



# Sight Action News

Making life better for blind and partially sighted people  
Supported by the Highland & Islands Society for Blind People

**Spring 2015**

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Hello, welcome to the Spring Edition of Sight Action News. The first issue of 2015 includes information on upcoming I.T. training sessions with us, further developments on our digital Talking Book Service, guidance on preventing doorstep crime, alongside the usual updates and some other articles of interest to the community.

As always, remember this is YOUR Newsletter, so we would love to hear from you with any suggestions on the content or indeed any of your interesting news or articles you'd like to share with the rest of us in the Sight Action Community.

To do this, you can contact our Senior Team Leader Gillian at:

**[gillian.mitchell@highlandsensory.org.uk](mailto:gillian.mitchell@highlandsensory.org.uk)**

Alternatively, you can contact us using the details below.

**You can contact Sight Action via - Tel: 01463233663**

**Email: [admin@highlandsensory.org.uk](mailto:admin@highlandsensory.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.sightaction.org.uk](http://www.sightaction.org.uk)**

## HOT OFF THE PRESS

### **ACTIVITY GROUP FOR 12 – 18 YEAR OLDS**

We at Sight Action have been successful in obtaining funding to hold activity days this summer. The age group we are aiming at is 12 to 18 year olds, who are Visually Impaired.

The whole project will be overseen by our qualified staff, with our aim being to help these young people prepare for adult life, by obtaining the necessary skills to look after themselves independently.

We did run a previous group who are all grown up and moved on into adulthood, some of whom have remained friends.

With this in mind we are asking you as a parent of a V.I. young person to speak with them, and put their name forward as a potential member of this youth group.

If your child is interested in this opportunity, please call us on **01463 233663** and ask that their name is added to the list. We will contact you with further information when we have enough interest in this Activity Group, to take this forward.

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### **Talking Book Service**

Some of you will have now received your Boom Boxes and memory sticks. They now arrive in sunshine yellow pouches and each yellow memory stick has our postcode engraved on it.

A new volunteer called Sheila is going out and about taking the boxes to everyone and helping anyone with reading the catalogue.

We have, unfortunately, had to put the price of the Boom Box up from £25 to £30. This is to cover the cost of a long term loan.

If anyone has any audio books on CD they no longer require it would be great to borrow so we can add new titles to our library.

Please do let us know what you feel about the new service and give us a ring if there are any problems

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## Support Groups

Remember these groups meet on a regular basis.

- **Inverness Day Trippers** – 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month
- **Inverness Chat Club** – every Friday excluding most of December
- **Inverness Walking Group** – 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month. The walks commenced in March 2015
- **Dingwall** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month
- **Nairn** – 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month
- **Alness & Invergordon** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month
- **Grantown on Spey** – 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month
- **Aviemore** – last Monday of each month
- **Lochaber** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month
- **Skye & Lochalsh** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month

If you are interested in finding out more information about any of these groups please contact us at Sight Action on 01463 233663 and ask for Sarah.

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## **IT Training**

Here at Sight Action we have volunteers who are able to provide IT training to visually impaired people. There are regular slots on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings and at other times by arrangement.

This training can be for anybody, from someone completely new to the world of computers to people with experience who would like to see what is available in terms of making computers more accessible.

Training can also be provided on the accessibility features available on tablets, iPhones, iPads and other mobile devices.

If you would like to find out more or arrange a session please call Sarah on **01463 233663**.

## **New iPads & Training Sessions**

The weekly iPad training sessions will start on Tuesday May 26<sup>th</sup> and run for six weeks regularly every Tuesday between 10.30 a.m. and 12.00 noon.

The classes will be held at Beechwood and it is important that all 6 classes are attended.

Please give us a ring to put your name down for the classes so that we can make up a final list of people wanting to come.

## **Service Users Forum Update**

## 1. Updates on services –

- Highland Cross have granted us the funds to purchase a new vehicle, which we will obtain in October / November. We are also looking for volunteers required to assist with the Highland Cross fundraising day on 20<sup>th</sup> June.
- Gillian Mitchell has assisted an Occupational Therapy project to produce information for other professionals to standardise aids and adaptations for visually impaired people in Highland. This should mean that if you get a shower installed, it will be one that is easy to use and identify the settings!

## 2. Update from the Cross Party Group, Scottish Parliament.

- Rod Murchison gave an update on the difficulties that were expressed by people at the meeting, when being asked to complete their Bowel Screening Test for the over 50's. We would like to know about any problems that you have encountered.
- Gillian Mitchell raised a question at the Cross Party Group about Aids and Equipment provided by local authorities:
  - the discrepancies from area to area
  - no provision of assistive technology
  - no provision of electronic magnifiers
  - some discrimination between equipment provided for hearing loss and vision loss

This topic has been placed on the agenda for the next Cross Party Group.

- The number of people in Scotland who are blind and Partially Sighted is 34,500 at present with this figure set to double in the next 10 years.

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## **Sight Action Shop**

A big thank you to everyone who donated goods for us to sell in the shop. Also to everyone who helped us during the week.

In total we managed to raise £1,300 which will help us to continue providing the services.

## **Carol-thon**

The Inverness Choral Society sponsored Sight Action at their annual Carol-thon, which was held in the Eastgate Centre on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2014. Over a period of 5 hours the fantastic figure of £2,300 was raised for Sight Action.

## **Polytunnel**

Service Users in the Inner Moray Firth area have received a letter from Gillian with regard to the potential of a poly tunnel garden club for our clients. The site would be supported by Sainsbury's. The project will depend on the interest shown. So again, please put your name forward if you have not already. **This will only go ahead if there is enough interest.**

## **SSE Priority Services**

Scottish & Southern Energy offer a free priority service for the visually impaired in the event of a power cut. To register for this you can call **0800 294 3259** or **0345 072 1900** if using a

mobile. On text phone use **08003165457** or alternatively register online at:

**[www.ssepd.co.uk/PriorityServicesRegister](http://www.ssepd.co.uk/PriorityServicesRegister)**

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## **Western Isles Sensory Centre**

Sight Action has successfully extended their lease on the offices in Stornoway, until the end of March 2016. This means service as usual, opening between 10am and 2pm weekdays.

Our Rehabilitation Officer will visit on a monthly basis as has been our practice for the past 5 years.

I have had the pleasure of serving the residents of Lewis and Harris for the past 5 years and I am happy that we are to continue the service.

I have had some success in holding drop in clinics on Skye. What happens is I set a time and inform those clients that we have not visited recently and invite them to drop into the local surgery, where we use an available consulting room to allow you, our service users, to come in for a chat or to gather information. As Evita my guide dog and I have met almost all of you over the past few years it would be useful for me to check your magnifiers and see if we can be of any further assistance to you.

The clinic idea only works if enough people in the area can attend, and you will still be able to have a home visit as and when you need them.

We are happy to visit anyone on the Western Isles and if there is a demand we will begin the clinics on Lewis as a pilot scheme.

There has been one small change in WISC in that we no longer transfer calls to Inverness outside office hours. There is

now an answer machine in the Stornoway office and messages will be picked up the next working day.

Lastly, I would like to ask all our service users for their help regarding a talking Bible. This was produced on tape many years ago by a congregation on Lewis, and I am keen to preserve this as we now have no copies of this Bible. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find new cassette players, so I want to take the tapes and put them onto a computer and produce the Scriptures in a digital format. Gallic Bibles in large print are not available as far as I know, so a tape or digital version for those who are no longer able to access print would help so many of those in the community who prefer their own language to read their bible. If anyone has one of these cassette Bibles please contact Ishbal Murray at the Stornoway office on **01851 701787**. Thank you sincerely for your help; you are helping many other people enjoy the Word of God once again.

**Raymond Smart**

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## **Badenoch & Strathspey Visual Impairment Awareness Event**

Fancy a nice day out in Badenoch & Strathspey? The Badenoch & Strathspey Visually Impaired Group with the support of Reshaping Care for Older People (RCOP) Networker invite you all to join us for a Community and Visual Impairment Awareness Event on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June, from 11am - 3 pm in the Boat of Garten Community Hall.

The event is free and refreshments will be available for visitors throughout the day.

You will be able to try the latest high tech products from Optelec and Humanware, Guide Dogs, RNIB Scotland and of

course our own Sight Action who will all be displaying equipment and information on the various support services they provide to blind and partially sighted people.

High Life Highland (HLH) Leisure will have taster sessions of Otago exercises (chair based exercises to improve circulation and muscle strength) and HLH Libraries will have information on their services also.

In addition the Scotrail Access and Inclusion Manager will be in attendance to assist with any rail travel queries and the Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport Company will also be there.

We hope to have information on leisure activities and other organisations that support the needs of people with sight loss. Please come along and visit our exhibition.

Make a day of it, visit the event and have lunch or afternoon tea in one of the excellent restaurants in Boat of Garten village or head to Aviemore which is only five minutes away along the A95. RCOP funding to cover transport costs will be available for local VI groups hiring a community minibus to attend this event.

**For more information contact Joy Roberts by email [jroberts473@btinternet.com](mailto:jroberts473@btinternet.com) or Tel. 01497 812456**

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## **Highland & Islands launch Operation Monarda**

Police Scotland, Highland and Islands Division today renewed its commitment to eradicating the scourge of doorstep crime and bogus callers.

Operation Monarda drives home the message: **“If In Doubt, Keep Them Out”**.

If someone arrives to your home unexpectedly:

- ensure your windows and doors are secure.
- make use of door chains and bars.
- don't allow anyone entry to your home unless you have verified their identity by telephone.

Operation Monarda brings together public, private and third sector organisations to help minimise risk and prevent harm to vulnerable and older people from criminals who commit doorstep crime.

It operates as a preventative project, and encompasses engagement work with the general public, as well as enforcement work to target criminals.

Victims of bogus callers and doorstep crime are often unaware the crime has been committed, feel so embarrassed they feel unable to go to the police, as well as fearing a loss of independence, and facing financial uncertainty in the future.

Doorstep crime occurs across Scotland, in every policing division, with more than 1,000 incidents recorded between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014 and 13th February 2015. Approximately £400,000 was taken from victims in that time.

Speaking at the Highland and Islands Division launch, Superintendent Mark MacKay said: “Bogus callers and associated doorstep crime is a vastly under-reported crime so we hope the campaign will encourage members of the public to report incidents.”

“Doorstep crime can affect anyone but we know that the elderly can be particularly vulnerable. Bogus callers and rogue traders can be extremely convincing in their methods in securing the confidence of potential victims. Sadly, many people are convinced by their lies; with potentially devastating effects for individuals and families, financial and otherwise.”

"Even if you do not feel you are likely to fall victim to this type of crime, it is very important to pass on advice to friends, neighbours' or family members who may be more likely to be targeted and provide them with the information and confidence to say no."

"Householders are advised to seek a number of quotes from reputable companies when planning to have work carried out; professional firms will provide description of the work they plan to carry out and what the price entails. Genuine traders will appreciate the need for a cooling off period."

“We don’t recommend dealing with cold-callers for any form of property maintenance or repairs to your home or garden, so if you have any doubts, do not let them into your house. If you have any concerns relating to suspicious activity taking place at the home of a neighbour, friend or family member, please contact Police Scotland or Trading Standards immediately.”

David Crawley from Crimestoppers Scotland said: “Crimestoppers is an independent charity which is committed to helping victims of crime, or those who live in fear of crime, to be able to report, or provide information about crime, anonymously.”

**Call 101 for non-emergencies and general enquiries, in an emergency call 999. If you have information about a crime**

**you can also contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111**

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## **Fund Raising for Sight Action**

Sight Action is now registered with Virgin Money Giving, which enables us to receive funds directly from online donations and sponsored events. Anyone who wishes to do a sponsored event for Sight Action can visit the website at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving> and follow links to set up an event page > search for the chosen charity by name > enter own details > then share the donation page with participants etc. Sight Action would be notified of any funds raised after an event is complete, it's as simple as that!

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## **Eden Court Theatre Audio Description Service**

A service offered on a regular basis at Eden Court, Audio Description (AD) is a narration for blind or visually impaired people describing what's happening on the screen or stage during the natural pauses in the audio. Listened to through a headset, and undetectable for anybody not wearing one, AD is an additional commentary describing body language and movements.

With the service provided by specially trained audio describers, Eden Court has around 8 AD theatre performances each year. Before each AD theatre performance, there is a touch tour, which involves going behind the scenes enabling patrons using AD to walk the set, feel costumes and props, and get an account of where these things appear in the show and their relevance to the story.

Along with the theatre performances, Audio Described film screenings are marked with 'AD' in the Eden Court cinema guide. So, if you haven't been to an audio described performance or film at Eden Court before, come along and give it a try.

## LIVING PAINTINGS

Do you, or would you like to regularly bring together a group of blind or partially sighted people for an enjoyable social event? If so, Living Paintings **Touch To See Book Club** packs could be ideal for you! They create unique touch and sound packs and children's books which are distributed completely free of charge through a postal library. Comprised of special versions of pictures with raised surfaces, which come to life when fingers feel them, along with directional sound recordings - telling the stories of the pictures whilst describing their features. These titles have been designed for use by groups of people to share and explore together.

Each book club resource pack includes:

- 2-3 tactile pictures (10 copies of each) & colour pictures
- Atmospheric audio guides discussing & describing the pictures
- Guidance notes for the group leader, suggestions for discussions, hands-on activities, music, poetry and literature

If you are interested in using the Touch to See Book Club packs for your group, or setting up a new club please contact living paintings on **01635 299771** or you can email: **[mariav@livingpaintings.org](mailto:mariav@livingpaintings.org)** – you can also visit [www.livingpaintings.org](http://www.livingpaintings.org) for further information.

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## In The Kitchen.

Hello again readers, in this issue I'm being optimistic and looking forward to a good summer of salads, both green salads and fruit salads. I now use a slightly larger plate than I need in

order to separate the various components of the salad, dividing the plate into quarters for a basic salad. It's definitely not as pretty as a layered salad but is more practical as the colours together can cause a little confusion and it makes things easier to find and get on the fork. Unless you've bought ready-prepared leaves, you should wash and dry your lettuce. I'm now keeping things more chunky I just find it easier to keep on the fork. Using a safe method cut up your ingredients, I use a D peeler for cheddar-type cheeses peeling along the narrowest edge. This is easier to keep on the fork than grated cheese and keeps a consistent size. Salad dressings can be problematic as they are prone to drip, so I tend to be sparing with the runnier types, and I put mayo or salad cream at the furthest edge from me.

Fruit salads are a joy whatever your favourite combination is and using fresh fruit is much more controllable than the tinned versions, which tend to be much smaller pieces of fruit. The preparation required for a fruit salad can help keep your skill level high. Peeling and chopping are the most problematic of kitchen skills and require practice. Making your own fruit salad allows you to choose the contents, if you don't like what is available in the tins or frozen packs. You could also try a combination of tinned and fresh seasonal fruit. It's all down to personal taste as it is all good for you!

Next time I'll be looking at one-pot meals and slow cooking.

**Raymond Smart**

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## **VOLUNTEER HANDY MAN**

Do not forget that we have a volunteer who can help with one-off jobs – painting a fence, putting up a shelf etc. Please ring us on 01463 233663 and speak to Sarah.

## Discontinued Stock

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Category	Description	Quantity
Magnifier	LED RAYLITE Series 3 Mag Head 11.7D	1
Magnifier	LED RAYLITE Series 3 Mag Head 14.8D	1
Magnifier	LED RAYLITE Series 3 Mag Head 17.7D	1
Magnifier	LED RAYLITE Series 3 Mag Head 31.0D	1
Magnifier	RAYLITE Series 2 RAYLITE 24	1
Magnifier	RAYLITE Series 2 RAYLITE 36	1
Magnifier	RAYLITE Series 2 RAYLITE 44	1
Mobile Phone	EasyProject Easyuse	1
Mobile Phone	Owasys22C	1
Mobile Phone	Emporia Life	2
Audio Player	Plextor Plextalk	1
Landline Phone	Dallas 10	1
Landline Phone	Phone Easy 311c	1
	Audible Spirit Level	1
	Talking tape measure	1

If you are interested in any of the above equipment please give us a ring and speak to Catriona and she can provide prices.