



Annual Review 2020-21



Tackling vision loss together

At a glance

Total income:

£19,971,000

Total amount spent on supporting people with sight loss:

£24,137,000

Total amount of fundraised income:

£607,000

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Who we are

We are Scotland's largest visual impairment charity. We provide care and support to empower people affected by sight loss in Scotland.

There are more than 180,000 people with significant sight loss living in Scotland today. We have an ageing population and the number of people living with sight loss is set to increase by 30,000 over the next 10 years.

Our mission is to reach everyone in Scotland with sight loss – where and when they need us.

In our pursuit of this mission, we are guided by three key values: Transform, Unite and Thrive. These values reflect who we are, what we do, and why we do it.



Transform

We transform outcomes for people with sight loss

Unite

We connect with partners and communities to support more people

Thrive

We care about those who we work with and want them to flourish

Words from our Chair



I am proud to present Sight Scotland's 2020-2021 Annual Review. This review provides an opportunity to reflect on what our colleagues, service users and supporters have achieved in the last financial year.

I am heartened by the tremendous dedication and commitment shown by our supporters, our donors, our staff and our volunteers during a very challenging year. The Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns have had a dramatic impact on everyone's lives, including those with sight loss. I would like to thank all our colleagues who worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, whether they worked in frontline services that remained open or had to adapt to working from home to support service users and organisational operations remotely.

This year we engaged colleagues across the organisation to identify our charity's three core values: Transform, Unite and Thrive. These values underpin our work and will be embedded in colleague communications, recruitment, and appraisal processes in 2021-2022.



During 2020/21, we refurbished our office building at 2a Robertson Avenue so our head office could move from our Gillespie Crescent premises. We anticipate that colleagues will relocate to Robertson Ave in the autumn of 2021. The building is currently home to the Scottish Braille Press. Head office staff will occupy the top two floors, which previously had tenants in them.

Despite the challenges of Covid, this year also held several new developments. In October 2020, we re-branded our charity and launched our new name and ambition: to reach and support many more people with sight loss in Scotland. We believe our new name Sight Scotland puts us in a strong position to achieve this ambition.

In pursuit of this ambition, we developed and launched our new Community Services. This included our freephone Support Line which started receiving calls in January 2021 and enables us to reach people across the whole of Scotland – both those with sight loss and their families, who are impacted by their loved ones' sight loss.

However, we also had to make some very difficult decisions this year. One of these difficult decisions was to cease operating our care homes for older people due to recurring financial losses over several years, which were a major risk to the wider

sustainability of our charity and its ability to meet its strategic objective of supporting many more of the 180,000 people in Scotland with sight loss, approximately half of whom are aged over 75 years. We worked with care home residents, families, and industry partners to find suitable new accommodation for all the care home residents before their closure.

We do have an ageing population in Scotland. The number of people living with sight loss is expected to increase by 30,000 over the next 10 years. We believe our new Community Services will help many more people across Scotland to access the information, expert advice, and emotional support they need. I hope you will support us in our pursuit of our ambition. Together, we will seek out and address the needs of those with sight loss with optimism and determination, as we set out to reach and support many more people across Scotland.

Thank you.

Michael Craig
Chair of the Board
Sight Scotland

Thank you for your support this year

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously towards our work. We are so grateful to all our supporters who gave individual donations and fundraised tirelessly on our behalf, and especially to those who so kindly left a gift in their will.

The following charitable trusts, foundations and companies (in alphabetical order) contributed greatly to the services and projects we run.

- Baillie Gifford
- BlackRock Gives
- Buccleuch Charitable Trust
- Children's Aid
- Connecting Scotland
- D M Charitable Trust
- Edinburgh Rotary
- Glebefoot Charitable Trust
- Hospital Saturday Fund
- Hugh Fraser Foundation
- J and J R Wilson Trust
- Liddell-Simpson Charitable Trust
- James Inglis Trust
- JTH Charitable Trust
- Lady Marian Gibson Trust
- Lothian Buses Employee's Charities Fund
- MEB Charitable Trust
- Meikle Foundation
- Miss R E Morrison-Bell and Evelyn Sutherland Trust
- Mrs EY Imrie's Trust
- National Lottery Community Fund: Awards for All
- PF Charitable Trust
- R J Larg Family Charitable Trust
- Row Fogo Charitable Trust
- Russell Trust
- Scottish Government: Community Recovery Fund
- Scottish Government: Temporary Restrictions Fund
- Scottish Government: Transitional Support Fund
- Scottish Government: Wellbeing Fund
- Templeton Goodwill Trust
- Tesco Bags of Help
- W M Mann Foundation
- W O Street Charitable Foundation
- William H Fernie Charitable Trust

Learning

We provide specialist learning to pupils with visual impairment at the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh and in mainstream schools in three local authorities.

Children and young people are at the centre of our approach. Each pupil's learning is customised to them and their unique abilities. We teach children and young people vital skills and prepare them for the challenges of everyday life.



Mobility skills, such as white cane training



Use of specialist equipment, such as screen-reading software



Access to learning through braille and large print



Guidance for school staff



Everyday life skills



Social skills and transitions



Royal Blind School

We want to reach everyone with sight loss – when and where they need us.

In 2020, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Royal Blind School and our wider learning services, we restructured the school. This restructuring involved analysing pupils' needs and the underlying cost of delivering services. The new structure has made a major positive impact on the long-term sustainability of the school and our wider learning offering. We successfully recruited a new Head of Learning to consolidate these changes and to develop the strategic direction of all our learning services.

Our teachers and support staff continue to provide an outstanding level of specialist teaching to the children and young people in our care. When the Coronavirus lockdown closed school premises in March 2020, our teachers adapted their teaching to support children and young people learning at home.

The Royal Blind School's day pupils were taught how to use Microsoft Teams video conferencing software, so they could log in to group and one-to-one lessons online. Many pupils learned to email their schoolwork to teachers. We provided coaching to parents too, to help them support their child's remote learning.

Royal Blind School residential pupils, who reside with us 52 weeks a year, continued their learning on-site.

In August, following government guidance, the Royal Blind School's day pupils returned to our premises in Canaan Lane in Edinburgh for their tuition. Pupils enjoyed being back in the classroom with their friends. Our pupils, families, teachers, support staff, care workers and school community all worked collaboratively to follow guidelines and keep everyone safe.

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Learning in mainstream schools

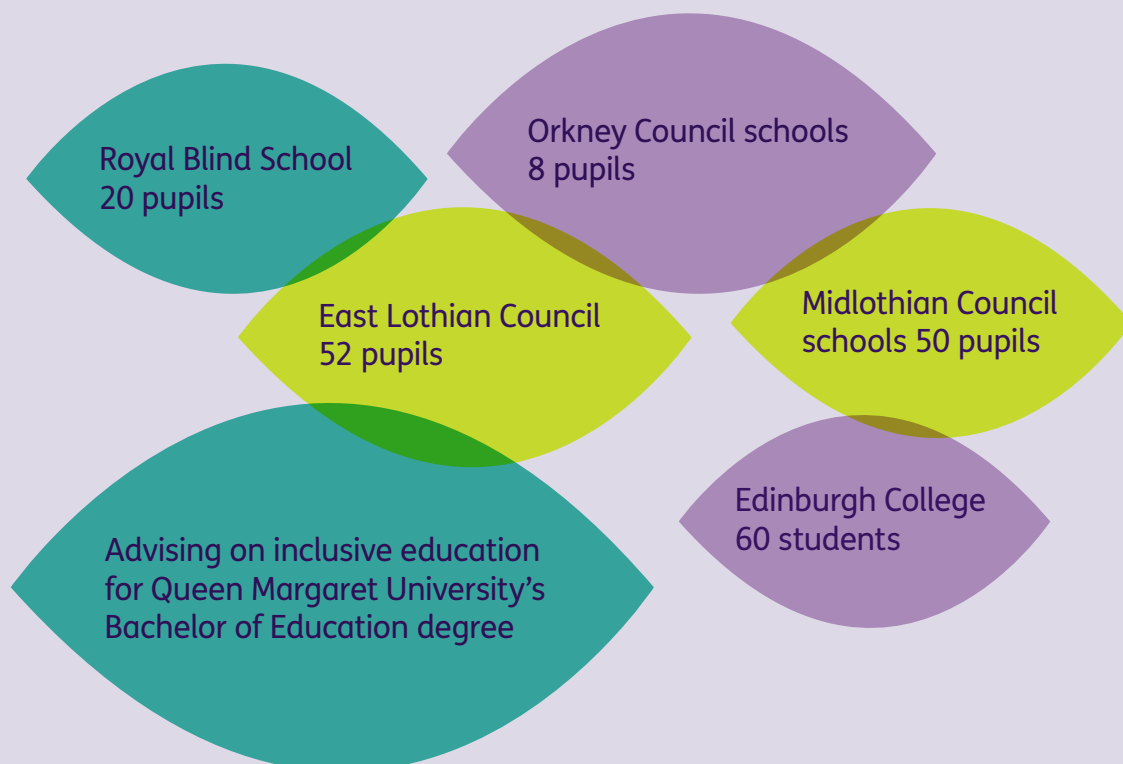
In 2020, we significantly increased our learning support to children with visual impairment who attend mainstream schools.

We successfully secured a local authority contract to support up to 50 pupils with visual impairment living in Midlothian. This added to our existing provision of support to 52 pupils in the East Lothian council area, and to our support for 8 pupils in the Orkney Islands.

We also began supporting 60 students with visual impairment who attend Edinburgh College. Students were assisted in their educational progress, as well as their inclusion in college life.

Our Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVIs) supported not only pupils and their families, but also teachers and support staff. This helps bring a deeper understanding of visual impairment and builds teachers' confidence in using strategies and resources to maximise pupils' access to the curriculum.

New student teachers will be equipped with this knowledge too, as we began a support service to Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University in 2020. We helped to shape the curriculum in the context of inclusive education. Our input raised awareness of the issues faced by children with visual impairment among those studying for a Bachelor of Education degree (Primary).



Amy's story



▲ Amy doing her schoolwork at home on her BrailleNote Touch

Royal Blind School pupils like Amy learnt many new skills during the first 2020 lockdown.

When the school premises closed for day pupils, Amy was supported to continue learning at home. Amy used a BrailleNote Touch tablet to write, send and receive her schoolwork and attended online lessons using Microsoft Teams.

Amy's mother, Gillian, said Amy looked forward to online lessons with classmates.

"Amy really enjoys the group lesson on Wednesdays. She has been completing English, Maths, Science, History and Geography work. Amy is so proud of her achievements, and I am amazed by her progress," Gillian said.

Amy uses a BrailleNote Touch device, which is an electronic braille notetaker with the power of a modern tablet. Pupils use the devices to write and edit documents, read books, send and receive emails and browse the internet.

Gillian said: "Amy is enjoying being able to independently access assignments sent by her teachers to her BrailleNote Touch. She completes the work and then sends it back to her teachers. She loves doing her homework.

"Seeing how motivated Amy was to learn how to do this has led me to understand how important a BrailleNote Touch will be for her future, as sending and receiving emails is a skill we all need to have. Just watching her on her BrailleNote really lifts me. The difference I have noticed is unreal."

Royal Blind School teachers also used video conferencing to run drama, music and PE lessons remotely. The school's Habilitation team offered parents advice, such as on maintaining pupils' long cane skills.



▲ The BrailleNote Touch has a refreshable braille display, which braille readers use to read emails, documents and web pages.

Angus's story



◀ Angus, a 17-year-old high school pupil that Sight Scotland provides support to.



Angus is one of the 52 pupils living in East Lothian who we support.

Angus attends Ross High School in Tranent. The gregarious 17-year-old is supported in his learning by Anna Christal, one of our Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVI).

Angus said: “Recently, we’ve been reading about the work available out there. The kind of job that caught my eye is working in an office with computers.

“Ms Christal and I talk about the software I’d use, the office layout and the assistive technology I could use. Recently we’ve been working on how people would want to see the work in Word Documents, such as using lists and putting text in bold and different fonts.”

Angus uses specialist software to access Microsoft and compile spreadsheets. In the 2020-2021 school year, Angus passed several school subjects, including National 5 Applications of Mathematics.

Angus said: “It’s real-world mathematics: the things you’d see yourself doing in later life, such as budgets, getting a house, paying insurance, or working out how much to cut off wood or like packing a container.”

One of the most useful skills Ms Christal has coached Angus on is self-advocacy.

Angus said: “She helped me realise the gap between what I was or wasn’t receiving and what I could get – and how I could ask for it.

“The biggest difference has been self-awareness and self-advocacy: knowing how to ask people to do things in a way that’s right for you.”

Angus said he’s looking forward to putting his skills to use.

“The specialist support I have received at school has been so important to me and now I’m looking forward to the future after school, doing more as a DJ and hopefully working in computers and technology.”

Care

Sight Scotland provides specialist care that enables people with sight loss, including those with additional complex needs, to live fulfilling lives and to live in safe and warm surroundings. Our residential care services also provide support so the people we care for can gain skills, make their own choices and build connections.

The safety and wellbeing of both the people we care for and our colleagues has been our utmost priority during the pandemic. Our residential care homes quickly adapted our care provision to minimise the risk posed by Coronavirus. We followed Scottish Government guidance and introduced enhanced cleaning regimes, social distancing and physical barriers, such as Perspex screens. Once tests for Coronavirus were available in June 2020, our care staff all participated in weekly tests. Families have remained in close contact throughout the pandemic.

We continue to operate our two care homes for younger people with visual impairment and complex needs, Forward Vision and Allermuir. Transition care services for young disabled adults are in high demand and there remains a lack of provision across Scotland. Financial arrangements for these services are separate from the National Care Homes Contract for older people's residential care and the funding we receive from local authorities allows us to operate them sustainably. We were thrilled by the generosity of all those who donated tablets to all our services, allowing families to stay connected. Regular Facetime calls were scheduled between families and those in our care. Distanced family visits were facilitated from June 2020 onwards, in line with Scottish Government advice.



To maximise our residential care staffing levels as much as possible, we used Kidscene, our after school care service, to provide childcare support to our “key worker” colleagues, who had children that required looking after when school premises closed.

In March 2021, we made the very difficult decision to close our care homes for older people. It had become apparent that the environment in which the care homes operated had changed significantly. Sadly, following extensive independent expert analysis, it was clear that both care homes had become financially unsustainable and unfortunately, these losses could no longer be sustained by the charity. Consultations were held with families of those in our care, affected colleagues and representatives in January. All residents had moved into alternative care settings by mid-March.

Our commitment to developing support for older people will continue as we develop new services, like our recently launched Family Wellbeing Service, to support the increasing number of visually impaired older people living in communities across Scotland.

Ben's story

Ben is one of the adults with visual impairment and additional complex needs we care for at our residential service for younger adults, Forward Vision.

Ben had an active time with us over the months of lockdown. Swimming in our on-site hydropool, playing football with his friend Andrew and singing along with 'Take Me Home Country Road' were some of his favourite activities.

Family members have visited Ben when guidelines allowed it and spent time with him at Forward Vision's garden and outdoor café, which we ran for families.

As he is a highly talkative young man, Ben said he really enjoyed regular Facetime calls with his family throughout the 2020 lockdown.

Ben said: "I talked on Facetime with Mum, Dad, Gran, my sister, Aunty Carol and Aunty Jane from Canada."

Ben celebrated his 21st birthday with us at Forward Vision – an event with plenty of cake and silly games. Government guidelines at the time meant one very special visitor could spend time with him indoors.

To Ben's delight, his mum appeared at his birthday and surprised him. The pair had their first hug in months. Ben said he had missed hugging his mum and the moment felt special.

Ben said the best things about lockdown lifting would be to Café Nero, going out for pizza and getting a sausage and cheese pastry from Greggs.

When he heard the sweet shop would be open too, Ben had a quick reply: "I'm liking this!"

A huge thank you to all the families, local businesses and members of the community who have supported us throughout the year and enable us to provide the best care – and healthy food – to people like Ben.



▲ Ben's birthday



▲ Ben in garden

Community

In January 2021 we launched our first ever community-based services. These consist of the Family Wellbeing Service and local authority contracts for rehabilitation and mobility. These services are part of our commitment to reach more people impacted by sight loss across Scotland.

We recognise that families play a huge part in supporting a loved one with sight loss. Our research shows that people with visual impairment can lose their confidence, self-esteem and ability to do many day-to-day activities. Families have concerns about how to best support their loved ones and don't always have support for themselves, particularly at the first diagnosis stage.

Our Community Services utilise the skills and knowledge we have across the charity to help provide advice and information, together with the emotional support needed by people who are affected by sight loss.

Family Wellbeing service

The Family Wellbeing service provides practical and emotional support to individuals with visual impairment, as well as their families, carers and friends. The Family Wellbeing service runs our freephone Support Line, which has been receiving calls since launching in January.

The service has been promoted nationally via mailings to hospital-based Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) and professional eye health contacts. We are planning for further national promotion of the freephone Support Line through TV, radio and press coverage.

The Family Wellbeing service provides:



A freephone Support Line



Home visits (depending on lockdown restrictions)



Befriending



Online support, including videos

We received funding to support the Family Wellbeing service from the National Lottery Community Fund for three years from April 2021 onwards. We would like to thank everyone at the National Lottery Community Fund, and players of the National Lottery for their amazing support.



Local Authority Visual Impairment Support Services

In 2020/21, we successfully won contracts to provide visual impairment support services to around 385 individuals in the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian local authority areas.

The contracts involve the delivery of a rehabilitation and mobility service where, following a diagnosis of sight loss, individuals and their families can meet with our expert staff and be provided with support and advice.

The City of Edinburgh Council contract started in April 2021 and will continue for

three years with the option of an extension for a further two years. We estimate we will support around 275 people per annum through this contract.

The three-year East Lothian and Midlothian contract also started in April 2021. We will assist around 110 people per annum through this contract.

We will continue searching out opportunities to provide services to local authorities through direct tendering. We will also work to deepen our relationships with statutory agencies in other ways, promote our cause and become an active source of support and advice to local authorities and Integrated Joint Boards.



▲ Rehabilitation and Mobility Officer Marie O'Donnell with Sight Scotland Veterans volunteer Michael McAllister

◀ Sighted guide Sharon McAllister from our sister organisation Sight Scotland Veterans, with Marie O'Donnell and Koko the guide dog

Colin and Margaret's story

Colin Fowler, 59, of Linlithgow, contacted our Support Line for advice on a magnification device for his mum.

Colin's mother Margaret has had macular degeneration for several years. The condition has made it a struggle for Margaret to read her favourite magazines.

The Family Wellbeing team introduced Colin and Margaret to electronic magnification. Now, she's delighted to catch up on reading about the royal family.

Colin said: "There wasn't much forthcoming support offered when my mum was diagnosed. We had bought some hand-held magnifiers in the past and they were of some use, but she could only see so much with them and they weren't really the best to help her reading.

"My mum's now been trying out an electronic magnifier and it's a great bit of equipment. She's really pleased. As a relative and a carer, I found the service very reassuring. Anita, the Community Worker, was always very prompt at getting back to me and there was excellent communication."



◀ Margaret, who loves using her new electronic magnifier.



Wilma's story

Wilma calls our Support Line about the visual hallucinations she experiences as a result of her sight loss. The 84-year-old widow regularly has phone calls with our Community Worker, Debbie, through our Support Line.

"We have a good blether about anything and everything. We talk about our families, about our week and things we remember," Wilma said.

Wilma experiences Charles Bonnet Syndrome. This causes her to see visual hallucinations, even though she is blind. The condition affects many people with vision loss, regardless of their age.

Wilma calls our Support Line and tells Debbie all about the hallucinations she experiences.

"Normally, I cannot see anything. I can only sense the brightness of the light coming through the window.

"But sometimes, I'll see tiny people. I'll see the whole person and their heads will be right in front of me. Other times, I'll see buses and trams. They'll be tiny and weird looking, in the distance," Wilma said.

"If you don't know about Charles Bonnet Syndrome, the hallucinations can frighten you. I've discovered if I move my head around, the people I'm seeing will move around too, and then vanish."

Wilma loves to think up little poems and share them with Debbie. She recently composed a poem on Charles Bonnet Syndrome.



▲ Wilma

Wilma's poem about Charles Bonnet Syndrome:

The Charles Bonnet Syndrome
Can give you quite a fright:
You can start seeing things,
When you lose some of your sight.

The brain always wants a picture
And when it doesn't get it from your
eyes, It makes an image up:
Now isn't that a surprise.

If you see pictures you do not like,
Just keep turning your head.
Then the things will vanish,
And you can go to bed.



▲ Debbie, our Community Worker, provides people like Wilma with advice and emotional support.

Enterprise

Scottish Braille Press

The Scottish Braille Press is a leading supplier of braille, large print and audio media to a wide range of customers. Its work ensures that people with sight loss have access to mainstream services such as banking and education. The majority of its operation is dedicated to servicing financial services clients and producing large print format documents, such as financial statements and statutory notices.

Operations at the Scottish Braille Press have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is deemed an essential service.



Early in the pandemic, the Scottish Braille Press prioritised requests from the Scottish Government and local councils, such as requests for accessible leaflets about Covid, so that people with visual impairment could get the information they needed in an accessible format. Our Scottish Braille Press colleagues increased their output by 52 per cent in the month of April 2020, processing 16,000 more letters than the 31,000 letters that would normally be processed.

In total, the Scottish Braille Press's performance has held steady, although there has been a reduction in discretionary business, such as marketing literature, from its financial services clients.

Through innovation, the Scottish Braille Press is developing ways to add value to products for its existing clients. In 2020, teams worked with a technology company to develop an electronic delivery mechanism of financial documents for people with visual impairment. Work on innovative technology features like this will continue in 2021.

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Enterprise development

January 2020 saw the expansion of Sight Scotland's trading with the appointment of an Enterprise Manager. Their aim is to create sustainable income for Sight Scotland by increasing the existing charitable trading offering, as well as generating new enterprise and social enterprise opportunities. This will generate further income for Sight Scotland, enabling us to support more people affected by visual impairment across Scotland.



E-Commerce



Accessible formats



Facilities utilisation



Training and consultancy



Digital services and assistive technology



Provision of corporate resources to third parties

“

January 2020 saw the expansion of Sight Scotland's trading with the appointment of an Enterprise Manager.”

Research

Sight Scotland is committed to funding research into eye disease. We know that research can find solutions to change lives for the better.

In 2020, we continued to provide funding for medical research into sight loss. Our funding is managed and distributed in partnership with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd). We contributed £100,000 over two years, as one of several co-funders, to support the Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research (SCONe) project. This project is being delivered by the University of Edinburgh.

SCONe's work involves building up a large collection of images of retinas. Each year, millions of retinal images are captured by 1200 optometrists across Scotland. These images are a rich resource for research and for work in eye healthcare.



SCONe's aim is to collect, classify and curate a repository of these images. This repository will help enable the early identification of eye disease, improve clinical outcomes, and help uncover biomarkers that are predictive of ocular and systemic diseases.

In 2021-2022, we will take forward a new strategy to further develop our activity in medical and social research into visual impairment.



Effectiveness of home-testing for glaucoma

Nearly 60,000 people in Scotland living with glaucoma could benefit from carrying out tests at home, a study funded by Sight Scotland has shown.

Glaucoma is a major cause of blindness that is caused by a build-up of fluid and pressure inside the eye. The increased pressure causes damage to the optic nerve, which causes gradual and irreversible vision loss.

A University of Edinburgh research team set out to establish whether it could be beneficial for people affected by glaucoma to test their own eye pressure at home with a self-testing kit, rather than visiting a hospital or an optometrist to be tested.

The study found that access to home testing could result in an increased number of eye pressure measurements being taken. Because of this, home testing could provide a better indication of when pressure levels are high and whether treatments are working. This improves eye doctors' ability to determine the risk of worsening sight loss from glaucoma and the types of treatment the patient should receive.

Consultant Ophthalmologist Dr Andrew Tatham, who led the research team, said:

“Glaucoma is a major cause of blindness, but as it usually develops gradually, many of those affected are unaware that they are slowly losing sight.

“Thanks to the funding from Sight Scotland, our research has shown that it is now possible for patients to measure their own eye pressure accurately at home. This can provide many more measurements and allow more close monitoring of responses to treatment.

“Home monitoring has been incredibly useful in other diseases such as high blood pressure. It has the potential to reduce sight loss from glaucoma, reduce the number of hospital visits needed, and give patients more control over their disease.”

“

Thanks to the funding from Sight Scotland, our research has shown that it is now possible for patients to measure their own eye pressure accurately at home.”



External affairs

Marketing

The Marketing department's major project in 2020 was launching the charity's new name and brand.

Following more than two years of research, consultation, planning and production, we launched Sight Scotland as the new name for Royal Blind in October 2020. Our sister charity changed its name from Scottish War Blinded to Sight Scotland Veterans at the same time.

The rebrand was well received and has provided a fresh and vibrant image for our charity that reflects our new ambition: to reach many more people who need us in Scotland. Our new name puts us in a better position to achieve this ambition.

Reasons for the rebrand

Market research told us Royal Blind was frequently confused with other charities in our field. The research also found that people with sight loss do not always associate themselves with the word 'blind'.

Developing the new brand

We worked with a specialist brand agency with experience in name changes to develop the new brand identity. We tested a wide range of options for new names with colleagues, services users, stakeholder organisations and the wider public including people living with sight loss. A new, positive name was the preference amongst those we support and 'sight' was the word most identified with.

The brand launch featured on STV News, as well as online and print coverage which backed a TV and outdoor advertising campaign. The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon officially launched Sight Scotland's new

Previous logo

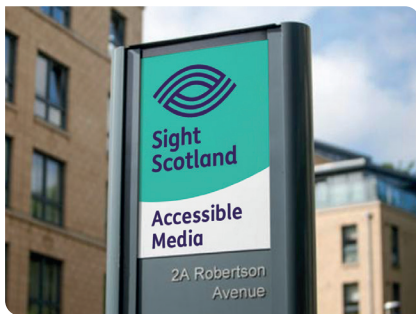


New logo



brand in a video that was viewed over 10,000 times on social media in the week after the launch. A motion tabled in the Scottish Parliament welcoming the launch was supported by 26 MSPs from across all the parties represented in Holyrood.

Six months after launch, external market research showed that our new name already had higher recognition than our previous name, Royal Blind. For our re-branding work, Sight Scotland was shortlisted for the "Change Project of the Year" award at the UK-wide Charity Times Awards.



Fundraising

Along with charities across the UK, we had to rapidly adapt our fundraising strategy to ensure we could continue to raise income despite some income streams being put on hold, particularly community fundraising and events. The net position from fundraising was an improvement overall, thanks to our Covid appeal which we launched in April 2020.



- ▲ Mame, who raised funds for Sight Scotland by completing a fundraising challenge at her school.



- ▲ Kirsty, who took our Sight for Sight fundraising challenge and walked to a different Edinburgh sight every day for 20 days.





Qualified Teacher of Children with Visual Impairment Pam Young (below) and our Executive Directors, including Chief Executive Mark O'Donnell (left) and Director of Services Hawys Kilday (bottom right), took on the 2.6 Challenge in April and May, raising nearly £2,000 for Sight Scotland's services.



Policy

Our ambition through our policy and public affairs activity is to achieve a more inclusive society for people with sight loss in Scotland.

Our goal is to work with the blind and partially sighted people we support to be the leading champions for positive change on the issues which affect them most.

Soon after the Coronavirus pandemic began, blind and partially sighted people told us how the pandemic and lockdown measures were having a drastic impact on their lives. They told us that social distancing was very difficult to do and that supermarkets' one-way systems were stressful to navigate.

We set out to raise awareness of these issues in the media, with industry partners and with the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

Working with our sister charity Sight Scotland Veterans, we conducted the most extensive study of the impact of lockdown on blind and partially sighted people in Scotland. More than two thirds (70%) of the 400 blind and partially sighted people who took part in our survey said they felt their sight loss had made lockdown a more difficult experience. We communicated the findings of our research in the media and through engaging with parliament.



Key activities



Involved the First Minister and party leaders in Holyrood in our brand launch



Researched the impact of lockdown for visually impaired people



Highlighted in media and parliament the challenges of the pandemic for people with sight loss



Researched the views of blind and partially sighted people on availability of support services



Collaborated in the development of guidance for health and social care staff on communicating with people with sensory impairment during the pandemic



In January, we launched our first-ever parliamentary manifesto: Time to Focus on sight loss, securing cross-party support.

Kirin's story

Kirin Saeed is championing a campaign to make workplaces more inclusive.

Kirin, who has visual impairment, works for Sight Scotland at the Scottish Braille Press as a Braille Proof Reader. Previously, Kirin has worked at a restaurant, at a cinema, and in an administration role.

In 2020, Kirin co-led a series of online workshops for employers facilitated by the Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE), which Sight Scotland is a member of. Kirin ran the workshop with Sight Scotland Veterans' Lead Rehabilitation Officer, Sandra Taylor.

Kirin said: "We got employers to think about action plans for an employee who is gradually losing their vision and how they can manage that process better to support that person to stay in their job."

"People told us they really got what they wanted from the training and learned how to work with someone who has visual impairment."

Kirin said employment was very empowering.

"As a person with visual impairment, employment is the foundation of getting you to do all the other things you want to do with your life."

"Once you're employed you can be more part of society, make more friends, get better housing, and it just means you're more established in life."

Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans plan to deliver more of these sessions in the next year.



▲ Kirin singing in a friend's band



▲ Kirin at the Scottish Braille Press

Financial Review

Our total income for the year was £20 million, which was an increase of £2.3 million on the previous year. The increase in income was mainly due to a net gain on the disposal of the property we owned at Craigmillar Park. This means we sold the Craigmillar Park property for more than it had been valued in our accounts. The property had previously housed the Royal Blind School and the Scottish Braille Press.

Our total expenditure before investment gains and losses was £24 million. This year, we reported a gain on our investments. Last year, due to the condition of the markets at the start of the global pandemic, our investments saw a loss of £1.7 million. However, at 31 March 2021, the markets had significantly recovered and this year we are reporting an unrealised investment gain of £3.4 million. Markets remain volatile though and it remains to be seen whether these gains can be sustained.

Income from legacies fell by £246,000 during 2020/21 with very little activity, possibly as a result of solicitors' offices being closed for part of the year and property sales being curtailed. Income from fundraising increased by £29,000 and this was largely due to income from grants to help the charity through the pandemic.

The Royal Blind School decreased its deficit to £396,000 (2020 deficit £701,000) following on from a restructure and the closure of the Learning Hub. Kidscene ran at a £62,000 loss as a result of being closed for normal use for much of the year. We reallocated Kidscene staff to care for the children of key workers from our other services when schools closed, helping us to minimise staffing shortages during the pandemic.

We received grants from the Scottish Government to contribute to the pandemic-related costs of both the school and Kidscene.

Within Older People's services, the deficits at Braeside House and Jenny's Well increased during 2020/21 as we did not accept any new residents during the pandemic, leading to a drop in occupancy. Following a review of our older people's services over the last few years and extensive independent expert analysis, we reluctantly took the decision to close both our care homes and focus on providing other community-based services for older people. We incurred significant cost in making redundancy and other payments to staff in March 2021, however the closures have put the charity in a much stronger financial position moving forwards.

Adult Services' income remained steady at £2.9 million, despite not being able to accept temporary respite stays due to the pandemic.

Income to the Scottish Braille Press fell by £333,000 due to a fall in customers in areas such as school exams and event publishing, although it still managed to make a surplus of £211,000.

We introduced a community services team in late 2020 and this has already won contracts to deliver services on behalf of Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian councils.

Expenditure on marketing increased as we launched our new name and brand in the autumn of 2020.

Overall, the net result was a deficit of £788,000 in 2020/21. This compares with our 2019/20 deficit of £5,057,000.

We also sustained an actuarial loss of £1,887,000 on our pension scheme, which caused in a total net decrease in funds of £2,675,000 (2019/20, -£1,953,000). Going forward, we will continue to seek new areas of funding to develop our services and will continue to review our existing services in order to maximise income and reduce costs.

Reserves

A key duty of the Directors is to ensure that users of Sight Scotland's services are cared for and protected. Due to the complex nature of the services we provide, it is important that we hold enough reserves to ensure that the essential continuity of care needed is not disrupted.

The Directors consider it appropriate to hold free reserves equivalent to a minimum of twelve months' operating costs (equivalent to £17 million in 2020/21) for such purposes. These reserves must be held in a realisable form that can be accessed in a timely manner. Sight Scotland's current level of free reserves of £23 million (2020, £19 million), which is our unrestricted reserves excluding fixed assets, ensures that there are sufficient funds set aside to operate our charitable activities for 16 months. The Directors believe this level gives adequate time to respond to any adverse changes or opportunities as they present themselves but are closely monitoring the level of reserves.

The importance of having an adequate level of reserves has been evident during the Covid pandemic. Due to our ability to call upon Sight Scotland's free reserves we were able to ensure continuity of service.

The Directors are committed to continuing the investment in fundraising and other

sources of unrestricted income in order to maintain and grow the provision of high quality care and support for our service users and to underpin the charity's strategic ambition to reach more of the 180,000+ individuals in Scotland who are suffering from a deterioration in, or loss of, their sight. The Directors have agreed to deploy proceeds from the charity's reserves while sources of income are diversified and aim to increase investment in line with the charity's new strategic plans. The Directors committed £131k to the establishment of Community Services and continued its annual award of £100k in research grants via the Royal College of Surgeons.

Substantial efforts to address the long-term practice of committing reserves to support day to day operations have taken place in the last year which have left Sight Scotland in a much stronger position financially.

The Directors are committed to supporting present day operation and future service developments via four main revenue streams and will set targets and monitor performance against a target operating model over the short to medium term.

These revenue streams are:

- Income from investment returns
- Contribution for trading activities
- Direct funding from statutory services (including the Scottish Government Grant Aided Special School provision)
- Fundraising, including legacies and grants

The Directors regularly review Sight Scotland's reserve levels as part of their reserves policy review cycle. The Directors will carefully review any future business cases involving major capital spend that would incur borrowing or investment draw down in excess of these targets.

How we achieved our income

Legacies

Leaving a gift in your will is a powerful way to support and give hope to people with sight loss for future generations. We are hugely grateful to all those who remember us with a legacy gift.

Donations

Donations from our wonderful individual supporters, corporates, trusts and foundations, as well as all those who tirelessly raise money for us, help make sure we can provide the best care to those with sight loss. Our events and campaigns are also key to raising awareness about different sight loss conditions and the support that is available.

Learning services

The Royal Blind School is a grant-aided special school, receiving core funds from the Scottish Government. In the future however, we expect this will move to a commissioning model, as per the recommendations of the Doran Review into the provision of services for children and young people with complex additional support needs in Scotland. Placements at the school are funded by local authorities and we are also incredibly grateful to the donors and trusts who give so generously to enhance the care and education the children and young people receive. Income to Kidscene is primarily from fees charged to parents. Our learning outreach services are delivered through contracts with local authorities.

Adult Services

Our adult residential services, Allermuir and Forward Vision, receive income from local authority funding. Additional income is received from fundraisers and trusts which help to fund care-enhancing experiences and equipment.

Older People's Services

Our Older People's Services were funded by fees charged to local authorities and to private individuals. Funding through donations, grants and charitable resources contributed to the cost of activities for residents.

Scottish Braille Press

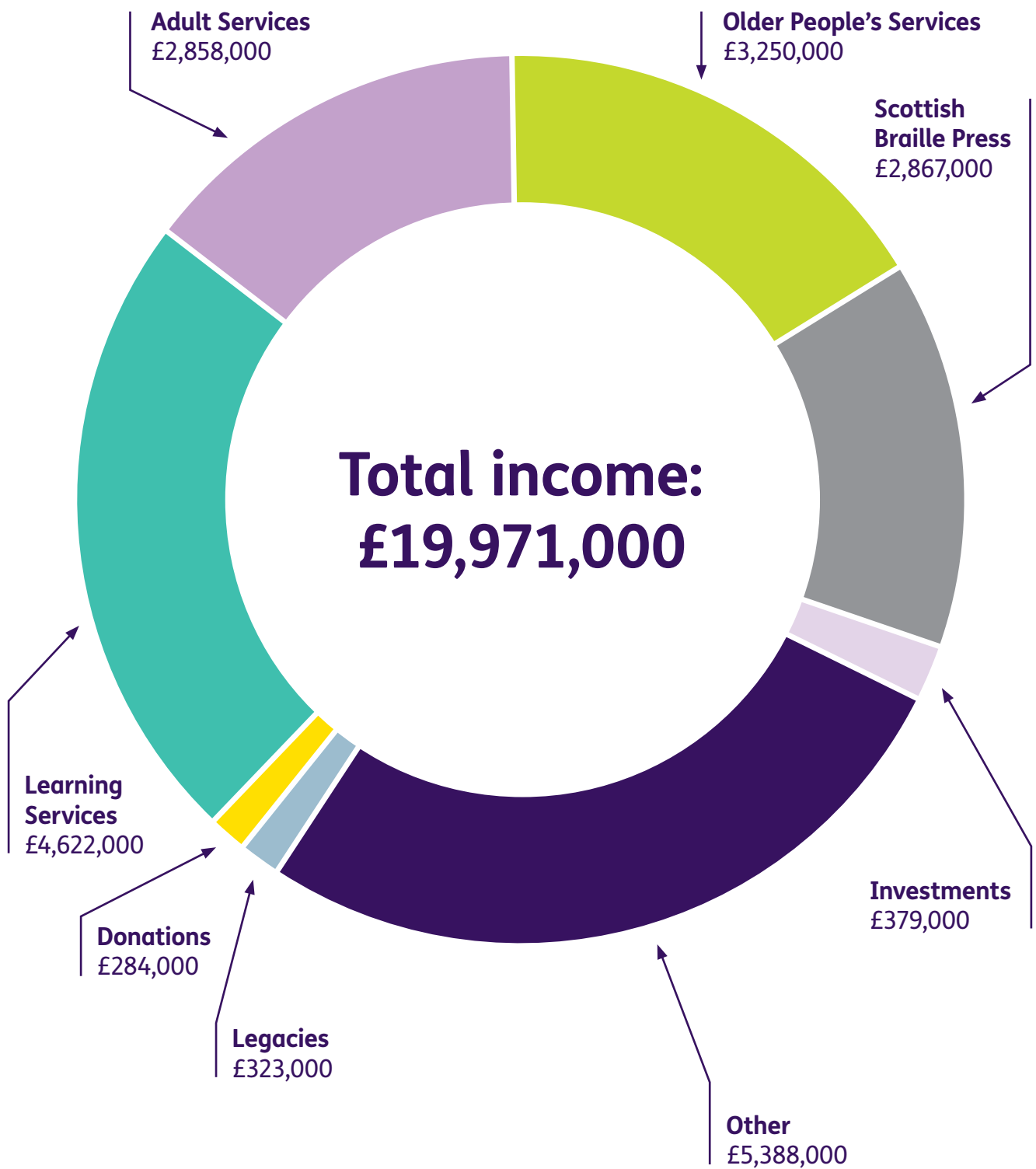
The Scottish Braille Press provides a chargeable transcription service to banks, exam boards, the public sector and many more organisations so that they can provide people with sight loss with formats that enable equal access to the written word. The profit generated by the Scottish Braille Press is reinvested to help fund Sight Scotland's support for people adapting to sight loss.

Investments

Careful stewarding of our investments helped increase our income during the year to allow us to further support people with visual impairment.

Other

This category covers the £4.5 million we gained from the sale of the former Royal Blind School building at Craigmillar Park. It also covers corporate support services we provided to our sister charity Sight Scotland Veterans, for which we received £612,000.



How we spent funds

Supporting children with sight loss

A total of 190 children were supported through the Royal Blind School and our outreach education programmes. You can read more on page 8.

Supporting adults with sight loss

Our care team kept the young adults in our services safe and supported. You can read about the Covid pandemic's impact on our adult care services on page 12.

Supporting older people with sight loss

We continued to operate both Braeside House and Jenny's Well care homes during the financial year. We ensured the required number of staff and PPE were available at all times, especially at the pandemic's peak. This had a significant impact on funds spent. To read more, go to page 12.

Reduction of asset value

On 31 March 2021, we closed the two care homes: Jenny's Well and Braeside House. We plan to sell both properties. We expect Jenny's Well to sell below cost so we have reduced its asset value by £4.2 million in our accounts.

Providing transcription into braille, large print and audio

The Scottish Braille Press provides a service to leading banks and other companies seeking to produce accessible formats for people with a visual impairment.

Developing services for people with sight loss

The charity invested in developing new services, such as our Community services, as

part of our ambition to reach more people with sight loss in Scotland.

Community services

Our Community services run our Family Wellbeing service, which launched in January 2021 to provide practical and emotional support to individuals with visual impairment, as well as their families, carers and friends. Community services also manages local authority contacts to deliver visual impairment services. In 2020/21, we won contracts to support 285,000 people from 31 April 2021 onwards. You can read more on page 16.

Funding medical research

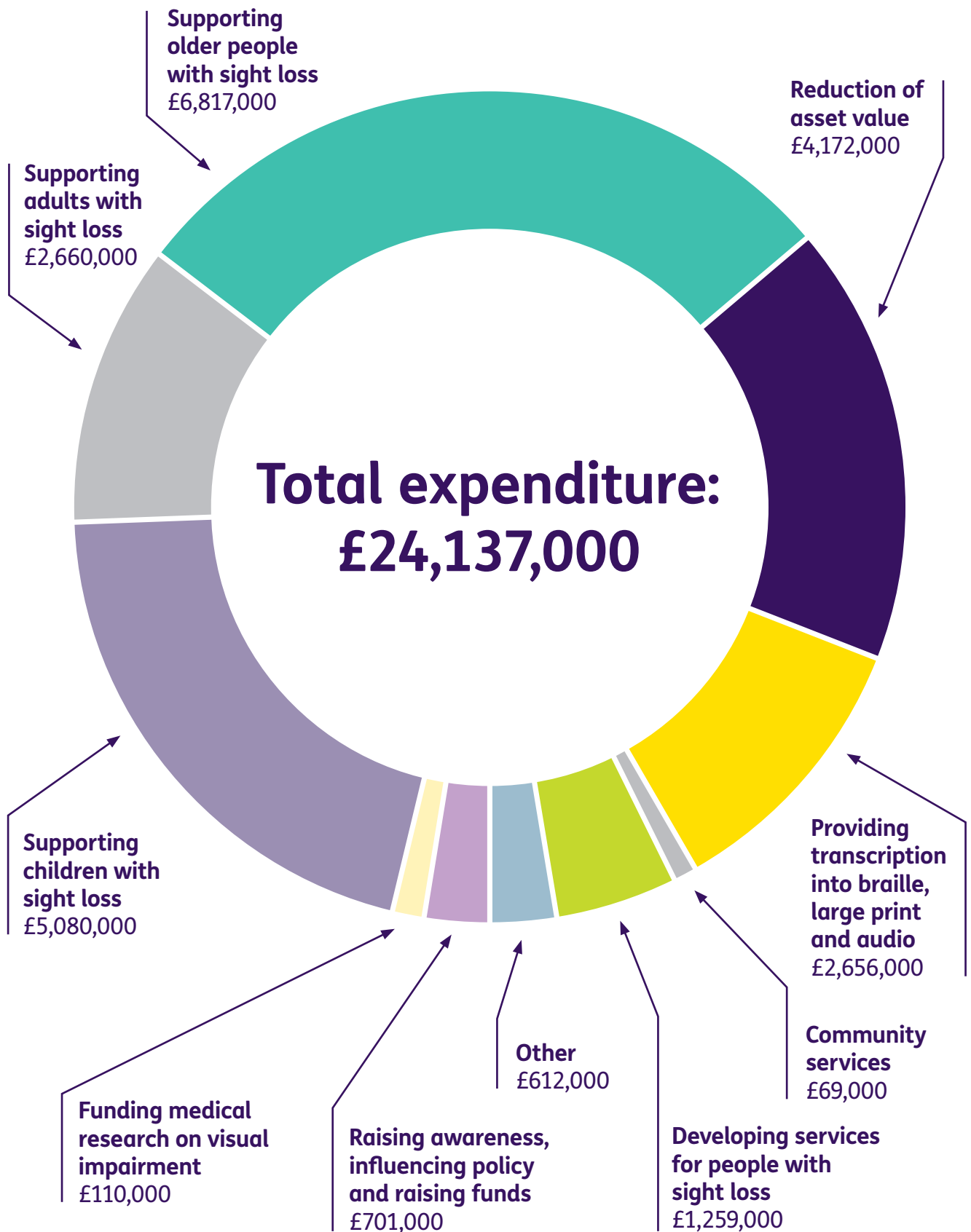
We provided crucial funding to medical research on eye conditions. Read more on page 20.

Raising awareness, influencing policy and raising funds

Our policy work increased to bring the key issues facing people with visual impairment to the fore. We changed our name and re-branded from Royal Blind to Sight Scotland after much consultation. This will ensure we are seen as a charity that is best placed to be there for people with sight loss in Scotland – now and in the future. We continued striving to raise the maximum amount of funds for every penny spent.

Other

Sight Scotland provided corporate support services to our sister charity Sight Scotland Veterans. The cost for these services was £612,000, which Sight Scotland Veterans reimburses Sight Scotland for.



Our Patron, President and Board

Sight Scotland is the operating name of The Royal Blind Asylum and School, Edinburgh, Scottish Charity Number SC017167. Sight Scotland was previously known as Royal Blind and the change of name occurred on 8 October 2020.

Patron

His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, K.G., G.C.V.O.

President

His Grace The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, K.B.E.

Vice President

The Hon. Mrs Janet Buchanan-Smith, C.B.E.

Board of Directors

Elected by Contributors:

- Michael Craig (Chair)
- Jamie Cuthbertson (Resigned 2 July 2020)
- Professor Mike Donnelly
- Michelle McWilliams
- Michael Martin
- Graeme Bold
- Jay Hogarty
- Aidan McCorry
- Ian McGregor (Resigned 28 February 2021)
- Stephanie Philips
- Elizabeth Porterfield
- David McArthur (appointed on 23 April 2021)
- Catherine Topley (appointed on 23 April 2021)
- Dianne-Dominique Theakstone (appointed on 23 April 2021)

Appointed by Public Bodies:

- Professor Baljean Dhillon – University of Edinburgh (Resigned 9 December 2020)
- Robert Mooney – Scottish Trade Union Congress (Resigned 9 December 2020)
- Derek Howie – City of Edinburgh Council (Resigned 30 June 2020)
- James Milhench – Scottish Council of the National League of the Blind and Disabled (Resigned 8 October 2020)

Chief Executive and Secretary

Mark O'Donnell

Principal Office – 2a Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh, EH11 1PZ

Auditor – BDO LLP, Citypoint, 65 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5HD

Bankers – The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, 26 Home Street, Edinburgh EH3 9LZ

Solicitors – Thorntons, Citypoint, 3rd Floor, 65 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5HD

Get in touch

Visit our website at sightscotland.org.uk for a wealth of information and resources about sight loss and what we can do to help.

You can also join our mailing list and help us support people with sight loss in Scotland. Just visit sightscotland.org.uk/enews to sign up for our monthly email newsletter.

Sight Scotland Support Line

If you need to talk to someone about sight loss, call our freephone Support Line.

Talk to us on 0800 024 8973

We're here between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

We'll explore what living with sight loss means for you or the person you support, and talk through your concerns, finding solutions together.





Sight Scotland

The new name
for Royal Blind.



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Web: sightscotland.org.uk

Registered Charity
No. SC017167