

MANX
BLIND WELFARE
SOCIETY



MOVING FORWARD


SIGHT MATTERS



INTRODUCTION

Manx Blind Welfare Society was founded 85 years ago and continues to deliver support and assistance to the blind and visually impaired community of the Isle of Man. Moving Forward sets out our aims and ambitions for the next five years of our charity's journey.

Moving Forward has evolved from an independent, professional review of our charity, which was commissioned and completed through 2019. The review was a process of consultation which incorporated listening to the views, experiences and aspirations of our Members, and other key stakeholders. This included staff, volunteers and professionals from a range of agencies in the private, public and third sector, and the benchmarking of our organisation's services with similar charities in other jurisdictions.

We intended to publish Moving Forward at our AGM at the end of March 2020 but Coronavirus has caused a delay. In the intervening period we have learned a lot about ourselves, our Members and Volunteers and our organisation. As, with the rest of the Island, we quickly adapted and were able to continue to provide the majority of our services. This said, that process of learning revealed not only the depth of commitment and support within the charity, but also brought some opportunities to further improve our services. Moving Forward incorporates our aspirations to further strengthen our resilience, in order to meet any challenges that may present themselves in future.

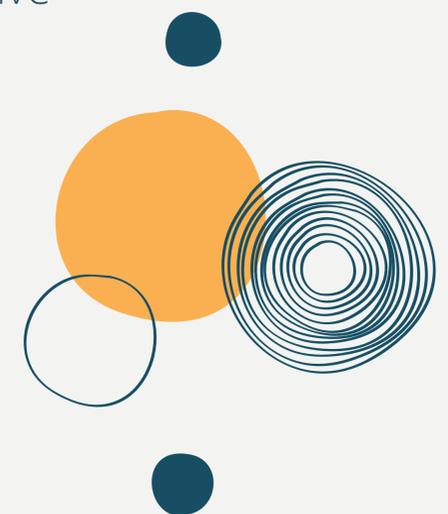




We would like to share Moving Forward with everyone associated with the Society to be clear about what we hope to achieve. In turn, we hope that it will encourage people to support us as we develop services to improve the lives of a vulnerable group of more than 500 people of all ages that we are able to support – day-in, day-out.

All of our services are designed for sight impaired people. Most importantly we ensure that they are involved or represented and consulted in that process. This strategy is no different: Moving Forward presents our strategic vision for the next five years.

Mr J.C. Fargher MBE, CP, JP, BA, FCA
Chairman of Sight Matters (Manx Blind Welfare Society)



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

We have operated our services under the name Manx Blind Welfare Society since it was established in alignment with the Isle of Man Blind Welfare Act 1937.

In more recent years the Society has received significant comments and feedback from Members, Volunteers and Staff, suggesting that our name should change. We have received advice from referring agencies, including clinical professionals, who have indicated that aspects of 'Manx Blind Welfare Society' can convey negative understanding to patients – complicating or even preventing referrals for individuals who would otherwise benefit from our services.

In response, we have decided that our charity will continue as Manx Blind Welfare Society, but our core services will be delivered under the operational services name 'Sight Matters'. This name was selected after careful consideration by our Trustees and Executive Committee, following input from our Members, Volunteers and Staff before adoption at our AGM in 2020.

We are grateful for the honest and frank feedback that has helped us to arrive at our new name, which we hope shall ensure our services are inclusive to all and enable us to deliver our services to individuals and families as early as possible when sight loss is diagnosed.



ABOUT SIGHT MATTERS

Sight Matters is committed to supporting the interests of over 500 people who are registered with us and who are living with the challenges presented to them by sight loss. Those challenges range from people who have become isolated, depressed and often feeling that they have become disenfranchised from society.

Operating out of our purpose designed highly accessible headquarters, we provide a wide range of services across the whole of the Island. All our services are provided free at the point of delivery.

Those services are delivered by a dedicated, professional and friendly staff team and a special set of volunteers consisting of over 200 individuals. We estimate that 40% of our work is undertaken by our trained voluntary teams.

We are financially independent, relying entirely upon funding generated through fundraising activities, sponsorship, partnerships, donations and legacies, to maintain and improve our services and further extend our reach.



SOME OF OUR SERVICES

**REHABILITATION AND
INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT**

**SUPPORTING INCLUSION AND
WELFARE**

**EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND
COPING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

VISION AWARENESS TRAINING

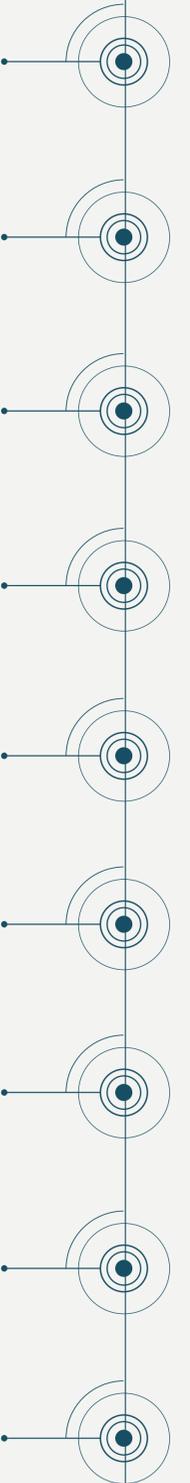
**YOUNG PEOPLES' ACTIVITY
GROUP**

**A RANGE OF SPORTING
ACTIVITIES**

**WEEKLY RECORDED NEWS AND
EXTENSIVE AUDIO LIBRARY
SERVICE**

**OPTOMETRIST-LED LOW
VISION CLINIC**

**LUNCHEON CLUBS (3 DAYS A
WEEK)**



OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our Vision

For all blind and visually impaired people in our Island community to lead inclusive, independent lives and for the Island to become a centre of good practice where everyone with a hidden disability may enjoy fulfilling, valued lives, free of discrimination.

Our Mission

The promotion of good eye health, the delivery of person-centred holistic support to those with a visual impairment and enhancing the inclusion, participation and independence of blind and partially sighted people of all ages and abilities.

OUR OPERATIONAL ETHOS

To deliver professional, compassion-based services with a focus on the needs of the individual, designed to end isolation and enhance the inclusion and independence of sight-impaired people.

To help sight impaired people whenever they may need us throughout their lifetime, through the delivery of person-centred support services tailored to their needs.

To maintain the emotional, physical, educational and financial wellbeing of blind and visually impaired people in the Isle of Man.

To develop a sustainable programme to build resource capacity, strengthen income streams and expand opportunities to work with others, ensuring a secure future for our charity and the essential services we provide.

To introduce a set of strategic aims to support the delivery of our vision, mission and strategic directions.

AIM 1: ENABLING AND EMPOWERING

We shall strive to give people living with the challenges of sight loss a stronger voice and greater influence in areas of policy and legislation, so that decisions impact positively on their lives.

We shall work to ensure that our Members are better equipped to fully participate in all areas of society, and in particular those areas they choose.

Our Members have expressed concerns about accessibility of information, facilities and services which sometimes leaves them feeling disenfranchised from decisions that impact on their lived experiences. To address this, **we shall:**

- Build on our relationships with Government departments and local authorities, taking every opportunity to lobby their support for improvements to all areas of accessibility for blind and visually impaired people.
- Encourage the private and public sector to increase their use of our freely available advisory resources to improve the ability of blind and visually impaired people to safely access their services and demonstrate their commitment to a more inclusive society.
- Proactively use our resources to represent our Members in any appropriate way necessary to ensure that all, or any of our Members, receive fair treatment and mitigate against unreasonable or unjustified exclusion in any area of society.
- Provide the best support and advice possible to visually impaired people and their families.



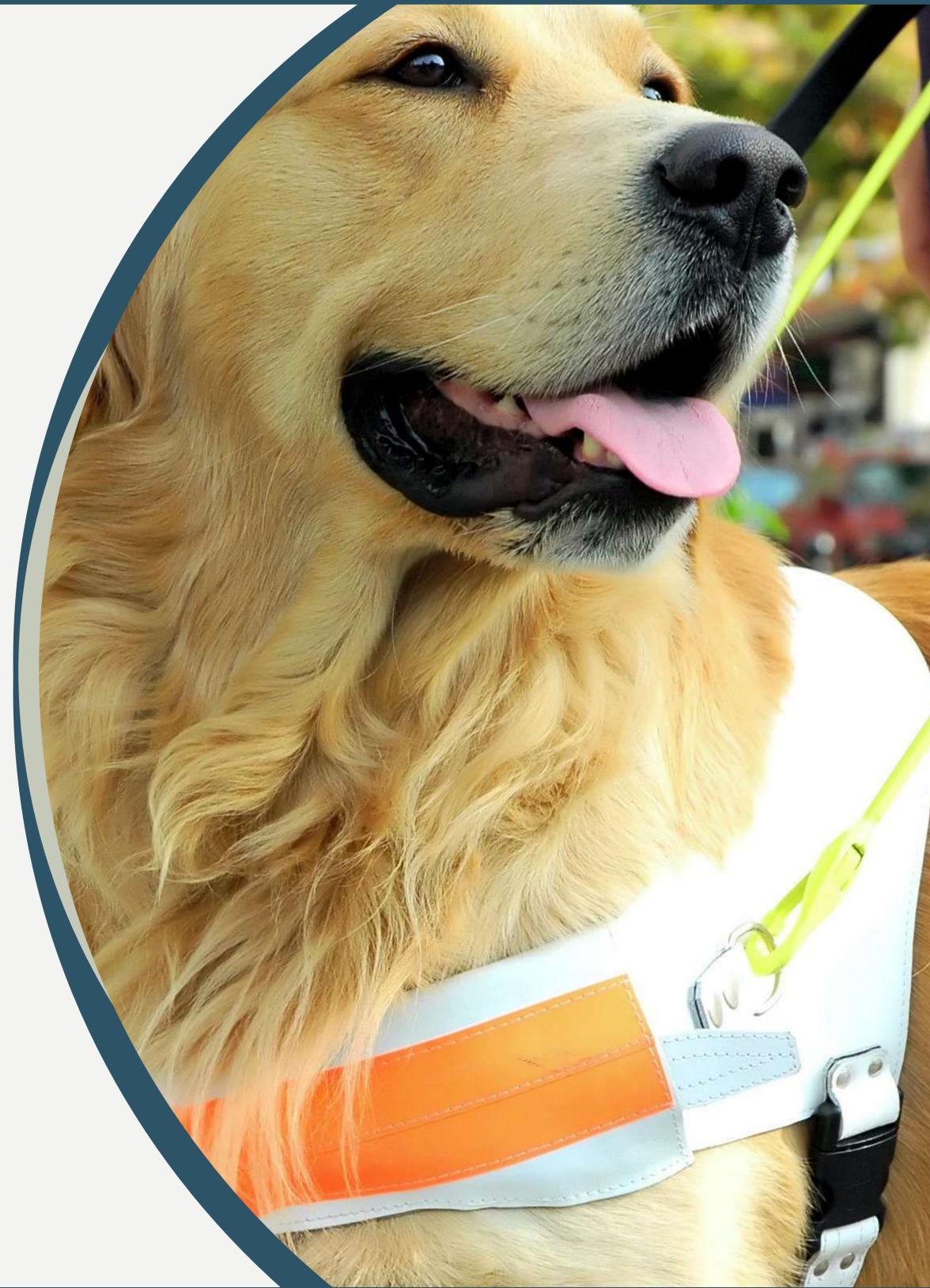
"I'VE WORKED HARD TO GET MY QUALIFICATIONS, BUT I STILL FEEL VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IS VIEWED AS A HANDICAP TO RECRUITMENT BY EMPLOYERS" - YOUNG SIGHT MATTERS' MEMBER

AIM 2: OPPORTUNITY AND CHOICE

We shall work with our Members and others to improve employment and independent living opportunities whenever necessary, using support from the Equality Act 2017 to ensure a consistent and fair approach to inclusion.

To ensure people of all ages receive the right levels of support when they need it, the way they want it, and to help them achieve their goals and fulfil their potential, **we shall:**

- Focus on areas such as education, training, technology and employment.
- Further develop our excellent rapport with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture's Visually Impaired Services team and take every opportunity to support that relationship.
- Look to work with Government whenever possible, lobby for employment opportunities for visually impaired people across all sectors, and develop business confidence in the value of visually impaired people in the workplace.
- Engage with employers in all sectors to promote a culture of equality across the local workplace to ensure all capable and qualified people are consistently provided with recruitment opportunities.

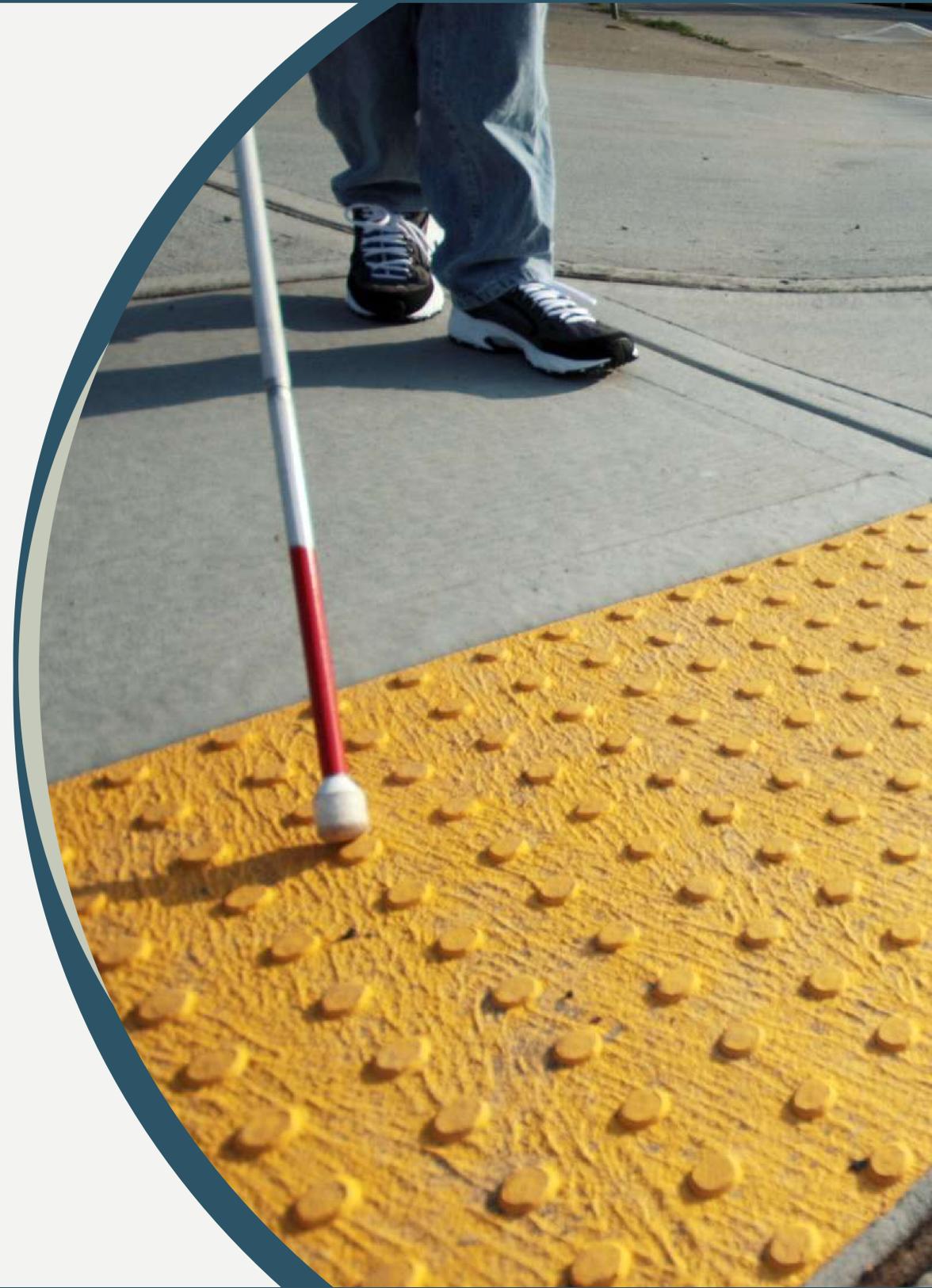


AIM 3: INDEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING

We have a strong track record in this area, and, in recent years, we have collected wide-ranging evidence of the beneficial outcomes and tangible improvements in people's levels of independence. We also have detailed feedback from Members about how we might offer additional help in this area.

In order to support our Members' independence and wellbeing **we shall:**

- Work to ensure visually impaired children and adults have improved access to social activities and confidence building experiences.
- Support our Members in every way to gain the independence they need to participate as fully as possible in society, and develop opportunities to enhance their physical and psychological wellbeing.
- Support our young people to have fun! This will include, building an even wider range of activities, and learning of their choice into their adventure programme.
- Continue to deliver services even in times of crisis. COVID-19 had a massive impact across our Island, with blind and visually impaired people feeling additional emotional impacts from isolation.
- Provide a secure outdoor space to help visually impaired people regularly connect with others while benefiting from being in a natural environment.



AIM 4: SUSTAINING SERVICES

The delivery of our services relies exclusively on the kindness of individual supporters, businesses and the generosity of our benefactors. Our financial independence is one of our greatest strengths, and enables us to make operational, tactical and strategic decisions to benefit our Members expeditiously. This financial independence is vital to ensure that our services can be delivered now and into the future.

To ensure more people understand the work we do, the challenges blind and visually impaired people face, and how individuals, businesses and organisations can support us to extend, improve and sustain our services, **we shall:**

- Develop a Marketing and Fundraising Strategy for the organisation with an emphasis on meaningful, tangible examples of what has been and can be achieved for blind and visually impaired people creating a range of regular income streams to underwrite our long-term financial sustainability.
- Increase public, private and third sector collaboration through partnership so we can deliver successful outcomes.
- Seek to explore the most appropriate areas of engagement for this type of joint working.
- Develop a structured program of volunteer recruitment, building upon and strengthening capacity, with volunteers joining service support hubs adding further value and satisfaction to their experience.
- Further support and develop our internal team with training, support and professional development.

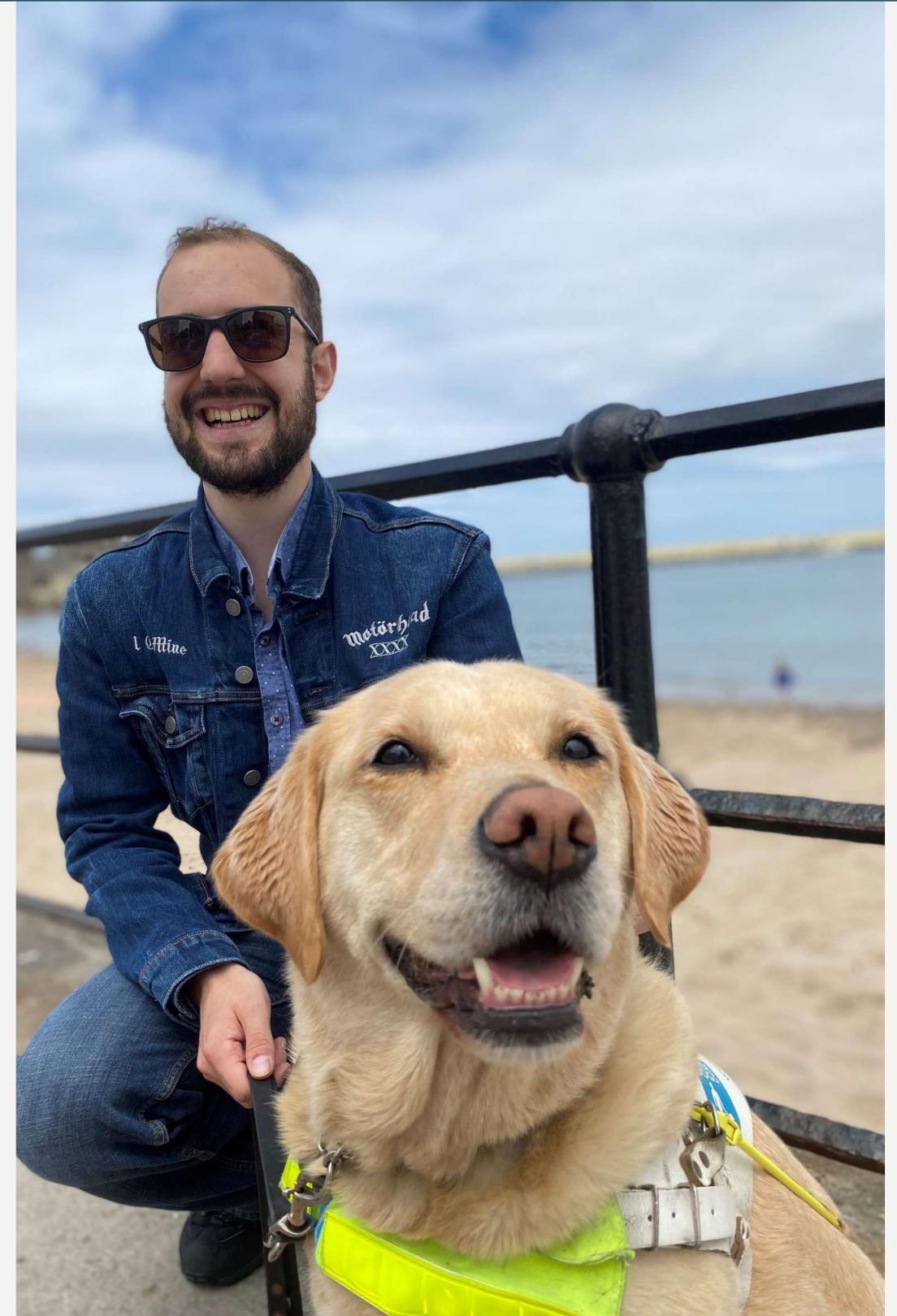


JUAN'S STORY

Growing up on the Isle of Man with a visual impairment was a major challenge for me. Diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at the age of eight, I gradually lost my sight throughout the next ten years, being registered blind at seventeen. This meant that as my friends were learning to drive cars during high school, I was coming to terms with the loss of my eyesight and the subsequent impacts of isolation and depression that sight loss can have on a young man.

I was introduced to Manx Blind Welfare Society in my early teens, but needed the Society's help more as my eyesight deteriorated throughout the years. The Society has helped organise equipment, training and advocated for me to attend the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford. At the RNC, I studied for my A-Levels, learned how to cook safely, and passed all exams with flying colours. I continued on to the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, where I lived between 2016 and 2020, and graduated in 2018 with a 1st class degree in BA Hons. Counselling and Psychotherapy Studies. I am furthering my study with UCLAN on a Master's course in Integrative Psychotherapy, and have placements with St. Catherine's Hospice near Preston and Hospice IOM as a trainee Psychotherapist.

Living by myself independently is a fantastic feeling, working is a great responsibility, and I am certain I would not be this happy if it weren't for Manx Blind Welfare's continuing involvement in my life. I donated my undergraduate mortarboard to them as a token of gratitude of how much they have meant to me over the years. As I shall soon finish my practitioner qualification and begin work on the Island, I can honestly say I am the happiest I have ever been.



BETH'S STORY

Being registered blind back in 2010 had a devastating impact on my life, just doing things I'd previously taken for granted had become so difficult.

The emotional consequences of sight loss are hard to bear and, although I have always enjoyed wonderful support from family and friends, I realised I would need advice, help and support to become more fully engaged with the world around me.

Meeting the team at Manx Blind Welfare Society was the first big step in my being able to develop the coping and practical skills to re-learn new ways of doing just the simplest of things, like making a cup of tea.

Over recent years, I have felt that Society staff, Volunteers and the other blind and visually impaired people I have got to know have become part of my greater extended family. I love the fact that people with professional skills in the charity are able to feel more like friends, it's just a really nice balance.

Many people who lose their sight feel isolated, disenfranchised and depressed and so I can't overstate how important it is to know that there are caring, compassionate people there for you.

The Society, together with my family and friends, have given me back that sense of value I had before losing much of my vision. Just knowing they are always there for me, whenever I need them, is fantastic.



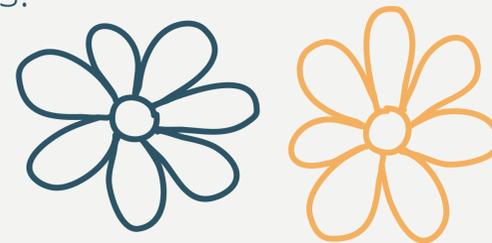
THE FREEDOM FIELD

Each of the operational aims in Moving Forward were borne in mind in the creation of our innovative Freedom Field facility. The facility is designed first and foremost as a safe and secure space for blind and visually impaired children, adults and assistance dogs, but extends its reach to a much wider audience, including those with hidden disabilities, or physical and psychological challenges, who need a special place to enable the powerful and healing value of nature to contribute to their general wellbeing.

Consisting of three principal zones, The Sanctuary, Paws4Thought and the Freedom Run, each with a special purpose, our new service park will provide an exciting outdoor space open to vulnerable individuals and professionals to work with each other, relax, reflect and benefit from the conducive areas the facility provides. The Freedom Field will operate with the assistance of a volunteer team of Freedom Field Rangers who will look after the space, work with our Members and even help exercise those assistance dogs who will use the facility.

This new addition to our services represents a real commitment, not only to our Members, but also to our community. As an organisation we recognise the importance of all those working in the public, private and third sectors with individuals facing challenges in their lives; we are, after all, companion providers with a shared vision of improving the experiences of those who benefit from our services.

John Riley MBE, LTCL, FNMSM
Vice Chairman of Sight Matters (Manx Blind Welfare Society)



WORKING TOGETHER

Being disability aware is clearly very important in every sector; it also makes a huge amount of business sense, helping organisations to engage with an even larger group of potential customers.

We provide a range of advice freely to organisations operating in the private, public and third sectors around aspects of sight loss. Advice provided includes issues concerning accessible design, workspaces, communications, accessible documents and assistive equipment.

We provide tailored visual awareness training to organisations to help them engage with blind and visually impaired clients. We can bring the training to you. The training is fully accredited and designed to make learning interactive, fun and memorable.

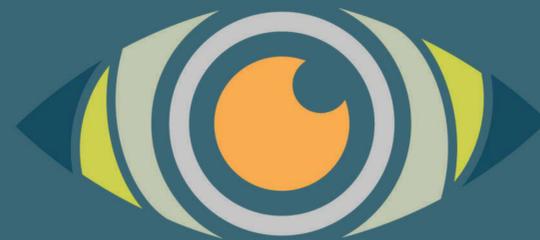
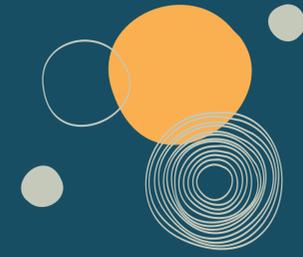
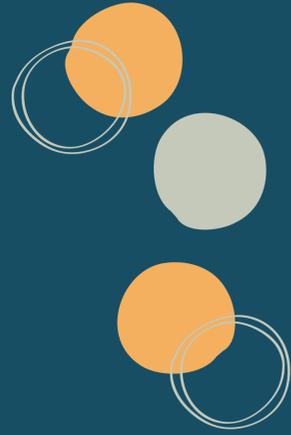
For a nominal fee, we are able to translate text into braille or have your organisation's key messages recorded and made available as audio.

We offer a range of exciting "out of the office" opportunities for businesses, including full- or half-day sessions contributing directly in the provision of our services.



"We recognise the importance of equality legislation and this training has enhanced our staff team's awareness and self assurance in dealing with vulnerable clients and puts a big tick in our equality training schedule"
- Retail Service Manager

"An unforgettable learning experience. It was fun while increasing my confidence in supporting someone who is visually impaired to make full use of our facilities"
- Local Hospitality Sector Worker



SIGHT MATTERS

MANX BLIND WELFARE SOCIETY

"KINDNESS IS THE LANGUAGE WHICH THE DEAF CAN HEAR AND THE BLIND CAN SEE"

- MARK TWAIN



THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE IN ALL ACCESSIBLE FORMATS AND READING PREFERENCES