

Our Mission

We provide a range of practical help and support services for people who are visually impaired, across the whole of Dorset.

30k people with sight loss in Dorset

In Dorset today, more than 5,600 people are registered as blind or partially sighted and an estimated 30,000 people are living with serious sight loss.

That's the equivalent of 4% of the county's population.

The Dorset Blind Association works across Dorset to help as many of those people as possible lead full, independent, healthy and socially active lives in their local community, notwithstanding the impact to them of their sight loss.

(media here)(1+ image / video)

Directly into the community

We deliver practical services, tailored to the needs of each individual, directly into the community to make these as accessible as possible to all service users and through this we provide support for up to 1,000 local people each month.

Our help and support is not time limited in any way, unlike the programmes delivered by many others. We are happy to provide continuous support for as long as people need it recognising that, for most people, sight loss is sadly not curable and also that many people's needs change over time.

The Staff

The Dorset Blind Association works with a very small staff team, currently 6 full time and 3 part time, who are in turn supported by our wonderful army of volunteers.

The staff are all deeply committed to the work of the charity, regularly going the extra mile to make sure that our service users receive the best possible help.

(1+ photo of staff)

The objective : make a difference

Although small in number, between them the staff team possess a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience, all of which combines to help deliver a service which makes a real, positive and lasting difference to the lives of so many people with sight loss across Dorset.

"I love the diversity of my job, one day I could be helping someone coming to terms with the emotional impact of sight loss just by talking and listening and the next day I could be guiding a group of mischievous youngsters on an activity day. Most of all, I know that whatever help we give, it really is appreciated."

– Leah, one of our Community Support Workers

Staff members

The first full-employed person was hired in 19xx, and now the team has grown up :

(photo of staff member smiling / working / helping someone)	Name & short description (+testimonial maybe)
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(for each 6-9)

1. Community Support

Visually impaired people want to remain living independent and active lives in their local community.

Our Community Support Workers give advice, training and support. They ensure people are accessing all appropriate services and benefits and have suitable equipment and home adaptations. Volunteer visitors build friendships and trust while providing ongoing, practical support.

(media)

Practical & emotional support

Our Community Support service helps each blind or partially sighted person we meet to lead a full, healthy and independent life and continue to be an active part of their local community. Our staff and volunteers offer a listening ear and lend a helping hand and provide a mix of practical and emotional support depending on the needs of each individual.

Community Support Workers visit VIPs (Visually Impaired People) in their homes to discuss their needs, aiming to get to know them as a person, so they can then make the best match with a local volunteer visitor. The volunteer and VIP are introduced and the volunteer then visits regularly to help in all manner of ways.

(graph : vertical bar **74% increased confidence**)(alongside text below)

In an average year now over 750 people will be helped by this service and, with the benefit of our help, 74% of our service users felt they had increased confidence in their capabilities to deal with their sight loss.

“Quotation here”

Support at Bournemouth Hospital

Our help desk at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital provides non-medical advice, empathy and information about sight loss.

This service is provided by Tiffany, who is herself visually impaired. She offers a wealth of advice and useful information suited to each individual she meets.



(media)

The Eye Unit at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital is the largest and busiest dedicated hospital Eye Unit service in Dorset.

We play our part in helping a significant number of the people who need to attend at the Eye Unit, through our Help and Support Desk service.

1,6k+ people helped each year

Based in the Outpatients area of the Eye Unit, this service helps more than 1,600 people each year, providing them with impartial, non-medical advice and information about sight loss conditions and an informal counselling service for people experiencing sight loss and struggling with the emotional impact of that.

It is often now the point at which many people have their first contact with us. The service is able to signpost people on to other Dorset Blind Association services, as well as to help and support provided by other agencies.

Equipment Centre

At our office in Poole, we provide advice on a wide range of matters for the visually impaired.

We also source and supply specialist aids to daily living and equipment designed to enable people with sight or hearing loss to continue independent living.

(media)

For almost everyone who suffers serious sight loss or age related hearing loss there is a range of equipment and specialist aids to daily living which will help them to continue independent living.

Based at our Poole office, we provide a bespoke and personal service, advising people on the best equipment for their individual needs and then sourcing and supplying this.

Our most-asked products are :

- x
- y
- z

Each year now between 650 and 700 people will visit the Centre for help with their needs and all are assured of a warm welcome and a friendly, attentive service.

1. Mobile Equipment Service

Our office is based in Poole, but our two equipent vehicles allow us to deliver our services directly to homes across the whole of Dorset.

(media)

Based in Poole, working across Dorset

We recognise that not everyone can visit our Centre in Poole : most people who are blind or partially sighted in Dorset are elderly – 80% are aged 75 or older. So many have other physical problems commonly associated with old age which restrict their movement and ability to travel, while many live in parts of the county which are not well served by public transport.

To make sure, therefore, that no one is denied access to our Equipment Service we offer a mobile service, operated through our two Sight and Hearing Equipment Vehicles.

800 visits a year

These travel across Dorset, taking the Equipment Service directly into people's homes and local community venues. Last year alone the service made nearly 800 VIP (Visually Impaired People) visits.

(graph : vertical bar [70% improved resilience])(alongside text below)

With the benefit of the equipment provided through the service, 70% of service users said in a recent survey they had improved resilience to cope with the impact of their sight loss.

Working Age

XX% of the partially sighted people in Dorset are working age.

We tailor our support for working age people, helping with relevant skills to secure and maintain employment across the county in many varied roles.

Social Eyes clubs

While the great majority of people who are blind or partially sighted in Dorset are elderly, there is still a significant minority of people with sight loss who are of working age and here at the Dorset Blind Association we recognise that group having a slightly different set of needs than our older service users.

To help meet those needs we run 3 Social Eyes clubs for people of working age, meeting regularly in Poole, Weymouth and Bournemouth.

(link : Adresses of the SEc)

The clubs each have a very relaxed and informal format, with the emphasis placed on them being an opportunity for people to just get together, enjoy the social contact and friendships which group members form. For many members of these clubs the most valued aspect is the peer support which members give each other. On countless occasions it is another member of the group who has the solution to the latest challenge or difficulty which another is facing. So it is important to continue to make the clubs happen.

(media)

And our staff are also always on hand to help with the issues which working age people often have to address, such as employment matters or benefits advice.

Members enjoy regular outings and activities and many also enjoy taking part in one or more of our sports or activity groups.

Social Clubs

It is essential that visually impaired people maintain an active social life and have regular social contact with others.

We sponsor and support social clubs across Dorset, serving all the main population centres. We offer a warm and friendly welcome to large numbers of people who enjoy the regular gatherings.

(media)

12 regular social clubs

The Dorset Blind Association currently supports and runs 12 social clubs for older people with sight loss which meet regularly at venues around the county.

The clubs are managed and run by a combination of our staff and volunteers and anyone who attends is assured of a warm and friendly welcome.

(map)

Most months the clubs will offer entertainment and there are occasional outings, but for many of the people who attend club meetings the real attraction is just the opportunity to sit and talk with others, share a joke and a drink and feel safe in the knowledge that they are amongst friends and in an environment specifically tailored to their needs and where they are safe.

And we know that our clubs work and make a difference for people. As one member recently said, "I do so appreciate the Dorset Blind Association clubs and events and activities, otherwise my life would be very lonely", while another said "I feel elated after the social club from seeing everyone and it stops me feeling sorry for myself."

Activities and Sports

We offer a range of opportunities to ensure visually impaired people are still able to participate in a wide range of activities and sports.

Current regular activities include ballroom dancing, a book club, indoor bowls, acoustic shooting and cricket. Other sports and outdoor activities are offered whenever possible, such as sailing and kayaking.

(media)

The chance to remain active

Serious sight loss shouldn't mean that people can never take part in activities and sports which people with full sight take for granted, so we offer a range of activities and sports which allow our members the chance to remain fit and active, both in mind and body.

Activities to build confidence

Some activities and sports are offered on a regular basis and some on an occasional basis, but all are fun, stimulating and help people to build confidence and feel that they are still part of their local community.

Current regular activities include various handicrafts, the chance to listen to and discuss talking books, indoor bowls, ballroom dancing, visually impaired cricket and even target rifle shooting using acoustic shooting systems.

Occasional activities include driving days with qualified instructors on private roads, visually impaired tennis and various water sports.

(media)

We hope there is something of interest for everyone and we are always looking at new opportunities, so keep watching our latest news in case we decide to offer something which you would like to try!

Support for Businesses

5,600 people are currently registered as blind or partially sighted in Dorset.

An estimated 30,000 people living with serious sight loss : that's the equivalent of 4% of the county's population.

Adapt to visually impaired customers

Each of these people is a customer or service user and we want businesses and other agencies in Dorset to be ready and able to give them as good a service as they would to anyone who is fully sighted. After all it just makes good business sense that you look after these customers.

Disability Discrimination Act

Since YYYY, [every company in England] has to meet legal obligations under disability discrimination legislation (Disability Discrimination Act).

We can help business and other agencies in very practical ways to make sure they achieve this goal, and positively support the employment of a staff member who develops sight loss.

Your staff may benefit from sight and hearing loss awareness training and you may need to use our Transcription Service, to convert your written sales and other material to formats that are more accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

Contact us for more info

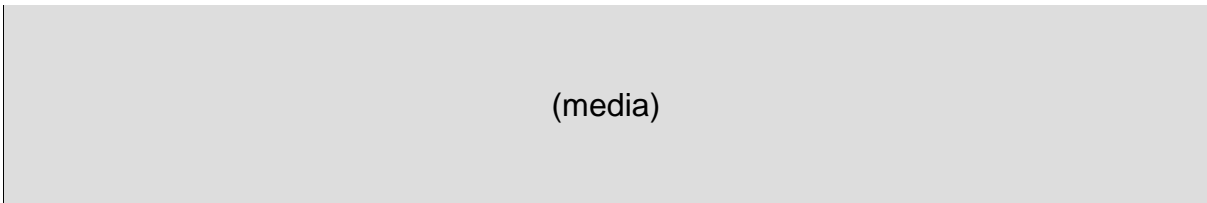
Please talk to us, on a no obligation basis, and we will be happy to discuss your specific needs and ways in which we can work together with you for everyone's benefit.

(link : [contact us](#))

Transcription

Standard printed text is not accessible to blind and partially sighted people and needs to be converted to a format which they can access.

Our transcription service takes written material and converts it to a range of audio formats, large print or Braille as required.



(media)

We provide a transcription service which can convert written documents to the format required by each visually impaired person. We can offer a range of audio formats, including CD, MP3 and even the good old cassette tape!

Volunteering

Volunteers truly are the life blood of the Dorset Blind Association. So much of what we do is only possible with volunteer involvement and we really appreciate and value the wonderfully dedicated group of volunteers which we are lucky to have.

(link : volunteer now)

(media)

400+ volunteers now

More than 400 people now volunteer to help in one or more of our services and between them donate around 42,000 hours of time each year.

We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities and we are sure that there is something to suit everyone, wherever you live in Dorset, whatever your age and however much time you can give.

(graph : vertical bar [90% of volunteers feel a sense of accomplishment])(alongside text below)

Over 90% of our volunteers feel that their volunteering gives them a sense of accomplishment, with a similar number feeling that, through their volunteering, they were making a real positive contribution to their local community.

“Quotation here”

(links : What to volunteer for)