



Herts Vision Loss

Weltech Business Centre

Welwyn Garden City

AL7 2AA

Sight-line 01707 324680

Email: office@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21

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1. General Information

Herts Vision Loss is a charitable company, limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 15th March 1995 and registered as a charity on 9th June 1995. The governing documents are the Memorandum & Articles of Association.

Registered Office Unit A3, Weltech Business Centre
Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AA

Telephone 01707 324 680

Website www.hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Charity Number 1047148

Company Number 3033089

Chairman of the Board Mrs Alex Hickinbotham

Company Secretary Paul Taylor

Chief Executive Officer Mrs Joanna Carter

Patron Lord Homes of Richmond MBE

Board of Directors

The Directors of the Company for the purposes of the Companies Act and the Charity Trustees for the purpose of the Charities Act are as follows:

John Warner-Smith	Chair until June 2020
Alex Hickinbotham	Vice Chair to June 2020, Chair from June 2020 onwards
John Page *	Vice Chair from June 2020 onwards
Keith Harding	Company Secretary until retirement in November 2021
Paul Taylor	Company Secretary from November 2021
Richard Seaman	
Alison Macdougall	Commenced in post July 2020
Jennie Beebe	Commenced in post October 2020
Raj Visram	Commenced in post March 2021
David Ottolanguai	Commenced in post March 2021

*Indicates visually impaired person

Honorary Advisor

Mrs Tara Petri
5 Broadleaf Grove, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7AZ

Insurer

Towergate Insurance
Funtley Court, 19 Funtley Hill, Fareham, PO16 7UY

Bankers

Santander UK PLC,
Bridle Road, Bootle, G1R 0AA

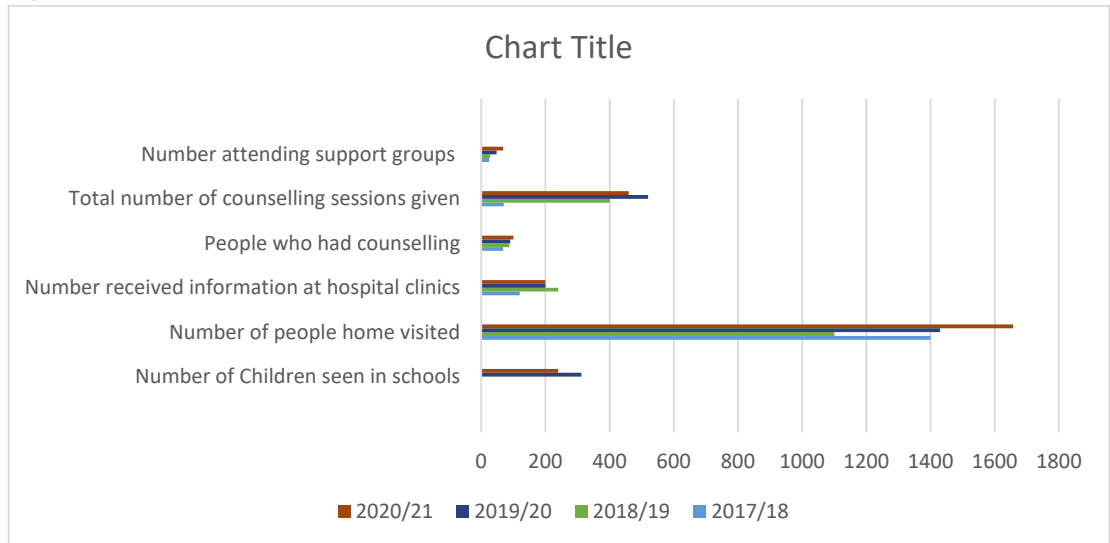
Shawbrook Bank Ltd,
Lutea House, Warley Hill
Brentwood CM13 3BE

Clydesdale & Yorkshire Bank
30 St Vincent Place, Glasgow, G1 2EU

Nationwide Building Society,
Pipers Way, Swindon SN38 1NW.

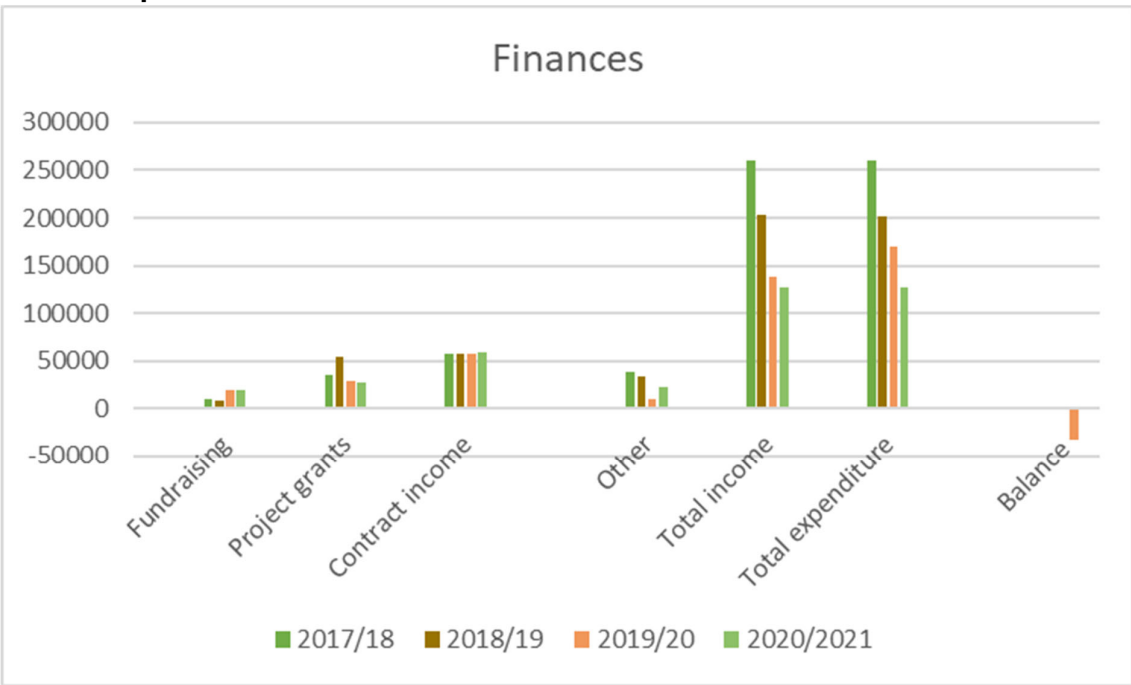
2. Herts Vision Loss Performance at a glance

Operational Performance



NB: Whilst all our services continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to make adaptations to ensure we were following the Governments Guidance. As a result, some services were delivered differently, for example via online platforms or by telephone.

Financial performance



1. Welcome and Introduction from the Chair, Alex Hickinbotham



Well, what an eventful year for everyone. No-one would have expected the Covid 19 pandemic to have such an effect on all our lives or for requiring the continuation of the restrictions for so long. It has been a steep learning curve for both the charity and users.

The additional challenges faced by the Charity this last year have been fourfold, 1) The Pandemic and its financial effect, 2) How to adapt provision and sustain support for our current and new service users with the restrictions placed on all organisations. 3) Relocating our premises in October and 4) Retendering of the Hertfordshire County Council Service contract and would we be able to win the new contract. All of which HVL achieved despite the challenges.

I am so proud of our CEO, staff and volunteers. As well as coping with the pandemic restrictions in their private lives, they were willing and able to flex their working methods of providing services and continue with alternative support for our service users over this time. Many of the new techniques or methods we have had to utilise will remain as an alternative way of support, in addition to seeking a return to more usual ways.

We sought funding support, as available, even though traditional fundraising methods were limited or unavailable. Fortunately, we were successful with Government and other local Covid orientated funding opportunities which supported our other reduced income. This culminated in HVL faring better than many charities, several of whom have ceased, or severely reduced, functioning. HVL succeeded in operating within its income and making a small surplus for the financial year 2020-2021.

Amongst the pandemic changes, we have also moved our HQ and premises from the Woodside Centre to the Weltech Centre a short distance away from the previous Woodside Centre in Welwyn Garden City. Thanks to all the staff who had to wade through, and pack, our goods and chattels and arrange the move at the end of October 2020. As we had to downsize a considerable amount it was a huge task. But those of us who have done a similar sort through at home, will understand the process and how hard it can be. After many years at Woodside, it was a wrench to move but the Weltech Centre does very well for our current needs and currently reduced face to face encounters. Though it is too small for our long-term space requirement. Having reviewed our future premises needs, in light of the adaptations we have had to make this last year and the expected changes going forward, we have developed a plan and are now seeking our new longer-term home.

We are delighted to have been awarded the new Hertfordshire County Council Sensory services support contract from April 2021 which has stabilised part of our income stream. It has also been innovative in that we are the main provider for Sight and Hearing support to the residents in Hertfordshire and have subcontracted the hearing element to Hertfordshire Hearing Advice Service (HHAS), who was the previous hearing support provider across Hertfordshire. Governance has been high on our minds this year and we sought additional Trustees to this end. I am delighted to confirm we have recruited 4 excellent new

Trustees since last summer: Alison Macdougall, in the summer of 2020 and Jennie Beebe in November, and both were appointed to the board at our November 2020 AGM. We have then been successful in recruiting two more trustees who were co-opted to the Board in the Spring of 2021, Raj Visram and David Ottolanguì. Hence, we have widened our Trustee skills and governance base in the last financial year, with health, marketing, IT, risk management, volunteering and engineering knowledge. We will be formally appointing Raj and David at our November 2021 AGM meeting.

This year we say goodbye to Mr Ardeshir Laloui who has admirably officially undertaken the Annual review of the HVL accounts for many years. Mr Laloui is a qualified accountant, being a Fellow of the Association of International Accountants (FAIA) and is a former European Finance Director of McCann Erickson Advertising Agency. We record our sincere thanks to his expertise on our behalf over the years and wish him well for the future. We welcome Tara Petri as our new Independent Examiner who has undertaken the HVL 2020-21 accounts review.

As 2020-21 has been such an extraordinary year coping with the Covid 19 lockdown, discovering new opportunities and ways to function, and adhering to government restrictions. HVL has remained flexible and adaptable and, through the good offices and governance of the Trustee Board and CEO, have remained solvent as shown in the 2020-2021 annual accounts. The work done during the year has enabled us to go into the 2021-22 financial year on a positive basis. We have a new, though temporary, HQ, new Hertfordshire County Council contract and new opportunities to pursue. Plenty to be getting on with.

Risk management within the Charity is high priority for the Board and risks are reviewed regularly. The current major financial and other top risks for the charity are - Changing in funding streams from other bodies, future of contracts, fundraising from general public, fluctuations in investment income and unforeseen rise in demand for services, succession management or staff shortfalls and our premises.

As expected, the Charity's Trustees continue to give consideration to all the major risks to which HVL is exposed and have satisfied themselves that systems and procedures are in place to manage those risks which fall into Governance; Operations; Finance; Environment/external factors and Legal compliance. Managed via our Finance and Governance Sub Committee there is quarterly overview of the charity's risks. Each of which we mitigate by addressing different ways in delivering services. We review core activities and their funding, use flexible and reduced staffing to accommodate their own and service users' needs during the pandemic and reduction of activity, for example - phone calls to users rather than travel to them, or on-line support groups and use of business contingency plans. All in all, an innovative time for HVL.

In conclusion I commend this Annual Report to our members and look forward to another productive year working with such a positive group of staff and volunteers.

Alex Hickinbotham, Chair of the Board / Trustee

5. Overview from the Chief Executive, Joanna Carter



I am pleased to present the annual report and accounts for Herts Vision Loss for 2020/21. We have had yet another eventful, busy, and rewarding year with many things to highlight despite, like many in social care facing the most unprecedented challenges of modern times.

Like you, we were one day providing services to many across Hertfordshire in the way that we had been doing for some years to be thrown into turmoil as the Global Pandemic took hold.

I was keen to write this report with little mention of the Pandemic, however it is impossible not to recognise just what a huge impact it has had on all of us. It has led to services being changed in ways that we could never have imagined and at a speed that we have worked hard to keep up to. I am pleased to say that we have not stopped supporting those who have a sight loss and in fact we have supported in new ways. We are proud of the way we have delivered services to flex capacity and need and in how fast we have been able to transform our online services. I must mention at the onset, that my dedicated team of Trustees, Staff and Volunteers have adapted brilliantly, and our Service Users have, overall, coped very well with such sudden and dramatic changes. I must thank all of them for their flexible approach, dedication, and resilience.

Today more than 2 million people are living with sight loss in the UK and by 2050 this is likely to be over 4 million. We have never lost this from our sight, which is why we have continued to develop and deliver services with the support from our donors.

We have been fortunate to receive grants from Morrisons, BBC Children in Need, The Woodroffe Benton Foundation, NHS Charities together and many local county counsellors which has really supported our position and helped us to operate in a time where fundraising has been next to impossible.

There are 25,000 visually impaired children under 16 in the UK and we have continued to identify young people who require our support. Whilst we have not been able to hold our clubs in person, we have still been able to offer counselling services, telephone befriending and support. BBC Children in need have been instrumental in helping us with funding to provide dedicated Vision Loss support and counselling and we hope to very soon resume our trips and clubs.

Everyday 250 people start to lose their sight and 1 in 5 will live with sight loss in their lifetime. Around 350,000 people are registered blind or partially sighted in the UK.

We know that people with a sight loss suffer with their wellbeing, with more than 4 in 10 people attending a low vision clinic suffering from clinical depression and isolation. Whilst our team have been unable to support in person at the Low

Vision Clinics, we have still been receiving referrals and supporting people emotionally whilst they wait for their deferred appointments. I am sure that this figure will rise dramatically as we emerge from the pandemic and after long periods of shielding and isolation for many. Many people have expressed a lack of emotional support explaining that before they were introduced to us that few people understood the needs and support required by those who are losing sight. As the Hospitals and GPs made way to treat the most sick and vulnerable, many people awaiting routine appointments were cancelled leading to distress and uncertainty. We have been there to offer support and guidance. Most of our service users rely on some form of support, for example making meals, paperwork, picking out the right clothes or with travel and transport. We have supported with shopping and accessing online services to help them with their day-to-day life. Many have financial struggles and have had to cope with additional costs and expenditure from job loss, not being able to gain employment to additional equipment needs or support costs. We have also been able to support people financially.

You will note from the report that our Headquarters have changed. In October 2020, we were finally evicted from The Woodside Centre after plans were approved for the redevelopment of the site. This has led to a temporary move the Weltech Business Centre whilst we seek out our “forever home”. We are keen to move to a dedicated space where we can provide a resource and education centre, counselling suites and a social space for our service users to come to. We can’t wait for the interactive buzz again and this move is an exciting chapter for Herts Vision Loss.

In the last report we talked about the Hertfordshire County Council contract being retendered in the light of a new Sensory Services Strategy. I am very pleased to say that we successfully bid and were awarded the contract which sees us delivering a comprehensive service to adults with a sensory impairment. We have subcontracted Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service to deliver service to the deaf community and we look forward to this partnership going from strength to strength.

As well as our great volunteers, I am fortunate to be supported by a dedicated team who are always seeking out innovative ways of delivering good quality services. All our team play critical roles in delivering the charities work and I will take this opportunity to appreciate all our team members.

We receive such positive feedback about the work we do from service users and their families and friends as well as from other partners and we have continued to receive positive feedback through these difficult times. In particular our home visiting service has been described as “a life saver, the highlight of the week, something that is very much looked forward to”. Hearing this feedback really does help us to drive things forwards. We always work in line with our strategic objective and incorporate the UK vision strategic direction into our work. This ensures that:

- Everyone knows how to look after their eyes and their sight.
- Everyone with an eye condition receives timely treatment and, if permanent sight loss occurs, there are early and appropriate services and support.
- A society where people with sight loss can fully participate.

I am really pleased to show you on page 5, our performance at a glance. You can see that we are reaching more people year on year at less cost.

We continue to move from strength to strength, however, we couldn't do any of this work without the support from the local community as well as our dedicated team of staff, volunteers and trustees, who strive to deliver the highest quality of service.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Keith Harding who has been a valued Trustee and Company Secretary and Ardeshir Laloui for undertaking the review of accounts for a number of years. We wish them both well in their retirement.

We welcome Tara Petri who has kindly examined our accounts this year.

Thank you!

Joanna Carter (CEO)

6. Meet the Board

John Warner Smith (Chairman until June 2020) is a retired GP with over 30 years' experience. During his time working in a Stevenage practice he had particular responsibility for purchasing or commissioning healthcare for patients, beginning with GP Fundholding and later working with CCGs, PCTs and Locality Groups. He kept the accounts for the practice for 20 years, being also responsible for maximising (and then keeping to) healthcare budgets.

Alex Hickinbotham (Vice Chair and Chairman from June 2020) is a retired Senior Manager in the Health Service having qualified as a nurse and midwife. She has over 35 years NHS experience. She has successfully run her own business, specialising in service transformation and is now a trustee of two charities, including HVL. She also works with the St Albans and Harpenden Patients Group, Herts Valleys NHS Commissioning Group and West Hertfordshire Hospitals Trust as a patients' representative and Parish Council on planning issues.

John Page * (Vice Chair from June 2020) is a degree-qualified electrical engineer and has spent 40 years working in the defence industry, the last 33 of those being at British Aerospace/MBDA in Stevenage, before retiring in 2013. During his time at work, he managed multi-site teams and budgets as well as performing technical design roles. Shortly after retiring, John joined the charity as a Volunteer to produce and maintain their new website, before moving on to provide IT support for service users and one-to-one training in the use of talking software. John has Macular Degeneration and coping with this gives him a good understanding of the day-to-day problems people with sight impairment have and the role the Charity has to play in supporting them.

Richard Seaman has global experience of working in both the commercial and not for profit sectors. From 2002 to 2011 he was the Executive Director of Abbeyfield International, the charity which provides affordable sheltered housing and extra care homes for the elderly around the world. Prior to this, Richard had a 30-year career in the IT company IBM, where he worked in marketing, finance and sales operations for the firm in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Birmingham.

Keith Harding is an ex-Corporate Bank Manager and Business Consultant who has been involved at Board level in Charities for the last 20 years. Keith retired in November 2021 and we are very grateful for all he has done from the charity since he was appointed to the board in 2007.

Paul Taylor is a retired finance director and with several years' experience in working with large organisations to support financial turnaround. Paul had given support with the financial operations over the last few years.

Alison Macdougall is a qualified Orthoptist working part time for Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust eye services in St Albans and Hemel Hempstead. She is also a Herts Vision Loss hospital volunteer. She was an Orthoptist with East and North Herts NHS Trust hospitals for 12 years. Before that she worked in North London, Peterborough and Glasgow. Alison moved from Lincoln with her family in 1999 to Hertfordshire. She has an interest in low vision and learning disabilities. Her previous roles have been as an Intervenor with the charity Sense and at Lakeside SLD School in Welwyn Garden City where she supported a student with sight and hearing impairment. While living in Lincoln she worked in Social Services as a Social work Assistant for those with Visual Impairment and oversaw a local 'Blind' Club.

Jennie Beebe has been working in marketing for 15 years, with experience in a variety of commercial environments, working as Chief Marketing Officer in her current role. Specialisms include marketing strategy, leadership, business planning and e-commerce. Jennie has a bachelor's degree in English Literature, a master's degree in Creative Industries Management and recently qualified in Mental Health First Aid.

Raj Visram initially started his career in software consultancy after studying Physics. He has a successful history of Project management consultancy service for a variety of organisations, including not for profit, international business and commercial businesses. Raj has supported many voluntary organisations and was the previous Chairman of St Albans Good Neighbour Scheme, where he has volunteered for over 10 years. Raj is active in local politics and in the St Albans community. Most interestingly he is Regional Head of the French Wine Society in the UK!

David Ottolangui has over 40 years' experience in the pharmaceutical industry and has lived in Hertfordshire for over 30 years. He is married with two grown-up children and currently is managing director of his own pharmaceutical consulting business. David has previously held a position as a school governor at Cheshunt and more recently has been a volunteer during the Covid pandemic doing a range of roles from packing food parcels to helping out at Covid vaccination centres. He hopes to make a valuable contribution to HVL using his breadth of experience in both the business and commercial world. In addition to his volunteer work in his spare time David enjoys cycling, football, golf and building Lego!

Trustees' Areas of Responsibility

The Trustee Board members determine the general policy and ensure the governance of the Company. The day-to-day management of the Company is delegated to the Chief Executive

Organisation, Committees and Working Groups

The Charity has a Board of Directors that met every month during the pandemic but has now returned to meeting every quarter. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction, policies and review and monitoring of performance. The following sub-committees of the Board were in place during the year:

- Finance and Governance Committee
- Service Committee
- Fundraising and Marketing Committee

The chair of each committee presents reports and makes recommendations for action to the Board. The Chief Executive presents her report to the Committees and to Board.

Recruitment and Appointment of Directors

The Trustees are the Directors of the Company for the purposes of the Companies Act, and Charity Trustees for the purpose of the Charities Act. The directors seek to ensure that all proposed directors enhance the existing, committed, and diverse body of directors and are able to provide the necessary skills, experience and commitment to the Charity's development before being approved and elected.

Proposals for directorship are made after advertising or personal recommendation. Each prospective candidate is interviewed by two Board members and the CEO. New directors are invited to attend The Charity's Board meetings at least once as a non-voting observer. This forms part of the Board co-option process.

All directors and proposed directors are issued with a copy of "The Essential Trustee", produced by the Charity Commission, copies of the Governing Document and a copy of the latest Annual Report and Accounts to enhance their understanding of their statutory responsibilities.

Each director is familiar with the work of the Charity and takes an active interest in the services and activities. Once elected to the Board, a director serves a term of three years, after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

Committees and Membership

Finance and Governance Committee

Paul Taylor	Chair
Keith Harding	Trustee (retired Nov 2021)
Alex Hickinbotham	Trustee
John Warner-Smith	Trustee
Raj Visram	Trustee
In Attendance	Chief Executive

Services Committee

Alex Hickinbotham	Chair
John Page *	Trustee
John Warner-Smith	Trustee
Alison Macdougall	Trustee
David Ottolanguì	Trustee
Raj Visram	Trustee
Leigh Davies	Sensory Services Rehabilitation Officer
In attendance	Chief Executive

Fundraising and Marketing Committee

Richard Seaman	Chair
John Page *	Trustee
Jennie Beebe	Trustee
David Ottolanguì	Trustee
Sandra Page	Volunteer
Gill Richardson	Volunteer
In attendance	Chief Executive

*Indicates visually impaired person.

7. Meet the Team

The Chief Executive is supported by a small team of permanent staff covering finance, administration and fundraising, together with a field-based team who deliver the front-line services, who are in turn supported by dedicated volunteers without whom the Charity would not function so successfully. The directors would like to thank the team, staff and volunteers, for their commitment and hard work.

The team consists of:

Joanna Carter (CEO) – joanna.carter@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Sophie Chapps (Vision Loss Advisor) – Sophie.chapps@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Sue Firth (Volunteer Coordinator) – volunteering@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Debra Lavington (Office Administrator) – office@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Monica Ansbro (Finance Officer) – monica.ansbro@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Alma Henderson (Counsellor) – alma.henderson@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

Patsy Slew (Office administrator) – appointed June 2021

Vanessa Macdonald (Vision Loss Advisor)

Vanessa Browell (Counsellor) – retired in September 2021

Sophia Ramsden (Vision Loss Advisor) left in April 2021

8. Governance

Our Mission

‘Supporting and empowering the people in Hertfordshire with a visual impairment’.

Our Vision

- The people of Hertfordshire know how to look after their eyes and their sight.
- Everyone with an eye condition receives timely treatment and, if permanent sight loss occurs, there are early and appropriate services and support.
- A society where people with sight loss can fully participate.

Between 2015-2021, HVL's strategy has been one of **Growth** and **Outcome**. We will reach and support thousands more blind and partially sighted people who most need our help. We will work to ensure that people who are experiencing loss of sight receive the support that they need to rebuild their lives. We aim to make sure that blind and partially sighted people get advice, support and access to services to make the most of their lives. We will work to change our local community so that it fully includes blind and partially sighted people as equal citizens and consumers. We will continue to monitor the prevalence of sight loss and ensure that our accessible services meet the demands across Hertfordshire.

Our Values:

Our values describe our ethos. They underpin our behaviour and help us to judge our actions. They are:

S ustainability	We use all resources effectively and efficiently
I nclusive	We include and value people with diverse experience, abilities and backgrounds.
G iving	We give our help and support to those who need it in a non-judgemental way, ensuring that blind and visually impaired people are in the heart of all that we do
H earth.	We promote good health and wellbeing amongst our service users, volunteers and staff alike.
T ransparent.	We are open and honest in all that we do.

“Visually impaired people are at the heart of all we do”

9. Principal Activities

Counselling



Our trained counsellors continue to operate services for our blind and visually impaired community and their families and carers. The counselling service has been very well received and has had very positive feedback. However, it is becoming more and more challenging to fund this service and we are actively looking for opportunities to support with funding. The online counselling service has proved very popular and the model continues for those with transport difficulties

Home Visiting and Befriending

We continue to provide home visits and befriend service users to reduce social isolation and loneliness. During the year we have had a times to flex our services and provide telephone and online befriending schemes as required, particularly for those who are clinically vulnerable.

Volunteering

We have 127 active volunteers on our database. We do continue to advertise volunteering opportunities and provide a range of things that people can support with. Many volunteers have been able to support our telephone befriending services and will keep this going as we emerge from the pandemic as it has become a very valued service.

Hospital Information Services

These continue at the acute hospital Trusts; however, these have been suspended since March as a result of the pandemic. We have now restarted these. Our representatives in the hospital are very well received and support the acute trust with training and information services. The low vision clinics lead to many people being sign-posted to our services as well as to the services of others. There is no dedicated ECLO service in Hertfordshire, which is something that would really benefit the service and offer a dedicated pathway for HVL and service users.

Sight Information Points (SIPs)

We have undertaken a number of events online and hope to soon restart our SIPs in the communities, social care settings and schools.

We provide a range of other services and also deliver time specific projects. Our website provides details. To enable the delivery of the key projects we rely heavily on external funding. We have received funding of just over £58K from the local authorities, however the rest of the running costs are provided through charitable donations and fundraising. We are fortunate to have been very well supported over the last few years and we are working hard to ensure that the support continues.

The Charity continues to work in partnership with our colleagues from Sensory Services and Ophthalmology Departments in hospitals across the county, together with voluntary organisations both local and national.

10. Our Performance

Thanks to a fabulous team effort by staff, volunteers and trustees and' with the support from our Patron, together with the support of Hertfordshire County Council and many funders, our achievements include:

- Tendering and being successful in the bid to deliver the provision of sensory services in Hertfordshire.

- Growth of the counselling service.
- Delivering an excellent service to our service users, their family members and carers.
- The development of new initiatives and expansion of the current services.
- Implementing new online events and clubs
- Providing transport and travel on our dedicated minibus.
- Well-being courses and mental health toolkits
- Providing work placements for university students
- Immense flexibility to deliver services during Covid-19 pandemic.

We measure performance of our key service areas – Home Visiting & Befriending, Hospital Information and Equipment & Information Outreach – through both output and outcome measurements, the latter of which were agreed with our Commissioning Manager at Hertfordshire County Council. All our outcome measures have been achieved in 2020/2021.

Home Visiting and Befriending Service

The Home Visiting and Befriending Service helps to meet the needs of blind and visually impaired people in our community, the vast majority (75%) of whom are elderly, in retaining their independent living for as long as possible in their own home, help reduce loneliness and social isolation, whilst providing assistance with their daily living needs, in order to improve their quality of life. Our services are provided in line with the Care Act. We also provide, where applicable, a well-earned break for family members and carers from their caring responsibilities. This key community service has been delivered by HVL since the 1920's. The service is managed by 3 VLAs and is supported by more than 100 volunteers. There are two strands for this part of the contract. The outreach support workers will contact people in their home, make assessments of their needs and source further support as required. When considered beneficial to service users the outreach support workers will match them with volunteers to reduce isolation.

The Home Visiting Service can quite often be the only contact and lifeline that some people have. The visits allow relationships to build, allow us to signpost service users to other organisations and ultimately serve to reduce hospital admissions and improve quality of life.

Hospital Information Service

The Hospital Information Service delivered by our staff and volunteers, supports the Ophthalmology Departments by adding capacity and advice regarding services that the charity can offer. We aim to help visually impaired people during low vision and general eye clinics, providing them with support during the difficult diagnosis period and reduce the workload for NHS paid staff. We also aim to support their pathway and make it as seamless as possible in the absence of ECLO support.

The contracted provision of services with the Hertfordshire County Council is as follows:

- Advice and information about sight loss, registration, signposting and/or referral to other services, support services and rehabilitation after sight loss at six county hospitals – QEII, Lister, St Albans, Hertford, Watford and Hemel Hempstead.
- Follow up support service for patients at low vision clinics, including information about access to low vision aids and equipment.
- Support and information provided to carers and/or family members regarding help and support offered by the Charity and other agencies.
- Enable patients to discuss their diagnosis, its non-medical implications and respond to any emotional and social consequences.

We measure the success of this service by patient feedback as well as the amount of people we come into contact with. In 2020/21 we saw just under 200 people in the hospital location. Many of these people go on to become regular users of the service and others may just need short term support.

Equipment and Information Outreach

This service enables relevant information, advice and guidance about sight loss and relevant services to be disseminated to blind and visually impaired people, family members and carers via sight information points, events, exhibitions and at our resource centres in Welwyn Garden City and Hemel Hempstead.

The contracted provision of services with the Hertfordshire County Council is as follows:

- Advice and information about sight loss, available support, services, equipment, gadgets and technology.
- Support, advice and information provided to carers and/or family members regarding help and support offered by the Charity and other agencies (for example, Sensory Services).
- Display and demonstration of low vision aids, gadgets, equipment and technology via personalised 'one to one' appointments at our centre in Welwyn Garden City or at one of our community sight information points.

Overall Summary of Services

Finally, 100% of our service users who were asked, felt that the Charity had made a positive difference to their lives. In our satisfaction survey, service users were very positive about their contacts with our team and the use of our resources. We have delivered against our contracts and have demonstrated growth as we reach out to more service users. We are really pleased with our performance this year.

The Schools Programme

The schools programme is in its seventh year and has received very positive feedback. We have been invited back to many schools. Our dedicated team provides education and raises awareness. Reports have told us that we have helped reduce stigmas and reduced bullying in some areas. We plan to resume this service in March 2022, however, will be offering on line services ahead of this.

Social Media / enhancing our profile

We plan to fully develop and enhance our website and social media presence in 2021/22



LIKE us on Facebook



FOLLOW US on Twitter @hertsvisionloss

Support Groups

Support groups take place across the county. We now have established groups in Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage, Watford, Hemel Hempstead, St Albans and Waltham Cross. There are also many blind clubs running too. The groups have focussed on learning practical skills as well as having activities planned to reduce social isolation. There have been canal trips, cooking with confidence courses, theatre, tennis and seaside trips to name a few. We continue to facilitate groups encouraging independence and growth. Junior Sight life groups support children and their families.

The junior groups were established following a generous donation from Morrisons at Welwyn Garden City and now can continue as a result of a three-year grant received from BBC Children in Need.

Support groups are always expanding, with more people than ever benefitting

The service has grown year on year and the feedback we get is excellent. It is great to see members move on from the group as they gain their independence and confidence.

Corporate Objectives

During the year, the Board monitored the performance of the Charity against the objectives set out below:

- To at least break even and aim to grow income each financial year.
- To raise our public profile by increasing media coverage, networking activities and promotional material
- To achieve and maintain effective quality assurance systems
- To deliver and broaden services to meet emergent and current contractual obligations
- To retain, train and support staff and volunteers to ensure excellent services are delivered
- To maintain and develop appropriate physical resources to enable services to be delivered and enhanced

Performance and Results

The Board of Directors' Annual Report for the year to 31st March 2021 will report links between the Charity's Governing Document and the Statement of Financial Activity. This will be achieved by reporting the aim of the charity, our corporate strategies and how our principal activities have been achieved.

Quality Assurance

The Charity was awarded the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) quality assurance kite mark (Level 1), by the Charities Evaluation Services in January 2018. HVL will be looking at other accreditors in 2022.

Financial Summary

The Charity generated a surplus of £300 in the year ending 31st March 2021.

The Statement of Financial Activities (see pages 27 to 33) is in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 with all gains and losses recognised in the year.

Risk Management

The Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the Charity's risk management activities. Detailed consideration of risk is delegated to the Finance and Governance Committee, who review this matter and report thereon to the

Board. The Charity has an up-to-date risk register that is reviewed on a monthly basis. Operational risks are scrutinised by the Services Committee.

Serious Incidents

No serious incidents were reported in 2020/2021.

One near miss was reported. This event could have potentially caused harm to vulnerable people, but in the event, did not. The event was investigated, and appropriate learning put in place

Complaints

No complaints have been received.

Reserves Statement

The Charity's reserves policy focuses on the 'net current assets', which amount to £87,237 as at 31st March 2021. This equates to more than three months' operating costs together with costs of any statutory payments to staff should normal funding sources be absent.

Payments

The Directors acknowledge the importance of maintaining goodwill by meeting financial obligations to staff, volunteers, and suppliers, in a timely manner. The Charity seeks to pay its bills within 30 days of receipt

Financial Scrutiny

The Finance and Governance Committee takes the lead in supervising the Charity's financial affairs and the maintenance of proper financial records and procedures in order to ensure the charity's financial viability. The Committee meets several times during the year to review, monitor, discuss and make recommendations on, amongst other matters, the management accounts, the budget for the next financial year and the Annual Report and Accounts respectively.

Directors' Interest in the Shares of the Company

The Company is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital; therefore, the directors have no interest other than the extent of the limited guarantee, as a Member, as denoted in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

11. Looking to the Future

It is a very difficult time to try to predict what the next 12 months will look like. There will be many challenges and opportunities including:

- The development of some new services to complement our existing rich portfolio
- Attracting and increasing the number of people accessing the services
- Further partnership working with other organisations to enhance our portfolio.
- Finding suitable premises
- Moving premises
- Winning contracts to ensure income generation
- Reaching out to our community to ensure that we are delivering the services that they want
- Holding engagement events
- Applying for the Queens award for volunteers
- Holding fun and well attended meetings/groups
- Increase staff and skills
- Full development of the website
- Increasing profile on social media
- Identifying Board support links, e.g. informal legal advice
- Recruiting new patrons
- Ensuring financial stability
- Increasing the profile of the charity
- Fundraising events

Plus much more!

12. Independent Examiner

The Independent Examiner (IE) is "an independent person who is reasonably believed by the Charity's Trustees to have the requisite ability and practical experience to carry out a competent examination of the accounts" (Charities Act 1993 s 43 (3) (a)).

Therefore, an IE does not need to be a qualified accountant. A person "qualified by experience" - a retired person with financial skills for example - could be considered by the trustees. The IE should always be independent and should have no connection with the organisation, which might inhibit the impartial examination, such as a personal or business connection to a trustee or employee.

The Board invited Mrs Tara Petri to independently examine the Charity's accounts.

Mrs Petri is a qualified accountant, being a Fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants as well as Finance Director of AA Woods Ltd. She has over 20 years' experience.

A resolution proposing the appointment of Mrs Petri as Independent Examiner of the Company will be put to the forthcoming Annual General Meeting. We record our sincere thanks to her for her expertise on our behalf during the reported year.

13. Independent Examiner's Report

To the Members on the un-audited accounts of Herts Vision Loss, I report on the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021, which are set out in the section headed Financial Reports on pages 27 to 33.

Respective Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of the Company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 (2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the Charity is not subject to audit under Company Law and is eligible for an Independent Examination, it is my responsibility to:


1. Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
2. To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act and 3.
3. To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Opinion of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Company Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities, have not been met, or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Date: 7/1/22.

Mrs Tara Petri, Independent Examiner

14. Audit Exemption Statement

For the year ending 31st March 2021 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' Responsibilities Companies Act 2006

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies, subject to the small companies' regime

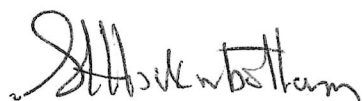
15. Financial Reports

Statement of Financial Activities

		Year ended 31 st March 2021			Year ended 31 st March 2020
	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	£
Income					
Donations & Legacies	1	13,361	-	13,361	17,772
Charitable Activities	2	3,354	103,923	107,277	115,525
Investments	3	6,559	-	6,559	4,993
Total Income		23,274	103,923	127,197	138,290
Expenditure					
Raising Funds		226	-	226	3,337
Charitable activities	4	22,748	103,923	126,671	167,114
Total Expenditure		22,974	103,923	126,897	170,451
Gross Income/Expenditure		300		300	(32,161)
Release of Designated Funds					30,000
Net Income / Expenditure		300		300	(2,161)
Reconciliation of Funds					
General Reserve			-		
Funds brought forward		94,006	-	94,006	96,167
Net movement in funds in year		300		300	(32,161)
Release of designated funds			-		30,000
Transfer to Designated Reserve		-	-	-	-
		94,306	-	94,306	94,006
Designated Reserve for Premises		659,677	-	659,677	689,677
Funds Release to general reserve					(30,000)
		659,677		659,677	659,677
Total funds carried forward		753,983	-	753,983	753,683

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2021

		As at 31 st March 2021 £	As at 31 st March 2020 £
Fixed Assets & Investments			
Land & Buildings		-	-
Motor Vehicles	5	3,453	7,219
Furniture & Equipment		3,616	3,521
Designated Funds for Premises	6	659,677	659,677
Total Fixed Assets & Investments		666,746	670,417
Current Assets			
Debtors & Prepayments	7	11,539	3,956
Short Term Deposit	8	135,837	77,954
Cash at Bank & In Hand	9	9,839	45,297
Total Current Assets		157,215	127,207
Current Liabilities			
Creditors		6,869	1,273
Accruals		21,325	24,796
Grants relating to a future period		40,425	15,813
Payroll Liabilities		1,361	2,059
Total Current Liabilities		69,980	43,941
Net Current Assets		87,237	83,266
Total Assets less Liabilities		753,983	753,683
The Funds of the Charity			
General Reserve		94,306	94,006
Designated Reserve for Premises		659,677	659,677
Total Charity Funds		753,983	753,683



Alex Hickinbotham
Chair of Trustees

30th October 2021



Paul Taylor
Secretary

Audit Exemption Statement

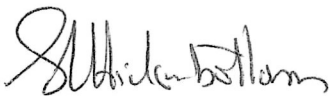
For the year ending 31st March 2021, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts

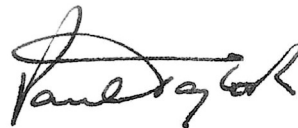
These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies, subject to the small companies' regime

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees



Alex Hickinbotham
Chair of Trustees

30th October 2021



Paul Taylor
Secretary

Notes to the Accounts

1. Donations & Legacies

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Donations	8,361	9,889
Legacies	2,633	7,883
	-	
	13,361	17,772

2. Income from Charitable Activities

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
HCC Contract	58,655	58,655
Project Grants	37,168	27,732
Fundraising	770	18,873
Training	700	-
Advocacy Project	-	-
Lettings	-	-
Trading income	344	1,706
Counselling	1,540	3,460
Locality Grants	8,100	2,870
Activities	-	393
Minibus Hire	-	1,648
Newsletter Advertising	-	-
Access to Work	-	-
Apprenticeship Scheme	-	-
Other Income	-	188
	107,277	115,525

3. Investments

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Interest Received	6,559	4,993

4. Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	31 st March 2021 Total £	31 st March 2020 Total £
Staff Costs Note 4a	96,469	129,998
Office Expenses	6,739	7,840
Property Costs	5,438	5,988
Fees & Insurance	6,959	6,835
Newsletter	1,537	3,665
Activities	272	4,009
Student Placements	0	0
Volunteer Costs	390	1,043
Minibus Hire	2,731	2,229
Training	60	0
Other	1,051-	183
Depreciation	5,026	5,324
	126,671	167,114

4a. Staff Costs

	31 st March 2021 Total £	31 st March 2020 Total £
Staff Salaries	95,041	120,873
National Insurance	983	4,551
Pension	236	251
Travel & Subsistence	209	4,323
	96,469	129,998

Number FTE Employees	3.25	4.9
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5. Fixed Assets*

	Freehold Property £	Motor Vehicles £	Furniture & Equipment £	Total £
Cost				
Brought Forward	-	15,065	77,455	92,250
Additions	-	-	1,354	1,354
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Carried Forward	-	15,065	78,809	93,874
Depreciation				
Brought Forward	-	7,846	73,934	81,780
Charge for Year	-	3,766	1,258	5,024
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Carried Forward	-	11,612	75,192	86,804
Net Book Value at 31st March 2021	-	3,453	3616	7,069
Net Book Value at 31 st March 2020	-	7,219	3521	10,740

6. Designated Funds for Premises

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Designated Fund for Premises	659,677	659,677

7. Debtors & Prepayments

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Prepayments	3,282	3,396
Gift Aid income due	735	540
Deposits Paid	1,894	-
Trade Debtors	5,628	20
	11,539	3,956

8. Short Term Deposits

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Shawbrook 100-day Notice	31,531	31,204
Santander Instant Reserve	104,306	46,750
Undeposited Funds	0	0
	135,837	77,954

9. Cash at Bank & in hand

	31st March 2021 Total £	31st March 2020 Total £
Cash	11	31
Santander Business Account	9,828	45,266
	9,839	45,297

Accounting Policies

Basis of Accounting

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of certain assets and in accordance with the statement of recommended Practice: Accounting for Charities.

Income

Grants, donations and legacies are taken to the statement of financial activities when there is a reasonable assurance of receipt. Grants relating to a future period are deferred.

Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

Tangible assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at the following rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Furniture	25% Straight Line
Computers & Equipment	25% Straight Line
Motor Vehicles	25% Straight Line

Taxation

The company is a registered charity and is exempt from tax on its income and gains applied to charitable purpose. The company is not registered for VAT.

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