



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2020

A message from Gina Dormer, CEO

I would like to open this newsletter with a much-used phrase at the current time - "we are all in this together". Never has this approach and philosophy mattered more. The commitment from everyone - our clients and their loved ones, our supporters, our volunteers, our trustees and our staff - have cemented those six little words into the movement that has enabled the NNAB to progress to the next level.



Re-brand

Our rebranding of NNAB to Vision Norfolk is one physical representation of this; it has been a relatively slow burn as we have navigated our way through the legal framework to transform our long established charity into a modern-day structure of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. But we are nearing the final stage of this process and will be celebrating the transition and name change at our forthcoming AGM and in the launch of our hubs.

A localised approach

We spent much of last year listening to our service users - as well as those visually impaired people not 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 will be investing in technology and infrastructure, but above all we will be delivering our services in a far more integrated, local way; the aim is to combat the loneliness and isolation felt by so many. We will be running our services from within our three hubs at King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Norwich. We will also be seeking to resume our satellite support provision in Cromer.

Each multi-service hub will have community work support, equipment advice, connectivity with local eye clinics and optical services, and an activities programme, much of which will be providing more virtual support than face to face activities, support for children with vision impairment and their families. Each hub will have its own appointments system which will enable individuals to receive tailored support at a very local level. Our work will extend beyond the hubs and virtual support as we are ambitious in our desire to outreach more widely in the community.

Our services

The pandemic has brought many challenges including social distancing and the need to support people with visual impairment both practically and emotionally during these difficult times - and we have an important role to play in raising awareness and most importantly achieving positive change for our clients. In mid-March it became apparent that all our activities and events planned for the coming months would not be able to happen due to lockdown. We had to, reluctantly, end the majority of our face to face work.

November national lockdown

We are still very much here! Many of our staff are on furlough just for a temporary period whilst we wait, and hope, that Covid-19 infection levels start to fall and we can return to more normal services. The national lockdown, coupled with our need to put some staff on furlough, means that we will not be in a position to conduct home visits or open our hubs to the public. However, we continue to:

- Run our virtual activities (pages 11-13)
- Provide support to individuals who are referred to our Eye Clinic Liaison Service. More information will be available in due course on our website or alternatively please call our main number for further details.
- Provide telephone support to those who need it the most

We have suspended our volunteering activities and the hubs openings have been put on pause. Our ability to visit people in their homes will be limited too during this period in line with Government guidance.

Moving forward

Over the coming weeks, as we start to emerge from this period of lockdown, we will approach the future with enthusiasm for reintroducing activities, involving and relaunching our volunteering activities and of course opening our hubs. In the meantime we will be discussing and planning the most effective ways to do this and we will keep you updated with a further newsletter when we have more certainty about how our services can operate in most effectively in the 'new normal'. Of course, as the recent announcement has illustrated, all things are subject to change, but through all of this, please rest assured we are still here to support you and your loved ones, albeit in a more socially distanced way at least for the time being.

We have needed to respond to and tackle many issues over the past 8 months, along with many 'bumps in the road'. There are moments to cherish in it all however, and through adversity we have forged and

reinvigorated partnerships and acquired new friends of the organisation along the way, with some heart-warming and wonderful examples of generosity, kindness and compassion. Despite the difficulties we have all faced this year we are optimistic for the future. 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gina James".

We want to hear your views on our services!

Vision Norfolk is conducting a county wide consultation with adults with visual impairment. We are interested in hearing your views and opinions on current services but also what kind of services would be useful in the future for us to provide. We are particularly keen to hear from you if you have never accessed our services before alongside those of you that have been using our services for many years. The accessible consultation questionnaire can be accessed via our website at www.visionnorfolk.org.uk and we are happy to offer you telephone support to complete it should you require or prefer this option, just give us a call on 01603 573000.

“To Gina Dormer, and her fantastic team at Vision Norfolk. The innovation, collaboration, courage and selflessness shown by so many across the County during the COVID-19 pandemic has been truly inspirational and uplifting. As Her Majesty The Queen's representative, I would like to thank you for the wonderful contribution you have made to the County during these extraordinary and challenging times. Norfolk owes you a profound debt of gratitude for your service to the community.”

Lady Philippa Dannatt, MBE, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk

NNAB Annual General Meeting – 19 November 2020

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to hold our 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the same way as usual. The Board of Management (Trustees) has carefully considered the most appropriate arrangements for this year's AGM in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the evolving public health advice and legal restrictions on gatherings. Based on current (19 October 2020) public health advice and restrictions the Board has agreed the following arrangements for the AGM:

The meeting will be limited to voting members only, with key personnel and external advisers in attendance, where necessary to facilitate the meeting.

Remote attendance and voting arrangements

The Board recognises that due to Covid-19 it may not be possible or advisable for some members to attend the meeting in person on this occasion. In addition to the normal business of the AGM, there are a number of important resolutions prepared by the Board that members are being asked to consider and vote on.

In the interests of good governance, the Board considers it essential that all members with a right to vote are able to do so and are not disenfranchised due to the additional challenges presented by Covid-19. To this end, the Board has decided that members shall be able to attend the 2020 AGM and cast their votes remotely, via video call or telephone call. The identity of any member attending remotely will be confirmed and his or her votes clearly acknowledged.

The 2020 AGM will be limited to key items of charity business and governance rather than the usual public celebration of the charity's work. We hope to hold a public celebration event at a later date.

Corporate Services Director

A message from Jelena



The lockdown had an effect on the way our teams work. The members of the admin team have been heavily involved in assisting with welfare calls to our clients. In order to enable some staff members to continue working during the lockdown, the association had to invest heavily in updating the current IT arrangements. We thank 'IT Norwich' for their kind assistance in ensuring continuity of our external services and their assistance within our care home which was above and beyond that which could be expected within the usual commercial arrangements. The work to upgrade our existing IT network and equipment continues, and we are in the process of migrating our email addresses to the new domain **@visionnorfolk.org.uk**. Please note that all emails sent to the current @nnab.org.uk addresses will be automatically diverted to the new addresses.

I would like to thank our admin/HR and finance teams who had to adapt to the new ways of working and supported our care home with recruitment, workforce development and admin tasks throughout the lockdown and subsequent summer months which was not always easy as their work heavily relied on the systems that were not always accessible remotely.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and gratitude to all volunteers who continued to offer their support throughout these challenging times.'



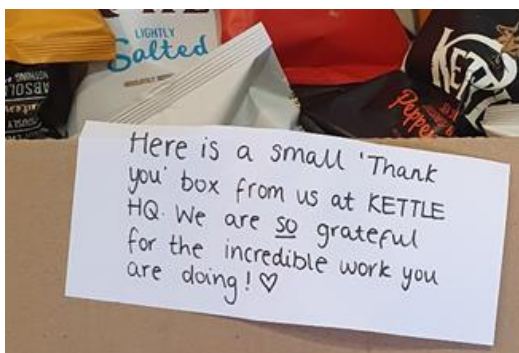
THOMAS TAWELL HOUSE



A massive thank you to all our Thomas Tawell House heroes!

They have been working tirelessly around the clock in some of the most difficult conditions the charity has ever known. Thanks also to the fantastic support we received from other workers of Vision Norfolk, including volunteers.

A message from Samantha (TTH Manager)



During the crisis the team came together, we received many treats, gifts and goodies from the public. Donations of PPE and hand sanitiser were also received.



A mock CQC inspection showed many positive improvements to the home despite the pandemic. We have also redecorated the dining room and garden room. We are currently engaging in different ways each month to support other charities. This month, it was Harvest Festival and we are donating to a food bank - any donations gratefully received. Next month we are going to engage in activities that will raise money for Norfolk & Waveney MIND, in December we will be doing ELF day for the Alzheimer's society. Our testing program has required a huge effort from everyone. Staff and residents are now tested in-house for Covid-19 (staff weekly; residents every 28 days). We are looking forward to the future and are already planning outings for the residents.



Elizabeth Plane RIP

We sadly and suddenly lost a long standing member of staff. Elizabeth Plane - "Liz". She worked at Thomas Tawell House for 10 years, as our cook. Liz had a positive impact on all staff, and residents here. She will be greatly missed.

External Services: A message from Sally

Senior Community Worker and Norwich hub leader: 01603 573000

During lockdown the Community Worker team, ably supported by various members of the wider staff, called every client on our database to check they were okay and to set up any services as needed to ensure they were safe and well. Those who we were unable to get hold of were sent letters.

Without access to the Equipment Centre and our stock, the team have done an amazing job of liaising, sharing and then distributing equipment, previously donated and therefore free of charge, to as many clients as possible. The shout would go out to the team, 'I've got a client in Watton who needs a talking clock. Has anyone got one in their boot/bag?' We would then exchange photos of whatever was asked for, and if we had it, would wrap it and post it out to all parts of the county to ensure our VIPs had what they needed.

Since the end of the formal lockdown period we have been able to step into the daylight again and, whilst the sun was shining, we began garden visits which proved very successful. With the wet and colder weather, further adaptations to our service have had to be made but we are still conducting essential home visits, although we have to ensure we take every precaution to protect both the clients and ourselves.

Despite the restrictions, we are very happy to be able to return to visiting, as this is one of the most valued parts of our service, especially to those who are less mobile and able to get out by themselves. Many people are so very grateful to receive a visit as they are more isolated than ever before. For those not in need of a visit, we continue to telephone on a regular basis and, as winter sets in and the situation changes on a daily basis, it is likely that these calls are going to become more and more essential once again.

External Services: A message from Kim

Due to closure of the hubs, the inability of the Community Workers to visit and our ECLOs being on furlough, it left many clients feeling very vulnerable and isolated. The main challenge has been to enable our clients to be able to use more



technology. Taking into account the restrictions placed on us all by Covid 19, we are having to think on our feet even more than usual and find inventive ways to overcome hurdles. We are very excited about the opening of the Hubs on 2nd November. An appointment system for clients is being set up, to enable us to limit numbers and ensure that we can hygienically clean equipment between visits. I am looking forward to the new beginning

post-COVID, where we will be able to upgrade our services and offer more clients the best support and opportunities available, keeping our traditional values alongside more up to date thinking.

**Message from a client,
“Thank you so much
for thinking of me. I
have not needed your
services in quite a long
time and am so
grateful to know that
you have not forgotten
me, it is lovely to know
that someone cares.”**

A message from Edward Bates

**Volunteer Coordinator and Great Yarmouth Hub
Leader: 01603 573029**

I’m Edward Bates and I’ve been with Vision Norfolk for 7 years. For all that time, I’ve been working in the equipment centre, explaining to clients how technologies and daily equipment work, listening to their concerns regarding sight loss, and trying to fulfil their needs. I am now moving into a new role at Vision Norfolk.



I will be in the Great Yarmouth area more, predominantly trying to recruit more volunteers. We know this is an area of Norfolk which needs more strengthening of our services, and I'm excited to be part of that new team, making sure we get to more people in that area who may need us. I will still be in and around the Norwich office though, so those of you who are regulars and used to seeing me around, don't worry as I won't have gone far. Once we can get out and about a bit more, (and who knows when that will be!) I will be going out and around the County, helping to promote the charity to various different groups of people, similar to what I have been doing in the past. But for now, stay safe and well, and I look forward to catching up with you before too long!

The Vision Norfolk app

A message from Bradley

Hi, my name is Bradley Burrows and I am the Connections App Project Facilitator at Vision Norfolk. I thought that due to recent events, it would be nice to give everyone an update on the app and how it is coming along. Since lockdown we



have had to make quite a few adjustments and changes to the app to enable people to use it in a Covid secure way. Although this means people won't be able to meet up through the app in person as previously planned; instead they will now be able to call people instead, as we have now introduced the Telefriends service to the app itself. Additionally, we will be adding a news feed section to help people find out the latest information on what's happening at Vision Norfolk. Due to all the changes to the app and current events, there has been a slight delay in the app being released, but I'm more than confident that the wait will be worthwhile.

Activities

A message from Mark

Please contact Mark Smith on 01603 973216

& mark.smith@visionnorfolk.org.uk



The pandemic has sadly put almost all our “face to face” activities on hold. We have also had to adapt our Telefriends service; volunteers now make their calls in confidence from home, instead of coming into the office, with remote weekly support over the phone. Our eight countywide audio book clubs, creative writing and EffstopEyes photography group now hold virtual phone or on-line meetings, with the audio books being sent to each member in the post. I’ve really missed the individual and group face to face contact with colleagues, clients and volunteers, and look forward to the day when it’s safe for us to all be back in the office and able to run group activities and use the minibuses.

The creative writing group is meeting once a month online, every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 2pm. Also, we will be introducing arts and crafts (see Helen's section below) and virtual coffee mornings later in November. If you are interested in any of these activities or you have ideas for others, please contact Mark on the details above.

“Whilst making welfare calls to clients it’s been lovely to get to know some of them a little more and to discover what people have lived through over the decades. I’ve been inspired by people who, despite failing sight, still want to look after their gardens, keep their house spick and span and cook the most fantastic meals.”

A message from Helen

Moving forward with our arts and crafts we would like to try some online sessions; either sending out small kits so people can follow along or maybe even calling in with ideas that they would like to try. It would be great to all join together over a coffee and some crafting or even just listen in and do some knitting or your own creative craft and be part of a crafting community... Let us know your ideas and we can work together to see if we can create them. Please contact Mark on the details above.



Norwich Theatre Royal are holding a “Panto in a Pickle” performance with audio description on Saturday 19th December at 2pm. Tickets are limited due to the social distancing and reduced seating capacity, and please contact the Theatre Royal directly to book on 01603 630000, between 1- 6 pm Monday to Friday.

We are holding an on-line and phone based virtual quiz on Friday 6th November in conjunction with the Norfolk Records office. Please contact Mark on the number above. Please let us know if you would like to receive a large print version.

Phone a friend

With the Covid restrictions relating to going out and social opportunities being reduced at the moment, and the isolation and loneliness which can sadly come from this, we are keen to expand our phone based befriending services. A weekly phone call may just be the ticket to help alleviate these feelings over the coming months, and we can offer a befriending call from a Vision Norfolk volunteer. Calls are made in complete confidence with all the necessary training and checks in place with a potential volunteer. A weekly phone call with a friendly voice will help to keep you in touch with someone and ensure you have a friend to talk to. If you are visually impaired and think you would potentially benefit from the service or would like to volunteer, please phone Mark Smith on the number above.

Young Eyes



**Barbara Dunn, Young
Eyes Activity
Coordinator**

01603 561242



With face to face events cancelled we have been trialling some virtual events. We have two boxes of Braille Lego to loan out. Here are some pictures of Lauren having a go!

Young Eyes Virtual Christmas Party!

On the 5th December at 2pm

Contact Barbara Dunn on 01603 561242



Volunteering

A message from Rachael and Penny

Penny and I are now back from furlough and will be resuming a limited number of volunteering roles including tin collections. We are looking forward to the launch of the befriending app and will be recruiting volunteers for this nearer the time. We will soon be joined by Edward, who will be volunteer co-ordinator for the Great Yarmouth area.

We are looking forward to catching up with all of our wonderful volunteers and hearing about their lockdown experiences, meeting new volunteers via Zoom or Skype and seeing all of our work colleagues.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please email volunteers@nnab.org.uk; existing volunteers who would like to resume as fundraisers can contact: robert.collins@visionnorfolk.org.uk.



“Rachael has been homeschooling her little ones during lockdown and now has her cat acting as her personal assistant. Penny has been planning for all of the wonderful initiatives and recruitment drives we will be delivering in 2021, ensuring that as many as possible involve tea and cake!”

Maintenance and Health and Safety

Message from Gary

We have been working hard to protect staff, visitors and clients throughout this dreadful pandemic. We have had very low instances of Covid 19, mainly due to the sterling work undertaken by Sam in TTH and her team. We hope to continue in the same vein during the months ahead. I would like to take this



opportunity to give a huge “shout out” to Adrian, Dean and Victor for the way they have performed their duties throughout this pandemic. During some stressful times, not one complaint came from the team regarding working in what could sometimes be anxiety-inducing conditions. They all continued to carry out checks, repairs and redecoration

throughout the Association, as well as producing a magnificent garden display throughout the summer. Many, many thanks to the incredible team! I am looking forward to the spring when we should see the benefits of the 1000 plus bulbs that we have planted around the Norwich site. We are looking to make some changes to the gardens next year so watch this space!



Marketing and Fundraising Team:

Trusts and Grants

A message from Christina and Clayton

The fundraising landscape has changed. Funders have changed priorities, many of them now only funding emergency provision, others only funding those that they have previously supported. The majority of funding at present is still linked to Covid-19 related activity. It remains a highly competitive environment with less funding available for ongoing services and more people bidding. Despite these obstacles, we have recently had success with a bid to the Mercer's Trust, which has helped to fund the community workers and the welfare calls they have made. We are also hoping for a positive response to our funding bid to support a mobile centre working at Kings Lynn and Norwich, which will enable the eye clinic service to resume.



Additionally, we are in the process of organising a countywide consultation to improve our understanding of the visually impaired across the county, those that access our services and those that don't. Please watch out for this, as we are really keen to hear from all of you.

Digital Marketing

A Message from Kathryn

Hello, I am Kathryn, the new Digital Engagement and Marketing Officer. I joined Vision Norfolk back in July and it has been a strange time to start a new job to say the least!



I have been brought on board to develop digital marketing which encompasses branding, the new Vision Norfolk website which launched earlier this year and social media.

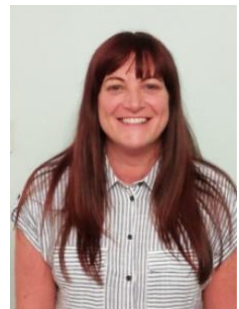
If you use social media, you hopefully already follow us, or if you don't, please do!

If you follow us on Facebook, you may have noticed that we have been a bit quiet over the past couple months. This is because we have had to create a new account and we would really appreciate it if you could follow us, as it is a great way to keep in touch with what we get up to.

Community Fundraising

A message from Amy

My name is Amy and I have worked for Vision Norfolk as an Administrator for a year now. I have recently been helping Rob with the Community Fundraiser role while Gemma is on maternity leave. This is a very exciting time to be involved with fundraising and there's lots going on! We are now restarting fundraising events and collections after pausing these due to lockdown and the Covid pandemic. It's now more important than ever, that we raise awareness about what we do here at Vision Norfolk. If you would be interested in volunteering, we would love to hear from you. Please contact me if you would like to be part of our team



**The Original Charity Christmas Card Shop is
selling our range of cards at St Peter Mancroft
Church, Norwich**

Mon-Sat 11:15am – 2:30pm until 12th December



Ways to Help

Volunteering

We need volunteers for our Telefrends service, for collections, administration and many other things. We can promise – a warm welcome and feeling part of our close-knit team, plus support and training in all roles. Please contact Penny or Rachael on 01603 573000.

Please think of us when doing your online Christmas shopping this year. We are now set up on Amazon Smile. Simply go to:

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk>.

Search for us under, the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind, and set us up as your preferred charity. Every time you buy something from Amazon Smile, we will receive a donation of 0.5%.

Donations

Donations, as always are gratefully received. You can donate online at: <https://www.visionnorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/donate/>, or pop a cheque in the Freepost Envelope (no stamp or additional address needed), or pay in cash at the bank: **Barclays Bank, The Norfolk & Norwich Association for the Blind, Sort code: 20-62-68, Account: 20701785.**

We always need stamps, so please do send us your old stamps!

If you are interested in taking part in a fundraising event (virtual or real) please contact Rob Collins (01603 561299 or robert.collins@visionnorfolk.org.uk) or Kathryn Webb (01603 573028 or kathryn.webb@visionnorfolk.org.uk). We can help with branding and setting up your donation portal.

Vision Norfolk Norwich Street Collection Day

11th December

We need volunteers; if you are interested in even just an hour or two, please get in touch with Amy Ballard on 01603 573000 or

amy.ballard@visionnorfolk.org.uk



Legacies

The backbone of our funding for over 200 years has come from the generosity of local people. In particular legacies. Please do consider us when making your will. For more information please contact Diane Stewart on 01603 573024 or diane.stewart@visionnorfolk.org.uk.



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Message from the Editor

Rob Collins

T: 01603 561299

E: Robert.collins@visionnorfolk.org.uk



This short newsletter has been put together as an interim replacement for Magpie News. It is a one off and will be sent out not only to clients, but to all staff, supporters, volunteers and all who are interested in our work. Magpie News will return shortly, but we wanted to reach out to everyone in order to update you about our work since the pandemic threw all our lives up in the air. I am sure can speak for everyone when I say that it has been a very strange time! For those of us going into an almost empty office or working from home, or for clients and community workers chatting on the phone, or for those working or staying in Thomas Tawell House and Hammond Court. Despite all our best efforts to keep in touch with each other, we cannot help but feel a bit isolated at times and separated from other parts of the charity. I would love to say that you will find a full schedule of events and activities in this newsletter – meetings, walks, talks, crafts, sports – but the sad fact is that many of these vital services still remain off-bounds with the current regulations. We are certain that these things will return in time, but in the meantime we need to do what we can to pull together and overcome isolation.

You will have found in this little newsletter some brief updates from each of the areas of our work. Please do let me know of any suggestions and thoughts that you have about anything you read here or would like to see us do in the future. I can be found via my details above. Or you can use the FREEPOST envelope enclosed – no stamp is needed and there is no need to add anything to the address. Thank you all!

Finally, may we take the opportunity to wish all our readers and their loved ones a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year and to remind you all to keep safe during the festive period.

Contact details:

General enquiries (including external services, equipment, Thomas Tawell House and Hammond Court): 106 Magpie Road, Norwich, NR3 1JH, t: 01603 573000, e: office@visionnorfolk.org.uk

King's Lynn hub (general enquires): King's Lynn, Unit 3, Dundee Court, Hamburg Way, King's Lynn, PE30 2ND, t: 01553 660808

Great Yarmouth hub (general enquiries): 12 Hall Quay, Great Yarmouth, NR30 1HP, t: 01493 745973

Young eyes: Barbara Dunn

T: 01603561242 or e: barbara.dunn@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Activities: Mark Smith

T: 01603 973216 or e: mark.smith@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Marketing: Kathryn Webb

T: 01603 573028 or e: kathryn.webb@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Individual donations/fundraising events: Rob Collins

T: 01603 561299 or e: robert.collins@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Collecting and Community: Amy Ballard

T: 01603 573000 or e: amy.ballard@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Volunteering: Rachael Green or Penny Parker

E: rachael.green@visionnorfolk.org.uk and
penny.parker@visionnorfolk.org.uk

Campaigning: 01603 573000 or e: office@visionnorfolk.org.uk