

Annual Report 2025-26



MySight York members
on Try the Train Day

MySight York

live well with sight loss

R N I B
Visibly Better
Employer



Supporting local people throughout their sight loss journey

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Registered Charity number 1159188

Reflecting on the past year, I want to say how proud and grateful I am for the hard work and dedication of the whole staff team, the Board of Trustees and all our wonderful volunteers who makes our services possible.

Our purpose as a charity is to support blind and partially sighted people and help as many people as possible to “live well with sight loss”. Living well not only means providing practical support but also encompasses wellbeing, and this report will demonstrate how every element of our services is delivered with wellbeing in mind.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are simple, evidence-based actions that can improve mental health. They are: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give. Our aim is to provide services and activities that benefit our clients’ wellbeing and help them to find community in which to thrive.

Our Eye Care Liaison Officer continues to be a vital link between patients receiving clinical care and support available in the community. Whilst initial diagnosis can bring with it concern for the future, the ECLO can help to guide a patient

towards practical help and emotional support. Often this will be a referral to our Equipment and Information Centre or to our Counselling Service. Here clients have the opportunity to connect, reflect and learn how to manage their sight loss.

Connection is a huge part of everything we do. Our groups offer a wide range of activities that allow people to make new friends, learn a new skill or continue a hobby that had become more difficult following sight loss. Social connection is vital to wellbeing and this year we have had more people than ever joining regular or one-off activities. Our Befriending Service also provides the chance to connect and shows the value of giving, with volunteers telling us how they gain as much as the clients they visit.

We have also strengthened our connection to the local community with our hugely successful Community Connect project. Working with partners across York to build a sight loss friendly city, enhancing the cultural and leisure opportunities for blind and partially sighted people. Our aim for the next year is to continue this work and to extend the reach of the services we provide.

The Equipment and Information Centre

The Equipment and Information Centre is the beating heart of our services and central to our mission to help people “live well with sight loss”.

Our Sight Support Advisers provide bespoke, one to one appointments, guided by the client, to explore solutions to the difficulties they are facing.

Central to this is the wellbeing of the client. These appointments provide a space for learning new skills or techniques to cope with their sight loss and a chance to try out equipment to find the right solution for them.

The appointments can cover anything from magnification, lighting, kitchen equipment, mobility aids, talking clocks, eye-shields, talking books or a range of other items.

This year we were extremely grateful to have received funding to help us establish a Digital Hub within the E&I Centre. Here people learn about and utilise accessible technology and explore apps and software designed to build confidence and create connection in an increasingly digital world.

For people with sight loss, the digital world can be a significant barrier, with twice as many blind and partially sighted people likely to be digitally excluded than the general population. Our Digital Hub aims to break down those barriers whilst allowing people to learn at their own pace.

Sessions are tailored to the individual and can cover anything from understanding the accessibility settings on a phone or tablet to trialling a pair of Meta glasses or the Seeing AI app.



Client trying out Meta glasses

Use of technology is a key tool in people being able to maintain connection with friends and family or being able to access social opportunities. Simple changes to accessibility settings can have a lasting impact.

“Thank you, I was ready to give the phone away, I have not used it in 2 years. I am so glad I came to see you, I should have come earlier.”

Just as important as exploring new technology though is the time taken to listen and understand how a client feels and what support they need.

“You’ve got such a fabulous range of help. It’s not just the equipment, it’s the talking and the time, it all helps!”

For a person who loves to cook or to read, sight loss can feel like the end of the person they used to be. A visit to our Equipment Centre can show them the possibilities available.

Talking kitchen scales or a talking air fryer may be just what the keen cook needs to be able to carry on with their baking, a talking book player can bring lasting enjoyment to someone who had given up reading as their sight decreased.



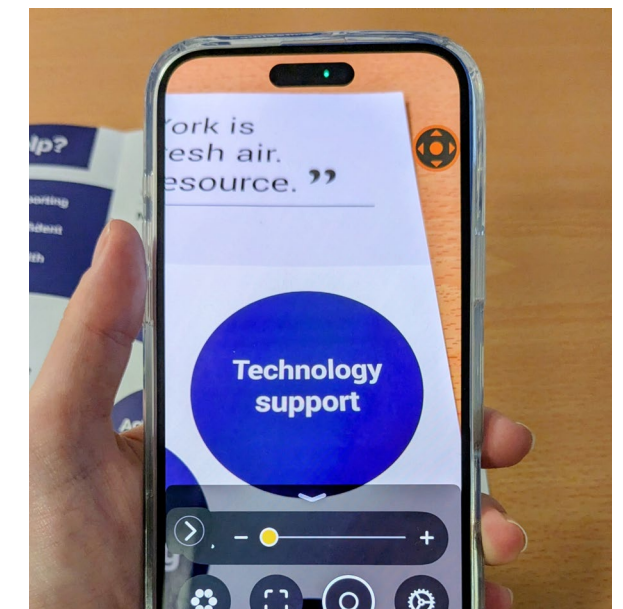
Talking Air Fryer

An hour-long appointment can have a life-long impact on someone’s independence and wellbeing.

Last year the E&I Centre supported:

1,793 contacts

Over 500 individual clients



Eye Clinic Liason Service

When someone is diagnosed with an eye condition, very often they can feel overwhelmed and uncertain about what the future will bring. The support and advice our Eye Care Liaison Officer can give at this point is vital to their future wellbeing.

Helen, our ECLO, is based within the Eye Clinic at York Hospital and her role is to help people understand their diagnosis, listen to their concerns and connect them to the emotional and practical support they need.

Helen is there to help people navigate the system, by understanding the needs of each person individually and signposting them to services that can help them as they come to terms with sight loss, a hugely important step in the Eye Care Support Pathway which was designed to overcome the “pain points” for patients during their eye care journey.

“I didn’t know there was so much help and support available to me.”



In the last year Helen has dealt with:

1,735 patient contacts

521 Individual patients

201 Certificates of Vision Impairment

802 Onward Referrals to support organisations

Each patient is given the space and time to discuss their concerns and the emotional impact of their diagnosis. Patients are then offered a referral to the right support for them, whether that is an appointment at our Equipment and Information Centre, Counselling, Befriending or Rehabilitation Services.

The positive impact on patients cannot be underestimated and, as the number of people being diagnosed with sight loss continues to grow, so does the need for the ECLO service.

Counselling and Wellbeing

In the last year we have been very grateful to receive funding from the Community Mental Health Transformation Grant Programme which has allowed us to expand our counselling and wellbeing services.

Talking Space is our free service, offering one to one counselling to enable people to explore their feelings as they come to terms with sight loss.

This service has, in the main, been delivered by volunteer Counsellors, however, the funding from the CMHT has enabled us to bring in a fully qualified Counsellor. This development has allowed us to offer the service to a wider range of people, sometimes in alternative locations, to ensure more people than ever can benefit.

All Counsellors receive sight loss awareness training and the service is open to people with sight loss and their family members or supporters. Learning to cope with sight loss is something that can impact a whole family and Talking Space provides the opportunity to explore the feelings these changes can bring.

Counselling can play an important role in wellbeing for people coming to terms with sight loss. These sessions allow space for people to “take notice” of their feelings and can help to provide coping strategies and emotional support, allowing people to talk honestly about their feelings of anxiety and fears they may have for the future.

This service is immensely important to our clients, they have told us:

“I am now feeling able to tackle life’s issues again more positively.”

“The support I have received has enabled me to have a life again.”

We are extremely grateful to all of the volunteers who help us to run the service and to the funders who make it possible to provide this vital service.

MySight Activity and Support Groups

MySight York runs a wide variety of Activity and Support Groups, helping our clients to be active, keep learning and find time for reflection.

These groups are adapted to be as accessible as possible, allowing blind and partially sighted people to come together in a social space to improve their wellbeing and keep physically active.

The Audio Book Group provides an opportunity to carry on reading and discussing together the book of the month, the Telephone Quiz gives people the chance to test their knowledge in a safe and accessible setting and the ever popular Knit and Natter Group not only provides social connection but a beautiful range of knitted goods to be sold on our fundraising stalls.

Alongside the social element, our groups also provide space for people to talk about their feelings and receive support.

Esme's Friends is a support group for people with Charles Bonnet Syndrome where members can share their experiences of visual

hallucinations, and the Living Well with Sight Loss courses can help those new to sight loss, and their family members, understand the wide range of support available to them.



Knit and Natter group

One client summed up what this support means to her:

"Thank you for all the small things that you do. They make a big difference to me."

"Making things accessible makes it better for everybody."

In total we had:

1,691 attendances at regular groups or activities

141 attendances at one-off events

Sometimes our activity groups can act as a stepping stone for people to gain confidence and participate more in their local community.

"I am pursuing other activities which means I'm leaving the house more - which is great for me as I need to be out and about and doing, rather than sitting at home."

2025/6 saw the final year of our Community Connect Project, funded by the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

"You really are a truly fantastic organisation, I wish all sight loss charities were like you guys."

This project was designed to work with organisations across York to create a "sight loss friendly" city and increase access to leisure opportunities for blind and partially sighted people.

Many of our activity groups worked directly with local providers who have undertaken sight loss awareness training such as Chair Exercise, VI Tennis, VI Golf and Tai Chi, to ensure the experience is accessible and enjoyable to participants.

One of our most popular additions to the activity programme is the Cuppa and a Chorus singing sessions. By providing large print and Braille lyrics, our members have been able to join this group running at the National Centre for Early Music with many reporting the increased sense of wellbeing they have enjoyed.



Volunteering

Volunteers play a crucial role in the delivery of services and activities; we simply would not be able to do it without them.

We currently have around 70 active volunteers who, between them, provided over 1,000 hours of support last year.

This can range from being a regular befriender, supporting a weekly or monthly activity, or helping at a fundraising event. Our Counselling Service is provided mainly by volunteer Counsellors and of course the charity is governed by a Board of volunteer Trustees.



Volunteers at a fundraising event

Many people choose to volunteer because they want to give back and often find that giving not only helps the clients we are supporting, but also improves their own sense of wellbeing.

Volunteers and clients value that sense of connection and the friendships that can arise when a volunteer chooses to give time week after week.

"Volunteering gives me a sense of worth and pride knowing I have learnt a skill to help others. It is good for my own mental health and physical wellbeing."

All volunteers receive sight loss awareness and safeguarding training and are offered various opportunities to "top up" their training each year, allowing them to learn and develop their skills.

We want to say a huge "Thank You" to every single person who has volunteered their time this year, your support is appreciated so much by all of us at MySight York.

Befriending Service

One of the services that relies heavily on volunteers is the Befriending Service.

Befriending can take place in person or on the telephone, but however it is delivered, it plays a huge role in reducing feelings of social isolation and can increase the sense of wellbeing for clients and volunteers alike.

Clients may request a befriender for a number of reasons, sometimes they need support to be able to go out for a walk or go for a coffee, for others it is seeing a regular friendly face and a person to share interests with.

Before a volunteer is matched with a client, the Volunteer Coordinator spends time getting to know each of them to ensure they will be compatible and the match will be successful.

Volunteers must also undertake mandatory training, including sighted guiding skills and awareness of safeguarding to keep both the client and the volunteer safe.



A befriending client and volunteer

Sometimes the benefits of having a befriender reaches wider than the client alone.

"Having a home visitor means that my wife can have some time to herself and go out and about. This is very important to me. I now have someone to talk to. It's making me feel a bit better"

The wellbeing benefits of social connection cannot be underestimated and the Befriending Service plays a vital role in helping to reduce isolation and improve mental health.

Communication and Transcription

The right to receive information in a format that is accessible to you is central to our commitment to help people “live well with sight loss”.

As part of this we provide a Transcription Service, primarily used by York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust, to help them to achieve the Accessible Health Information Standard. This exists to ensure that patients receive medical information in a format they can read, allowing them to keep this information private.

We also produce our own quarterly newsletter, YorView, which is sent out to clients in their chosen format.

Every quarter we distribute:

- **1,231** Large Print
- **39** audio CD
- **37** audio USB
- **3** Braille
- **470** emails in PDF and accessible Word formats

In addition, the newsletter was listened to over **500** times on Alexa and is available to view or listen to on our website.

The newsletter is not only sent to clients and volunteers but also to family members, supporters and local organisations.

“Really inspirational to read your newsletter”

One of the most important aspects of the newsletter is the opportunity to let people know about our activities, new equipment they may find useful, or events in the wider community that may be of interest, helping to increase their sense of connection and providing opportunities for social interaction.

As part of our digital inclusion project, we have also developed a new TechView newsletter, bringing tips and guides on accessibility to a wider audience.

Finance - Income

2025/2026	As at 31 March 2026	2024/2025
£23,470	Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group	£23,470
£102,069	Lottery Project	£119,764
£29,836	York Hospital (ECLO)	£29,836
£28,000	F M Muller Will Trust	£28,000
£0	Clothworkers Foundation	£8,664
£92,019	Donations and Gift Aid	£55,539
£144,273	Legacies	£165,690
£3,273	Community Fundraising	£14,287
£3,359	Income for Work	£3,210
£14,259	Sales of equipment and aids	£5,332
£1,990	Social and Group Activities	£680
£2,671	Sundry Income	£250
£50,295	Other income	£799
£1,110	Bank Interest	£8,000
£496,624	Total Income	£463,521

Finance - Expenditure

2025/2026	As at 31 March 2026	2024/2025
£291,900	Salaries	£294,217
£9,691	Rents, rates, Service Charge	£10,359
£11,095	Cost of equipment sold	£9,505
£9,066	Professional Fees	£10,271
£1,850	Independent Examination	£1,750
£38,595	Lottery Funding Overheads & Outreach	£34,308
£615	Depreciation	£172
£6,156	Staff IT	£3,196
£1,134	Insurance	£2,588
£140	Consultancy	£120
-	Maintenance	£14,163
£1,011	Stationery and Photocopying	£1,189
£1,595	Sundry Expenses	£1,742
£438	Postage	£412
£720	Bank Charges	£643
£2,615	Newsletter	£3,192
£2,452	Phone	£1,656
-	Social Activities	£72
-	Benenden Funding	£3,300
£1,187	Expenditure on raising funds	£1,268
£6,095	Other costs	£14,522
£13,993	Digital Inclusion Funding	-
£400,348	Total Expenditure	£408,645

Finance - Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2026	2026	2025
Fixed Assets		
IT Equipment	£2,076	£1,537
Current Assets		
Stock	£10,364	£9,554
Debtors	£17,368	£28,480
Cash in bank and in hand	£294,262	£183,538
Total	£321,994	£221,572
Liabilities: Amounts due within one year		
Creditors and Accruals	£(19,759)	£(15,074)
Net Current Assets	£302,235	£206,498
Net Current Assets Less		
Current Liabilities	£304,235	£206,498
Represented By:		
Funds		
Unrestricted	£76,141	£25,096
Restricted	£228,170	£182,939
Total	£304,311	£208,035

The full accounts for the year to March 2026 have been independently examined by Azets are available on the Charity's website mysightyork.org

The work we do is only made possible by the continued support of donors, trusts and grant providers to keep our services and activities running.

We are very grateful to the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund for their continued support with the Community Connect Project.

Thank you also, to the NHS Humber and Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and to York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust for providing vital support to the Eye Care Liaison Service and the Equipment and Information Centre.

Thanks also go to:

Sylvia Waddilove Foundation

Barchester's Charitable
Foundation

The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust

Feoffees of St Michael's
Spurriergate

Charles & Elsie Sykes Trust

Q Futures Community Fund

FM Muller Will Trust

Duckworth Trust

UK Shared Prosperity Digital
Inclusion Fund

Garfield Weston

Charles Brotherton Trust

Two Ridings Community Fund

Community Mental Health
Transformation Grant

NISA Making a Difference Locally

W.L. Pratt Charitable Trust

York Dispensary Sick Poor Fund

We wish to extend our thanks to the very kind individuals and families who leave us a gift in their will, all those who make a regular or one-off donation, take part in a community fundraising event or donate to a Pink Elephant collecting box. Every penny is gratefully received and makes a real difference to the lives of the blind and partially sighted people we support.

MySight York

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Registered Charity No. 1159188