

Walsall Society for the Blind

2021-2022



**A YEAR IN REVIEW
EDITION 117**

Annual Report

Summary of Financial Statements 2021-2022

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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 10 dedicated volunteers and provides support to over 1,400 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 Officer
- An Assistive Technology Officer
- Equipment and Loan Services
- Transcription service
- Awareness and Training Sessions

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

Public Benefit

Through the year we have:

Had 2,008 Enquiries at Reception

Dealt with over 5,335 Community enquiries

Offered 1,431 Social Activity placements

Sent out over 8,137 issues of the Talking Newspaper and Magazine

Legal and Administrative Information

Registered Name

Walsall Society for the Blind

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, Kevin Merchant,
Laurie Shore

Chief Executive Officer

Amanda Reed

Investment Advisors

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

Auditors

Stanton Ralph & Co
The Old Police Station
Whitburn Street
Bridgnorth
WV16 4QP

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

Directors / 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 2022. 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 Officer's Report

As the year began, it appeared at last that we had emerged from the Covid 19 pandemic. We made it! We changed our ways of working and were able to remain open, government guidance permitting and delivered the services which were needed more than ever.

We began with ensuring all our existing services carried on as normally as possible and, as life went on, we saw changes to our team. Barry retired as WTN engineer after 17 years of service, Les retired after 12 years of service as Registration Officer and Karen left to chase her dream job. We have had the opportunity to recruit and welcome new members into our team. Dan joined as our Technology Officer, Sarah joined as the Community Officer and Gina joined us in the Social Activity Centre.

Amanda our fundraiser, has been successful in securing funds for overdue renovations, new projects, and vital funds to cover the cost of our existing services.

Following the pandemic, it became apparent that we were unable to meet the assistive technical requirements of our clients and did not have on site the equipment to assist them.

The funds from the Postcode Neighbourhood Trust allowed us to employ our first Assistive Technology Officer. Dan the “Tech Man” started with us in June and a much-needed assistive technology service has been developed.

Unfortunately, the Social Activity Centre lost some of its members during the pandemic. We have begun to rebuild the service with a limited transport service delivered by Ring and Ride, a timetable of activities and themed weeks. We hope to increase the numbers within the groups to pre pandemic levels.

With Jenny at the helm of the Walsall Talking Newspaper, we were able to maintain the provision of this vital lifeline to so many in isolation through the pandemic. The newspaper and magazine service has continued to go from strength to strength.

As this year comes to an end, a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, thanks to funding from Severn Trent is now ready to commence.

As the pandemic is now no longer affecting our lives as it did, it has presented us with the opportunity to focus our thoughts and look towards the future.

With a strong staff team, support from our loyal volunteers and members and an ever increasing demand for our support, it is the right time to ensure that we deliver the services that are required for the future, to meet the needs and aspirations of those affected by sight loss within the borough of Walsall.

To ensure we are able:

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



Financial Report 2022

A complete set of the Society's financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 is available from the Society in various formats, on request. This report is a summary of the principal elements of those accounts.

Income and expenditure

Our total income for the year was £421,756, which is approximately £43,000 higher than in 2021. As in 2021, we have been very fortunate again this year to receive significant legacies and donations that have enabled us to maintain our core services. Our sincere thanks and gratitude go to all of those who chose to support the Society with such generosity.

Our total expenditure this year was £276,875, a modest increase of about 2.5% from 2021. As normal, the costs of employing our hardworking and dedicated staff — £187,209 this year — form by far the largest share of that expenditure. Our staff are supported by the Trustees, all of whom are unpaid, and none of whom has claimed any expenses despite being entitled to do so. The work of the Society is also supported by a team of volunteers that give their time and energy so generously.

Our net income for 2022 is thus £144,881. That figure needs placing in context as it includes more than £201,000 in legacies this year, without which we would therefore have incurred a deficit of about £56,000. We remain very much aware of the need to plan our finances with caution, always with the objective of maintaining the services we provide and

ensuring the long-term survival of the Society.

Investments and reserves

The Society has a portfolio of financial investments managed by an independent broker, EFG Harris Allday. At 31st March 2022 the value of this portfolio was just over £2.1 million, and the investment income received from it this year was £76,549. That income is about 25% higher than in 2021, though this simply represents a return to the normal level of dividends paid by most companies, many of which suspended payments of dividends altogether in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Trustees are grateful to EFG Harris Allday for maintaining the value of the Society's investments in challenging economic conditions and volatile markets.

The Trustees believe that the Society's finances are currently sufficient to enable it to continue providing its existing services to the visually impaired people of Walsall. However, the Trustees also recognise the need for extreme caution and prudent management of the Society's resources if its long-term future is to be secured. With the economic outlook being affected by high levels of inflation and war in Ukraine, the Trustees have decided that the Development Fund should now be increased from £1.2million to £1.5million.

The Trustees express their grateful thanks to the Chief Executive and her dedicated team of staff and volunteers for their work during what has been another year made difficult by Covid-19.

Fundraising Report 2021- 2022

It's been a busy year for fundraising at WSB and we're excited to share some of the highlights of the last 12 months with you. First of all though, we must say a huge THANK YOU to everyone who has made a donation towards our work. We are so grateful for your support, without it we simply wouldn't be able to fund our vital sight loss support services.

This year, we are pleased to have been able to launch our new Assistive Technology service. This project, supporting our sight loss community with all things electronic, and has been made possible thanks to seed funding from the Postcode Neighbourhood Trust. The Trust have funded the first 9 months of the service with a number of other charitable foundations ensuring that we could deliver it for a full 12 months. The technology support has been really well received and you can read more about it elsewhere in this annual review.

We'll be starting another new sight loss support service in the coming year thanks to continued support from the Severn Trent Water Community Fund. They will be funding an exciting new Mental Health and Wellbeing project which we will be piloting over the coming 12 months.

Our new Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer will be working closely with our Community team to support our visually impaired clients to regain their independence and improve their mental wellbeing following the pandemic.

We also are thrilled to let you know that BBC Children in Need are covering the cost of our work with visually impaired children and young people for the next three years! This year was the first year of our partnership which will run up until April 2024. It's wonderful to have support for our existing services as well as new projects.

Thanks to other generous donations we've been able to buy 3 new benches to improve our outdoor patio space and a range of new magnification equipment which is now available for demonstration and loan to our sight loss community.



Supported by players of



Awarded funds from



We've also received 10 pre loved computers from Birmingham City Council which we'll be using in our new IT suite which we hope to open for clients next year.

Have you noticed the new addition in our entrance foyer? Our Tree of Life is not only a stunning piece of artwork, it's a place to celebrate life's special moments whilst raising a bit of money too. So, whether you are marking a special occasion, an achievement, a birthday or a loved one, you can have your own personalised message inscribed on one of the tree's colourful leaves.



And finally, this year has been a bumper year for legacies with a staggering £200k received from people who remembered the Society in their Will. We thank them unreservedly and have remembered them on our Tree of Life, as a lasting acknowledgment for their support.

For more information about making a Tree of Life dedication please contact Reception.

Assistive Technology Officer

Hello! My name is Dan and I am the new Assistive Technology Officer.



While here, I aim to bring technology to the visually impaired across Walsall to help them regain independence and provide confidence to these people in need through apps and equipment.

In my first 9 months since starting in June 2022, I have assisted with over 960 individual enquiries, involving almost 350 visually impaired individuals.

The service also provides assistance for families, carers and friends, as those suffering from visual impairment can act for themselves through technology, reducing the strain that care can have on individuals.

I provide support with a range of technology, including:

- Magnifiers
- Phones (including apps)
- Sunglasses
- Computer software
- Everyday living aids

All equipment is available for demonstration at the centre, and I provide home visits to those unable to attend the centre.

Case Study



I met a child that was in need of some technology to help him perceive the world. He had been struggling with his sight impairment and this meant that at school, he was struggling to see the board in class and was not learning because of this.

He was falling behind his classmates and was not receiving the attention he needed because he was not registered with a sight loss.

To help with this issue, we provided him with an ipad which he could use to catch up on his education, as well as support the family at home.

Unfortunately, this child returned shortly with the same problem, because the school did not permit aids that could connect to the internet. After some observation from him and his mom, we found the Eschenbach Smartlux digital magnifier that we could loan to him to be able to view his work that did not connect to the internet.

Since loaning this magnifier and a writing board, he has been able to continue with his education and uses the device every day at school. I have regularly contacted his mother since his visits to make sure that his needs are met for his visual impairment and to make sure he is doing well.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY CENTRE



WE'RE BACK





The staff at Walsall Society for the Blind would like to take the opportunity to say Thank You to all of the clients and volunteers for supporting us over the past 12 months.

It has been a difficult year, but with the support and dedication of our loyal clients and volunteers, it looks like we were heading in the right direction to get WSB back up to where we were pre Covid and ready to make new plans for the future of WSB.





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Website - www.walsallblind.org



Charity No - 1075854
Company Reg - 3674948



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