

Walsall Society for the Blind



**A YEAR IN REVIEW
2019-2020
EDITION 115**

Annual Report

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Our Mission

To provide information, support and friendship to all visually impaired people living within the Borough of Walsall.

Our Services

Walsall Society for the Blind is the leading charity providing advice, information and support to the visually impaired living in Walsall.

The Society employs 13 members of staff, is assisted by over 25 dedicated volunteers and provides support to over 1,300 visually impaired people within the Borough of Walsall.

The range of services we offer includes:

A Social Activity Centre

Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service

Registration Services

A Community Engagement Officer

A Community Officer

Transcription Service

Awareness and Training Sessions

Resources and Information

Equipment and Loan Services

The Society is contracted to provide Registration Services and maintain the Sight Loss Register on behalf of Walsall Council.

Public Benefit

Through the year we have:

Had 2,353 enquiries at Reception

Dealt with over 9,724 Community enquiries

Offered 3,003 Social Activity placements

Sent out over 9,663 issues of the Talking Newspaper and Magazine

Conducted 7 training and awareness sessions.

Legal and Administrative Information

Registered Name

Walsall Society for the Blind Limited

Charity Registration number

1075854

Company Registration number

3674948

Governing instruments

The Society is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England & Wales No. 3674948. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Society comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Company was formed on 27th November 1998.





Directors/Trustees

Chairman

John Cooke

Vice Chairman

David Smith

Directors / Trustees

Richard Meere, Julie Harris,
Elizabeth Smith, Amanda Elliott,
Kevin Merchant, Laurie Shore

Chief Executive Officer

Amanda Reed

Investment Advisors

EFG Harris Allday
33 Great Charles Street
Queensway
Birmingham
B3 3JN

Auditors

Bakers Chartered Accountants
Arbor House
Broadway North
Walsall
WS1 2AN

Solicitors

Enoch Evans LLP
St Pauls Chambers
6-9 Hatherton Road
Walsall
WS1 1XS

Registered Office

Hawley House
11 Hatherton Road
Walsall
WS1 1XS

Bankers

HSBC
The Bridge
Walsall
WS1 1LN

Report of the Trustees

The Trustees, who are also the Directors of the Charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their annual report and the audited financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2019. The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2015) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (FRS102) in preparing the annual report and financial statement of the Charity.

The Charity was established in 1885. It is an incorporated Charity, being a Company Limited by Guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association.



Chief Executive's Report



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What a year it has been, and now, as the Covid 19 pandemic continues, what will it hold for us in the future and what changes will we have to make?

The year started with an increase in the demand for our specialist services, with more people making contact with us for information, advice and support.

The Community Team remained busy making contact with everyone on the database completing a huge 9,724 contacts this year, they did this by phone and by letter. They continued to carry out face to face assessment of needs to all those newly registered and home visits for those who needed our ongoing support, to ensure our members were all safe and well.

The Talking Newspaper continues to be produced on a weekly basis with over 9,663 publications sent out. It now attracts listeners from outside the Walsall area. Using the web has increased our listenership by using the web based platform Soundcloud as a new way to listen in.

Our Social Activity Centre flourished offering over 3000 placements in the year. There was a strong sense of belonging growing and developing within the groups.

Then in January of this year, news started to arrive that a pandemic known as Covid 19 was starting to spread across the world and by March we were focused into looking into new ways of working.

With the Government informing us of a looming lockdown, we closed our doors to clients and volunteers, all of a sudden our Centre was empty and silent. However, as the saying goes, "The show must go on!"

Staff were given the tools to work from home, and we looked at new ways of working. Staff embraced this new way of working. They began safe and well checks by phone, whilst providing emergency food and medicine deliveries to those most at need.

It was agreed that the Talking Newspaper would continue and a small skeleton team of staff continued to produce this vital lifeline for those whose lives were already isolated due to sight loss, who now faced a new challenge of increased isolation due to the restrictions imposed to keep them safe from Covid 19.

As the financial year comes to a close, it does so with an air of uncertainty and unpredictability. But as ever, we have the overwhelming feeling that we can do this, we will continue to support all those affected by sight loss, we are just going to find new and different ways to achieve this, we will move forward and develop in the new Covid 19 environment.

We remain in a strong position, to be able to continue to provide all our services to all for now and in what appears to be an unprecedented future.



Our Volunteers continued to support us with our Social Activity Centre, the Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service and Fundraising Activities. They clocked up a fabulous 3,781 hours of their time to support us.

We thank all of our supporters who give their time, their donations and who have generously remembered us in their wills.

In a time where "take care and stay safe" and "be positive and test negative" became the new buzz words and salutations, we go forward with a positive attitude. Whatever we may face in the future, we will do so knowing that we are in a strong position to be able to provide all our services albeit in different ways for now.

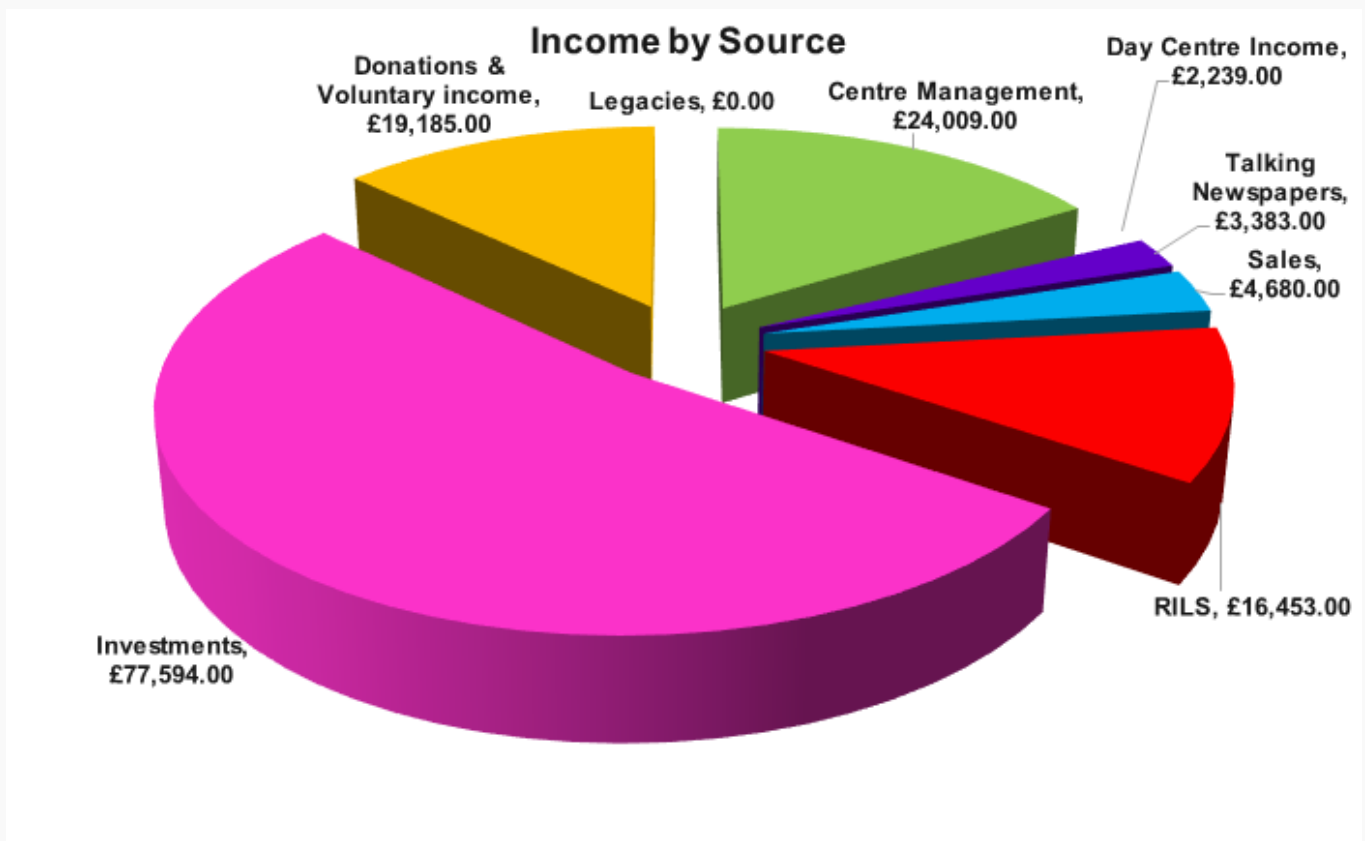
We are confident that for now and for the future that we can continue our mission,

To provide information, support and friendship to all visually impaired people in the borough of Walsall

Income

Our total income for the year was £148,249 compared with £182,529 last year. There was a decrease in income income of £34,280.

Income by Source – year to 31st March 2020

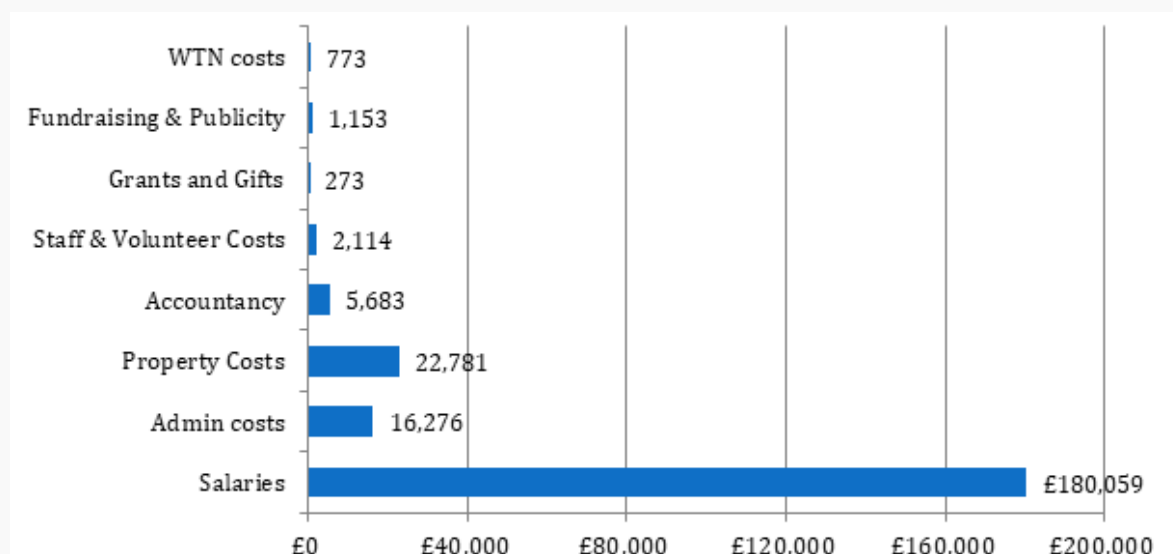


We wish to thank all who support the Society and the families of those who donate to us in memory of their loved ones. Thank you to Walsall Council for their continued support.

Expenditure

Costs incurred this year were £253,505 compared with £235,860 in the prior year. Salaries form the largest share of our expenditure at a cost of £189,407.

Expenditure by cost – year to 31st March 2020

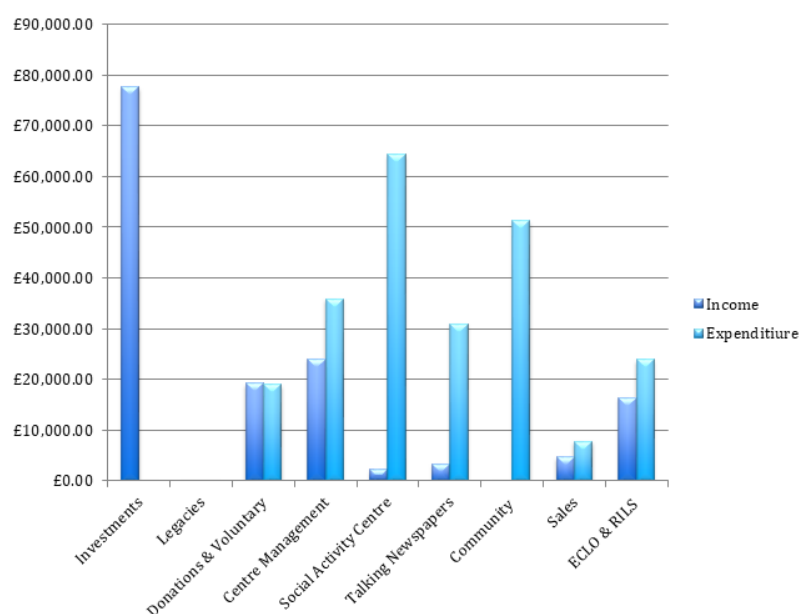


Results for the year

Our expenditure this year was greater than our income showing a deficit of £105,256. However, we try to continue to maintain the level of support and guidance we offer to the Blind and Partially Sighted individuals, their families and carers within the Borough of Walsall.

Our investment income, legacies and donations are used primarily to fund the Social Activity Centre, Translation & Talking News and the Community Support work that Walsall Society for the Blind continues to offer all those affected by sight loss. As we have seen the level of legacies and general donations has not been fully sufficient to fully meet the costs of those activities this year.

Income & Expenditure – year to 31 March 2020



Society Assets

The investment income we receive each year is generated from our investment portfolio, managed by an independent broker.

This income represents 52% of our annual income. Such income has become an increasing proportion of our total income.

The cost of our investments was consistent at £1.7 million and these were valued at £1.6 million at the year end.

Society Reserves

We are required to hold sufficient funds to cover between 9 months and 2 years' costs at any time which we hold in a Development Fund, at £1.2 million.

Closing unrestricted funds for use by the Society stand at £491,299.



Summary

The Trustees believe the Society has sufficient funds to continue to support the visually impaired people of Walsall.

The Trustees also express their thanks to the Chief Executive and her dedicated team, who have continued to provide support to those affected by sight loss within the Borough of Walsall.

A complete set of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 is available on request from the Society in various formats.



New staff

This year we have welcomed three new members of staff to the Society.

Jenny and Karen have joined the Social Activity team as Coordinators whilst Lesley is supporting the admin department as a Administrative Assistant.



Karen

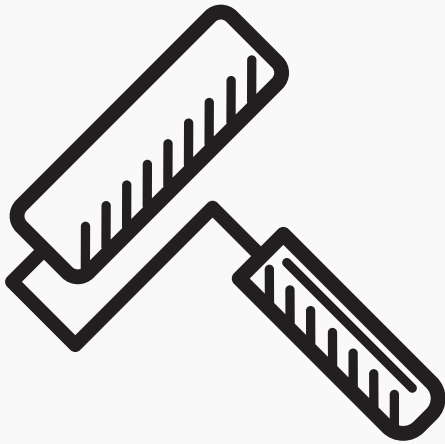


Lesley

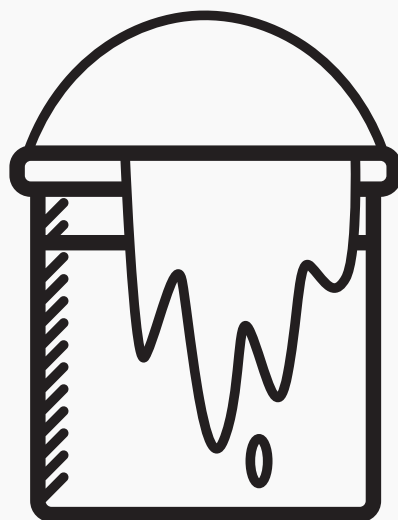


Jenny





This year we have had a full makeover throughout the building, including being fully decorated and new flooring throughout. We moved our Social Activity Centre to 'The Crossing' at St Pauls Church, Walsall where they were great at accommodating us. The renovations were completed in 7 weeks and we were then able to welcome our clients and volunteers back into the fresh and new centre.





Let me introduce you to Daniel, my 6-year-old son who besides being completely handsome and adorable also has very complex needs including being registered blind. At birth Daniel's brain was so damaged that when professionals spoke about him it was never with any hope or aspirations for his future. Partly because of the level of damage and partly because I believe some worry about giving parents unrealistic expectations. Whilst I believe in being realistic our family motto is "never say never" so I was determined to give Daniel the best chance to achieve his potential on whatever level that would be. This led me into researching therapies that could support Daniel and his development and I was introduced to The Snowdrop programme. Snowdrop is a neuroscience-based treatment which has changed the lives of many children. Its principles of treatment is stimulating and directing brain plasticity. This is simplistic in its description but is the best overview. We started Daniel on this program in 2018 and to be honest it is one of the best things we have ever done, Daniel has literally been awakened. We had our first assessment online with the founder of The Snowdrop programme, Andrew Brereton, a man who I have come to admire greatly. The assessment looks at a child in the eight major areas of development, (visual, auditory, tactile, cognitive, mobility, hand function, language and socialization) and assess where they stand currently on Snowdrop's developmental profile. This gives their current developmental age in each area. If I am to be completely honest, on this first assessment Daniel barely reached beyond new-born level.

It was so hard to read back the first lot of feedback, but everyone has to start somewhere, and this programme was so positive we could not wait to start. This year we had to cancel our second, in real life, assessment as travelling to Devon under Covid wasn't ideal and we have been shielding, but thankfully Andrew swapped Daniel's assessment to an online one. We worked through the questionnaire he sent us, taking videos of Daniel's responses, etc and sent them off. I'm actually finding myself crying as I write this because although we have seen the difference in Daniel as parents sometimes it's easy to view progress through rose tinted glasses so when we received Andrew's new assessment it was incredible. Over the two years Daniel's progress has been more than we ever hoped, his cognitive levels especially. I remember reading the level of cognitive ability twice as I could not believe it, from a child not registering on a scale he was now working at around 30 months and in fact maybe more. Andrew believes he is understanding more than he can communicate to us. How incredible is this.



Anyone who knows Daniel can see the changes in him, the first time we met the team at Walsall Society for the Blind Daniel would not even open his eyes. This last Christmas party saw him laughing and verbalising with the team. The Snowdrop programme has been key in the opening of life for Daniel and we are already working hard on our new programme. Obviously, the programme comes at a cost and whilst I truly believe it is so worth it, we have had to fundraise to fund it. We have been so blessed to receive a grant from the Walsall Society for the Blind and this has helped fund two assessments which we are so thankful for. Their kindness financially and emotionally has really impacted Daniel's life and definitely mine as his mom. Watching Daniel open up and engage in the world has been nothing more than magical. I'm extremely grateful to all those that have supported us and especially Walsall Society for the Blind, their support both financially and emotionally mean the world to me and Daniel.





**We would like to say a massive Thank
You to our fantastic loyal volunteers
who support us each day to deliver the
services that we do.**



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WS1 1XS

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01922 627 683

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Website - www.walsallblind.org

Charity No - 1075854
Company Reg - 3674948

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