



making life better for blind and partially sighted people

sight action news

Supported by the Highland & Islands Society for Blind People

Winter 2014

Welcome to the Winter Edition of Sight Action News. Along with some general updates, this latest issue includes information on a simple new way of raising funds for Sight Action, information on upcoming IT sessions with us, developments from our recent service user forum meetings, the digital Talking Book Service, an item on long cane maintenance and some other bits and pieces!

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

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

gillian.mitchell@highlandsensory.org.uk

Alternatively call us on 01463 233663

You can contact Sight Action via - Tel: 01463 233663

Email: admin@highlandsensory.org.uk

Website: www.sightaction.org.uk

NEWS & UPDATES

Talking Book Service

A group of our volunteers have started to send out the new catalogue of audio books to people who had received tapes in the past who would like to change over to the USB memory sticks. We also have a couple of volunteers who are more than happy to visit and demonstrate how to use the new digital audio books on whatever equipment you have that will play this format, for example the USB will plug into a computer or a USB player. It is very straightforward so please don't be put off by the change of format!

If you do not have any such equipment to plug the USB memory sticks into, we can show you how to use a 'Boom Box' which we have available at a one-off rental fee of £25 to help cover the cost of the equipment. These devices are small, portable speakers which a USB stick can be connected to for audio playback.

If you would like more information on this, are a previous user and have not yet heard from us, or would like to be added to the list for this service please give us a phone and we'll be happy to assist.

Support Groups

Remember these groups meet on a regular basis.

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

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

On a related note, we are delighted to have recently been provided with some iPad tablet computers with Sainsbury's help which will be used to help clients become more familiar and confident in using them. There are an abundance of fantastic applications available to be used on an iPad which can assist with daily living. We are here to show you how these could potentially help or benefit you. Also if you are ever considering investing in something like this, it may be useful to have a demonstration before you make the commitment!

One-to-one sessions with the new iPads are being arranged via a working partnership with the "Getting I.T Together" project. Dates for these will be set in the Spring so please get in touch on **01463 233663** if you would like to participate, and remember that these sessions are for everybody, from beginners upwards!

Old Magnifiers and Equipment

If you have any old, unused or unsuitable magnifiers lying around that have been issued from Sight Action, these can be re-issued or recycled where possible. You can return any equipment by any of the following methods:-

- Call us for a collection on the usual **01463 233663**
- Post back to us at **Beechwood House, 69-71 Old Perth Road, Inverness, IV2 3JH** marking the parcel “Articles for the blind” – no postage is required.
- Or you can hand in equipment to us here at Beechwood.
- Clients in Caithness can hand in old equipment to either the Sensory Centre on Telford Street, Wick (Mon, Wed & Thu, 10am - 2pm) or 9 Riverside Place, Thurso (Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am – 2pm)

Service Users Forum

So far there have been 4 meetings of the forum to date, with client numbers and activity generated by the group both steadily growing which is very positive. Many topics have been discussed to date, and we'd like to thank those who took the time to complete the “Road Crossings Survey” as the response was magnificent with hundreds of you taking part. This information is currently being used to produce a document highlighting problem areas and areas lacking in safe crossing spots to present to the Highland Council. We were encouraged by our initial meeting with a council representative

as they seem very keen to engage on the topic and work towards solutions to the issues raised.

If you would like to become a part of our Service Users Forum then please give us a call.

Sight Action Shop

We are having a shop in Inverness city centre from the 18th – 25th of February 2015. After Christmas we will be looking for bric-a-brac donations so if you want to get your spring clean out of the way early and have anything that you could donate just give us a ring and ask for Sarah on **01463 233663**.

Drop-In Centres

- **Ullapool & Gairloch** – held every 3 months on the 2nd Tuesday of the month – March/June/Sept/Dec. Ullapool in the morning and Gairloch in the afternoon.
- **Kyleakin** – Held on the 1st Tuesday of every month.
- **Aviemore** – held on the last Monday of every month
- **Inverness** – Held daily Mon – Fri, 12 – 3pm at SeeHear Centre, 16 Kenneth Street. Catriona is also available up at Beechwood, between 10am – 11.45 am on each of these days.

Handy Person Volunteer

If you live in Nairn or Inverness, we have a new volunteer who is keen to help out with simple one-off tasks. For example painting a fence, painting a room or a wall, replacing lampshades, gardening - eg: weeding, pruning, sweeping paths etc. Please call Sarah on **01463 233663** for further info.



DisabledGo Update

Mentioned in the last newsletter, on this website you will find free, detailed access information to thousands of venues across the UK and the Republic of Ireland: shops, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, railway stations, hotels, museums, hospitals and more. Around 1000 premises in and around Inverness have been audited by specialist surveyors so far with the assistance of the Highland Council and Inverness access panel with a view to maximising independence and choice for people in accessing their local area and the places they want to visit. They are hoping to encompass more than just the larger cities in future. It can be a very useful resource for locals and tourists alike, for planning days out, short breaks or visits when you want to know if your access requirements will be met when you get there. Check the site at **www.disabledgo.com**

EASY FUNDRAISING TO HELP SIGHT ACTION!



If you do any of your shopping online, then it is now possible to raise funds for your chosen charity (Sight Action hopefully!) There are no catches and no cost to you, the customer, as the donations come from the retailers and not from your pockets!

- 1) Register for free on easyfundraising.org.uk by clicking 'Create an account'
- 2) Search for 'Sight Action - Inverness' and then choose 'Support this cause'
- 3) All you require to register is an email address, and you can opt out of the websites mailing list at the registration stage, so you won't receive any junk mail or offers etc.

After registering and logging in, you would simply search for the company name you wish to shop with on easyfundraising.org and click on the link to their website to shop as usual. You can also search by a description of what you want, for example – 'flowers by post', and a list of participating companies who offer this would display.

Participating companies include M & S, NEXT, Amazon, Tesco, Argos, Currys, Expedia, John Lewis, Debenhams and over 2,700 more. They donate different amounts, some are more generous than others and you will be able to see how much you have raised for the charity. It's a great, simple way to raise funds, and if a lot of people do it, especially with

Christmas on the horizon and more people buying online, the money raised soon mounts up and can be invested in our services!

Highland Council Website

The Highland Council constructed a new website in July. It now has new accessibility features which can be found at the web pages below –

www.highland.gov.uk/accessibility/settings

www.highland.gov.uk/bsl

Darren MacLeod, their Digital Services Manager, wants you to look at the new tools and give feedback on them if possible. He can be reached via the details below.

Highland Council Headquarters,

Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Telephone - 01463 216680

SMS - 07818 520122

Email - darren.macleod@highland.gov.uk

OTHER ARTICLES:-

Keeping Fit!

Hello all, my name is Katarzyna Jakimczuk, or Kasia for short. I am a 'twilight' creature – functioning at the borders of both the sighted and not sighted worlds. I have been thinking of organising something new for VIPs and would like to ask around for your opinions.

As I imagine some of you may sometimes feel a bit isolated from many social/physical activities which are popular in mainstream society. I have recently discovered the joy and health benefits of trying to keep fit by jogging, attending capoeira (a Brazilian martial art combining elements of dance and music) and jazz dance classes. In all of these situations I have found people kind, open and willing enough to include more of us into these types of activities.

At the moment there is a nationwide event running called *Get Scotland Dancing* which aims to encourage more people in Scotland to get active and participate in dance. As far as I am aware there are not too many events which are inclusive of the blind or partially-sighted community. Due to this fact, I would like to suggest organising something similar if there is a possibility of arranging it with our resources. But what kinds of things would each of you be interested in doing? For instance would you prefer a one-off taster session of different forms of dance / exercise, or a day out based around dancing or martial arts? Or would you have the time and energy to enrol in a regular class? Any feedback / ideas would be most welcome in order to get the ball rolling! Please do get in touch with Sight Action and they will pass your details on to Kasia.

Long Cane Maintenance

By Raymond – Rehab Officer

For a lot of you reading this article, you have no need for any kind of cane but there are however, a significant number of cane users in the Highlands. For all of you who do use the

long cane, and wish to keep it in good working order, checking it over once a week can be a good practice and can save you a lot of grief in future! Use a touch of petroleum jelly on the joints where the cane slides into the other sections, it will make it easier for the sections to come apart and go together. Another habit which can increase the lifespan of your cane is to leave it open, or built up, whenever you can. This will reduce tension on the cord inside and prevent it wearing on the joints when folding constantly.

For those using the modern roller tip cane – wear and tear of the roller ball is unavoidable, but regular inspections can reduce the chance of it failing when you least expect it. It's always a good idea to keep a spare roller tip for when it does eventually wear through. You should have some warning of this though, when the ball becomes more cone-shaped, so regular checks can help you gauge when a new one is needed.

SOUP MAKER

By Raymond – Rehab Officer

It's not very often I find an item that I think was meant for visually impaired people, but the Soup Maker is one such item. In roughly 30 minutes you can produce one and a half pints of soup. It works like a kettle and a blender combined just adding some chopped veg, stock or cooked meat, this machine will cook it and blend it into a smooth soup. I've never tried a broth or used lentils, if I want a thicker consistency I use potatoes to thicken it. As you know, independence is what we want for all

of our service users. You can buy ready cut veg in the supermarket, personally I see it as a challenge to prepare my own veg and can then combine whatever I like.

I have found my Soup Maker easy to pour out into a bowl then what remains can go into a container to be refrigerated. It is also easy to clean out, it switches the heat off when required so the soup will not burn, and you do not need to stand stirring it as it does this for you as well.

These Soup Makers are available in some larger retail outlets and online, so you may need to shop around, or better still get somebody to do some research on them. Enjoy your soup making and send us any interesting or unusual recipes you make. I often add a bit of root ginger to give an extra heat to my soups, it makes a nice change!

BEECHWOOD HOUSE

Christmas Closure

We are closed from and including December 24th 2014 until we re-open on Monday January 5th 2015.

Opening hours: Mon – Thurs, 9 – 5pm and Fridays 9 – 4pm

Training Closure

Sight Action's office at Beechwood House will also be closed on the 4th Wednesday of every month from 1.00 so the staff can undertake in-house training. The answer phone will be on and there will be a notice on the door.

Change in opening hours

Please note that Sight Action will now close at 4.00 p.m. every Friday from now onwards.

KENNETH STREET RESOURCE CENTRE

The Resource Centre at Kenneth Street will be closed from Tuesday December 16th 2014 and we will re-open on Monday January 12th 2015. The Resource Centre at Beechwood will be open until and including 23rd December 2014 and will re-open on January 5th 2015.

As this information is important it might be worthwhile detaching this last page from the newsletter and keeping it somewhere safe.

