

Walsall Society for the Blind

**A Year in Review
Issue 118**



2022 - 2023

Annual Report

Summary of Financial

Statements 2022-2023

1	Contents
2	Our Mission & Services
3	Public Benefit / Legal Information
4	Directors & Trustees
5	Report of Trustees
6	Chief Executive's Report
10	Treasurer's Report
13	Staff
14	Social Activity Centre
17	Fundraising
18	Wellbeing Officer
22	Meet Maxine
24	Assistive Technology Update
25	Fundraiser Report
29	Thank You
30	Contact Details

All rights reserved and all contents copyright by Walsall Society for the Blind. No part of the document may be reproduced and transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without prior permission of the publisher.

Alternative formats are available

Our Mission & Services

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 14 members of staff, is assisted by over 15 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 Officer
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Services
- Assistive Technology Services
- Transcription Service
- Awareness and Training Sessions
- 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 / Legal Information

Public Benefit

During the year we have:

Had 2,603 enquiries at Reception

Dealt with over 8,262 Community enquiries

Offered 1,699 Social Activity placements

Engaged with 2,299 Mental Health and Wellbeing contacts

Supported 1,978 Assistive Technology contacts

Sent out over 8,141 issues of the Talking Newspaper and Magazine

Conducted 2 training and awareness sessions.

Legal and Administrative Information

Registered Name

Walsall Society for the Blind Limited

Charity Registration number

1075854

Company Registration number

03674948

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

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

Stanton Ralph -

Chartered
Accountants
& Registered Auditors
The Old Police Station
Whitburn Street
Bridgnorth
Shropshire
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

Report of Trustees

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 2023.

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

Chief Executive Report 2022 - 2023

At Walsall Society for the Blind, we believe that everyone with sight loss deserves the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. We are determined that no one should face sight loss alone. There are more than 8,980 people living in Walsall today with sight loss. With an ageing population and being an area of high deprivation, these figures are increasing year on year. We have been supporting people living with sight loss since 1885. We are an entirely independent charity and have to raise all of our own funds to be able to provide our range of services.

Our Vision

Our vision is a world where blind and partially sighted people have the confidence to reach their full potential and opportunities to play an active role in society.

Our Mission

To provide information, support and friendship to all those affected by sight loss within the Borough of Walsall.

We achieve this by supporting individuals with sight loss, their families, carers and friends. We also provide advice to professionals, members of the public, community groups and anyone else who wants to make a positive difference to the lives of people with sight loss.

We have a large network of local and national professionals we can call on to support us such as GPs, opticians, ECLOs and other charities.

Our expert team works closely with Rehabilitation Officers - Rachel and Simon, who provide rehabilitation and mobility training to enable people to regain their independence after sight loss.

The facts, figures, stories and pictures within this annual review illustrate how our charity has developed and improved its services.

It has been a real joy for all our staff and volunteers to see visually impaired people return with enthusiasm to face-to-face services. Our centre is once more full of people who are visually impaired enjoying our social groups.

Technology and equipment services continue to expand as we invest in life-changing tech support for people who are visually impaired; helping them reduce isolation, stay connected and enjoy greater independence.

Often the devastating impact of sight loss has a huge effect on mental health, with individuals now presenting with increasingly complex support needs. Our newly funded Wellbeing Officer post is now meeting this need.

As the community team has grown, they are able to achieve so much more, being able to refer in house for Tech and Wellbeing support services. This has much improved the service we provide. The team itself has achieved a total of 12,541 contacts either by letter, email, phone, or face to face visit, not including the training and awareness and roadshows out in the community.

The Walsall Talking Newspaper service continues to deliver local news, information, engagement and entertainment in audio to visually impaired and print disabled individuals. We post to the cloud, Facebook, website, on British Wireless for the Blind and on Alexa, so there are so many ways to choose to listen.

We remain committed to Walsall being a place where people who are visually impaired can live without barriers and where they can take full advantage of all that our great borough has to offer.

We are continually evolving our approach to ensure the best possible advice, support and friendship for those that need us. None of our work would be possible without the commitment of our donors, our fundraisers, our supporters and the strength of our committed Trustees, Staff and Volunteers.

I thank you all for your commitment, support and willingness to work in new and different ways to meet the changing needs of people with sight loss, making Walsall Society for the Blind fit for the future. In doing so, we remain a leading provider of sight loss services in the Borough of Walsall.



Treasurer's Report

Walsall Society for the Blind Financial Report 2023

A complete set of the Society's financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 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 £341,585, which is approximately £80,000 lower than in 2022. Last year we received some exceptionally generous donations and legacies so the reduction in income was fully anticipated. 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 £356,783, an increase of about 29% from 2022. This is due largely to an increase in the number of people employed by the Society. This expansion of our workforce and of the services we provide was made possible by generous funding received for specific projects, the details of which are given in Note 17 of the published financial accounts.

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.

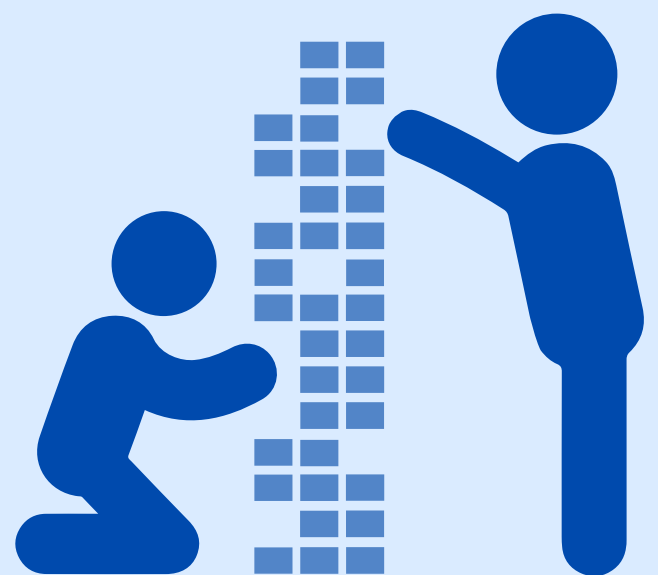
We are thus reporting a modest net operating deficit for 2023 of £15,198. As usual, that figure needs placing in context as it includes more than £105,000 in legacies this year, without which we would therefore have incurred a deficit of about £90,000. We remain very much aware of the need to plan our 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 2023 the value of this portfolio was just over £2 million, and the investment income received from it this year was £83,644 which is about 9% higher than in 2022. 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 still being affected by high levels of inflation and interest rates, the Trustees have decided that the Development Fund should be increased from £1.5million to £1.6million this year.

The Trustees express their grateful thanks to the Chief Executive and her dedicated team of staff and volunteers for their work during another challenging year.



Staff

Amanda Reed



CEO

Claire Evans



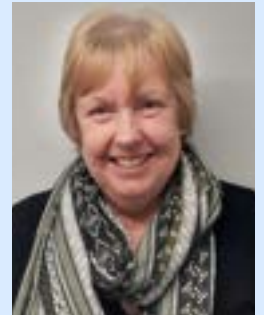
Operations
Manager

Amanda Elliott



Fundraiser

Sue Thompson



Finance

Community Officers

Lisa Bradley



Wellbeing

Sharon Haycock



Registration

Sarah Pearmain



Community

Dan Smith



Assistive Tech

Jenny Smith



Talking News

Social Activities and Centre

Gina Cornforth



Social Activities Coordinators

Grace Cashen



Ruth Gibbons



Brailist

Maxine Hemmings



Administrative
Assistant

Brian Grace



Domestic
Assistant

Social Activity Centre







Fundraising

Pete the Poet

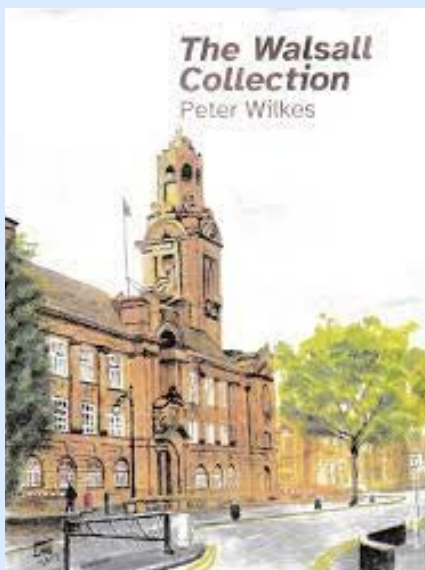
The much loved and renowned Pete the Poet published his long awaited poetry book this year, whilst generously sharing the proceeds between Walsall Society for the Blind and Guide Dogs.



To date he has raised an amazing £2,000 which will go towards the day-to-day running of the Centre.



As a thank you, a cheque presentation was arranged and the Mayor of Walsall attended to personally thank Pete for his fantastic charitable work.



Wellbeing Officer

On 25th April 2022 I joined the Society to take up a new Mental Health and Wellbeing role which had been funded by the Severn Trent Community Fund for the first 12 months.



During the first few weeks in post I shadowed our Community, Registration and Tech officers to enable me to gain a good understanding of the support the charity offered and how my role would fit into it. I reached out to current clients to introduce myself and to tell them about the new wellbeing service that was now available and joined the community team in making safe and well calls to check in on clients' wellbeing.

Following referrals from colleagues and safe and well calls I started to arrange home visits to clients in need of support. I completed an initial assessment on each client's needs, then developed a health and wellbeing plan to allow me to address any issues that they faced, to prevent problems escalating. Challenging circumstances have prompted me to respond quickly. I have overcome these challenges by using a self-care technique learned from a wellbeing course I completed at the start of my employment.

I have applied for network rail cards, blue badges and bus passes on behalf of clients. I have also supported clients who were desperately seeking social interaction but had no confidence to go out in the community alone. Some of these individuals are now regularly attending the gym and socialising cafés.

Contact has been made to doctors' surgeries chasing appointments for clients and to social services for reporting concerns about a client's welfare and general enquiries. I have assisted and guided clients with hospital, occupational therapy and optician appointments. Referrals have been made to occupational health nurses, low vision aid clinics and to services such as Ablewell Advice to support benefit applications for clients.

Close contact has been made with a mental health nurse within the local community to support a client who was at crisis point with their poor mental health. Further referrals have come directly to me from social prescribers expressing concerns about individuals who had become isolated following the pandemic and were uncertain of their future because they did not know how to break the vicious cycle.

Supporting people with a visual impairment to gain self-confidence and to feel less isolated whilst accessing community activities and services has already proven to significantly improve their mental health and wellbeing and I look forward to continuing this work.

I have educated myself and spent time with work colleagues to research information that is beyond my area of expertise. I have also built a network of other local organisations to whom I have been able to signpost clients, in order to support them to reach the outcome that they desire.

Training throughout the year has better equipped me with the skills and techniques needed to support clients with sight loss on a practical level. As well as completing an NVQ level 2 in mental health awareness, I've also attended sight loss workshops and received certificated training from the local rehabilitation team which has enabled me to support clients with basic kitchen skills and sighted guiding. All of this has made a huge difference to my understanding of the challenges faced by those with sight loss, and how best to tailor the support I offer to help them improve their wellbeing.

During the wellbeing officers first year with
Walsall Society for the Blind
762 individual forms of contact had been made.
289 were severely sight impaired.
385 were partially sighted.
88 were non registered clients



Meet Maxine

Hello, I'm Maxine and work as an Administrator. I initially joined WSB in May 2022 for 6 months to put paper files onto the database and was then offered the role on a permanent basis.



I have a secretarial/PA/linguistic (French) background. After caring for parents for a few years (one with terminal cancer, the other with Alzheimer's disease/dementia) along with my Sister, I had planned to do a one year Post Graduate Primary Teaching Course. However, this did not work out. I then looked for a role to help regain confidence and skills and came to WSB.

My job is front line and includes dealing with phone calls, deliveries, post, car park passes and welcoming visitors to the centre. I also book travel via ring and ride for clients. I record donations for the WTN service and find stories from local news.

I source and arrange speakers to come to the centre to share expertise in their field and to raise awareness. Speakers have included the Samaritans, Air Ambulance, the Cinnamon Trust and Mary's Meals.

Another part of my role is sending out birthday cards to clients. This is a nice thing to do, as I am aware that a card from WSB may be the only one they get. I will be sending out Christmas cards this year too.

I proof read and amend correspondence, policies and procedures too and will be sending out a mailshot in the near future to promote WSB's services to healthcare providers.

On a personal level, I love to travel and am lucky enough to have been all over the world. I enjoy the theatre (plays, ballet) and live music concerts. I also enjoy gardening, reading, walking and competitions.

WSB is probably the quirkiest place I have ever worked and also the most endearing. I am in awe of how clients have adjusted to sight loss, especially when sudden and how they just 'carry on'.

The centre is a place of friendship, support and kindness and I am pleased I came to work here. I look forward to my role developing in the future.

Thank you,
Max.

Assistive Technology Update

Over the last year, my experience has grown and I have continued to help the clients of the Walsall Society for the Blind with the same aim: to bring technology to visually impaired people across Walsall so they can have independence where possible with this technology.

I have increased my efforts in home visits to target the most vulnerable and isolated. In partnership with other departments such as the Walsall Talking News, our Community Team and even external organisations such as our Rehabilitation Officers and sight loss technology distributors like Associated Optical and Humanware, I aim to spread news and opportunities for everyone with sight loss in the Borough of Walsall.

Involved in this process is the organisation and demonstration of products by a company representative or myself to show people the benefits of the technology available.



In addition, I organise trial periods for different pieces of equipment so that people have the opportunity to try out the products before purchasing for a longer period. This is very successful, as it has persuaded many people to purchase or to avoid the purchase if the device is not suitable for them.

- Dan

Fundraiser Report

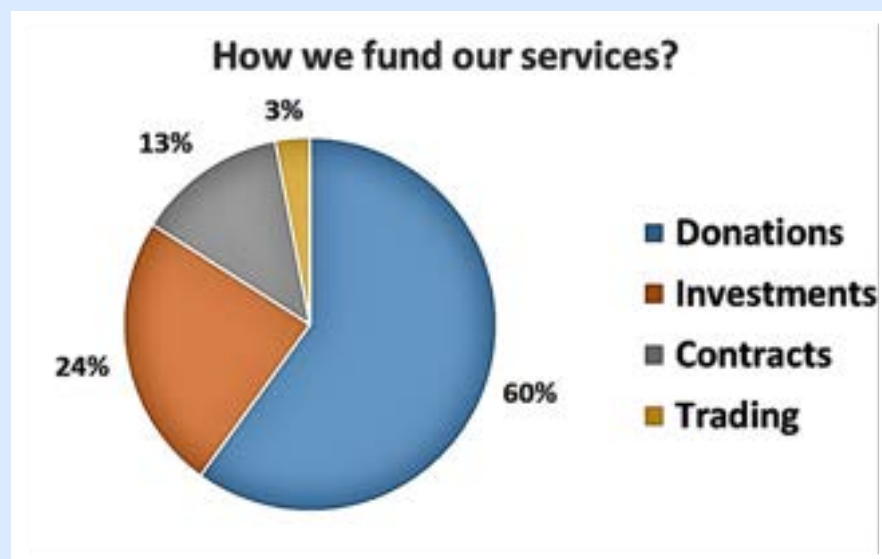
Over the last year I've had a lot of interesting conversations with service users, volunteers, staff and members of the public about what it costs to provide Walsall Society for the Blind's sight loss support services, free of charge, to all who need them.

What has surprised me the most is that many people don't realise that we are a charity and that we rely on donations to keep our services running. So, I thought it would be helpful to provide a little insight into how our services are funded.

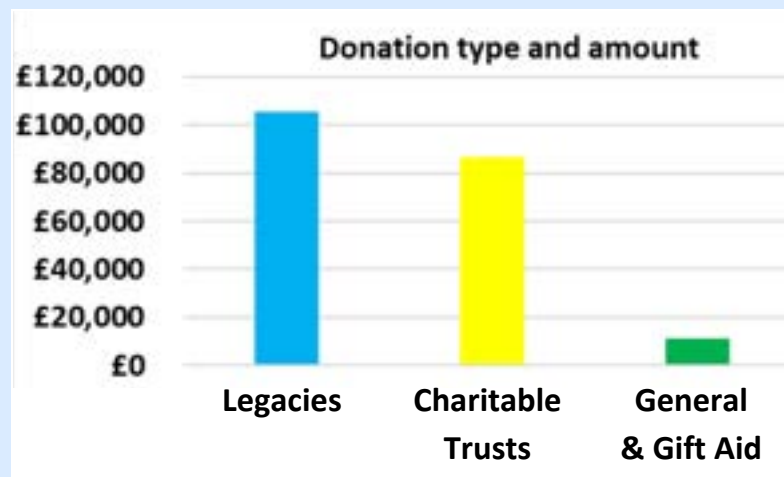
During the last financial year it cost Walsall Society for the Blind almost £357,000 to fund its sight loss support services. That's almost £1,000 every single day, and it's a lot of money to have to raise each year.

We fund our services largely through donations and investment income.

Donation income accounted for just over £200,000 last year, which is around 60% of the money needed to fund all of our services for one year.



Our donation income comes from 4 main areas; legacies, charitable trusts, general donations and gift aid:



Over the last 12 months, thanks to generous donations from Charitable Trusts and Foundations we have secured funding to extend our Mental Health and Wellbeing project for a second year, create an IT suite within our charity premises to provide tutored and independent computer usage and to fund a new telephone helpline and call costs for the year ahead.

We've also received funding to provide sight loss support aids to those newly registered with a visual impairment, to replace the broken but much used pool table in our Social Activity Centre and to upgrade our heating system.

The replacement of our 15 year old boiler has been instrumental in ensuring that all of our services have been able to continue without disruption during the colder months.

On top of all of that, we're delighted to have also secured vital funding to support our ongoing community outreach service provision.

However, at £86,000, the money raised through our Charitable Trust fundraising covers only a quarter of what we spend each year to support local people with sight loss.

The largest donation type last year was legacy income. Legacy donations are gifts left to us in a person's Will. They accounted for over 50% of our donation income. Legacies provided us with £105,237 to use towards our services. This amazing sum is almost equivalent to funding the whole of our Community outreach work for the year!

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that we will receive any legacy income next year. If we don't, there will be a huge shortfall between the cost of running our services and the money we have available to fund them.

With your help we can increase our donation income, and plan for the future. There are so many ways you can support Walsall Society for the Blind. From one off and regular donations, to hosting an event or sponsored activity or getting your place of worship, club or workplace involved. There are lots of fun and simple ways to raise awareness and funds for the Society.

What's more, leaving a gift to Walsall Society for the Blind in your Will enables you to support us during your lifetime without costing you a penny right now. We even have a free will writing service available for anyone who needs it, ensuring that making or updating your will is easy and cost free.

If you would like more information about how you can help us to ensure future support for local people with sight loss please get in touch.

- Amanda



Thank You

Dale

Steven

Brian

Joanne

Ade

Michael

Andy

Dee

Janet

Sandra

Sheila

Sita

Nuala

Peter

**We would like to say
thank you to all of our
clients and volunteers
for their loyalty and
dedication throughout
the year.**

Thank
you

Contact Details



Walsall Society for the Blind
Hawley House
11 Hatherton Road
Walsall
WS1 1XS



Helpline Number
01922 627 683



Charity No - 1075854
Company Reg - 03674948



Email - hawleyhouse@wsftb.co.uk
Website - www.walsallblind.org



Follow us on
Facebook - [WalsallSocietyfortheBlind](https://www.facebook.com/WalsallSocietyfortheBlind)
Twitter - [@blindwsftb](https://twitter.com/blindwsftb)

