



214TH ANNUAL REPORT
2019-2020



Vision Norfolk is the county's local sight loss charity. Founded by Thomas Tawell in 1805, it has always been, and remains to this day, a charity which understands the needs of Norfolk's visually-impaired, and provides services right across the county.



Every year, visually-impaired people, along with staff, volunteers and supporters of Vision Norfolk, gather at Thomas Tawell's memorial in Norwich Cathedral on our founder's birthday to give thanks for the organisation which he bequeathed to the county, and which continues to support visually-impaired people throughout Norfolk today.

Cover

A group of visually-impaired people proved that sight loss is no barrier to leading a full life and tackling the most daunting challenges when they took on the Go Ape treetop adventure in Thetford Forest. In six hours, the group completed all five areas of the challenge – an amazing achievement.

Our **Vision** is: 'All visually-impaired people in Norfolk live independent and fulfilled lives.'
Our **Mission** – the part we play in making that Vision become reality – is: 'To support visually-impaired people of all ages in Norfolk to overcome barriers to independence and to live the lives they want.'

We achieve our mission by:

- Tackling social isolation amongst visually-impaired people, through social and leisure opportunities, befriending and other support
- Providing expert practical and emotional help to visually-impaired people in the community and in their own homes, delivered by our Community Team through our community hubs
- Providing practical help to visually-impaired people in the community and in their own homes by our network of volunteers
- Delivering expert support in the clinical environment by providing staff and volunteers in eye clinics, especially to help people at the point they first start losing their sight
- Enabling visually-impaired people to live independently by providing supported permanent accommodation
- Providing high-intensity residential care for elderly visually-impaired people in the charity's care home, Thomas Tawell House
- Supporting visually-impaired children and young adults and their families practically, emotionally and socially
- Campaigning on issues which will enable visually-impaired people to live independent and fulfilled lives

Our Values – the guiding principles behind the way we deliver our services – are:

- **Openness:** we are committed to a culture of honest teamwork and collaboration
- **Respectfulness:** we will actively listen to our stakeholders and value everyone's input
- **Professionalism:** we will retain our reputation by being trustworthy, consistent and reliable
- **Flexibility:** we will continually adapt to provide the best outcomes for visually-impaired people
- **Enabling:** we will always work alongside an individual to provide the tools to achieve their goals
- **Positivity:** our 'can do' approach will always be ambitious for visually-impaired people
- **Responsibility:** we will be individually accountable for our actions and collectively responsible for achieving the best for visually-impaired people

In this Annual Report, we explain in more detail how we have delivered against each of these aims during 2019/20, and how we are proposing to continue to do so into the future, a future which presents more challenges than at almost any time during the charity's history.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Although this Annual Report covers the 12 months to the end of March 2020, we cannot ignore the seismic events which started in the last few weeks of that year, and which continue to have a massive impact on Vision Norfolk – along with every other charity.

But we should not ignore the excellent progress that we made over the entire 12 month period, most of it before any of us had heard mention of Covid-19.

Following the decision to change our name to Vision Norfolk early in 2019, we have continued to build an organisation which properly represents all those with sight loss throughout Norfolk.

Visually-impaired people – who we like to call VIPs – have become steadily more independent over the past few years. We have to deliver what they need rather than what we think they should have delivered ‘to’ them.

That has meant a process of modernisation and restructuring, which will bear fruit in the current year with the opening of our multi-service local Hubs, about which you can find out more on page 24 of this report.

These hubs will help us become more agile, signposting people towards where they can find help and support. They will help VIPs lead independent lives, quite possibly dipping in and out of our services as they need them, rather than being dependent on us (although we remain there for those who have more intensive needs, of course).

We are working towards being better at supporting people in their homes, in their own social environments, and in their communities, and at enabling them to remain economically active (and hence independent) as well.

We do all of this in a charity landscape which was already becoming much tougher even before coronavirus. The reduction in statutory support in many areas means that there is much more demand on all charities, at a time when fundraising is becoming more competitive.

Vision Norfolk has traditionally been the recipient of generous legacies which has in a large part enabled us to deliver the breadth and depth of services that we offer. We are incredibly grateful to those who remember us in this way, but there are increasing calls on such bequests, not least as the Covid crisis makes people more mindful of the immediate needs of their own families.

As with many charities, we have had to revisit our constitution to see how we can be more agile, more engaged, and more transparent. For example, the care sector has changed massively over the past five years alone; the current Vision Norfolk constitution was written 40 years ago. The world has moved on in that time, and we must too.

There is an expectation now that charities – especially ones like Vision Norfolk – should become more professional, both to comply with increasingly complex charity law, and to be able to attract Trustees and funders.

With the help of external expert advice, and working with the Charity Commission, we have taken the decision to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which is a charity structure conferred by the Charity Commission. It allows charities like Vision Norfolk to operate in a more professional way, and with greater transparency in our governance.

As we write, there are many challenges facing us. The biggest, at least in the short-term, is the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. We want to pay the greatest possible tribute to Vision Norfolk’s executive team and staff, who went way above and beyond – and continue to do so – to ensure we were able to provide our services in a safe way, especially for those living in Thomas Tawell House and Hammond Court.

We are in awe of the way that they selflessly put themselves on the ‘front line’, with some even isolating themselves from their own families so that they could continue to provide care. This kind of dedication amongst our staff is our greatest asset, and one which deserves both our thanks and our ongoing support.

Covid isn’t the only challenge. Remaining financially viable in the face of reduced public funding, increasing demands on the care sector, and growing competition in the fundraising arena, is one of our biggest long-term tasks.

But the most important challenge is to ensure that Vision Norfolk remains relevant to those living with sight loss. We remain committed to refocussing and modernising the charity so that it remains fit for purpose over the coming years.

Rev Canon Simon Stokes and Richard Hanson, co-chairs and trustees



Vision Norfolk Co-Chairs Richard Hanson (left) and Rev Simon Stokes. This is the first time that the charity has ever had two co-chairs who are themselves visually-impaired.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



I pay tribute to how our staff have responded to these challenges. That was especially evident towards the end of the year, as Covid-19 struck.

Gina Dormer

When I look back on the year 2019/20 for Vision Norfolk, I think I can sum it up in three concise phrases: becoming more professional; listening and adapting; and at the end of the 12 months, responding to the biggest challenge we have ever faced.

The year was definitely one of transition, and much of what we achieved will really start to bear fruit in 2020/21. So although this is a review, it would be disingenuous if we didn't look forward, too.

I am very proud of how the whole team at Vision Norfolk grasped the need for change, and then set about making that change work for visually-impaired people throughout the county.

As clients' needs have changed, so we are having to adapt both what we deliver and how we deliver it, and that has resulted in extra demands being made on our people. We have increased investment in workforce development, upskilling staff, delivering more training, and further strengthening the management team.

I pay tribute to how our staff have responded to these challenges. That was especially evident towards the end of the year, as Covid-19 struck. The pandemic intensified the need to make everything we do more accessible, and its delivery more local; this, however, is something we were already doing before coronavirus.

We spent much of the year listening to our service users – as well as those visually-impaired people who weren't using our services – through a series of consultations and village hall meetings.

These were about helping us define what Vision Norfolk will be in the future, and ensuring that we will genuinely meet the needs of those living with sight loss in our county.

We are seeking to be far more creative and innovative in the way we support people. That will mean investing in technology and infrastructure, but above all it will mean delivering our services in a far more integrated, local way.

That is why in the current year we are introducing the local multi-service hubs (for more details see pages 24 and 25 of this report), which will allow us to reach more people, better meet their needs, and deliver our services in a better way.

Crucial to that will be working with other organisations, and the past year has seen a significant strengthening of partnerships to that effect. A key relationship we have started to build is with the county's hearing loss charity Hear for Norfolk, with the aim of creating a much more user-focussed sensory support service.

We have also invested heavily in the support we provide for younger visually-impaired people and their families, with more activities reaching more young people than ever before. We will continue to invest in this area, including the appointment of a young people and families activities co-ordinator before the end of 2020.

If 2019/20 was a year of transition, 2020/21 will be one of delivery. I am confident that this time next year I will be reporting that we will have engaged with more visually-impaired people throughout Norfolk and that we will have met their needs better; that staff and volunteers will be working in a more integrated way, with a proper programme of development for volunteers supporting us; that we will have delivered much more, informed by what people want and need, and not by what we think they want; that the local hubs will have strengthened Vision Norfolk's position as a genuinely pan-Norfolk organisation; and that we will be able to demonstrate the value of what we do and the impact we have had.

I am proud to lead Vision Norfolk, but it would not be possible without the support of our staff, our trustees, our volunteers and our supporters, and I thank every one of them.

Above all, it is the visually-impaired people of Norfolk who inspire me most, and my pledge to them is that the charity will work tirelessly to meet their needs in this and future years.

Gina Dormer, chief executive

CASE STUDY – ADRIAN COALES



Retired mental health nurse Adrian Coales started volunteering for Vision Norfolk as a telephone befriender during 2019. He has personal experience of sight loss, having been diagnosed with Stargardts disease in 2011.

“At present I phone seven people, all of whom have been referred to the service by a community worker. They vary in age from 22 years to the eldest being 92. With one exception the people are living on their own and have various degrees of support. We talk about everything except politics and religion.

“I feel that I am providing a service to people who may not speak to another person from 1 week to the next, which I find very satisfying.

“The Telefriends service is a two-way conversation. I have learnt a lot about being sight impaired and find that the people I talk to are as much a resource for me as I hope I am to them. I find that the interaction with others who are sight impaired stimulating and rewarding.”

SIGHT LINES – CASE STUDY



‘Sight Lines’ was a pioneering art project launched during the year, which brought a series of workshops for visually-impaired people of all ages, ranging from painting and portraiture, photography, creative writing, sculpture, print and experimental performance.

Working with artist-in-residence Amy Fellows, the project aimed to ‘challenge perceptions and re-educate audiences on what sight loss means’.

Former English as a Foreign Language teacher David Foulds started to lose his sight about ten years ago through macular and retinal problems. Despite never having had any art training, he decided to participate in the project.

“I had no formal art training, but I found I really enjoyed it,” he said. “It makes you realise you are not alone – and the social side of the classes is very important, it allows us to swap ideas, not just about the art, but about everyday life.”

TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Alongside the obvious practical impacts of sight loss, one of the most common effects is that visually-impaired people can experience social isolation. One study has shown that around half of older people with sight loss experience loneliness, compared with around a third of older people generally.

Of course, it is not inevitable that those living with sight loss will experience social isolation. Many will have strong support networks of family and friends who will help them cope with the emotional and practical impact of losing their sight.

Activities programme

But an important part of the work Vision Norfolk does is helping to tackle the isolation which can come with sight loss. Through a vibrant programme of social, leisure and sporting activities, the charity offer visually-impaired people the opportunity to come together and discover new things they might not have done before – or even considered they were able to do.

From the eight audio book clubs which meet monthly in libraries around the county (they have been meeting online during the Covid crisis); through the Heritage group, which enjoys visits to the county’s museums and heritage attractions, with the opportunity to handle artefacts often part of the experience; to the photography group, which meets twice a month – the common thread is that participants are part of a group, making friends and finding others who can provide mutual support to counter that social isolation.

TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION

The range of sports on offer is mind-boggling: boccia, bowls, cycling, darts, tennis, tenpin bowling, rambling, sailing and yoga are just some of what is on offer for the active.

Alongside this there have been behind-the-scenes theatre visits, special art exhibition tours, gardening and even a choir for visually-impaired people.

We are extremely grateful to the many organisations which have helped Vision Norfolk deliver this programme during the year, including the National Trust, Norfolk Libraries Service, Norfolk Museums Service, Norwich City FC, Norwich Theatre Royal and Norwich Castle.

“there have been behind-the-scenes theatre visits, special art exhibition tours, gardening and even a choir for visually-impaired people.”

Telephone befriending

Another important part of tackling social isolation is Vision Norfolk’s telephone befriending scheme, which has been going for 22 years. During 2019/20, a team of eight volunteers – all of whom have experienced sight loss to some degree themselves – regularly rang 53 mainly elderly people living with sight loss.

The calls are mainly for a chat, to help people feel connected – in many cases these are people who find it difficult to get out and take part in activities.

NCFC VISIT – CASE STUDY



Blind and visually-impaired Norwich City fans had the chance to experience the ‘backstage’ of Carrow Road, when they were taken on a stadium tour which saw them visiting the team dress-

ing rooms, walking up the players’ tunnel, taking part in a mock press conference in the club’s media room, and sitting in Daniel Farke’s seat in the dugout beside the pitch.

The 14-strong group – plus two guide dogs – were treated to a bespoke tour by NCFC stadium guide David Newton, who used all his powers of description to bring Carrow Road to life for the visually-impaired fans – some of whom attend every home game.

GO APE – CASE STUDY



A group of visually-impaired people from west Norfolk stepped right out of their comfort zone and reached new heights, as they tackled the Go Ape Treetop Challenge in Thetford Forest.

69-year-old Peter Gyton from Ringstead was one of those taking on the Go Ape course. After his optic nerves died 12 years ago, he now has just 25 per cent vision in one eye, and none in the other eye.

“When you lose your sight, you lose your independence,” he said. “Your brain adapts, but you need to gain confidence. It is really important to stretch yourself and challenge yourself.

“Doing the Go Ape treetop course has been a challenge, but it gives you an incredible buzz, as well as telling you how fit you are!”

PROVIDING SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

The vast majority of those living with sight loss continue to live independently in their own homes, and the role of Vision Norfolk's Community Team is to provide expert practical and emotional help so that they can do just that.

Adjusting to a visually-impaired life is as much an emotional journey as it is a practical one – the potential loss of confidence can hold people back from living independent and fulfilled lives. That loss of confidence can happen quickly or over time, but the common thread is that as people start to lose their sight, they fear of what might happen to their lives in the future.

Vision Norfolk's team of community workers is out there supporting visually-impaired people in their own homes, from helping them accept their new situation after diagnosis, to providing ongoing assistance.

Isolation is a common concern, but also simple, practical things such as 'can I make a cup of tea?' And yet with the right support, that confidence begins to grow. Perhaps people learning to live with sight loss will never have the life they had with sight, but with the right help and support they can find a life that is fulfilling.

Vision Norfolk's team of community workers is out there supporting visually-impaired people in their own homes, from helping them accept their new situation after diagnosis, to providing ongoing assistance.

People are referred to the service by a number of agencies such as the Sensory Support unit, Vision Norfolk's own Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, opticians and GPs. Visually-impaired people – and their families and friends – can also seek support directly through contacting Vision Norfolk.

The service doesn't separate out the practical and emotional: the two are very much interlinked. The team adopts a holistic approach, from simply being a lis-

tening ear to signposting people towards adaptations and equipment which can transform their lives and enable them to live independently.

The Covid-19 crisis has presented its own unique challenges for visually-impaired people living in their own homes. It has pushed all of us into a more virtual world, and whilst technology can be hugely helpful for those living with sight loss, its use can be more difficult. In addition, many of the activities which enable visually-impaired people to counter feelings of isolation have not been possible.

During the crisis the Community Team has been very proactive in providing support over the telephone, and, where possible, through garden visits at people's homes.

How technology can help

- The use of technology can play a big part in enabling visually-impaired people to live independently. In many cases it can allow people to continue to do the things they used to do, by finding a different way to do them.
- Vision Norfolk's Community Team are experts at understanding the needs of people living with sight loss, and matching the right technology to meet those needs.
- Often it is the simplest things which can make the biggest difference, such as liquid level indicators which bleep when the cup is full (enabling people to make tea), talking watches, and magnifiers.
- A big step forward in recent years has been smart speakers, which have made a huge difference to the lives of many visually-impaired people.
- Technology is seldom the entire answer – but coupled with human support, it can really enable those living with sight loss to enjoy independent lives in their own homes.



A big step forward in recent years has been smart speakers, which have made a huge difference to the lives of many visually-impaired people.

CASE STUDY – JUNE BELTON



June Belton was put in touch with the Community Team six years ago after her sight started to deteriorate more severely due to the age-related macular degeneration she had experienced since her fifties. At the time she had just lost her husband, so life alone with failing sight seemed daunting.

But with support from the team, June, who is 81 and lives in Reedham, was able to rebuild her confidence, joining in many activities run by the charity, including Garden Eyes, the Heritage group, various arts and crafts groups, and theatre trips.

During the Covid crisis June's community worker put her in touch with another member of the Art group, and the two were able to meet regularly and support each other.

June, who admits she has a strong independent streak, says, "It was unbelievable the support they gave me. The practical and moral support I received has helped me remain independent. I think what the Community Team does is fantastic."

VISION NORFOLK VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any charity, and Vision Norfolk is fortunate indeed to be supported by over 200 volunteers from a wide spectrum of backgrounds.

The charity's team of volunteers undertake a huge range of activities, including helping at sports and leisure activities, advising at eye clinics, being Tele-friends, driving, fundraising, escorting and guiding, and working in the charity's three local hubs.

Many volunteers comment on how rewarding the experience is, with a range of benefits including:

- Increased self-confidence

- Counteracting the effects of stress or anxiety
- Learning valuable job skills
- Being part of a community and meeting new people
- Making a difference
- Having fun

Vision Norfolk could not provide anywhere near the range of services for visually-impaired people in Norfolk without our army of volunteers, and we are extremely grateful to all of them.

“Volunteering with Vision Norfolk has been a thoroughly joyful and positive experience. It has helped to ‘fill the void’ left by retirement. I really feel as if I’m doing something worthwhile and that it’s appreciated.”

Martin, volunteer for nine years



CASE STUDY – CHRIS STANLEY

Chris Stanley's first involvement with Vision Norfolk was in 2009, when as president of the Great Yarmouth Lions Club, he presented a cheque to the charity. Also as part of his Lions presidential year, he organised an event for World Sight Day in the town, which saw various MPs following a course while wearing blindfolds.

Six years later, on his retirement, Chris started volunteering with the charity. Initially he got involved with the monthly pleasure walks, as well as craft sessions and coffee mornings at the Great Yarmouth hub.

It was after meeting eye clinic liaison officer Rosie Knell that Chris started helping out at the eye clinic

at the James Paget Hospital, where he spends every Tuesday morning in a varied role which ranges from keeping the leaflet stations stocked with the latest information to liaising with the community support worker and simply chatting to patients.

He also is a reader for Grapevine, Great Yarmouth's talking newspaper.

“If anyone is looking for a role with a local organisation, I would highly recommend Vision Norfolk,” he says. “I have found all blind and visually-impaired people I deal with to be extremely grateful for whatever you do for them. They are such lovely people; I never hear them complain about their sight loss, they just get on with it.”

CASE STUDY – ZOE TINKLER



Zoe Tinker started volunteering for Vision Norfolk after she was made redundant – and the experience has not only been rewarding in itself – it has led to a new career.

“I was nervous to join the Visual Awareness course, but was made welcome straight away. As I had been made redundant, I found myself volunteering lots, and the more I volunteered, the more the organisation impressed me.

“It is not always easy, but I get to see first-hand how relaxed and happy clients are to spend time enjoying social activities and learning new skills.”

Zoe's experience volunteering has led directly to a new career – with Vision Norfolk. She has recently been employed as one of the hub co-ordinators at the charity's King's Lynn hub, proving that as well as making a difference, volunteering can have real benefits as well.



The contribution made by over 200 volunteers to Vision Norfolk was celebrated at a party in Norwich last summer – with several recognised for their long service stretching back as much as a quarter of a century.

“What has surprised me the most about volunteering with Vision Norfolk is how much I’ve personally got back in return through making connections with other people. Focussing on other people’s needs helps put any of my own problems into perspective. People often think they don’t have time to volunteer, but even a few hours can make a real difference to others and also yourself.”

Sue, volunteer for one year

If you are interested in volunteering with Vision Norfolk, please contact volunteer co-ordinators Rachael Green or Penny Parker, or fill in the Vision Norfolk volunteer form on the Volunteers page of the website.

DELIVERING EXPERT SUPPORT IN THE CLINICAL ENVIRONMENT



The impact of starting to lose your sight can be massive. It is not just the practical considerations of how you are going to live your life, but those who receive the news that they are experiencing sight loss also have to deal with their loss of identity – the change in who they are as a person. And we shouldn't forget the impact on the person's relationship with their family, and their changing role within the family setting.

Vision Norfolk's Eye Clinic Liaison Service aims to provide an immediate point of support for patients within the clinical setting, at eye clinics in the county's hospitals. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) act as a bridge between the clinical team and the patient, ensuring that they understand the information they have been given during their diagnosis, as well as that the patient's voice is heard by the clinical team.

Set for an expansion to all of the county's hospital eye clinics in the coming year, the Eye Clinic Liaison Service helps patients navigate the pathway from diagnosis to independent living, complementing the medical and clinical expertise provided by the medical teams.

ECLOs have been shown to provide both economic and social benefits for individuals, medical services and local care services alike.

The ECLO acts as a single point of contact for the patient, providing emotional support, information and advocacy, but also assessing needs and providing appropriate referrals to medical support, local services and peer support groups.

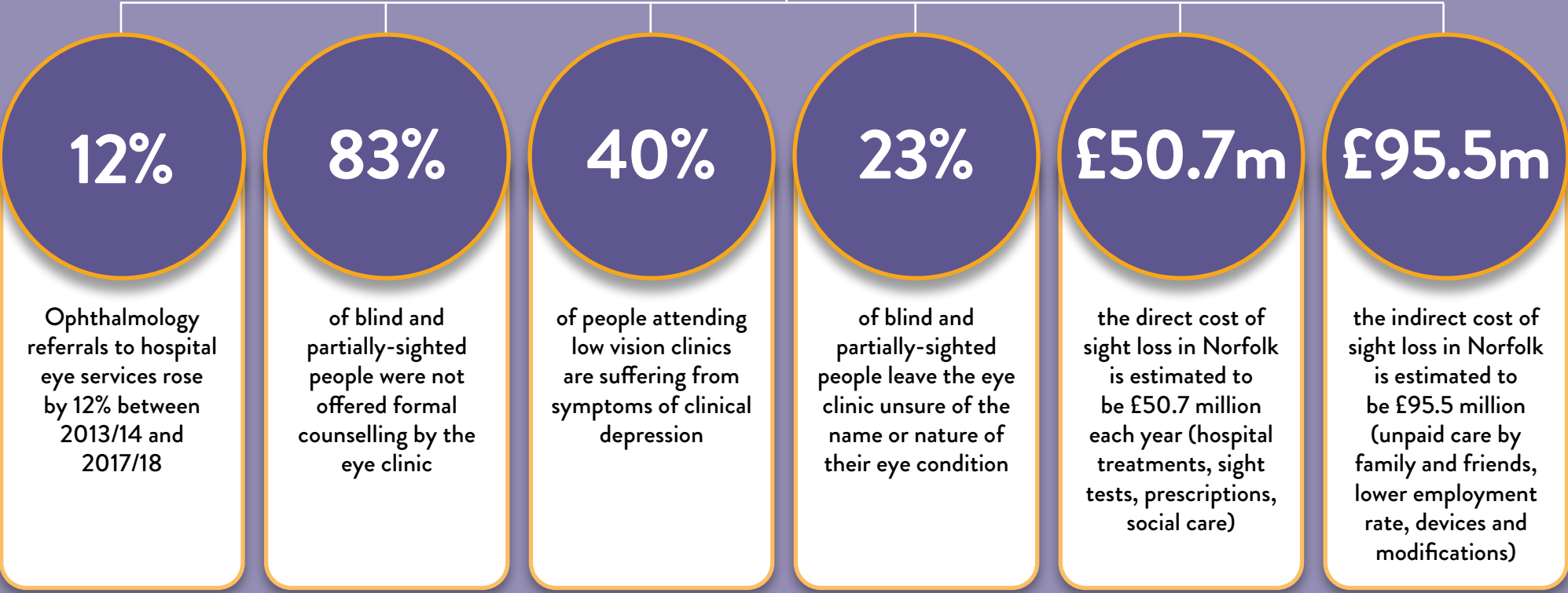
The service has been shown to increase patients' sense of wellbeing and confidence – vital if they are to lead independent and fulfilled lives.

'Just knowing there is someone who has a level of understanding and is clinically removed is very reassuring. The consultants deal with the medical side, the eye clinic liaison officer deals with the wellbeing side.'

Eye clinic patient

During the year Vision Norfolk had one fully-trained ECLO based at the James Paget Hospital in Great Yarmouth. Plans were also put in place – which have been implemented during 2020 – to recruit two further ECLOs to cover the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital (including the Central Norwich Eye Clinic and Cromer) and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn.

In Norfolk:
36,200 people living with **sight loss**
31,350 with **partial sight**
and **4,920** with **blindness**



What the Eye Clinic Liaison Service provides:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ Emotional support | ■ Signposting | ■ Initial needs assessment | ■ Certification and registration |
| ■ Provision of information | ■ Advocacy | ■ Referrals | ■ Monitoring and follow-up |



Staff from Norwich City Football Club's Community Sports Foundation deliver food parcels to residents at Hammond Court during lockdown

Enabling visually-impaired people to live as independently as possible is at the heart of what Vision Norfolk does, and the charity's Hammond Court supported housing service aims to do just that.

Comprising 20 flats where blind and visually-impaired residents live independently with warden assistance, Hammond Court is a vibrant and welcoming community.

During the year there has been an ongoing programme of improvements to both individual flats and communal areas. The year saw refurbishment and redecoration of communal areas, including the popular conservatory.

Residents are very active in organising their own communal leisure activities, including Friday Film Nights, when they bring food and wine and enjoy an audio-described movie together.

Hammond Court is not just a place to live, but a real community. Residents are very active in organising their own communal leisure activities, including Friday Film Nights, when they bring food and wine and enjoy an audio-described movie together.

Many residents also take part in Vision Norfolk's busy activities programme. In addition, Vision Norfolk staff and volunteers organise a busy programme of outings and trips, which during the year included a brewery visit, a trip to the beach for fish and chips, visits to local pubs, and for football fans, the opportunity to attend Carrow Road for home matches.

The Covid-19 crisis, which took hold at the end of 2019/20, posed particular challenges for the residents of Hammond Court. Whilst safe in their own flats, lockdown meant that communal areas and residents' activities had to be put on hold.

The charity worked hard to support residents during this difficult period, including organising hot meals to be delivered, and working with partners such as Norwich City Football Club's Community Sports Foundation, which provided welcome food deliveries during lockdown.



Mervyn Ivany and his guide dog AJ

Mervyn Ivany has lived at Hammond Court with his guide dog AJ for three years – and says that he wishes the rest of the world shared the strong community spirit which is to be found there.

Mervyn, 72, lost his sight in his teens, but maintained an independent streak throughout his life, training as an engineer and working for Norwich firm Diamond H Controls.

"Living here has allowed me to be as independent as I ever was," he says. "There is a great sense of community, everybody gets on, and there is a busy social life."

TAKING GREAT CARE

Vision Norfolk's care home, Thomas Tawell House, started the year with the boost of a 'Good' rating from the CQC – and we have spent the subsequent 12 months building on that success to make the home an even better place to live and receive care for our residents.

Of course, as the year closed, the spectre of coronavirus was upon us, as with every care home in the country, and the focus has been very firmly fixed on keeping people safe, and minimising the impact of the pandemic on the lives of our residents.

As we went into lockdown in March, the home was well-prepared, with a programme of improvements having taken place during the previous 12 months. These included refurbishing the dining room, a bright new look for the garden room, and redecoration to much of the home.

As well as this, a new management team has ensured that those 'Good' standards have been maintained and built upon, with one of the biggest changes being the introduction of individualised activity plans and a new care planning system, ensuring that the care provided is more person-centred and focussed on the particular needs of each resident.

As part of this improvement, a vastly increased training and development programme for staff has been introduced, with many now studying for the Diploma in Adult Care, supported by the Workforce Development Fund for Norfolk and Suffolk.

The Covid crisis put significant pressure on the home, as it did on every care home in the UK. Staff at the home were in the front line, and they responded magnificently, working long hours, and in some cases isolating from their own families in order to ensure that residents were kept safe.

“Staff at the home were in the front line, and they responded magnificently, working long hours, and in some cases isolating from their own families in order to ensure that residents were kept safe.”



We were also supported by many external organisations during the dark days of lockdown, to whom we are extremely grateful:

- The makers of Black Shuck gin donated much-needed hand sanitiser for use in the home, along with lettered and thoughtful gifts for staff
- East Anglian charity Friend in Deed donated tablets for residents to keep in touch with their loved ones
- Norwich School manufactured and donated face shields for staff to wear
- Kettle Chips kept morale up by donating crisps for staff and residents
- Norwich City Football Club's Community Sports Foundation provided lots of support, including food package deliveries, signed football shirts for residents who are fans, and even a cake from Delia!



Samantha Capper, manager at Thomas Tawell House, receives the hand sanitiser from Patrick Saunders of Black Shuck Gin.

CASE STUDY – MAURICE SADD



79 year-old Maurice Sadd has lived at Thomas Tawell House for 12 years, moving into the home when his mother, with whom he lived, passed away.

“I love it,” he says. “It’s a really good atmosphere, and I have a lot of friends both in Thomas Tawell House and in Hammond Court next door. It’s a great place to live. I get really well looked after. The staff are very good, very nice.”

Norwich City fan Maurice’s newly-refurbished room in the home is festooned with yellow and green, and prior to coronavirus, he attended every home match at Carrow Road, as he has been doing for the past seven decades. He also enjoys the regular activities and parties which take place.

In common with every resident, Maurice has an Amazon Alexa in his room, the result of a very generous donation by Vision Norfolk supporter Bob Oldershaw. Maurice uses the technology for a variety of purposes, including listening to music, catching up on the news and weather, and chatting with his sisters.



Through our Young Eyes programme, Vision Norfolk supports children and young people with visual impairment, helping them to achieve the best possible start in life.

When it comes to young visually-impaired people, it is all about providing support for the whole family – as having a child living with sight loss can have an enormous impact on parents and siblings as well as the young person themselves.

During the year, Young Eyes ran a busy programme of activities, including:

- Theatre trips
- Ten pin bowling
- Half-term digital music sessions with Lab Media

- Visual-impaired football, in conjunction with Norwich City Football Club
- Trips to Legoland and Harry Potter World
- A behind-the-scenes tour of Carrow Road
- A Christmas ‘Santa Special’ trip on the Bure Valley railway
- A Christmas party

Young Eyes is about helping young people and their families realise that visually-impaired children can go on and lead a life that, whilst it may be different to that of their peer group, will nevertheless be a successful and positive one.



12 year-old Marcus Dunn’s sight loss resulted from childhood cancer at the age of seven; he has now reached an age where his sight loss is impacting more seriously on his life.

“Marcus can’t do the things that his friends do, such as riding a bike or chasing a football,” says mum Barbara.

“Having known what it was like to have his sight, it has been difficult for him to adjust. He doesn’t like the fact he is different from his peer group, and hates having to leave classes early to avoid the crush, or even using his cane, even though with it his mobility is much better.



“His sight loss has had an impact on the whole family. His two siblings, who are 15 and 18, are very protective of Marcus, but equally they do sometimes get irritated with him – or certainly with the situation. They know that lots of attention was inevitably on Marcus when he was ill, and that now he still needs more support than they do; it’s natural for young people of that age to resent that a little, with the best will in the world.

“It has impacted on me as well. The stress of the situation sadly led to the break-up of my marriage, and it has also had a huge financial impact, as I had to give up work to care for him. The truth is that we



don’t know how independent Marcus will be able to be as an adult.

“The support from Vision Norfolk, and the Young Eyes group, has been really valuable. It is helping me start to plan the transition into adulthood for Marcus, helping us prepare for what comes next.

“Being with other families in similar situations is so important, too. When he lost his sight, I didn’t know children went blind, I didn’t know what to do with him. Meeting other parents who had experienced the same emotions was a godsend – it has helped the whole family cope with the situation and has given Marcus the best start in life he could have.”



We believe that sight loss should not be a barrier to living life to the full. Unfortunately, through ignorance, lack of thought, or occasionally selfishness, sometimes the world in which we live can create situations which impede people living with sight loss from living the independent and fulfilled lives that they should be able to lead.

An important part of the work that Vision Norfolk does is to give visually-impaired people a voice. Campaigning and advocating on behalf of people living with sight loss is an important part of our role, because however much practical and emotional support we provide, if the wider world is full of barriers for the visually-impaired, they will not be able to fulfil their potential.

Issues such as the introduction in Norfolk of e-Scooters, excessive street furniture, parking on pavements and the difficulties of social distancing have all been subjects tackled by Vision Norfolk during the year.

Vision Norfolk has been proactive during the year in a number of campaigns, harnessing the power of the press and broadcast media, as well as social media platforms, to win over hearts and minds, change opinions and shape public policy.

Issues such as the introduction in Norfolk of e-Scooters, excessive street furniture, parking on pavements and the difficulties of social distancing have all been subjects tackled by Vision Norfolk during the year.

This is an area of activity which we are planning to grow in the coming months. Co-chair Rev Simon Stokes is becoming one of the media's 'go-to' spokespeople on issues which affect visually-impaired people, and he is now a regular face on television, putting the charity's views across.

Our aim is to help make society more aware of the issues which stop visually-impaired people living full lives, and influencing policy-makers to take those issues into consideration when making decisions.



Social distancing and A-Boards: two areas where Vision Norfolk has campaigned to raise awareness of the challenges facing visually-impaired people

The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown up significant challenges for everybody, but one aspect which many people don't realise is the difficulty for visually-impaired people to adhere to social distancing guidelines.

It is difficult for visually-impaired people to maintain the required two metre distance from others when out and about, sighted people can sometimes be aggressive in their reaction to someone with sight loss inadvertently straying into their personal space.

At the same time, an understandable reluctance to touch other people – essential if you are going to offer a visually-impaired person an arm to guide them – makes life even more difficult.

Vision Norfolk has been attempting to educate people about the particular needs that the pandemic has presented the visually-impaired. From co-chair Rev Simon Stokes fronting a major piece on BBC Look East, to working with shops and other businesses to help their staff understand how to offer help without taking away people's independence – all the while keeping everybody safe – the charity has played a major role in seeking to improve the lives of visually-impaired people throughout the crisis.

REDESIGNING OUR COMMUNITY SERVICES

The year has seen a substantial process of listening to our client group to find out exactly what support and services they would like us to provide, and how they would like us to deliver those services.

One of the clearest messages we received from this process was that visually-impaired people across the county want to see a more local delivery of services, in a way which more accurately reflects the needs of individual communities across the whole county – and which enables them to access all relevant services in a seamless way.

As a result of this, 2020/21 will see the launch of three regional ‘Hubs’, in King’s Lynn, Norwich and Great Yarmouth, which will enable Vision Norfolk to reach out to people within their communities at a more local level.

The aim is to create local ‘one stop shops’ which provide easy access to the whole range of Vision Norfolk’s services: support via eye clinics, community workers, basic equipment, activities and social contact, volunteering and sign-posting to other relevant organisations.

In particular, the creation of the hubs will see substantial investment in both the east and the west of the county, ensuring that Vision Norfolk remains a genuinely pan-Norfolk charity.

Each hub will set its own programme of activity according to local need, providing a variety of services and opportunities, both in the hubs themselves and off-site in the wider community.

The hubs will consist of staff and volunteers, all of whom will be working together as teams across disciplines, including community workers, eye clinic liaison officers, activity co-ordinators, volunteer co-ordinators and volunteers. The

hubs will also be able to advise on equipment and specialist adaptations designed to help visually-impaired people lead independent lives.

Each hub will set its own programme of activity according to local need, providing a variety of services and opportunities, both in the hubs themselves and off-site in the wider community.

The hubs will be supported by a Central Support Services Team, whose work will include creating an inclusive activities programme that can be applied across the county, within the hubs and beyond; building partnerships with other services which support visually-impaired people in Norfolk; overseeing the telephone and wider befriending services, backed by our new Connections App which will go live later in the year; and supporting the staff and volunteers with personal development opportunities.

Each hub will undertake the following:

- Provision of a timetable of activities both within the hub and in the wider community (including Blind Clubs, lunch clubs and the like, where the invitation is open to Vision Norfolk clients)
- Provision of advice and support, both face-to-face and via telephone and video link
- Advice regarding equipment and access to equipment
- Home visits (and/or garden visits while social distancing restrictions remain)
- Co-ordination of volunteers
- Co-ordination of community fundraising activities



Norwich



King's Lynn



Great Yarmouth



CASE STUDY – ALICE SIZELAND



A first-time marathon runner from north Norfolk whose father lost his sight two years ago raised over £2,400 for Vision Norfolk by completing the 2019 London Marathon.

Alice Sizeland, who runs the beachfront Trendies café in Sheringham with her partner Andy Trend, only entered the race on a whim after Andy and several relatives applied for a place – and was shocked when she was the only one who was successful.

She completed the marathon – her first – in five hours four minutes, narrowly missing her target of five hours, raising a total of £2433.06 for the charity.

Ms Sizeland’s father Robin, also of Sheringham, lost his sight through illness two years ago, and now takes part in a variety of activities organised by the NNAB in north Norfolk, including sailing.

FUNDRAISING – THE LIFEBLOOD ENABLING US TO EXIST

Fundraising is the lifeblood which enables Vision Norfolk to reach out to so many visually-impaired people in Norfolk, and deliver such a wide range of services. As with many charities, the fundraising environment has become steadily tougher in recent years, which makes us appreciate even more the efforts that our supporters make on our behalf.

The year saw a significant reorganisation and strengthening of our fundraising team, including a renewed focus on Trusts and Foundations, a source of funding which enables us to take a more long-term, strategic approach.

These funders rightly want to know that the money they give is being effectively spent. So our fundraising team are increasingly writing funding bids which demonstrate clearly the need, show that the proposed projects will deliver against what visually-impaired people want and need, and that we as a charity will manage those projects professionally.

The year saw some significant successes, including a £120,000 grant from the Earl of Northampton’s Charity (see case study) to support activities tackling social isolation, and a £95,000 grant from the National Lottery’s Community Fund to develop an app to link people with visual impairment with volunteers throughout the county.

Alongside the fundraising from Trusts and Foundations, Vision Norfolk is incredibly fortunate to benefit from the extraordinary generosity of many individuals, both in the form of regular or one-off donations, and by remembering the charity through a legacy in their wills.

Legacies are an important part of how the charity raises the funds it needs to deliver services (accounting for nearly 15% of income last year), and we are very grateful to those who remember us in this way – and of course, warmly encourage you to consider doing the same.

Finally, the year saw many supporters and friends undertaking fundraising activities on our behalf. To the runners, cyclists, musicians, gardeners and collecting tin volunteers – we thank you all.

CASE STUDY - EARL OF NORTHAMPTON’S CHARITY

Social isolation is one of the biggest challenges facing those living with sight loss, and Vision Norfolk is thrilled to have been given an extremely generous £120,000 grant over three years by the Earl of Northampton’s Charity, which is administered by the Mercers’ Company.

The donation is to help Vision Norfolk deliver a varied programme of sports and social activities to visually-impaired people in the county over the age of 55, a group which is often the most socially isolated in our communities.

CASE STUDY – MARK SMITH AND TOM PAGE



Vision Norfolk activities co-ordinator Mark Smith, who is himself blind, took on the Tour de Broads cycle event on a tandem with volunteer Tom Page – and raised £275 in the process.

The pair faced particular challenges, with Tom constantly having to describe the route, giving warnings of hills, corners, the need to transfer weight, and gear changes. A keen cyclist, Tom has volunteered with the charity since 2012, and also partnered Mr Smith in the event in 2018.

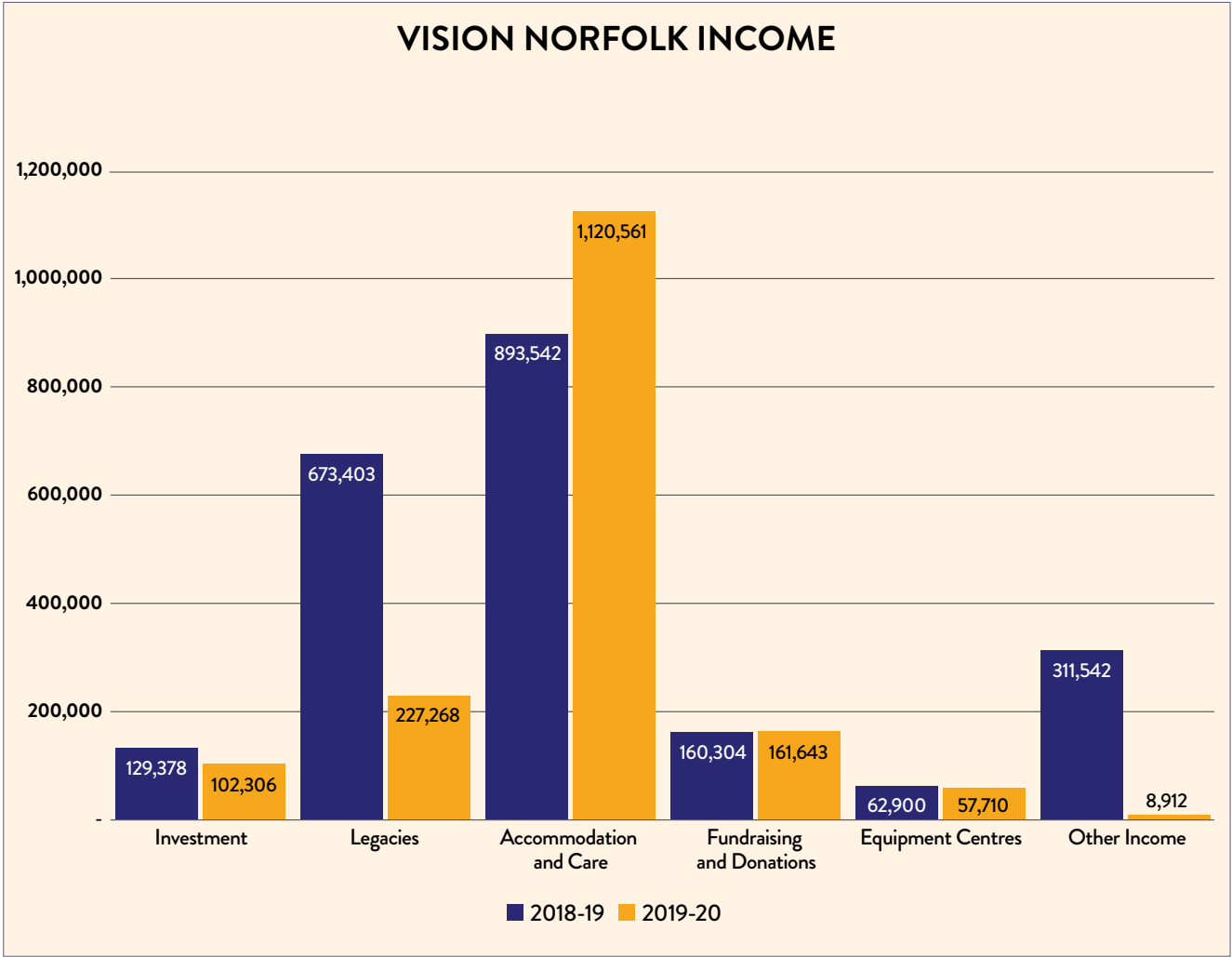
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We were very grateful for the flexibility offered by the charity during the Covid lockdown, when such activities were not possible: the trustees allowed Vision Norfolk to use the Year 1 funds to repurpose the social support through telephone and online channels, a vital lifeline for those isolated at home.

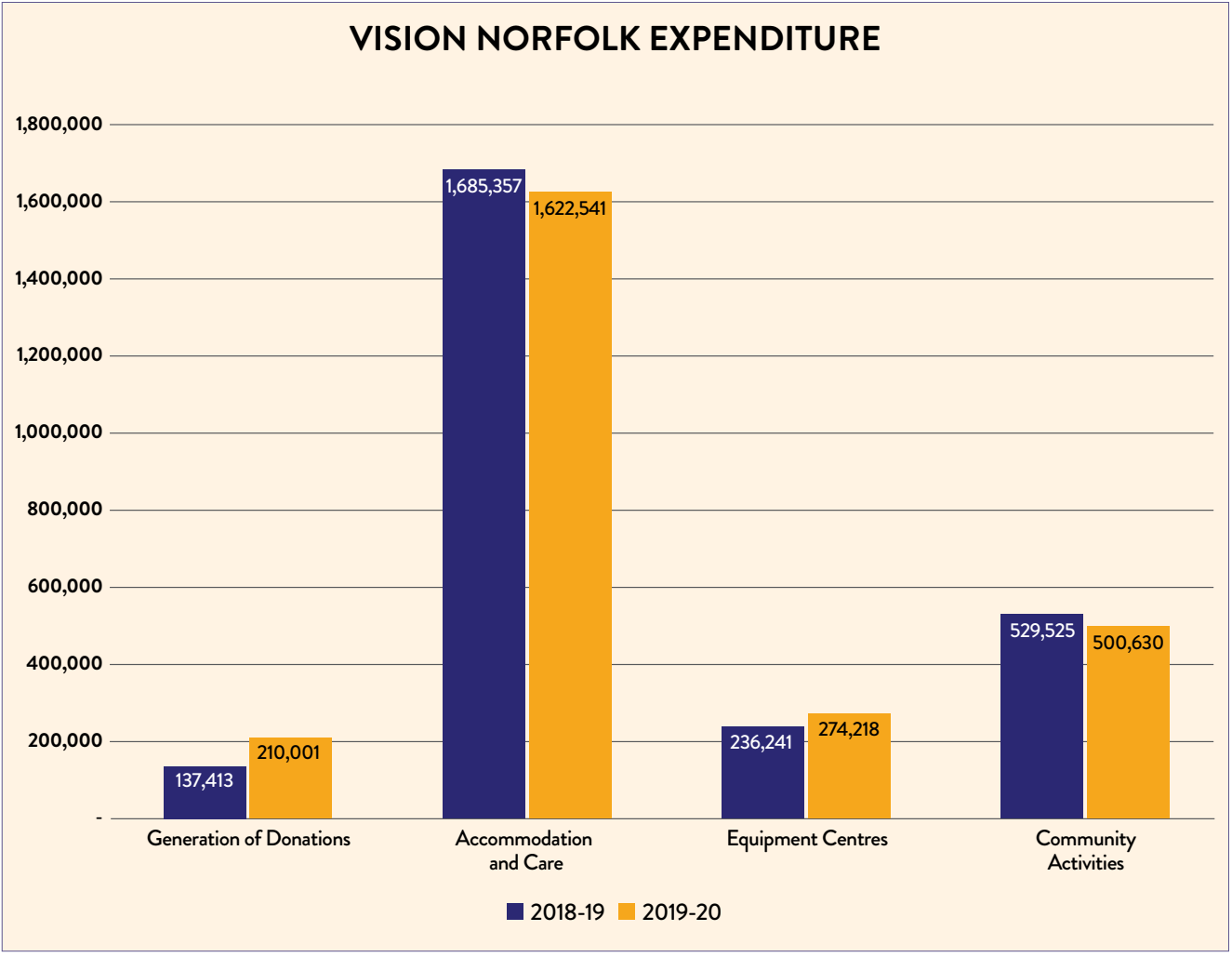


There can be no hiding from the fact that for Vision Norfolk – as for every organisation in the third sector – the year to 31st March 2020 was a financially challenging one. Charities and voluntary organisations continue to be squeezed by the combination of a reduction in statutory spending, increasing demand for services, and an ever-more competitive fundraising environment.



Overall our income fell by 25 per cent during the year. Mostly this was as a result of a fall in donations and in particular legacy income. Legacies have traditionally been one of the main sources of funds for Vision Norfolk, but this type of income stream is by

its nature unpredictable and fluctuating. More and more charities are becoming aware of the power of legacy giving, so the environment has become increasingly competitive in recent years. We are extremely grateful to those who have re-



membered us in their wills, and to their families, and we continue to work hard to persuade people to support us in this way. On the positive side, the year saw the charity start to benefit financially from the considerable in-

vestment in our Thomas Tawell House care home during 2018/19. Income for the home rose by 27 per cent in the year, a reflection of our ability to open up admissions once more, and a tribute to the hard work of the new management team and the staff.

The year saw a reorganisation of our fundraising team, and we are already seeing this result in funds flowing into the charity, in particular from trusts and foundations. I hope to be able to report more success in this area in next year's annual report.

Our expenditure remained broadly in line with last year, despite pressure on costs from an above-average increase in the National Living Wage, and a continuation of our improvements programme in Thomas Tawell House and Hammond Court. Ensuring we do what we do as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible is a vital part of the work of the executive team, and I am grateful for their hard work on this during the year.

As we ended the year, we faced new, specific and unprecedented challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. This has meant that we now need to look at different and robust ways to take the charity forward from a financial perspective. That will include looking at different ways to raise funds, to communicate our 'message', and to manage our assets – all with the ultimate goal of continuing to provide an outstanding service our clients.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers who work so hard to keep Vision Norfolk going, and to our many supporters who make this possible. I can assure you that the trustees and I work tirelessly to translate your generosity into an effective and efficient charity, and your support has never been needed more.

Andrew Orves, treasurer

PATRONS, PRESIDENTS AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

Patron

Her Most Gracious Majesty
Queen Elizabeth II

President

The Right Reverend
The Lord Bishop of Norwich
The Right Reverend Graham Usher

Vice-Presidents

The Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk
Lady Philippa Dannatt MBE
The High Sheriff of Norfolk
Lady Georgina Roberts
The Lord Mayor of Norwich
Councillor Vaughan Thomas
The Sheriff of Norwich
Dr Marian Prinsley
The Mayor of Great Yarmouth
Councillor Michael Jeal
The Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Councillor Geoff Hipperson
The Venerable Michael Handley MA
Peter Scarfe FCA

TRUSTEES

Co-Chairs

Richard Hanson
Canon Simon Stokes (1)

Vice-Chairman

Guy Gowing MRICS

Treasurer

Andrew Orves ACCA ACA BSc (Hons)

Trustees

Dr David Goldser
Georgina Holloway
Councillor Brenda Jones (2)
Karen Norton
Amanda Lockett
Richard West

Trustees retiring during 2019/20

Emily Barnston
Paul Bowerbank
David Harris

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive

Gina Dormer

Director of Corporate Services

Jelena Sarubina

OTHER OFFICERS

Hon Consultant Ophthalmologist

Narman Puvanachandra MB BChir MA
FRCOphth

Hon Physician

Dr Sunil Pinto MB BS DCH DRCOG MRCGP

Trustee of Real Estate

The Official Custodian for Charities

Auditors

Lovewell Blake

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC

Solicitors

Spire Solicitors

Chaplain

The Reverend Heather Wright

(1) Appointee of the Lord Bishop of Norwich
(2) Appointee of Norfolk County Council



Amanda Lockett



Georgina Holloway



Karen Norton



Andrew Orves



Gina Dormer



Richard Hanson



Brenda Jones



Guy Gowing



Richard West



David Goldser



Jelena Sarubina



Simon Stokes

Vision Norfolk is the brand name of Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind
Registered charity No. 207060

NORWICH HUB

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01603 573000

WEST NORFOLK HUB

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Hamburg Way
King's Lynn
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01553 660808

GREAT YARMOUTH HUB

12 Hall Quay
Great Yarmouth
NR30 1HP
01493 745973



Registered charity no. 207060

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