

Walthew House News

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Welcome to the latest issue of Walthew House News. Our cover photo shows Jacky and Lynn, who are learning Braille with Debbie Carmichael (centre), one of the rehabilitation officers from Stockport Council. Debbie has been running a weekly beginners session throughout the summer.



Most of our social activities take a break over the summer, but we



have one open session on a Monday, which provides a great opportunity for people who usually come to Walthew House on different days to meet up. The photos, above and left, show group members doing crafts and chatting, and Edith who brought cake to celebrate her birthday.

Walthew House News

Local Young People Support Walthew House

This summer, as in previous years, Walthew House has been working with The Challenge Network, an organisation that supports young people on the National Citizen Service programme. Over July and August four groups of teenagers visited to support the charity, with one group running a drama session for our Monday craft and Tuesday luncheon groups. A different group created videos about the work of the charity which

are being used to advertise services to people across Stockport. The other two groups organised events at Walthew House and ran street stalls in Stockport town centre. These events included a family fun day at the end of July that included a number of sensory activities. The group involved with this event raised more than £300 for Walthew House. The photo (below) shows Challenge and Walthew members sitting in a circle playing a 'Get to know you' game.



Counselling Service Expansion

Walthew House has provided a free specialist sight loss counselling service since 2012. The cost of the service is met by grants from charitable organisations, and for the past two and a half years has been supported by the CRH Charitable Trust. Over the past few weeks our two counsellors, Lynda Bradshaw and Chris Taylor, have been reviewing the service and chatting to some of our previous clients.

They discovered that most people find out about the counselling service through either Manchester Royal Eye Hospital or Stepping Hill Hospital, but over the years we have been recommended by other charities, including Guide Dogs and the Macular Society, and by the Sensory Service at Stockport Council. Overwhelmingly, people said they chose the service

because it offered specialist support – the opportunity to talk to someone who really understands the issues of sight loss, and because the service was local and well recommended. Most people have continued to feel well following the support they received, but the review has also given us the chance to remind people that we're here if they need extra help. It also provided the opportunity to let people know that the service, which originally offered face to face support, now also offers telephone counselling for people who are unable to travel to Walthew House and couples counselling so that we can also support people who may be struggling with the emotional challenges of their partner's sight loss.

Accessible Information Review

Earlier in the year we supported around 60 people to contribute to the NHS England review of the Accessible Information Standard introduced in 2016. The standard defines the way the NHS and statutory services should meet the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents, where those needs relate to a disability, impairment or sensory loss. The review gave people the opportunity to have their say on whether the standard had led to improvements.

It was disappointing to see that, across the whole country, only 1,312 surveys had been completed by patients, service users, carers and parents. This may be because – ironically - people who didn't have access to a computer would have struggled to access the questionnaire!

This report is available in a number of formats including as a Word or PDF document, audio file, easy read and British Sign Language (BSL) video [from the NHS England website](http://www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo) at www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo. It is also available on request as a hard copy, including in large print and easy read, on audio CD, in braille and as a BSL DVD. To request a copy of the review report in any of these formats please email england.patientsincontrol@nhs.net, or patients / members of the public can call 0300 311 22 33.

Alternatively, you can access a copy of the report in your preferred format from the office at Walthew House.

Is Online the Answer?

Stockport Council's new Digital Inclusion project is encouraging organisations to get involved and help shape plans to get more people online. Feedback from Walthew members in the past indicates that people with sight loss struggle with inaccessible websites, and that talking software can be expensive and not always reliable, and deaf sign language users criticise many websites for their overly complex language. Walthew House is taking an active interest in the digital inclusion project and promoting the needs to people with sight or hearing loss to help ensure information and support is fully accessible. We're asking that computer courses are sign language interpreted, and offer access to computers with magnification and talking software for people with sight loss.

It would be helpful to get some feedback from Walthew members about what technology they use (if any) and the challenges people face. With more and more information and support only available online, people with sensory loss run the risk of being left behind and isolated, so this is a good opportunity to speak up and get involved for everyone's benefit. Contact Dan or Teresa in the office for more information.

Come and See us at Sight Village

This year, for the first time, we are exhibiting at Sight Village in Manchester. The event takes place on Wed 27th September at the Renaissance Manchester City Centre Hotel, Blackfriars Street, Manchester, M3 2EQ, between 9.30am and 3.30pm. Come along and say hello if you can!

What's Coming up at Walthew

We are hosting a few events at Walthew House between now and the end of the year. The first of these is our annual **Charity Auction** set to take place on the evening of Friday 6th October. A full list of the lots will be available from the end of September and auction items will be on display at Walthew House before the event if you would like to view them. In previous years lots have included hampers, signed sports memorabilia, tickets for local attractions and some beautiful pieces of art. Entry on the night is

free and you can make a pre-bid on any of the lots before the event.

On Saturday 18th November we will be holding a **Race Night** fundraiser and this will also be our volunteers' party for 2017.

Our annual Carol Service is on Sunday 10th December at 3pm, led by the Rev'd David Brewster from St Matthew's Church Edgeley. There will be mince pies and mulled wine after the service.

Please contact Dan Oliver for more information about any of these events. You can call him on 0161 480 2612, email him at funding.walthouse@ntlbusiness.com or find him in person at Walthew House.

Whoever Said Tandems Can't Climb Hills!

This summer, Brian Anthony, one of our intrepid visually impaired tandemers, completed a gruelling feat of cycling endurance, climbing, not once, but three times - in Brian's words – 'the most iconic summit featured on any Tour de France stage, Mont Ventoux'. Brian has written a brilliant piece on why he chose to take on the challenge, his training regime and how he got on, and rather than try to paraphrase it for the newsletter we're happy to send out the article in full to anyone who would like to read more, please just ask. The photo (right) shows Brian, with his sighted front rider Adam at the summit with their tandem.



A Busy Summer for the Steel Band

Our Visually Impaired Steel Band performed out in the Stockport community over the summer, with the first performance being at the annual Bramhall and Woodford Rotary Duck Race. They've also attended and performed at an event hosted by Wythenshawe Hospital and a family fun day in Offerton. The photo (right) shows the band in action.



Monkeying Around with the Youth Club

Our youth club spent a day at Knowsley Safari Park at the end of July, with a coach ride through the safari enclosures and a trip to the nearby funfair. All the children had a fantastic time seeing the animals and then playing on the attractions. They also took part in a photography competition where they were asked to capture moments of themselves with zoo animals and park staff. Thank you to Happy Days Children's Charity for funding the trip. The photo right shows some of the members peering out from a hollowed-out log!



Deaf Centre Celebrations

It's been Party Central at the Deaf Centre over the summer, with Lynn Brady celebrating her 90th birthday and Barbara and Tom Carter celebrating their 55th wedding anniversary.

The photos below show Lynn cutting her birthday cake surrounded by friends from the Deaf Centre, and Tom and Barbara cutting their anniversary cake at their party.



Pupdate

Do you remember Tanya, the first guide dog pup puppy walked by Walthew's manager Kay Kelly? Tanya joined Guide Dogs' breeding programme, and has had five litters of puppies and 43 puppies in total! Many of them have gone on to be working guide dogs, including two that have been puppy walked by Kay – both incidentally called Max – one working in Manchester and one in Blackburn. Tanya is now seven (shown right with one of her pups, Freda) and is now enjoying a well-deserved retirement with Jackie, the Guide Dogs volunteer who has looked after her since she joined the breeding programme.



Other News

RNIB/Action for Blind People Merger

The following article is from Mandy Owens at RNIB:

As you may be aware Action for Blind People fully merged with the RNIB on 1st April 2017. As of 30th August 2017; our phone systems will change to reflect this merger by way of a single gateway for customers to access our services across the UK, where anyone affected by sight loss will be able to access a Sight Loss Adviser and a range of specialist support. After 30th August,

callers will hear a brief message before being connected to the Helpline as follows:

‘Thanks for calling RNIB. If you didn’t already know, Action for Blind People merged with RNIB on 1 April 2017. We’re still delivering great services and offering advice to help you but how we do this has changed. You’ll now be put through to our Helpline who’ll talk to you about the reason for your call and how we can help. If you want to speak to someone in particular let us know, otherwise speak to the Helpline Adviser about the information or support you need and we’ll help you or help you get through to the right department.’

We still have staff based across the UK who will make and take referrals to/from local organisations. Please speak with any local RNIB staff contacts you may have for their direct dial numbers. For customers accessing our services, please provide our Helpline number: 0303 123 9999 and they will be directed accordingly.

Bumblebee from British Wireless for the Blind Fund

The following is from Sophie Wheldon at British Wireless for the Blind:

‘Bumblebee is an easy to use app specially designed to give visually impaired listeners simple, portable access to a huge range of internet audio content. Bumblebee provides access to thousands of radio stations, podcasts, talking newspapers and magazines, audio books, online content and a wealth of useful information, all from one portable device. The recipient is provided with the app on a Samsung Tablet along with the option of choosing headphones or Bluetooth speakers.

Full details are available here on our website:

<http://www.blind.org.uk/bumblebee-powered-by-british-wireless-for-the-blind-fund/>

The criteria for receiving Bumblebee on free loan is the same as our other equipment, the recipient would need to be aged over 8, registered sight impaired (blind) or severely sight impaired (partially sighted) and in receipt of a means tested benefit. They would also of course need access to the internet to be able to use the app.

If you know somebody who may be interested in receiving Bumblebee, please refer them directly to me for now. If the client is suitable, then one of our Bumblebee-trained volunteers will be able to provide them with one.'

Sophie is Regional Development Manager for the charity and can be contacted on: 07540 724063

Deaf Support

Sea Recruitment (which stands for Signing Enabling Access) is an agency that specialises in providing services for deaf and deafblind people. All staff are fluent in BSL and services range from personal care to managing finances and budgeting. Costs vary depending on the service, but start at about £14 per hour.

Contact: 07595 917403 (text), 0161 332 7732 (fax)

<http://www.searecruitment.co.uk/>

British Red Cross – Connecting Communities in Stockport

A new service is available, which people can access for up to 12 weeks, offering wide ranging support from companionship and befriending to transport and accompanying people to community groups, and help with shopping, filling in paperwork, visiting after a hospital stay and respite for carers. More information is available from Lydia Bulka on 07525 902571.

Advocacy Support for Younger People

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People provides an advice/advocacy service for you people aged 15 to 25. Help is available filling in forms for benefits like PIP (Personal Independence Payments) and Employment Support Allowance and support finding the right services – housing, leisure etc. For more information call 0161 636 7535 or email:

mday@gmcdp.com

Fire Service – Safe and Well

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service provide free 'Safe and Well' visits and can advise on a wide range of issues including health and crime prevention. Call 0800 555 815.

Our information officer Teresa Wild is able to book appointments for deaf people and the fire service will arrange an interpreter.

A Few Thank Yous

Firstly thank you to everyone who has renewed their Friends of Walthew House membership, and a quick reminder that if you haven't, you still can! Membership is £10, and you can pay over the phone with your debit or credit card if that's easier. We'll be putting the names of all current members in a hat to win a £10 Morrisons voucher at the end of October.

Thank you also to the member of the Decibelles Ladies Choir who managed to get this fabulous photo (right) of our fundraiser Dan wearing a feather boa! The choir, from Heald Green raised £510 for Walthew House at their summer concert.



Thanks also to ASDA Stockport, the Inner Wheel, Gatley, Stockport Rotary Club, Stockport Federation of Townswomen's Guilds, The Hughes family, three members of which ran the Manchester 10K run in support of the charity, and the Thursday Morning Bridge Players Group.

Thank you also to Specsavers in Merseyway for donating £600 to Walthew House in July (pictured below presenting their cheque) and to Linda and the team at Rainbow88 for hosting a Tropical Night fundraiser, helping to raise more than £400.



Walthew House has also been one of the charities supported by the Coop Local Community Fund, and we were invited to

help celebrate the official opening of the new Coop supermarket on Berrycroft Lane, pictured right.



We are grateful for donations in memory of: Marjorie Goddard, Eric Leverington, Joyce Peach and Sheila Scott.

Finally, just a quick mention of Easy Fundraising, which is a great way of supporting Walthew House at absolutely no cost to yourself.

It's completely free and you can raise money when you make purchases online - think of holidays, Christmas presents, books, music, insurance, energy suppliers - virtually anything. Over 2,700 retailers are signed up to the scheme including Amazon, eBay, John Lewis, and Argos,

Sign up at easyfundraising.org.uk, then choose Walthew House as your nominated cause. When shopping online, go to easyfundraising.org.uk first, choose a retailer and click through to their website – or just use their simple [donation reminder](#). You earn money from the retailer for your purchase which can be turned into a donation.

So far, we have 18 supporters who have help raise £188.31. Rachel, our office manager, raised £42, just by booking a cruise!

Walthew House Supports People in Stockport who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, or who have Dual Sensory Loss. Registered Charity Number 215469

Walthew House News is produced in large print and is available on request in Braille, on audio CD, by email and as a British Sign Language DVD. The next issue will be available in January 2018.