Newsletter

Autumn 2026

Your Local
Sight Loss Charity

Sight FOR WIGHT

FRONT COVER
Millbrooke House
Sensory Garden taking shape

SCAN & LISTEN

Hello EVERYONE

Millbrooke House, 137 Carisbrooke Road,
Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1DD

Charity number 1149415
Company Number 06240404

Chair Report

Welcome to our Autumn 2026 Newsletter. I know that you will find it packed with information, activities and offers of support.

I am so thankful to have all our marvellous volunteers who fundraise, help run the activities, assist in the shop and support the Charity in so many different ways. We could not offer such a varied choice of groups without them. The staff offer technical assistance, eye health care and advice and many different opportunities to socialise, all with such kindness and care.

We are so fortunate to have both excellent staff and volunteers!

The Short Story Writing Competition was launched last month so now is the time to start thinking of your topics and story lines. I think a story based on Love, Hope and Courage will provide lots of inspiration.

We try to encourage eye care from an early age and Jasmine, our Young Persons' Manager, heads up the team that visit schools where eye care is introduced in such a fun way. Through using different equipment mimicking various eye conditions, children get to understand how it affects all those living with sight loss.

My grateful thanks to you all, we have a wonderful charity!

Sue **Chair of Trustees**

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CEO Update

It is hard to believe that a full year has passed since I had the privilege of becoming Chief Executive of Sight for Wight.

When I stepped into the role in July 2025, I was conscious that I was joining an organisation with more than 160 years of history on the Isle of Wight. My first year has therefore been about listening, learning and building relationships, while also being willing to embrace new ideas and ask: what else could we do to make life better for people affected by sensory loss on our Island?

Our Wight Sense service remains at the heart of much of what we do, and demand for specialist sensory support continues to grow. Between April and June alone, we received over 120 referrals, completed nearly 100 assessments and provided almost 200 follow-ups. Behind every number is a person – someone learning to remain independent, accessing equipment, seeking advice or regaining confidence. It is particularly encouraging that satisfaction with our support remains exceptionally high.

This year has also seen us increasingly work beyond Millbrooke House. Our Hello Everyone accessibility project has enabled us to work with GP practices and partners on accessible information and QR-enabled audio, while opening wider conversations about hearing loss, visual impairment, communication and inclusion.

Our partnerships have continued to grow with organisations including the Council, NHS and Integrated Care Board, GP practices, RNIB, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, transport providers, Visionary and many voluntary and community organisations. Together, we can share knowledge, reach more people and ensure sensory loss has a voice in wider conversations.

CEO Update

Our activities, including swimming, yoga, walking, golf and Mix & Mingle are about much more than filling a calendar. They provide friendship, confidence, wellbeing and opportunities to try new things. We are also exploring stronger opportunities for children and young people, particularly around transition and engagement with the Charity.

Our Past Futures Project will celebrate and capture the extraordinary history of Sight for Wight, Talking News and the changing experience of sight loss on the Island, while making that history accessible to future generations.

We have continued investing in Millbrooke House, with improvements to its structure, soundproofing, electrics, lighting and acoustics. Behind the scenes, we have also strengthened financial oversight, governance, risk management, health and safety and staff development. This work may not generate headlines, but strong charities need strong foundations.

There are challenges ahead. Funding is competitive and demand continues to increase, but I remain enormously optimistic about what Sight for Wight can become.

Most importantly, my first year has been a team effort. Our staff, volunteers, trustees, members, service users, partners and funders all contribute to making this organisation what it is.

To all of you, thank you.

We have more than 160 years behind us, but I am every bit as excited about what comes next. I hope we can continue to be brave enough to try new things, creative enough to find different solutions and compassionate enough to ensure that, whatever somebody's age or circumstances, they know that Sight for Wight is here for them.

JD CEO

Member Activities

Weekly

By Appointment: We have Sam on hand to give one-to-one help with accessibility features on your computer, laptop, tablet or phone. **It is essential you pre-book, so please call ahead.**

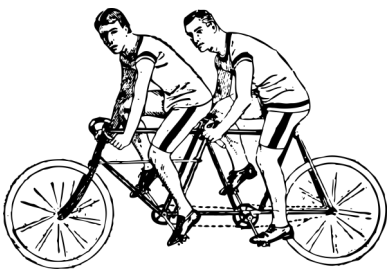
Monday: Swimming at Medina Leisure Centre, Newport (term-time only) between 1.15pm and 2.00pm. Cost is £6.00. Limited transport is available.

Tuesday: Yoga at Millbrooke House between 1.45pm and 2.45pm; come along and try gentle yoga. Just £4.00 which includes refreshments. Please call the office to book a space.

Wednesday: Coffee and Chat at Millbrooke House between 10.00am and 11.30am. All are welcome to join us for Coffee and Cake. The cost is £2.00 and the group is open to everyone.

Thursday: Mix and Mingle at Millbrooke House between 10.30am and 2.00pm. Planned activities include crafts, quizzes and entertainment. The cost is £4.00 plus £3.50 for transport if required.

Tandem Bike sessions are now held on a regular basis. Our pilots and members have been enjoying trips out, mainly along the cycle track. If you would like to have a go and you haven't let the office know, please call and put your name on the list. The cost is £3.00.



Member Activities

Monthly Groups

First Tuesday of the Month: Godshill Coffee Morning 10.30am - 12.00pm held at The Old Smithy Coffee Shop, Godshill. Volunteers, Yvonne and Linda, will be on hand to chat.

First Thursday of the Month: Audio Book Group held at Lord Louis Library, Newport, between 2.00pm and 3.00pm; this group is free to attend.

Second Friday of the Month: Walk and Talk; a short walk is normally between one and half and two miles. The cost is £2.00 plus £3.50 for transport. The group enjoys coffee and cake and is a lovely social activity.

Last Friday of the Month: Striders is for members who enjoy walking. The walk is normally between four and six miles, depending on the route and location. The cost is £4.00 plus £3.50 for transport. The group always enjoys lunch in a local pub and is a great social event.

Last Sunday of the Month: Golf at Westridge Golf Centre, Ryde. Members enjoy 45 minutes with a professional instructor available to help the complete novice, to those playing regularly.

Eye on Social is our afternoon group held on the third Wednesday of the month. This group is open to everyone; members, volunteers and friends and is a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, always finishing with tea and cake.

For more information and to reserve your place, please call Susan on 522205.

Entertaining Mix and Mingle

About every six weeks or so we have the pleasure, as volunteers, of visiting the Mix and Mingle group on a Thursday. For those who don't know, this is a weekly group who are mostly collected from their homes (by minibus or car) and arrive at Millbrooke House for a few hours of companionship; this can include craft activities, entertainment, quizzes or just chatting.

On our recent after-lunch visit, we spent some time chatting about completing advertising jingles and tag lines. For instance, “A million housewives every day pick up a tin of beans and say ....."

Or, “Hands that do dishes...".

The one we struggled with was, "They're tasty, tasty, very very tasty"; this was for Bran Flakes!

Peter then asked the question, "If we were making a 30 second advert for Sight for Wight what would we want to say and show?"

We felt it was important to show/say:

- that sight loss doesn't just affect the elderly
- we are still able to do lots of fun things, using pictures and videos of the different activities, including dancing and axe throwing at Warners
- meeting with others in similar situations helps you to feel less alone
- the kindness and help received was invaluable

Entertaining Mix and Mingle

So what would our tag line be? "Sight for Wight - you're not alone." This would be set in an outline of the Island.

Would we have a jingle or maybe someone famous to voice the words? Not necessarily a jingle, but someone with a well-known voice who has a sight problem, maybe Dame Judi Dench?

As you can see, there's nothing wrong with the imagination and ambition of the group!

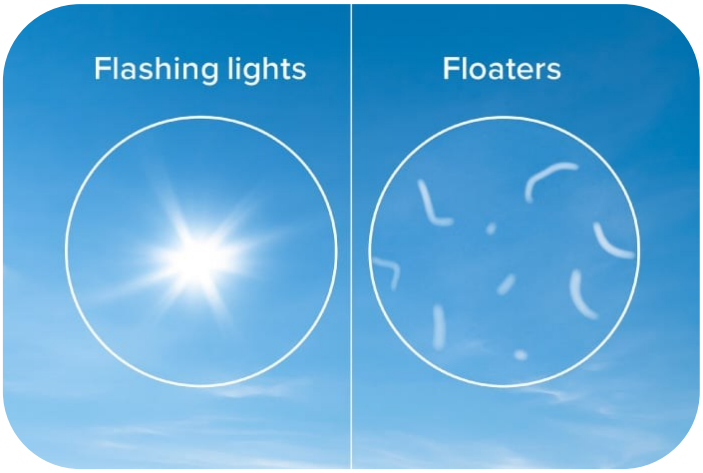
If you'd like to know more about the group, or volunteering at Sight for Wight, please get in touch with Susan.

You can call her on 522205 or email: volunteers@iwsb.org.uk

Sue & Peter **Volunteers**

Floaters & Flashes

Dots and lines (floaters) or flashes of light in your vision are common. They're not usually serious.



Symptoms of floaters and flashes

Floaters in your vision can look like:

- small dark dots
- squiggly lines
- rings
- cobwebs

Flashes look like sudden flashes of light.

They're usually harmless and not a sign of anything serious, especially if:

- you've had them for a long time
- they're not getting worse
- your vision is not affected

Flashes may eventually stop, and floaters often become less noticeable as you get used to them.

Ask for an urgent opticians appointment or get help from NHS 111 if:

- you have floaters or flashes in your vision for the first time
- you suddenly get floaters or flashes in your vision
- the number of floaters or flashes suddenly increases
- you have a dark "curtain" or shadow moving across your vision
- you also have blurred vision
- you also have eye pain
- floaters start after eye surgery or an eye injury

Floaters & Flashes

These could be signs of a serious problem with the back of your eye, which could permanently affect your vision if it's not treated quickly.

You can call 111 or get help from 111 online.

What happens at your appointment

If you have problems with floaters or flashes in your vision, your eyes will be checked at an opticians to see if you need to be seen by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) for more tests or treatment.

You'll usually only need treatment if you have a problem that could affect your vision.

Causes of floaters and flashes

Lots of people, particularly older people, get floaters and flashes.

They're usually caused by a harmless process called posterior vitreous detachment (PVD), where the gel inside your eyes changes.

Sometimes they can be caused by retinal detachment.

This is serious and can lead to permanent vision loss if not treated.

Floaters and flashes can also happen for no obvious reason.

Wight Sense (Sensory Service)

Caron and Karen attended the Independent Living Show at The Steam Railway in July. This was attended by around 30 local organisations offering their services to Islanders to allow them to stay independent. We talked to over 80 attendees from the public over the course of a very warm day.

We are very pleased to announce Emma has completed and passed her two year training course and is now a fully qualified Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS). Huge congratulations to Emma who has worked incredibly hard and is now looking forward to supporting all those on the Island with vision loss through mobility and independent living skills.

Our Hearing Café has had some new faces recently which has been lovely to see; please remember it is open to anyone with a hearing loss and their family and friends. It allows a comfortable space to be able to chat knowing those around you understand the struggles of communication with a hearing loss.

They are held on the second Monday of each month 10.30 am – 12.00 noon (no meeting in August) at various locations around the Island. Our next meetings are as follows:

14th September: The Range in Cowes

12th October: Wadhams in Newport Town Centre

9th November: Busy Bees in Ryde

December: Christmas meal ...date and location to be confirmed….

Volunteers' Update

As always, I would like to welcome all our new volunteers; we are very lucky to have so many volunteers who enable us to support our members through activities, services and events, as well as work within our fabulous dress agency shop, Dress for Less.

Although August is always shut down for groups, our volunteers are kept busy with the Talking News, Audio Library, Dress for Less and Fundraising. It also gives us time to plan ahead with rotas, fundraising ideas and a general tidy up of Millbrooke House.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Summer Party; unfortunately I was not able to attend but the photo's looked great and I hope you all enjoyed the afternoon.

As always, I would like to welcome all our new volunteers; we are very fortunate to have so many who enable us to support our members through activities, services and events, as well as work within our dress agency, Dress for Less.

Our next Volunteer Catch up is on Tuesday 13th October @ 10.30am, here at Millbrooke House. This is an opportunity for Volunteers to meet with one another and enjoy coffee and cake.

As always, if anyone knows a family member, friend or neighbour who would like to volunteer and be part of our amazing team, please do not hesitate to call the office and speak to me about opportunities we have on offer.

Susan **Volunteers & Members Manager**

Meet Trustee, Joost

My name is Joost Spit and I live in Brading with my wife, Teri, our son Troy and our dog.

I was born in Amsterdam some 64 years ago. I spent my youth moving from The Netherlands to Germany, then to Japan and then back to Holland where I ended up doing most of my education, including university, where I studied Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

After Uni, I was fortunate to roll into a few interesting jobs where I watched and participated in the rise of the computer era. I moved from ‘hands on’ jobs to project management and, in 1999, decided to start my own business, helping local companies with their IT. I was one of the first companies to implement a private cloud for my customers in 2007, running on my own servers in the big Data Centre in Amsterdam, which meant I did not have a lot of onsite support to worry about. That is when we (that is Teri and myself) entertained the idea to look elsewhere and decided we would love to live on the Island as Teri’s family is all here. We packed up and moved to St Helens with 3 of our kids. The other 3 came over later and we never looked back.

I continued to run my business for quite a few years, but when Teri started her property inventory company, I had the chance to semi-retire and looked into taking up community work, which had always appealed to me.

Meet Trustee, Joost

After becoming involved with St Helens Parish Council, I was invited to join the St Helens Community Centre. I served as Chair for a number of years and helped keep the Centre running through the Covid-19 period.

To help residents reconnect after the long period of isolation, I introduced a regular coffee morning. Through this, I came into contact with Aspire in Ryde and later applied there for a part-time role as a Digital Inclusion Officer.

One opportunity led to another, and I was fortunate to work with JD on improving community engagement at the old church in Ryde. I was also asked to supervise their community fridge programme. With support from Aspire and match funding from the Co-op, I helped set up a similar community fridge in the foyer of St Helens Community Centre. It continues to run to this day.

After I left Aspire, I joined the Spina Bifida charity in 2024, supporting the fundraising team with summer events and the Christmas Fayre. I still support Aspire, helping out with their events for a few weekends throughout the year.

When JD joined Sight for Wight, I hoped he would ask me to get involved and, in May, he invited me to join as Trustee/Treasurer, and I gladly accepted. I suggested that I could be of help with the IT at Sight for Wight, which would reduce some of the cost and over the past weeks I have helped out where I can and started on a restructure of the IT to create an easy maintainable and secure IT environment.

I also like to help out with community events, so I think you will see me around quite a bit and hope to meet our volunteers, members and their families.

Joost **Trustee**

Fundraising

Our fundraising team has been very busy over the last few months and we cannot thank everyone enough who have contributed their time, donations and baking to make all our events successful.

Our Open Studios held at Gurnard, once again, proved very popular and, although the weather was extremely hot, the homemade cakes, as always, were very popular.

We held two events in Chillerton and I thank the villagers for making us so welcome, both at the Village Market and the Scarecrow Competition. The Scarecrow Festival was so busy we actually sold out of cake!!!!

A special thanks must go to our Volunteer, Lin, who opened her gardens in Northwood and provided delicious cream teas for everyone; it was such a lovely afternoon enjoyed by members, volunteers, staff and friends.

We would be very grateful if you have a garden which you believe is suitable for a garden party and willing to open it, please speak to Susan; we can always provide the tea and cake. We need to look at different forms of fundraising during 2027 and afternoons like this are a pleasurable way of raising funds.

Save the Date

Wednesday November 4th we will once again be holding a Second Hand Equipment Sale at Millbrooke House and we will have a table with Christmas Goods on. More details to follow.

Fundraising

Looking ahead, we are the chosen charity for the Isle of Wight Classic Motor Show at Newport Quay on Saturday 12th September. We will be collecting money in our buckets and also have a stall raising vital funds for the Charity. If you are visiting the show please pop by and say hello.

Our annual sponsored bike ride, R-Eye-D the Wight, will run for all of September and, once again, we will display the miles at Millbrooke House. The cycling is open to everyone so if you would like to raise money please ask for a Sponsor Form. Perhaps you know a family member or friend who would like to raise money cycling? Everything raised stays here at Sight for Wight helping Island residents. We will have a static bike at our stand at the Classic Motor Show so people can clock up a few miles whilst enjoying the show and a static bike will be at Millbrooke House throughout September so please pop in and pedal a few miles at your leisure.

Clock up the miles anyway you like.

100 Club

Did you know we have our own 100 Club? This is our own lottery but restricted to 100 members. Each month, entrants pay £2.00 for a number with 40% prize money distributed as a single prize and the remaining 60% going directly to support our services.

This quarter's winners are Pauline, Ruth and Glyn. Congratulations!

If you would like to join the Sight for Wight 100 Club, it is just £2.00 a month; you can pay annually or by Standing Order each month.

Audio Library

Our CD audio books are available on free loan to our VI Members. Kate will send you a list of books by author and title, from which you select your preferences. Audio books are sent out and returned to us by post as 'Articles for the Blind' in protective reusable wallets at no cost. Once finished, you just pop it back in the post and Kate will send you a new one. There are over 2,100 titles to choose from.

A huge thank you to our volunteer, Kate, who comes in every single day to get books out ASAP and, single handedly, keeps the service thriving!

Sight FOR WIGHT

Short Story Writing Competition 2026

Write about a story inspired by

LOVE
HOPE
COURAGE

for a chance to have your story recorded by a celebrity & published!

ENTRY FEE (per story)

ADULTS £8.00 (1500 – 2000 words)

12 – 17's (up to 750 words) • 8 – 11's (up to 500 words)

Under 8's (up to 250 words)

Under 18's suggested donation £2.00

OTHER GREAT PRIZES TO BE WON!

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE!

ENTRY FORMS AVAILABLE FROM

Waterstones | Sight for Wight | Dress for Less

admin@iwsb.org.uk | sightforwight.org.uk

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES
FRIDAY 30TH OCTOBER 2026 AT 5.30PM

AWARD CEREMONY
FRIDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2026
RIVERSIDE CENTRE, NEWPORT @ 7PM

PAUL TOPPING	ALEX POLIZZI	STUART MCGINLEY	RICHARD CADELL	CHESNEY HAWKES
Broadcaster	Hotelier & TV Presenter	Presenter	Entertainer	Musician

Sight for Wight is the working name for Isle of Wight Society for the Blind
Registered Charity Number 1149415 Company limited by guarantee 6240404

Education Programme

As a volunteer with the Education Programme I have the privilege of going into Primary Schools on the Island with Jasmine and other volunteers to share this well planned learning experience. This is enjoyed by the children and also by the teaching and support staff.

Recently I've joined the team who visited Oakfield Primary in Ryde, Arreton Primary and St Francis Primary in Ventnor. Usually arriving at the school at the beginning of the day, we join a class for anything from 60 - 75 minutes. The children are always excited to have visitors and very willing to engage.

Jasmine begins the session with a PowerPoint presentation talking about what Sight for Wight does, and who we help. She then explains a few of the more well-known sight conditions and, after this, asks for suggestions of what we can do to keep our eyes healthy.

The most common response is "eat carrots"! Eating healthily is important, but not just carrots. Other things we discuss are:

- wearing a sun hat and sunglasses
- getting enough sleep
- wearing goggles if doing anything that may flick into your eyes
- washing your hands, especially if you touch your eyes
- having your eyes checked regularly and wearing glasses if prescribed
- exercise
- and the one the children always groan about - not too much screen time

We then split the class into three groups for different activities; braille experience, this includes understanding how braille works and writing your name in braille; sensory and showing some of the equipment to help the visually impaired, using an interactive map of the Island.

All these activities are very 'hands on.'

I usually lead the sensory activity where we talk about the different senses and then do drawing exercises and simple jigsaw puzzles wearing blindfolds.

The challenge of drawing a picture of your favourite animal or where you live when you can't see is interesting. I try to encourage the children not to cheat by peeking, and explain that it isn't about doing the best drawing but understanding how difficult it is to draw when you can't see.

One child was so intent on 'doing it properly'' half of his picture was drawn on the table!

Our aim is that every child gets to experience each activity. We sometimes have children within the class with sight difficulties who really benefit from having what they cope with every day talked about and being more fully understood.

The Education Programme is always in need of more volunteers, so if you think this would be something you would enjoy, please contact Jasmine.

Sue **Volunteer**

Dress for Less

It was time that all the lovely volunteers had a fun get-together.

We recently all met for a lovely lunch at One Holyrood in Newport. The weather was beautiful and we opened a couple of bottles of prosecco to celebrate all things Dress for Less.

I wanted to particularly celebrate Tina, our longest serving volunteer. Tina joined the shop twelve years ago. Her father was a physiotherapist and was severely visually impaired and benefited from the services offered by Sight for Wight. Tina is a very creative lady and these skills have made her a very valuable volunteer, taking on repairs to garments that would have otherwise been thrown away.

These wonderful ladies are the life blood of our shop and I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

Don’t forget we are always looking for new volunteers. If you think you would like to join our team, please contact Debbie for further details.

01983 523197

retail@iwsb.org.uk

Debbie **Retail Manager**

Terry's Ten Teasers

QUESTIONS:

1 In the south and south-east of England, how long does it have to be hot to be declared a hosepipe ban?

2 Most of Hampshire, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight currently have a heatwave, but one small region doesn't ~ where is that?

3 How many years is it now since the England football team won the World Cup?

4 Which town is generally regarded as the hottest one on the Island in the summer?

5 Why is the England versus Australia cricket series referred to as The Ashes?

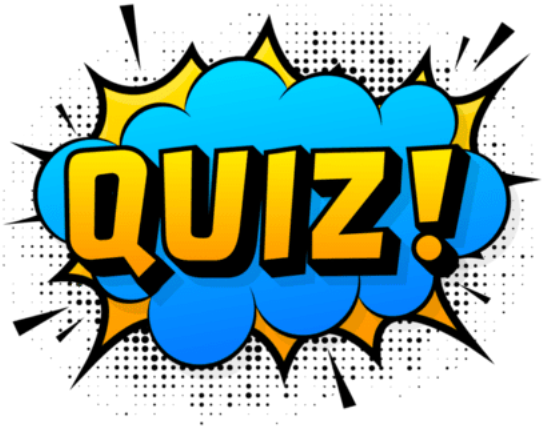
6 How old is Linda Noskova, winner of this year's Ladies' Singles at Wimbledon?

7 Which flower is sometimes referred to as a 'flag' or a 'blue flag'?

8 A centenarian looks after one hundred soldiers ~ true or false?

9 "It's a long way to Tipperary" ~ or is it? Approximately how far is it from the Island by road and ferry?

10 What was the name of Sherlock Holmes' side-kick/companion?



Terry's Ten Teasers Answers

1 Three days or more of at least 28 degrees celsius/centigrade.

2 Portsmouth ~ they have their own water company, and by mid-July they had still not introduced a ban.

3 Sixty years.

4 Ventnor, whose climate is often regarded as sub-tropical.

5 In 1882, Australia beat England, and 'The Sporting Times' published a mock obituary, stating that English cricket had died, the body would be cremated, and the ashes taken to Australia.

6 21 years of age.

7 The Iris.

8 False; that is a centurion, A centenarian is someone who lives to be a hundred years old.

9 About 536 miles (have a point for any answer between 500 & 600 miles).

10 Dr Watson (give yourself an extra point if you knew his first name was John).

SIGHT FOR WIGHT (01983) 522205 enquiries@iwsb.org.uk
sightforwight.org.uk

WIGHT SENSE (01983) 240222 info@wightsense.org.uk
wightsense.org.uk

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

DRESS FOR LESS (01983) 523197 retail@iwsb.org.uk
57 Pyle Street, Newport, IOW PO30 1UL

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Alexa / USB / Braille