# **SIGHT MATTERS**

# **Optic Topics**

Issue 48

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Younger Members Embrace Fun, Creativity & Adventure - What a whirlwind of fun it's been for our younger members so far this year! They've dived headfirst into a fantastic range of activities, making memories and learning new skills along the way. Their journey began with a lively football extravaganza at The Tommy Clucas Sports Hall. The air was thick with cheers and friendly competition as our young athletes (and some bravely participating parents!) kicked around, proving that fun and fitness go handin-hand. Shortly after, the sweet aroma of success filled The Cup Cakery in Castletown. Under the expert eye of Catherine, aspiring bakers meticulously decorated cakes, each a miniature work of art – we're told they tasted as delightful as they looked!

Nurturing green fingers, our members cultivated new life at Corrin Court. Tomatoes, spring onions, and carrots found new homes, and it was a joy to see each child proudly take home their own tomato plant. Updates confirming their healthy growth have been a testament to their dedication! The creative spirit bloomed further as vibrant wind chimes were painted, now adding a beautiful, gentle symphony to the outdoor space at Corrin Court.

A mid-year highlight was our cinematic escape to the Villa Gaiety Cinema for *Dog Man.* The rustle of popcorn bags and the collective giggles confirmed that this animated adventure was a hit with all ages, proving that sometimes, the simplest pleasures are the best. Artistic expression continued with a special visit from Anna Clucas, who immersed the children in the tactile joy of clay. Little hands moulded charming Easter Gonks, which, after a trip to Anna's kiln, emerged as truly amazing, colourful creations.

The Easter holidays dawned bright and beautiful, perfect for our captivating trip to the Grove Museum. The staff's incredible attentiveness made history come alive, blending interactive elements with fascinating facts. For the more adventurous, Hot Rocks Climbing Wall offered an exhilarating challenge, pushing boundaries and building confidence. After working up an appetite, a delicious lunch at Aqua Café was savoured before embarking on Sight Matters' inaugural Easter Trail – a fantastic scavenger hunt that ended the day on a high note!

The centre transformed into a bustling kitchen at the end of April as Claire Quayle led a fantastic cookery session. The sweet start involved concocting "fluff" – a light, airy dessert of whisked tinned milk and jelly liquid. Then came the savoury star: homemade meatballs! With the help of talking scales, ingredients were weighed, and despite a few tears from grating onions (a true sign of a chef in the making!), little hands confidently combined mince, egg, and onion, shaping perfect meatballs for a superb lunch.

Capping off this incredible period was a family fun barn event, a delightful kaleidoscope of controlled chaos. Slide races, joyous leaps into ball pits, and general playful pandemonium ensured smiles all around. While our full six-month schedule is eagerly awaited, we can hint at an absolutely action-packed summer ahead! Get ready for thrilling adventures like canoeing, an insightful lifeboat tour, gentle pony trekking, and exciting experiences at the Outdoor Learning Centre – just a taste of the excitement to come!

























If you're under 18 and interested in connecting with other blind and visually impaired children, we'd love for you to join our Younger Members Club! It's a truly wonderful place where kids can build lasting friendships, share experiences, and simply have fun in a supportive and understanding environment. Our club is designed to help members grow, learn, and create fantastic memories together.

# **Over 18 activity groups**



Our activity groups for the over 18's have been buzzing with excitement, enjoying a fantastic range of events recently. From the historic Moon at Peel Cathedral & VE Celebrations to the toe-tapping performances of Calendar Girls The Musical and Chicago The Musical, there's been something for everyone. Members also soaked up the sun at a delightful Garden Party, experienced thrills at the Sim Centre, and explored scenic routes on our Guided Walks. It's been a busy and enjoyable time for all involved in our activity groups!

If you'd like to join in the fun, just **phone Julie** on 674727 or email <u>Julie@SightMatters.im</u> to find out more!





# Sponsor Our Activity Clubs

Both our **activity groups** offer opportunities for **fun**, **learning**, **and connection** within our community, with no cost to members.

We rely on sponsorship to continue these programs. Would you consider sponsoring **one activity, a few activities, or a full year** of our clubs? Your support directly enables our members to participate in these activities.

To learn more about how your sponsorship can help, please contact us! Email enquiries@sightmatters.im

# A Green Oasis for Healing: Life Grows On with Manx Lottery Trust Support

We're thrilled to announce that we have received a fantastic grant of **£21,385 from the Manx Lottery Trust** through their Thematic Funding Programme! This generous funding will help us create something truly special: a tranquil, therapeutic garden called **"Life Grows On."** 

This new garden will transform an unused dog pen into a peaceful, inclusive space for emotional healing and well-being. We're not doing this alone; we're partnering with **Cruse**  Bereavement Support Isle of Man, Alzheimer's Society, and the Manx Deaf Society to make this a sanctuary for members of all four charities.

# Nurturing Well-being and Community

The "Life Grows On" garden will offer a calm environment for participants to connect with nature, reflect, and build resilience. Gardening is widely recognised for its mental health benefits, from reducing stress to improving cognitive function. This project will also help foster stronger community ties, allowing individuals to come together and support one another.

# **Designed for Everyone**

Accessibility is at the heart of the "Life Grows On" garden. It will feature raised planters, tactile signage, and guided gardening sessions.

This ensures that everyone, including individuals with sight loss, hearing impairments, or cognitive challenges, can fully participate and enjoy the healing power of nature. This initiative perfectly aligns with local health strategies, providing a meaningful and sensory-friendly space for those who need it most.

We are incredibly grateful to Manx Lottery Trust for their generous support. This project embodies the Manx Lottery Trust's Thematic Funding Programme, whose "Space to Thrive" theme aims to fund initiatives that create environments where individuals and communities can flourish and grow, promoting well-being, inclusivity, and community engagement

# Meet the VSS Team



(Photo details left to right -Natasha Molyneux-Smith, Jon Roe, Gemma Kneen, Jade Martin, Julie Jones and Jodie Green)

The Department of Education, Sports and Culture (DESC) have a small but specialised team, the Vision Support Service (VSS) who work with nursery/school/college staff, parents/carers and a range of outside agencies to provide specialist educational advice and support for children and young people with a vision impairment, up to the age of 25. They carry out vision assessments which are functional rather than clinical but there is close liaison with the Eve Clinic at Nobles Hospital and the Ophthalmology Department at Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

The services provided include: -

- support for children and young people, families and schools from the point of identification or diagnosis of a vision impairment
- advice and training for those involved in all aspects of education
- direct teaching of specialised vision impairment areas of the curriculum e.g. Braille literacy, touch-typing
- functional assessment and ongoing monitoring of how a young person is using their vision
- guidance on the effects of reduced vision for development and learning, and practical strategies to help
- support for successful inclusion in education settings
- recommendations for the adaptation of the environment, to support teaching strategies and access to the curriculum and school life
- attendance at annual reviews
- recommendations for examination access arrangements
- advice and support for successful transitions
- advice and training on the use of assistive technology

# What criteria do the VSS use?

To be eligible for support, a child or young person must have:

- vision acuity (with glasses if worn) recorded as 6/18\* or higher (with both eyes open and being used together)
- vision acuity (with glasses if worn) recorded as 6/18\* or higher in the better eye (if results for each eye are given individually)
- a diagnosed eye condition which affects safe and full curriculum access (even if the acuity is better than 6/18\*)
- registration as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, on the recommendation of an ophthalmologist.

\*Please note that the higher the second number, the greater the vision impairment e.g. 6/6 or 6/12 are within standard limits - 6/60 is a significant vision impairment.

### How to make a referral.

If parents/carers think their child is having difficulties with their vision, they should make an appointment with an optician. If hospital assessments are then carried out, parents/carers can ask the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (who is based at the hospital) to make a referral via email to the Head of Vision Support Service.

If an education setting thinks a pupil is having difficulty with their vision, they should obtain parental/carer consent before making a referral via email to the Head of VSS, giving details of the difficulty along with details of the young person – name, DOB and current school year, together with address and contact details for parent/carer(s).

Parents and carers may also make a direct referral by emailing the Head of VSS, Jon Roe.

# Contact details.

Email - jonathan.roe@sch.im

Telephone - 685808.

# Do you need help?

Are you or do you know someone struggling to manage with the impact of sight loss and would like some help?

Did you know you don't have to be a member or be registered blind or partially sighted to get in touch with us?

To find out more information or just a chat, please contact Michelle on **674727** or email MFerrer@sightmatters.im

# **Did you Know?**



• **Since 1936:** Manx Blind Welfare (Sight Matters) has been supporting the blind and visually impaired community on the Isle of Man for over **85 years**, making it one of the island's longest-standing charities.

- 700+ Members: Sight Matters looks after the interests of more than 700 people with serious sight loss across the Isle of Man.
- Free Services: All of Sight Matters' core services are provided free at the point of delivery, ensuring support is accessible to everyone regardless of their financial situation.
- The Freedom Field: Sight Matters is home to the unique Freedom Field in Onchan, a safe and accessible outdoor space specifically designed for visually impaired individuals and their assistance dogs to enjoy nature.
- Local News, Audio Format: Volunteers at Sight Matters record and distribute weekly audio news from the Isle of Man to help members stay connected with their local community.
- Extensive Audio Library: Their free audio library boasts over £100,000 worth of audiobooks, helping members re-engage with the joy of reading.
- More Than Just Sight: Beyond direct sight support, Sight Matters offers emotional support, mental health first aid, and social activities to combat isolation and promote wellbeing.
- Supporting Young People: Sight Matters runs a Young Persons' Activity Club to help younger members develop confidence, independence, and have fun.
- Accessibility Training: Sight Matters provides free visual awareness training to businesses and organisations across the island, promoting a more inclusive Isle of Man for everyone.

- Luncheon Clubs: The charity operates luncheon clubs three days a week, complete with an island-wide transport service, providing nutritious meals and a vital social outlet.
- Financially Independent: Sight Matters relies entirely on fundraising, donations, and legacies to deliver its extensive range of services, with all funds raised staying on the Isle of Man.



Get ready to rewind time at our ultimate 80s Ouiz Night on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July at Sight Matters! Dust off your leg warmers, tease up that hair, and join us for a totally 80s evening packed with trivia and throwback tunes, neon vibes. Whether you're an expert on 80s movies, music, fashion, or pop culture, this is your chance to prove you're the raddest of them all. Grab your team, dress to impress in your best retro gear (optional!), and get ready for a nostalgic night of fun, laughs, and epic memories. Don't miss out — it's gonna be like, totally awesome! Tickets are just £12 and include some retro food! Booking is essential on 674727 or email events@sightmatters.im



This August, Sight Matters invites you to move, get motivated, and make a real difference in our community. Join our **Stride for Sight** challenge, a month-long event designed to boost your wellbeing while supporting blind and visually impaired people across the Isle of Man.

Whether it's five miles, five minutes, or five mindful moments, we're asking you to commit to a daily activity that suits your lifestyle and ability. Every step you take, every minute you dedicate, helps raise vital funds for a cause that truly matters.

### What is the "5-A-Day" Challenge?

Our "5-A-Day" challenge is all about flexibility, inclusivity, and consistency. You choose a daily commitment centred around the number five and stick with it throughout August. It's that simple!

Need some inspiration? Here are just a few ideas:

- Walk 5 miles
- Run 5 kilometres
- Swim or cycle for 5 minutes
- Spend 5 minutes stretching, meditating, or dancing

• Do 5 laps of your garden or 5 sit-tostands from a chair

No matter your age or fitness level, there's a way for you to participate. Go solo, team up with friends or family, or even take it on as a workplace challenge – it's a fantastic way to build camaraderie and make a collective impact.

### Why Get Involved?

Beyond supporting a crucial local charity, taking part in Stride for Sight offers numerous personal benefits:

- Boost your physical and mental wellbeing: Get active and feel great!
- Create healthy new habits: Build consistency into your routine.
- Prepare for the Ivan Soulsbury Coast 2 Coast: A great training opportunity!
- Support your local sight loss charity: Your participation directly impacts lives.
- Make your steps matter: Every effort helps foster confidence, independence, and community for others.

### How to Take Part

It's easy to join the Stride for Sight challenge:

- 1. **Download** the Stride for Sight fundraising form (or the screen reader friendly version) from www.sightmatters.im.
- 2. **Choose your activity** and set your personal fundraising target.

- 3. **Share your challenge** with friends and family and start collecting sponsorship.
- 4. **Return your form and funds** to Sight Matters by post or email.

Prefer to fundraise online? You can easily **set up your fundraising page** in minutes by joining our official campaign on JustGiving. It's a quick way to share your challenge and collect donations.

Questions or want to help promote the challenge? We'd love to hear from you! Contact us at enquiries@sightmatters.im or call 674727.

Thank you for striding with us – every step you take makes a profound difference!

# The Ivan Soulsbury Coast 2 Coast 2025



Sight Matters is thrilled to announce the return of its much-loved annual **Coast 2 Coast Walk**, now proudly renamed the **Ivan Soulsbury Coast 2 Coast Walk**, sponsored by **Conister Bank**. This year's event, honouring a dear friend and dedicated supporter, promises a fantastic day out for everyone while supporting a vital cause.

# A Scenic Journey Across the Isle of Man

### On Sunday, September 7th, 2025,

join us for a memorable journey from the east coast to the west coast of the beautiful Isle of Man.

The **full 12-mile walk** offers a relatively flat and gentle route, kicking off from the **National Sports Centre (NSC) in Douglas** and culminating at the **House of Manannan in Peel**. If you're looking for a shorter, equally rewarding challenge, a **3-mile option** will begin from **St John's**.

# **Open to All Ages and Abilities**

This non-competitive and inclusive event welcomes participants of **all ages and abilities**. Children are welcome when accompanied by an adult, and even your well-behaved canine companions can join in the fun, with water bowls provided along the route. Inclusivity is at the heart of this walk, ensuring everyone can participate at their own pace.

# **Event Details:**

- Date: Sunday, September 7th, 2025
- **Distance:** 12 miles (with a 3-mile option from St John's)

- **Start Time:** 1:30 PM (Check-in opens at 12:45 PM) (or St John's 3.30 PM start – Check-in opens 3.00 PM)
- Start Location: NSC, Douglas
- Finish Location: House of Manannan, Peel

# Sign Up and Make a Difference!

We encourage all participants to consider taking on the Coast 2 Coast Walk as a sponsored event to raise funds for Sight Matters. Your support directly contributes to the vital work they do.

# Ready to join us?

- **Sign Up Online:** https://sightmatters.idloom.events/c2c2025
- Download a Sponsorship Form: https://sightmatters.idloom.events/c2c2025

More details about the event will be shared closer to the date, so be sure to keep an eye on our Sight Matters **Facebook page** and **website** for updates.

We can't wait to walk with you and together support the incredible work of Sight Matters!

# Save the Date: Bright 4 Sight Day

# Date: Friday 3 October

Get ready to shine for Sight Matters! Bright 4 Sight Day is back — our colourful celebration that invites schools, workplaces, and community groups to dress up in their brightest outfits to help raise awareness for people living with sight loss.

Whether it's neon socks or glittery hats, the brighter the better! Let's light up the Isle of Man and show your support in style.

# Save the Date: Dying to Talk about Death

Friday, 7th November | Sight Matters HQ, Onchan



We're pleased to announce the return of *Dying To Talk About Death* — a thought-provoking day of conversation, clarity, and compassion.

Join us as we welcome a panel of professionals who deal with end-of-life matters. Expect a safe, respectful space to ask questions, share experiences, and challenge common myths around death and dying. Full programme to follow — but for now, mark your calendars. Let's open up the conversation.

# **Speakers Brunch**

This year's Speakers Brunch will be on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November** at Sight Matters. For more information or for bookings email <u>events@sightmatters.im</u>

# Will Writing Month Returns This November



# Plan for the Future, Protect What Matters Most

Sight Matters is proud to announce the return of **Will Writing Month** this November, once again in collaboration with leading local law firm, **Callin Wild**.

This important initiative aims to encourage everyone on the Isle of Man — regardless of age or circumstances — to take a proactive step in securing their future by writing a will. Many of us put off making a will, but it remains one of the most vital things we can do to ensure our wishes are honoured and our loved ones protected.

Throughout the month of November, individuals who mention Sight Matters when using Callin Wild's will-writing services will benefit from a significantly reduced rate: **£200 (+VAT) for individuals and £300 (+VAT) for couples**. In addition, **50% of the fees will be donated directly to Sight Matters**, helping us continue our essential work supporting people with sight loss across the Island.

We've seen first-hand how having a will can ease the burden on families during what can already be an incredibly difficult time. Taking part in this initiative isn't just about legal documents — it's about peace of mind, knowing your wishes are clearly stated and your loved ones looked after.

Callin Wild's services are fully accessible and sensitive to the needs of those living with sight loss, making them an ideal partner for this campaign. As Peter adds:

By taking part in Will Writing Month, not only will you be making a meaningful investment in your family's future, but you'll also be supporting Sight Matters in our mission to improve the lives of blind and visually impaired people on the Isle of Man.

# Christmas Coffee Morning



Our Christmas Coffee Morning will be on Thursday 20th November, 10.30am at Corrin Court. We're already collecting items for the raffle and red stall so if you have anything suitable please pop it in!

# Paws 4 Thought: A Special Place to Honour Our Beloved Pets

Paws 4 Thought is a unique and heartfelt space at Sight Matters dedicated to celebrating the incredible animals who've touched our lives.

Nestled within the tranquil **Freedom Field at Corrin Court, Onchan**,



Paws 4 Thought offers a beautiful way to remember or recognise your cherished animal companions, past or present. The Freedom Field itself is a secure and welcoming environment, thoughtfully designed to support individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with assistance dogs, and also embraces those with hidden disabilities or other challenges.

# How Paws 4 Thought Works

Participating in Paws 4 Thought is simple and creates a lasting tribute:

- **Purchase a Tag:** Commemorate a beloved pet, whether they're still by your side or forever in your heart, with a specially designed personalised tag.
- **Personalise Your Tag:** Add your pet's name and a short, meaningful message that captures their spirit and the joy they brought you.
- Display Your Tribute: Your personalised tag will be proudly displayed on our dedicated Paws 4 Thought wall, becoming a permanent part of this loving tribute.

# Why Participate?

Paws 4 Thought offers more than just a tag; it provides a meaningful way to:

• Celebrate the deep love and immense joy your pet has brought into your life.

- Create a lasting and beautiful tribute to your furry friend in a serene and meaningful setting.
- Support the vital work of Sight Matters, directly helping blind and visually impaired individuals right here on the Isle of Man.

### **Costs and Payments**

Each personalised tag costs **£20**.

You have several convenient payment options:

- Online: Pay securely via PayPal or card. Please use the reference "Paws 4 Thought".
- **In-person:** Visit us directly at Sight Matters, Corrin Court, Heywood Avenue, Onchan.
- **By cash or cheque:** Make cheques payable to "Sight Matters."

# Get Involved and Visit

Whether you're purchasing a tag for yourself or as a thoughtful gift for another animal lover, Paws 4 Thought is a wonderful way to honour the pets who bring so much unconditional love into our lives. You're welcome to visit the Paws 4 Thought area during designated times or by arrangement to see the growing display and feel the collective love shared by all participants.

### **Contact Us and Download Form**

For more details or to purchase your tag, please don't hesitate to **contact us** on 674727 or

enquiries@SightMatters.im. Together, let's celebrate the pets who've touched our hearts while making a real, positive impact on the lives of others.

# Sun-Raiser Success: Solar Panels Now Installed at Corrin Court



We're delighted to share that the solar panels funded by our SUN-Raiser campaign have now been installed on the roof of **Corrin Court**!

Thanks to the generosity and support of our community, we raised an incredible **£100,000** towards our £150,000 target. To ensure we could complete the project without delay and to stay ahead of rising costs due to inflation — we made the decision to use reserves to fund the remaining balance. This allowed us to press ahead with the installation and begin reaping the benefits of cleaner, more cost-efficient energy sooner rather than later.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who contributed — from individual donors and corporate sponsors to those who simply helped us spread the word. Your support is helping Sight Matters create a more sustainable future while protecting the services that so many people across the Island rely on.

But the journey doesn't end here. We're already looking ahead to **Phase 2** of our SUN-Raising efforts, and will continue to fundraise so that we can build on this fantastic progress and further enhance the environmental and financial sustainability of Corrin Court.

Together, we've taken a bright step forward — and we're excited about what comes next.

# Luncheon Club's Latest: Engagements, Owls, and Art!

Our Luncheon Club has been buzzing with fantastic activities, bringing joy and connection to our members!

# **A Special Surprise for Happy News**

There was a lovely buzz in the air when a member recently got engaged. Everyone got involved in creating a unique, tactile art piece to mark the occasion, spelling 'Congratulations to you'. Using all sorts of wonderful materials, it was a heartfelt way to share in their joy and make them feel truly special.





# A Hoot with Feathered Friends

A highlight was undoubtedly the visit from some magnificent owls! Members loved getting up close, gently touching their feathers, and hearing their soft hoots. It was a truly magical sensory experience.



**Artistic Expressions** 

Our painting sessions continue to be a huge hit. Members explored colours and textures, creating impressive art, and enjoying the therapeutic benefits of painting in a friendly environment.



# Thank you

At Sight Matters, our mission is clear: to support blind and visually impaired individuals on the Isle of Man. Your continued generosity is fundamental to achieving this.

To our donors, partners, and supporters, thank you. Your contributions directly fund our services, enable us to provide essential equipment, and foster a supportive community.

Your commitment allows us to:

- **Deliver direct support:** Offering practical and emotional assistance to those facing sight loss.
- **Provide essential training:** Equipping individuals with skills in daily living, mobility, and technology.
- Facilitate community engagement: Running luncheon and activity groups to combat isolation and build confidence.
- Advocate for accessibility: Working towards a more inclusive Isle of Man for everyone.

Every donation, regardless of size, makes a tangible difference. It directly contributes to independence, builds confidence, and improves lives.

From everyone at Sight Matters, and on behalf of our members, thank you for your support!

# Scan Me!





Callin Wild – Will Writing Month



In partnership with Cruse Bereavement Support, Alzheimer's Society, and the Manx Deaf Society – Life Grows on, Supported by the Manx Lottery Trust



Robert Cowley with his Children's book 'Green' along with Karmen, the illustrator and Caoimhe with her short story



We currently have five Society vehicles, three minibuses, a people carrier and one car. We are therefore able to offer help to many of our members to attend our centre and to travel to and from the various functions and events we hold throughout the year.

### **Audio Library**

We have a range of mp3 stick audio books. We are supported in the delivery of these audio library books by the IOM Post Office who deliver the books and our weekly news sticks as items free for delivery to visually impaired and blind people.

### **Outreach visits**

A member of our team can arrange to visit you at home/hospital to assist with supporting your needs.

### **Specialist Equipment**

We have a range of assistive technology to help visually impaired and blind people; some of the simplest items like talking clocks, make the biggest difference in helping people with sight difficulties to live more accessible lives

### **Weekly News**

Our well used weekly news service provides an invaluable source of information to in excess of 100 people who rely on hearing the local news brought to them in detail on MP3 sticks; we issue players to all who require this fabulous service.

### **Social Activities**

We run a series of activities designed to enhance the lives of the local blind and visually impaired community, and we have new and exciting ideas being brought forward regularly, some of which provide real challenges to the staff and volunteers who provide our services. We hold luncheon clubs in our centre on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These consist of a three-course meal with a menu second to none and we can cater for all dietary and most other menu preferences.

### Visual Impairment Awareness training

We run courses designed to assist organisations who may occasionally deal with blind and visually impaired clients. We can bring the training to businesses and provide them with a chance to strengthen their customer service for this vulnerable group of people.

### **Events**

We regularly run events for the Society. These vary from week to week and we have adopted a no holds barred approach to the entertainment provided!

### **Charitable status**

We are a charity totally reliant on the contributions and donations of our many wonderful supporters; in particular we are grateful to the people of the Island who continue to give generously to our work. Much of our work is supported and delivered

by our fabulous teams of volunteers. Membership is free to anyone living with challenges to their vision and most of our services are provided without charge.

Please feel free to visit our Centre and review our operations. We welcome constructive feedback and thoughts and ideas on how we can further improve our services. We are pleased to offer 'walk and talk' tours of our facilities to organisations of all types.



Sometimes it can be very difficult to find out what

help is available. We have a wide range of services and support to offer the best help possible.

We are here to discuss any issues that affect the lives of people with serious sight loss. **Call us confidentially on 674727** 

Sight Matters is a trading name under Manx Blind Welfare Society Registered Charity No. 132.

If you would like this letter in large print, please contact our office on 674727.