



Wakefield District Sight Aid

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President: The Lord St Oswald Company No. 7432897 Registered Charity No. 1140483

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to our January 2024 newsletter!

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas raffle, either by buying tickets or donating prizes. We are delighted to have raised £1,866 (including ticket sales and donations), which is tremendous! A list of the winning ticket numbers and the corresponding prizes is published later in the newsletter. All winners have been contacted.

We are so grateful to everyone who completed and returned our annual survey which was sent out with the last newsletter. We are delighted to report that 91% of respondents rated our service as excellent (64%) or good (27%). We had some lovely comments, including:

“You are always there when help or advice is needed. Thank you very much.”

“Really helpful. It’s good to meet others with similar problems.”

“Nothing to fault the service, so helpful and kind, can’t do enough for you.”

Comments like this mean the world to us, but please don’t wait until the next survey if you need our help or have suggestions of how we can improve. You can contact the office on 01924 215555 or by email at admin@wdsa.org.uk.

We hope to see you at one of our events very soon!

With warm wishes,

Hayley Grocock (Chief Executive Officer)



*CEO Hayley holding a sign that reads:
Sight support means a fuller, happier life.*

The King's Award for Voluntary Service

We are delighted to share the wonderful news that, on 14th November 2023, it was announced that Wakefield District Sight Aid has been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.



**The King's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

*King's Award for Voluntary
Service logo*

The King's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and, following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the Award. Wakefield District Sight Aid is one of just 262 local charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year, and the only one in Wakefield to have been honoured.

Hayley Grocock, Chief Executive Officer of Wakefield District Sight Aid says: "Wakefield District Sight Aid has served the visually impaired community in Wakefield in one form or another for over 150 years. We support around 1,200 people a year, and only have three part-time staff, so we depend absolutely on volunteers who give so freely of their selves and their time to make our work possible. To have the service of these incredible people honoured in this way is testament to their generosity, kindness, and dedication. I am thrilled for them."

Luke Scholey, Chair of the Board of Trustees, who has been blind since birth himself, said, "I am so proud of how we have worked together to be recognised in this way for such a special award. The charity has had a direct, positive impact on my own life, and it is a great honour and privilege to be a volunteer myself, helping the charity to grow and adapt to the changing needs of the community we are here to serve."

Everyone at Wakefield District Sight Aid extends a huge thanks and congratulations to all our amazing volunteers, who make the work we do every day possible. Thank you!

Christmas Draw 2023 – winning ticket numbers and prizes

Ticket number 1081: Christmas hamper, donated by Lord St. Oswald.

Ticket number 121: 4 x Pantomime Tickets (January performance), donated by Theatre Royal Wakefield.

Ticket number 2021: Christmas hamper, donated by Newmedica.

Ticket number 3638: Christmas hamper, donated by Notay Consulting.

Ticket number 4806: Baylis & Harding Sweet Mandarin and Grapefruit large gift set, donated by C Isherwood.

Ticket number 832: Family ticket, donated by the Brontë Parsonage Museum.

Ticket number 47662: 2 x tickets, donated by Ripon Races.

Ticket number 4149: Family Travel Voucher, donated by North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

Ticket number 4884: Festive Trivet Set, greeting card book, bottle of Prosecco, donated by M Dodd and B Lockyer.

Ticket number 125: Alexa Echo Dot with clock, donated by R Southall.

Ticket number 2235: Baylis & Harding Sweet Mandarin and Grapefruit gift set with socks, donated by M Dodd.

Ticket number 983: Kindle Fire HD8 tablet, donated by C Nicholls.

Ticket number 4710: Christmas hamper, donated by Specsavers Wakefield & Marsh Way.

Ticket number 1766: Foldable backpack, donated by Mrs Purdie.

Ticket number 933: Red and navy M&S handbag, donated by B Senkiw.

Ticket number 792: £5 voucher, donated by Ignite Candles.

Thank you once again to our kind friends and partners who donated such excellent prizes, and to everyone who purchased tickets or sent monetary donations.



What's on at Wakefield District Sight Aid

All our events up to the end of April 2024 are shown on the calendar on page 12. Here is a summary of what's coming up:

The Ridings coffee morning 10.00 – 12.00 on the first Monday and third Wednesday of the month held at The Events Space, Middle Mall, The Ridings, Wakefield, WF1 1DS – outside M&S Food and Poundland). There is plentiful disabled parking at The Ridings, but it is not free of charge. There is on-street parking and Council car parks nearby where Blue Badges can be used.



A group of people playing board games at a coffee morning.

Please note that Monday 4th March will be a Demo Day rather than a coffee morning (please see below).

Horbury coffee morning 10.00 – 12.00 on the second Tuesday of the month (The Cluntergate Centre Café, Cluntergate, Horbury WF4 5DA).

Evening social group (ESG – formerly the younger members social group) 17.00 – 19.00 on the fourth Thursday of the month (held at Calder & Hops, 60 Northgate, Wakefield, WF1 3AP). This friendly and informal evening meet-up welcomes members of all ages and is looking forward to meeting new members!

Equipment Demonstration and Advice Day: 10.00 – 13.00 on Monday 4th March in **The Events Space, Middle Mall, The Ridings, Wakefield, WF1 1DS** – outside M&S Food and Poundland. Joining us will be Mark from Optelec; Sarah and Debra from Citizens Advice, who will be able to provide advice on benefits, energy bills and lots more; and other guests to be confirmed. We will also be running a showcase of our Art Beyond Vision project, where attendees of the courses will share some of the techniques they have learned and display some of their work. There may even be the opportunity for you to have a go yourself, so do come along and experience what is possible and hear about how challenges have been overcome and barriers broken down!

Future Demo Day dates for 2024: Monday 1st July and Monday 4th November.

Fish & chips, with cash prize bingo! Wetherby Whaler Empire Outwood, 12.00 – 15.00 (approx.) on Wednesday 13th March



Two ladies holding up a large print bingo card.

Join us for a fish & chip lunch at the Wetherby Whaler Empire Outwood, 550 Leeds Road, Outwood, Wakefield, WF1 2DX. After lunch there will be the option to play cash prize bingo (50p a book), followed by tea, coffee, and biscuits.

There is a one-course menu available at £12.25 or a three-course menu available at £15.45. We will ask for your preferences at the time of booking, but payment will be taken on the day.

Starter options: homemade soup of the day **or** fruit juice.

Main course options: haddock, plaice or scampi and chips (chips may be substituted for a salad garnish if preferred).

Dessert options: ice cream **or** sweet of the day.

Mushy peas, beans or curry sauce are an extra £2.40 each. Soup may be substituted for mushy peas, beans, or curry sauce with your main course if preferred.

All main courses are served with Yorkshire tea or filter coffee. Please note that speciality coffees (e.g. latte, cappuccino), soft drinks and alcohol will be billed separately.



Ladies enjoying fish and chips.

There are vegetarian/vegan/gluten free options, and all dietary requirements can be catered for, so please let us know your needs when booking. Prices may vary for different options, and we will advise you of prices at the time of confirming your booking.

All are welcome, including sighted companions. Parking is plentiful and free, and the 110 bus from central Wakefield and Leeds stops very close by on Leeds Road. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Please ring the office on 01924 215555 to book your place!

Living Well with Sight Loss course (LWWSL)

This free course aims to help you increase your independence, boost your confidence, and connect with others to share experiences. Whether you are newly diagnosed, facing a change in circumstances, or simply want to start enjoying life more, Living Well With Sight Loss delivers practical advice, useful information and resources available across Wakefield.



A group of people at a Living Well With Sight Loss course.

Living Well with Sight Loss is a partnership between WDSA and RNIB, made possible with the kind support of Wakefield Council. Our next course will be running on Monday 22nd and Monday 29th January 2023, at Lightwaves Leisure Centre, Lower York Street, Wakefield WF1 3LJ (opposite Wakefield Bus Station). Places are limited, so please contact the office on 01924 215555 and we will be happy to register your place.

Cost of living support



The rising cost of living is a big concern for everyone right now. Please don't struggle alone.

Thanks to some grant funding, we have a limited emergency fund available to help blind and partially sighted people who find themselves in financial hardship this winter.

We can help with unexpected expenses, sudden increases in bills, or one-off emergency costs.

For a confidential discussion about your situation, please contact Hayley on 01924 215555. We can also refer you to other organisations such as Citizens Advice, who can assist with issues such as welfare benefits checks, debt support and housing advice, to make sure you're receiving all the support available to you. Staff from Citizens Advice will also be available at our Demo Day in March.

Other Wakefield District Sight Aid services available

Here's a handy reminder of other ways we can help. To find out more about any of these services, please ring the office on 01924 215555.

Helpline – our telephone helpline is operational 09.30 – 13.30 Monday to Thursday (answerphone operational at busy times and outside of these hours). We can help with orders for equipment, referrals to other organisations, and a whole host of other questions.

Home visiting - our experienced Sight Loss Advisor, Nicola Ford, can visit you at home to assess for and provide certain equipment free of charge to help you with daily living tasks such as making hot drinks, cooking, and getting out and about with confidence.



*Sight Loss Advisor,
Nicola Ford.*

Befriending - our telephone befriending service is fantastically valuable, especially for people who find it hard to get out and about. We have trained volunteers who deliver this service, and we also work in partnership with Sightline, a specialist telephone befriending service for blind and partially sighted people.



Dean sitting at a table with a variety of equipment.

Tech Buddy - our technology support service provides in-person and telephone support, and 1-2-1 computer training. If you need help or advice about your mobile phone, tablet or computer, support is available with Dean via telephone appointment or in-person at our office on the second and fourth Mondays of the month, from 09.30 – 13.30. We can also arrange a home visit from another volunteer, Jane, in some circumstances.

Emotional support - through our partnership with **Gasped** (Giving Advice and Support to People in Emotional Distress) we can provide access to counselling, free of charge.



A group of participants at one of our Dare to Dream programmes.

Dare to Dream – we would love to hear from people who are interested in our training, mentoring and empowerment project for people of working age. This project is run in partnership with **Yorkshire Mentoring CIC** and **WEA**, the adult learning specialists.

Orange travel wallets scheme

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority recently launched a new initiative called the Orange Travel Wallet scheme, to help people with communication difficulties or disabilities to use public transport.

The bright orange wallet is a subtle way of letting transport staff know the passenger may need additional support with their journey, or a bit more time. The handy wallet can be used to hold a disabled or blind person's travel pass, along with an optional Travel Assistance Card which can highlight to a bus driver what support the passenger might need to help with their journey. The wallets are for anyone with a disability but may be particularly helpful for people with a non-visible or hidden disability.

Orange wallets are available from bus station travel centres or by calling MetroLine on 0113 245 7676 and can be posted out.

Travel assistance cards are available for printing online here <https://www.wymetro.com/plan-a-journey/accessible-travel/orange-wallets-travel-assistance-cards/> or can be picked up from a bus station travel centre. We can also help with this if you don't have a printer or are not online.

An Easy Read leaflet is also available here:

<https://www.wymetro.com/media/10288/orange-wallet-easy-read-a4-v4.pdf>

Join the West Yorkshire Sight Loss Council

Are you a blind or partially sighted person in West Yorkshire who wants to change things? The West Yorkshire Sight Loss Council is recruiting new members in your area.



Sight Loss Councils (SLCs), funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust, are regional groups led by blind and partially sighted volunteer members. Together, SLCs use their lived experience to work with businesses and service providers to increase the accessibility of their services.

You will work with policy makers and local service providers to improve access for blind and partially sighted people in your community.

You will also get the opportunity to come together with other blind and partially sighted people in your area, have a voice and develop new skills.

SLC volunteer, Emma, said: “Joining Sight Loss Councils has helped me to gain more confidence, skills, and meet lots of people who are on similar journeys. It gives me purpose.”

To find out more and how to join Sight Loss Councils, visit www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk, email info@sightlosscouncils.org.uk, or telephone 020 7031 6376.

You can also view short videos from existing SLC volunteers online here: <https://www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk/join-us/volunteer-stories/>



Image to the left shows someone using a Pen Friend at Pontefract Museum, which improved its accessibility for blind and partially sighted people following a visit and advice from the Sight Loss Council in September 2022. You can read more about

this here: <https://www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk/news/pontefract-museum-enhances-accessibility/>

Newsletter format

The newsletter is available in large print, audio CD or USB, and in Braille. We can also send you a copy by email. Please contact the office on 01924 215555 to request a different or additional format. For our audio subscribers, please don't forget to return your mailing pouch and USB stick (if you receive one) so we can use them for the next newsletter. The mailing pouches cost us £2.58 each and if we don't receive them back then we don't have enough to send out next time. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Volunteers

Without volunteers, much of our work would not be possible. We are looking for telephone befrienders, helpers at our outreach events, fundraisers, and people to join our Board of Trustees, which is responsible for the governance of the charity (we are particularly interested in hearing from people with lived experience of sight loss). If you or anyone you know would be interested in joining our friendly team, please contact Nicola Ellis (Finance and Outreach Manager) on 01924 215555 or operations@wdsa.org.uk, for an informal chat or to find out more about the roles on offer and how you can help.



Other helplines available:

Age UK Advice Line - 01977 552114 (regular friendship service), 0800 678 1602. Free to call 08.00 – 19.00 365 days a year. Age UK is supporting older people through the cost-of-living crisis.

The Silver Line - 0800 4 70 80 90 - The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Samaritans - 116 123 / www.samaritans.org. Samaritans is a registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress or struggling to cope.

Wakefield Safe Space - 07776 962 815. Open after 6pm every evening for those aged 16 and over at Prosper House (formally Caduceus House), Upper Warrengate, Wakefield, WF1 4JZ (next door to Warrengate Medical Centre). 1 to 1 support available between 7:30- 10:30pm. Wakefield Safe Space supports anyone in the Wakefield District aged 16 or over who feels they need someone to listen and speak through their mental health challenges in a safe, friendly, and non-judgmental environment.

West Yorkshire 24-hour mental health helpline - this can be accessed free, on 0800 183 0558. It provides confidential support, advice and information to anyone over 18 who is concerned about their mental health or worried about a family member or someone they care for.

Live Well Wakefield – supporting healthy living for people in Wakefield, including support to manage long-term conditions, befriending, and support during COVID-19. You can self-refer by calling 01924 255363 or by completing a self-referral form on their website here:
<https://www.livewellwakefield.nhs.uk/referrals/new>.

RNIB Helpline - 0303 123 9999 (8am-8pm weekdays, 9am-5pm on Saturdays) or visit the website at www.rnib.org.uk.

Macular Society - 0300 3030 111 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm), or email help@macularsociety.org.

Glaucoma UK - 01233 64 81 70 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5.00pm) or email helpline@glaucoma.uk.

Blind Veterans UK – supporting ex-service men and women of all generations with sight loss - 0800 389 7979.

Association of Blind Asians - 0113 210 3347 – this Leeds-based charity can help with benefit claims, advocacy, aids/adaptations, social events, and emotional and physical exercise. Find out more about the support they offer online at www.abaleeds.org.uk or via their Facebook page www.facebook.com/ABALeeds.

Calendar of events January 2024 – April 2024

January	February	March	April
1 Mo Bank Hol	1 Th Art group	1 Fr	1 Easter Mon.
2 Tu	2 Fr	2 Sa	2 Tu
3 We	3 Sa	3 Su	3 We
4 Th	4 Su	4 Mo Demo Day	4 Th
5 Fr	5 Mo Ridings	5 Tu	5 Fr
6 Sa	6 Tu	6 We	6 Sa
7 Su	7 We	7 Th	7 Su
8 Mo	8 Th	8 Fr	8 Mo Tech
9 Tu Horbury	9 Fr	9 Sa	9 Tu Horbury
10 We	10 Sa	10 Su	10 We
11 Th Art group	11 Su	11 Mo Tech	11 Th
12 Fr	12 Mo Tech	12 Tu Horbury	12 Fr
13 Sa	13 Tu Horbury	13 We Fish & Chips	13 Sa
14 Su	14 We	14 Th	14 Su
15 Mo	15 Th	15 Fr	15 Mo
16 Tu	16 Fr	16 Sa	16 Tu
17 We Ridings	17 Sa	17 Su	17 We Ridings
18 Th Art group	18 Su	18 Mo	18 Th
19 Fr	19 Mo	19 Tu	19 Fr
20 Sa	20 Tu	20 We Ridings	20 Sa
21 Su	21 We Ridings	21 Th	21 Su
22 Mo Tech/LWSL	22 Th ESG	22 Fr	22 Mo Tech
23 Tu	23 Fr	23 Sa	23 Tu
24 We	24 Sa	24 Su	24 We
25 Th Art / ESG	25 Su	25 Mo Tech	25 Th ESG
26 Fr	26 Mo Tech	26 Tu	26 Fr
27 Sa	27 Tu	27 We	27 Sa
28 Su	28 We	28 Th ESG	28 Su
29 Mo LWWSL	29 Th	29 Good Fri.	29 Mo
30 Tu		30 Sa	30 Tu
31 We		31 Su	