was out with the dog. I waved, but didn’t reply “Hello Sue!” because I didn’t work out it was Sue until she was well past me.

At least on this occasion I did – belatedly -- identify the mystery jogger (Sue is a neighbour). Often I don’t have a clue. I get home and when asked “Did you see anyone?” the honest answer is: “Not really, but someone saw me.”

John Sanders, Chair Sight Life

## University Hospital of Wales Eye Clinic services

We asked Ruth Rhydderch, our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer to update members on procedures at the University Hospital of Wales (UHW). This is what she had to tell us.

All clinics continue to run in although at reduced capacity. Patients are encouraged to attend their appointments as priority is given for appointments to treat and monitor sight threatening conditions. There are rigorous infection prevention procedures in place – this includes screening patients as they enter clinic, patients are expected to wear a mask or face covering unless medically exempt and, if at all possible, attend their appointment alone. Staff will support patients and ensure that their relatives can meet them safely after their appointments. Please don’t arrive early for your appointment as you will only be able to come into clinic five minutes before your appointment time. All of this is done to ensure that social distancing can be maintained.

AMD clinics are now taking place at UHW in Suite 7. All ophthalmology appointments are now back at UHW from the Spire hospital although some limited surgical lists are taking place in Spire. If you are unsure where you need to attend please ring the clinic to check.

Glaucoma clinics are still ongoing at UHW but a large number of glaucoma patients are being seen by community optometrists and their scans and information are then being reviewed remotely by the hospital consultants. It is important that, if you are asked to attend an optician for your glaucoma review, you attend the specific optician that the appointment is made with. If they note anything of concern, you will be seen in the hospital eye clinic.

If you have any changes to your vision or new symptoms it is essential that you seek advice promptly. The first port of call should be a high street optometrist (optician) who can assess the issue, discuss it with the ophthalmology team at the hospital and, in some cases, can arrange treatment without needing to attend the clinic. If a hospital appointment is needed you will be given a time to attend the eye casualty unit.

Cataract surgery is on the whole paused at the moment. Initial assessment appointments are only taking place for a very limited and specific number of patients. You will be contacted by the hospital when they are able to offer you a date for an appointment or for your surgery. Unfortunately, this will mean a significant wait for assessment and treatment of cataracts. If you develop any significant changes in your vision, please contact your optometrist to ensure that there is nothing else going on that may need treatment.

Ruth can be contacted on 029 2074 6860 or via email at ruth.rhydderch@sightlife.wales

## What’s happening in Cardiff

We are sorry that we weren’t able to send out a newsletter at Christmas, but due to the lockdown it proved too difficult. Although we cannot welcome you to the Sight Life building, we are all still very busy working from home running phone groups, answering queries and supporting people over the telephone. If you are interested in joining our phone groups or have a query, please contact us on 029 2039 8900 or e-mail me at teresa.sueref@sightlife.wales .

We have had a busy time with our telephone groups and we are delighted that our popular Elderfit classes are inspiring other organisations. We recently welcomed Jo Briggs and Michelle Edmonds from Active Derbyshire’s Strictly No Falling project. They joined one of our sessions to observe how exercise works over the telephone as they will be setting up a similar scheme for people with sight loss in their area. They thoroughly enjoyed their session and loved our chat whilst we exercised!

We also recently welcomed Stuart Ling from Humanware UK, who spoke about some of the latest products and gadgets available. Lynne Morgan from RNIB Connect joined our Music Appreciation group and played a selection of classical pieces which were thoroughly enjoyed by our members.

One of our volunteers will soon be starting a bird song and bird calls monthly telephone group - we will let you know when this will begin. We are also hoping to have a telephone chat with Claire Bottomley from Sherman 5 about the Love Letters to Cardiff project and more of the audio plays that will be available soon. We will also be welcoming more guest speakers and activities to keep our members entertained and following on from our Christmas craft there will be an Easter themed craft session coming soon.

We hope that you are all safe and well and that you will soon have your vaccinations. We hope to see you soon.

## Sight Life Telephone Groups - Cardiff

(Weekly and all groups last an hour unless otherwise stated). Contact Val Baynton for joining details on 07707 295121, or via email at Valerie.baynton@sightlife.wales

### Mondays

10.00am Cardiff Macular Group 1

11.30am Cardiff Macular Group 2

12.30pm Book Club - Chat about your lockdown reads. (Second Monday of the month)

2:00pm – Strength and Balance exercises with Gareth from Elderfit (standing exercises).

3:30pm – Teatime chat

### Tuesdays

10:00am fortnightly – Computer room catch up

11:00am – Coffee morning

2.00pm – Strength and Balance exercises with Gareth from Elderfit (standing exercises).

### Wednesdays

11:00am -Yoga Group social chat

3:30pm – Cardiff Wellbeing Group. Discuss relaxation and stress busting tips in a friendly, supportive and informal group

### Thursdays

12.30pm – South Wales Charles Bonnet Group (Esme’s Umbrella)

2:00pm – Strength and Balance exercises with Gareth from Elderfit (seated exercises)

3.00 – Men’s Group

### Fridays

11:00am fortnightly – Music appreciation

11:00am fortnightly– Morning quiz

2:00pm fortnightly – Afternoon quiz (repeat of the morning session on the same day)

## What’s happening in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Our Contact and Advice Line continues to be available for all our clients in RCT. It’s there for you to ask any questions or voice any concerns that you may have during this difficult time. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Steve, my volunteer, who continues to keep in touch and check on the wellbeing of those feeling isolated. If you would like us to contact you regularly, please give me a call on the number below.

Our seven-week Be Active programme which took place over Zoom in November and December was a great success. Working in partnership with the Cambrian Village Trust, the programme included sessions on baking, arts and crafts, fitness and mindfulness, storytelling, music and quizzes. In order to run a second Be Active programme, we need your continued support - we are looking for 10 new participants to run a course starting in March.

The Young at Heart Social group continues to thrive offering peer support and regular Zoom meetings. Please follow the link below to join our Facebook group or search Sight Life RCT:

<https://www.facebook.com/CIBRhonddaCynonTaff/about/?ref=page_internal>

During February and March, we hope to offer the chance for RCT clients to get involved in a beginners’ fitness class via Zoom. Gareth from Elderfit will facilitate the classes, providing seated or standing exercise depending on your preference. Finally, with the success of Be Active, and after listening to you, our first special interest group will be a six-week tutorial on hints and tips for make-up application (start date to be confirmed).

Please get in touch with me if you would like to get involved in any of the above activities. As always, I would love to hear from you with any thoughts/suggestions and feedback. You can contact me on 07753 305631 or via emailcarys.groves@sightlife.wales.

## What’s happening in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot

We’re talking to Swansea Little Theatre and Gower Talking Magazine (GTM) about a story produced by Cal who works for the Swansea Little Theatre Company. This will come on a memory stick but will also be available on CD. We want to ensure we don’t send the story to both GTM and Sight Life members, so we’ll be checking whether members already receive the GTM. If you are not a member of the GTM and would like the audio story, please get in touch on 01792 776360 or mobile 07824541982. If you are a YouTube user, we can provide you with the link to directly access the story.

Sight Life works with local authorities, health boards and other partners to ensure people with sight loss have a voice. This contact enables us to provide people with sight loss with information quickly and efficiently. We encourage members to attend appropriate forums which are currently run online through platforms such as Zoom. Email is a quick and efficient way to update you on changes which might affect day to day life within your community, your local authority and on a wider scale. If you have access to email or if you would like to take part in any of the forums, please let us know so that we can involve you or pass on your views.

Finally, once restrictions permit, we would like to arrange for members to meet at our community garden and attend walks. If you would like the opportunity to get out and about and socialise safely, please let us know. We are aware many of our members have lost confidence in going out. Any social activity will have to comply with the current regulations and restrictions. All activities will be risk assessed and appropriate measures will be in place so people can do so safely and confidently.

If you would like to join any of our telephone conferencing groups or have a one to one volunteer, please contact us on 01792 776360 or 07824541982 or email anita.davies@sightlife.wales

## Sight Life Telephone Groups – Swansea/Neath

(Weekly and all groups last an hour unless otherwise stated). Contact Anita Davies for joining details on 07824 541982 or email anita.davies@sightlife.wales

### Mondays

10.00am - City Centre group

11.30am - Laughter Yoga

1.30pm - City Centre group 2

3.00pm - Pontarddulais group

### Tuesdays

10.00am - Mumbles and Gorseinon group

1.30 - NEW! Music Entertain Sing Speak (MESS) Group. Different professional artists each week either sing or do a talk about various subjects

11.30am Technology support group (First and third Tuesday of the month)

11.30am - Quiz group Two (Fourth Tuesday of the month)

1.30pm - Make the change workshops

3.00pm - Men’s group

### Wednesdays

10.00am - Chair exercise class

11.30am - Women’s group

1.30pm - Wellbeing group

3.00pm - Chair yoga group

### Thursdays

10.00am - Make the change group

11.30am - Knitting group

12.30pm – South Wales Charles Bonnet Group (Esme’s Umbrella)

1.30pm – Quiz group One (Second Thursday of each month)

1.30pm - County Steering group Third or fourth Thursday of each month

### Fridays

2.00pm - NEW! Art Group with the Glyn Vivian Art Centre (First Friday of the month)

## RNIB Telephone Groups

RNIB Group is running a number of different telephone groups. For more information on what’s available, contact George Hinton on 07751 369079 (email George.Hinton@rnib.org.uk) or Bernice Cocking on 07761 328571 (email Bernice.cocking@rnib.org.uk).

## Connect Cymru Telephone Groups

RNIB Cymru Connect also has a range of telephone groups connecting people in Wales. All groups last for one hour. For more information contact one of the community facilitators:

Eleanor, 0770 282 1915, email Eleanor.rothwell@rnib.org.uk

Carol, 0786 496 8859 emailCarol.McKinlay@rnib.org.uk

Izzy, 07768503050, email elizabeth.james@rnib.org.uk

## South Wales Police Fraud Prevention Training

Between 17th and 19th March, Claire Perrin of South Wales Police will be offering Cyber awareness training via Zoom specifically to support people with sight loss. It will give hints and tips on how to protect yourself from fraud or scams online, via email, text message and social media. If you would like to attend this training, please register with Claire directly by emailing Claire.Perrin@south-wales.police.uk or calling her on 01656 869211 (Extension 42623) or on 07816 280201.

## South Wales Talking Newspaper and Magazine

The South Wales Talking Magazine re-launched in a digital format on December 1st. The February edition is now available. You can access it on their web site <https://www.swtma.com/members> either through the associated BWBF player or you can download it as a file so that you can produce a personal memory stick to play on the usual Sonic Player. It can also be played on phone or tablet via the free “Talking Newspaper” app.

As SWTMA’s usual contact phone line is not available, you can contact them via email on info@swtma.com. If you do not have access to email, get in touch with us on 02920 398900 and we can pass a message to them.

## Tips to make life with sight loss easier

### Bright and beautiful

Choose items that are bright and bold like towels, gardening tools, glasses cases, drinking glasses, torches, gloves, mobile phone cases. Use a pen with a medium or heavy flow of ink. Keep a large calendar handy to keep all memos together.

### Take your time

Allow extra time so you don’t get flustered. When you rush, you may panic, drop things - and worse still have accidents!

### Preparation is everything

Plan everything days or even weeks before. This lets you take charge of what you’re doing. Don’t’ forget to take into account what the light will be like at different times of the day.

### Let there be light

For lots of sight problems, correct lighting is important. Maximise or minimise daylight so it suits you. Ensure bulbs are renewed and never buy cheap. LED bulbs or strip lights are effective. Ensure outdoor lighting is working. Keep torches to hand. Use lamps. Extra lighting in the kitchen is helpful. Peaked caps can prevent glare.

### A place for everything

Be super organised. Mark dark clothes with an initial on the label B (black), G (green), N (navy). Buy plain black socks from the same shop so you always have a matching pair. Label tablets in a bold marker pen to prevent confusion. Keep everyday items in the same place so you don’t have to search frantically for keys, remote controls, pens, scissors. Have a system to recognise toiletries – put shampoo in a pump dispenser, conditioner in a black bottle, use brightly coloured liquid shower gel.

## Feedback from our service users

" I simply wanted to thank you for caring so much about all of us, especially during these particularly challenging times! Even though I don't participate in many activities, the abundance and diversity of info you provide is just great."

"We can't thank you enough for the fantastic support we have had. Mum has a better social life than me! Whenever I go in to her, she says, "hang on, I'm just chatting to so and so or Sight Life"

"I really appreciate you calling every week. Your support has been wonderful. It has been lovely to talk to someone who understands. I had not realised how much of an effect my sight problems were having on my mental wellbeing"

“It was lovely to have someone enquire as to how you are managing. Only a few people from organisations have contacted me. It's nice to know someone cares. We are all in the same boat, but it can feel very lonely and isolated.”

## Data protection and contact from Sight life

Many of you will be aware of the regulations on data protection, called the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), giving people more control over their data and how it is used. Sight Life has always taken its responsibility of collecting and using personal data very seriously.

Please let us know if you would only like to receive certain types of information from us or if you would like us to stop sending you all forms of communication. You can do this by calling us on 029 2039 8900 or emailing ask@sightlife.wales. You can also update your communication preferences, asking to receive this newsletter via email rather than in large print or Braille as an example.

Please also let us know if you have joined the Fundraising Preference Service and selected not to receive fundraising messages or information from us.

**Sight Life**

Jones Court

Womanby Street

Cardiff CF10 1BR

Telephone: **029 2039 8900**

**Gwefan/website:** [www.sightlife.wales](http://www.sightlife.wales/)

**Twitter:** @SightLifeWales1

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/SightLife.Wales](http://www.facebook.com/SightLife.Wales)

**Instagram:** sightlifewales2020

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmsO4dmcCKlt-ouqAzEIssA/featured?disable_polymer=1>

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