

CONTACT

Spring Issue 58



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Contents:

Editorial	1
Janice O'Donnell – An Obituary	2
Quote for the Quarter	2
Meet the....New Staff Member	3
RNIB Patient Research	3
Cost of Living, Sight Loss & Ageing Process	4
'Talking Tables'	5
Geranium Day 2017	6
Professional Vision Services	7
Community Low Vision Service	8
The Visual Impairment Leisure Group	8
Tech Talk	9
SV Quiz Night	9
The Dreaded PIP!	9
Help for Carers	12
Regular Dates	13
Useful Telephone Numbers	14

Front cover photo provided by Freelmages

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring Edition 2017 of CONTACT magazine.

Hush, Can you hear it?
The rustling in the grass,
Bringing you the welcome news
Winter's day is past.

Poem by Pam Fenn.

Source: www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/it-must-be-spring

Spring is such a miraculous time of year! We all seem to appreciate longer days, warmer weather, daffodils and the crocus in bloom. As we start a fresh new year, we at Sutton Vision, hope all our members enjoy the 'fresh' look of Contact.

Comments and contributions from Sutton Vision members and local partners are always welcome and may be sent to our Editor, Michael Parsons, at editor@suttonvision.org.uk. We are always interested to hear what you think of the newsletter and to receive ideas about articles for inclusion.

Please note that the deadline for the Summer edition of Contact is Thursday 8th June 2017.

Janice O'Donnell – An Obituary

It is with great sadness that we record here the death, on Christmas Eve, of Janice O'Donnell. My wife, Hilary, and I knew her for many years before she joined the SAB Board of Trustees in August 2007. Janice became involved with our Charity and was very active in raising funds through organising events such as Bridge sessions and quizzes. She was always keen to help others put on larger events such as fund raising garden parties. She could often be seen offering help in the office of SAB, later to become known as Sutton Vision (SV). She also represented the Charity at some important official meetings in the Borough.

Janice developed Macular Disease herself, which she found difficult to come to terms with but, because of it, was able to speak first-hand about the challenges presented by sight loss. Bearing in mind that Janice was coming up for 80 years of age when she died and that she suffered a great deal with other medical problems in addition to her sight loss, Janice must be admired for her determined and constant efforts in supporting, and raising the profile of, Sutton Vision throughout. Janice will, indeed, be very much missed.

Eric Kennedy
Chair of Trustees.

Quote for the Quarter

Continuing our series of Quotes for the Quarter, the following is quite apt:

"...Love, love lots, and love unconditionally!"
(taken from the Eulogy to Janice O'Donnell's Thanksgiving Service).

Meet the...New Staff Member

Welcome to Ann Ryan – our new Sight Advisor



My name is Ann Ryan; I work as a Sight Advisor in the Eye Unit at St Helier Hospital. Prior to this I worked in the Eye Casualty Triage Department for two years. I liaised with doctors and nurses with regard to patient's medical conditions.

It is never easy to tell someone that we cannot offer a treatment for sight loss or discuss registration with them. However, there are many strategies that can be incorporated into the practices of the Ophthalmologist that will ensure that the people we encounter experience a smoother journey into accepting and living with low vision.

If at any time in the future you have an appointment at St Helier Hospital Eye Unit and would like some support please telephone me on 0792 065 0613 or 020 8296 2000 Ext 8718, alternatively call the Sutton Vision office on 020 8409 7166. If you happen to see me in the waiting area at the Hospital please come and say hello, I look forward to meeting many of you.

RNIB Patient Research

Living with AMD, Cataracts or Glaucoma?

RNIB want to hear from you. Now's your chance to have your say on your treatment.

In 2017, decision makers will be rewriting the guidelines that tell care services, like hospitals, across England how to treat and manage these eye conditions. It's really important that they

know what matters to you when it comes to the treatment of your condition.

If you're willing to take part in a short survey and/or a telephone interview about your experiences visit www.rnib.org.uk/yoursayyourtreatment or contact Royal National Institute of Blind People direct on Tel: 020 7391 2123 or email: campaigns@rnib.org.uk

Cost of Living, Sight Loss & Ageing Process

The Cost of Living for People with Sight Loss Increases Significantly with Severity and Age!

The cost of everyday living for a severely sight impaired person of pension age is a hefty 73% more than for a pensioner who is not visually impaired, a new study finds.

Published by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University and national sight loss charity Thomas Pocklington Trust, the report Sight Loss and Minimum Income Standards is based on detailed group discussions among people with sight loss to identify the additional budget needed, with the exclusion of housing costs, in order for a severely sight impaired person of pension age living alone to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living.

This phase of research can be combined with previous studies which also utilised this Minimum Income Standard (MIS) approach to provide a picture of how the additional needs and costs of a single visually impaired person vary depending on their age and severity of sight loss. Total additional costs per week (excluding housing costs) for a single person, compared to someone who is fully sighted, are as follows:

- Working Age: £50.33 (Sight Impaired) £120.43 (Severely SI)
- Pension Age: £77.82 (Sight Impaired) £135.61 (Severely SI)

Key findings of the study include:

- Both severity of sight loss and ageing bring extra costs, which increase further when these factors combine
- Additional costs tend to be greatest where they involve regular human help, such as cleaning support or taxi journeys – so those who feel the most vulnerable can face particularly high costs
- Someone of pension age could face high extra costs even with less severe sight loss, due to the joint impact of deteriorating sight and lower mobility

To place these findings in context, a new phase of research, which started in February 2017, will seek to provide evidence around the sources of income of visually impaired people and how these compare to MIS budgets, as well as discovering how those with limited incomes adapt and cope in their daily lives.

The Research Findings are available as a PDF and as a Word document. The Full Report is available as a PDF and as a Word document.

For more information or for a free accessible version, please contact research@pocklington-trust.org.uk.

Sutton Vision 'Talking Tables'

We are delighted to announce the start of a new initiative offering advice, information and awareness of sight loss.

The drop-in sessions will be facilitated by Sutton Vision volunteers on a monthly basis and will take place at the Garden Café, Wallington Library, Shotfield, Wallington between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Look out for the yellow balloon!

“Talking Tables” is for the community as a whole to find out more about services and information available to people living with a visual impairment, their friends and families.

We are in the process of starting two new groups, one in Carshalton and one in Cheam, please check our website regularly to see when they are due to commence.

Geranium Day 2017



Geranium Day is Thursday 18th May 2017

Are you able to help us please on Geranium Day?

If you are able to collect for one or two hours in the morning or afternoon in Sutton High Street for Geranium Day it would really be appreciated. Please contact Amanda at the office on 020 8409 7166 or email amandalarter@suttonvision.org.uk

The Greater London Fund for the Blind (GLFB) was formed in 1921 by Sir Arthur Pearson who was also founder of both the Daily Express and the national charity St Dunstan's in 1915 (which is now known as Blind Veterans UK) for soldiers blinded by war. Sir Arthur had glaucoma and was blind. Just before he died he organised a "Geranium Day" appeal in London to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by blind and partially sighted people living with sight loss.

Today the GLFB is a fundraising organisation and funds the work of its nine member charities of which Sutton Vision is a member. GLFB reserves a third of its income to make special grants to other local charities and organisations which request financial assistance from the GLFB e.g. "Blind for Business" an organisation working with two hundred employers to help raise the hopes and ambitions of visually impaired people to be treated at interviews and in jobs on the same level as sighted people.

The other eight member organisations of GLFB are as follows: Blind Aid (formerly Metropolitan Society for the Blind, CLARITY, Croydon Vision, Kingston Upon Thames Association for the Blind, Merton Vision, Middlesex Association for the Blind, SeeAbility and Sight for Surrey.

The funds received from the GLFB by these organisations enable them to provide a range of services which include training and employment programmes, advice about equipment and facilities and support from the point of diagnosis through the entire rehabilitative process for adults, children and people with dual sensory loss.

This information is taken from the GLFB website
www.glfb.org.uk

So if you can please help us to collect for GLFB
Thursday 18th May 2017
we would be happy to hear from you.

Professional Vision Services

Low Vision Focus Day

Professional Vision Services will be holding a Low Vision Focus Day here at Sutton Vision on Thursday 13th April 2017. It will run between 10.00am – 2.30pm. If you are interested in attending please phone Vanessa on 020 8409 7166 to make an appointment.

Professional Vision Services manufacture and sell low vision aids to enhance reading.

Please see enclosed flyers for more details.

Community Low Vision Service

Sutton Vision, with funding from Sutton Clinical Commissioning Group, runs a fortnightly Community Low Vision Clinic at our premises in Sutton.

You will have an assessment with our Optometrist to find the solutions and establish which magnifying devices (if any) and other equipment will be of most help. Any equipment prescribed by our optometrist will be on a long term loan basis. A specialist rehabilitation officer from the Sensory Impairment Team will be available to give advice on your everyday needs, difficulties and discuss your goals. This service is available to people who have been diagnosed with low vision (a sight problem which is not correctable by spectacles), who live in the London Borough of Sutton and who are not already using the low vision clinic at St Helier Hospital (Collisons).

Our Low Vision Clinics are by appointment only. To book an appointment or ask any questions about the low vision clinics or the resource centre, please contact Vanessa Valentine on 020 8409 7166. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Visual Impairment Leisure Group

Over the years a number of VI people and friends have met on a regular basis at various venues in the Borough for social groups and activities. This group (formerly RLC) has decided to be known as “Visually Impaired Leisure Group” which they feel reflects the change in nature of the informal peer led approach to their gatherings. Their activities remain the same and are published regularly on Sutton Vision’s website and in the quarterly newsletter, Contact.

The V I Leisure Group organises its own programme and acts as the point of contact for participants. Although Sutton Vision supports and encourages the Group and their activities, those

partaking should be aware that any events organised directly by the V I Leisure Group are independent of Sutton Vision and are the responsibility of the V I Leisure Group only. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Sue Christie on 07891 783291 or e-mail susanchristie48@outlook.com

New Dates for Tech Talk

Join us for our drop-in sessions here in our Resource Centre. Bring your Smart device along to learn more useful tips about going online, apps, accessibility options and peer support. Thursday 18th May, 15th June, 20th July 2017. To book please call 020 8409 7166.

STOP PRESS - Quiz Night/Fish 'n' Chips

We are delighted to say that Steve, our Quiz Master, is already setting the questions for our planned quiz night. Previous evenings have been a great success; teams of six or alternatively we can put a team together for you. The date is to be confirmed, please call for further information and to provisionally book your place; you can always cancel if the date isn't convenient.

The Dreaded PIP!

There has been a great deal of media coverage in the last year or so about the introduction of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as a replacement for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Through my volunteering at Sutton Vision and at RNIB and as a member of a couple of Retinitis Pigmentosa [RP] groups on Facebook, I had heard a lot of adverse comments and stories about PIP.

So I was not too happy when, in early March 2016, I received my letter from the DWP telling me I had to apply for PIP or my DLA would cease; I had 14 days to register my intention to claim. I made the phone call, I had to give details of my sight registration, my GP, my hospital consultants and any medication I was taking. I was told that my DLA would continue during the PIP application process and that I would receive the application form within 28 days. When the form arrived I was horrified to find it contained 36 pages of questions!

I mentioned the PIP form to my volunteer co-ordinator at RNIB. He suggested that I use their Form Filling service. At his suggestion I rang DWP and asked for an extension to the 21 day limit on returning the form. When I explained to DWP that I was seeking help from RNIB they immediately gave me a fourteen day extension. I made an appointment to speak to one of the RNIB team of form fillers. This is a telephone appointment during which they complete a template of the PIP form on their computer. I spent over ninety minutes on the phone with a very experienced volunteer at RNIB. She was lovely, knowledgeable, understanding and very thorough. She took me through the form question by question. Often making me think about and expand my answers to make sure I was giving full and honest answers to give a true picture of the difficulties I face on a daily basis; not the upbeat positive face I normally present. I was then sent the printed out completed form to check. I signed the form and together with a covering letter from the RNIB confirming they had assisted me it was sent to DWP.

I then got a letter from DWP calling for me to attend an assessment. They wanted me to go to a centre in Wandsworth at 8.45am. I rang and asked if I could change the time to an afternoon so that my partner could accompany me. They gave me an afternoon appointment in Vauxhall. A much easier journey direct from my local station at Worcester Park.

The assessment was conducted by a nurse. She was very nice, very professional and could type very fast! She asked lots of questions about how I get around, using my white stick, and

about how I manage in the bathroom, kitchen etc. She listened carefully and noted everything we told her. I was also asked to read a standard eye chart and from a printed card. I explained that the lighting was just about perfect but I would be unable to read as far as I did in either brighter or darker conditions, which she noted. The assessor explained that she would submit a report and I would receive a written decision within four to six weeks. I was reimbursed my travel costs.

Previously I was receiving both elements of DLA at the lower level. When my PIP decision arrived I was very pleased. I was awarded High Rate Mobility and Lower rate Personal Care. I was also given a ten year review date. In financial terms I am receiving two and a half times under PIP than I was under DLA.

The best advice I was given about PIP was to be absolutely and brutally honest and be prepared to embarrass yourself; both when completing the form and at the assessment. There is no point putting on a brave face and talking about how well you cope. Tell them about all the difficulties you have. Modesty will cost you financially. This proved to be excellent advice.

My additional advice is to take your husband/wife/partner/best friend with you. Delma explained the difficulties I experience whilst showering. My award showed that the points I was awarded for that difficulty proved I met the required threshold for the personal care element. I also strongly advise you not to try and complete the PIP form yourself. As soon as you are told you need to claim, ring the RNIB on 0303 123 9999 and ask for the help of their Form Filling Service.

Good Luck!

Adrian Andrews
Sutton Vision Volunteer.

Help for Carers

Help for Carers is a not for profit company that specialises in home based support for people that look after someone with a care need caused by disability, illness or age. They offer highly skilled, friendly carers who can provide personal care and companionship, give medication and do bits of light housework.

Their Homecare Service is for anyone who needs a break from caring, be that an afternoon or even a whole night. It's all about helping carers maintain their quality of life. Care staff are well trained to deal with a number of conditions including dementia, palliative care and mental health and are trained in first aid, food hygiene and health and safety.

Homecare create a care plan tailored to each person's care needs. For more information call **020 8648 9677** during office hours or see their website for more details
www.helpforcarers.org.uk

(Sutton Vision have been asked to share “Help for Carers” information and encourage people who may be interested to contact them direct. SV don't endorse them or other service providers/companies but are happy to share information.)

Regular Dates

For information on any of these activities please call Sutton Vision on 020 8409 7166

Event	Date	Venue
Music Group	2nd Monday of each month 12.15 – 2.30 pm	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
News & Muse Group	3rd Monday of each month 12.15 – 2.30 pm	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
Social Eyes	Alternate Thursdays 2.00 – 4.00 p.m	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
Sutton Vision Talking Tables for Advice & Info	3 rd Wednesday of each month 10.00 a.m.–12.00 noon	Garden Café, Wallington Library, Shotfield
Friendly Club	Alternate Wednesdays 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.	Thomas Wall Centre, Benhill Ave, Sutton
Hello! Club	Every Thursday 10.00 a.m -12.00 noon	Christchurch & St Philip, Cheam Common Road, Worcester Park
Sutton Macular Group Monthly Meeting	2 nd Monday of the month 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon	Friends Meeting House Cedar Road, Sutton
VI Leisure Group Coffee Morning Waterstones	1 st Friday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Group Book Club	4 th Monday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Lunch Prince of Wales Pub	3 rd Tuesday of each month from 12.00 noon	The Prince of Wales, 28 Malden Road, Cheam,
VI Leisure Eve. The Hope Pub	1 st Monday of each month from 7.00 p.m.	The Hope Pub, 48 West Street, Carshalton
VI Leisure Group Coffee Morning Wallington	2 nd Wednesday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Garden Café, Wallington Library



Useful Telephone Numbers

The following list of useful numbers includes an emergency number for the London Borough of Sutton and Sutton Eye Unit.
St Helier Hosp Eye Unit 020 8296 3817

St Helier Hosp Eye Unit **EMERGENCY** 020 8296 3817

Sight Advisor Ann Ryan 020 8296 2000 (Ex 8718)
07920 650 613

RNIB/Action for Blind People Helpline 0303 123 9999

London Borough of Sutton 020 8770 5000

L B of Sutton Referral Point 020 8770 4565

Advice Link Partnership Sutton (ALPS) 020 8254 2616

Age UK (Sutton) 020 8770 4090

Macular Society (National) 01264 350 551

Macular Society (Sutton) 07970 525 143

Friendly Club 020 8669 4106

Sutton Carers Centre 020 8296 5611

Sutton Talking Newspaper 020 3759 6679