

Vision North Somerset Newsletter

Registered Charity 270331 December 2015

Good work by Vision

Vision North Somerset has recently been featured in the R.N.I.B. Good Practice Series - Early Intervention and Rehabilitation Services. The initiative is funded by the Department of Health to identify and share examples of good practice between professionals across the country.

The report recognises the effectiveness of Vision working together with North Somerset Council to provide a mix of statutory and charitable funded activities from one source. Whether it is rehabilitation or advice on registration; social clubs or benefit advice, services are easily accessed and are not time limited.

New Low Vision Role

North Somerset Clinical Commission Group which is responsible for commissioning community health initiatives has noted the importance of an effective community low vision service and is funding Vision to run a 14 month pilot project.

A low vision serviced based at Neva Road will assess for low vision aids including magnifiers, video magnifiers and lighting. Most importantly time will be available to discuss techniques such as steady eye, eccentric viewing and other strategies that make effective use of available sight.

The service will be launched in January and can be accessed via our Registration and Equipment Advisors, or our Rehabilitation Officer.

Eccentric Viewing

For people with macular degeneration this technique can help with reading, getting about and watching TV. It's about learning to use the healthiest part of the macular.

Your eyes won't get any better but eccentric viewing may help you use your remaining vision more effectively. We have a member of staff and a volunteer who have been specially trained to help people to learn the technique. It doesn't work for everyone and it can take time to become proficient. If you would like to know more about Eccentric Viewing contact Nina Farr our Rehabilitation Officer on 01934 419393.

IT Opportunities

Our Karten IT project in partnership with Action for Blind People is still steaming ahead. This is a great opportunity for visually impaired people to learn how to use computers, ipads and iphones and we have already had very successful results.

An initial chat with our "expert" allows you to discuss your needs and find out what is best for you. There is no obligation so if, at this stage, you decide that IT is not for you then you do not have to go ahead. However, if you want to give it a try then you will be allocated a trained volunteer who will meet with you every week here at Vision to help you get to grips with the IT of your choice, whether it's learning how to send an email or mastering the effective use of an iphone. Contact Nina Farr on 01934 419393 to book your initial appointment.

North Somerset Council Digital Inclusion Working Group

The council is working towards better and more efficient ways of dealing with enquiries and delivering services online. This could include paying your council tax or finding out about bin collections. The digital service will also make it easier for people to find out about the services they need.

Vision North Somerset is included on the working group and we make a significant contribution to ensure that visually impaired people can access services via computer or tablets. This means making sure that the council's web site works effectively with the built in accessibility features on computers, tablets and phones and also works with external screen readers and other specialist software.

It's a great time to look at Vision's Karten IT project to enable you to join in the digital revolution. However, rest assured you will still be able to access council services even if you don't have a computer.

North Somerset Council Automated Switchboard

North Somerset Council is planning to launch an automated switchboard to improve the speed and efficiency in directing callers. The number remains the same: 01934 888 888. Just say the name of the person you want to speak to and you will be connected automatically. It's reassuring to know that your call will be answered by a 'real person' if you need help.

North Somerset Highways

Vision's Rehabilitation Officer has been working with the North Somerset Highways team to help them understand the mobility needs of visually impaired people. It is important that access needs are considered at the planning stage of all developments. Things like controlled crossings and tactile paving can make a big difference to the safety of visually impaired people and it has also been an opportunity to highlight the dangers of shared space, where supposedly cars and people can move around in the same area without any danger to people with sight loss or other disabilities. The Highways Team is working on producing a Street Charter which will highlight the issues we have raised.

Getting Ready for winter

Being cold can raise the risk of increased blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes, so make sure you keep warm this winter. It is recommended that you heat your home to at least 18C (65F) and many prefer their living room to be even warmer. If you are able, move around – try not to sit still for more than an hour or so. A hot meal or snack can help to keep you warm too. If you struggle to cook for yourself consider community meals, you can contact them on 01275 882 867 or ask Vision for information about commercial meal suppliers.

Get the help you need

Government advice about energy saving measures is available from: www.gov.uk/warmthiswinter

The Home Heat Helpline is a free service for people concerned about their energy bills: 0800 33 66 99

www.homeheathelpline.org.uk

People in receipt of certain low income benefits can get a Warm Home Discount on their electricity bill. Call: 0345 603 9439.

And don't forget the winter fuel payment for people who are born on or before 5th January 1953.

Flu Jab

Flu can be far more serious than you might think. It can lead to complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia and can even be deadly. That's why the flu jab is free for people who are aged 65 or over, or if you have a long-term health condition. You may also be eligible for a free flu jab if you are the main carer of an older or disabled person. Contact your GP or local pharmacist.

Volunteers Needed

We know that Vision couldn't offer as much help as we do for our members without our volunteers. They are a very important part of our team. We are currently seeking a couple of special people to join our Volunteer Eye Clinic Support Team at Weston General Hospital.

A commitment of one morning or afternoon a week is all that is needed. If you are comfortable in talking to people with sight loss about the ways in which Vision North Somerset can help them then this may be the role for you. If not perhaps you have a friend or relative that may be interested. We provide full training and pay expenses. If you would like to find out more -

without obligation, phone Michele Blake our Volunteer Co-ordinator on 01934 419393

We have other roles available too, so please ask people that you know if they might be interested in Volunteering with Vision.

Christmas Opening Hours

The office will close on Wednesday 23rd December and open again on Monday 4th January 2016.

**With Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a peaceful
New Year from the Trustees and Staff at Vision North
Somerset**

Vision North Somerset

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