

Walthew House

Welcome to the October 2022 edition of our Newsletter. We would like to start with a warm invitation to our Annual General Meeting which will take place at Walthew House on Thursday 3rd November at 6.30pm. Refreshments will be served from 6pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend the AGM, and if you are a **Friend of Walthew House**, (annual membership £10), then you are an associate member of the charity and can vote at the meeting, nominate new trustees, or stand as a trustee yourself.

Earlier this year, Walthew House jointly commissioned a new report - **‘What D/deaf people want’** – with Bolton Deaf Society and Manchester Deaf Centre. The report findings were presented at a meeting in September, providing an opportunity for people with hearing loss to give their feedback and contribute to the planning of new services. One key finding was that Deaf people needed more help with accessible information and advocacy support. At the time of the survey Walthew House was providing a dedicated Deaf Duty Session on Thursdays, and help was also available from the TPA on Wednesdays. In response, Walthew House has increased its service and can now offer appointments on Thursdays and Fridays for sign language users. The need for support outside of office hours was also highlighted, and this is now provided on Thursday evenings.

The service is provided by one Deaf and one hearing member of staff, both of whom are qualified advocates, Erika Lever-Hogg and our Operations Manager and trainee interpreter Naomi Mather.

The photos below show Erika left working with a client and right Naomi on a recent visit from Stockport County, holding the National League cup which County won last season enroute to promotion to the Football League for the first time in 11 years. You can access the service directly by emailing Naomi on: opsmanager@walthouse.org.uk or Erika on: deafduty@walthouse.org.uk



We have two new sessions of our free half day courses for people with sight or hearing loss.

Making the Most of what you can See is taking place on 17th October and **Making the Most of your Hearing** is on 7th November. Both courses provide information on the support available locally and further afield, assistive technology and practical tips for making the most of residual sight or hearing. The sight loss course also provides an introduction to sighted guiding, and the hearing loss course provides introductions to lipreading and British Sign Language.

The courses are open to people with deteriorating sight or hearing, their carers or family members, and to professionals working with people with sensory loss. Contact the office for more information and to book your place.

We are also able to offer tailored training for other organisations, including a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accredited course for corporate training ‘Sensory Loss Awareness Training’ which provides information and guidance to employers and employees about how to make their workplace more accessible to people with sensory loss.

The photo right shows staff members from Stockport charity Signpost for Carers practicing their sighted guiding skills coming to a doorway.



We have a new 10-week course starting on 3rd November teaching **British Sign Language**. The course is a non-examined, ‘Introduction to Signing’ and costs £50, subsidised to £45 for Friends of Walthew House members.

We are repeating our 10-week **Introduction to Lipreading** course starting on 5th October. The course is subsidised by at least 50% for all attendees, costing £25 for non-members, and just £20 for Friends of Walthew House. Feedback from our pilot course earlier this year was excellent with attendees commenting how helpful the techniques our lipreading tutor Debbie taught are, and how being able to lipread helps them better understand what people are saying and ‘stay connected’. Several members also commented how practicing as a group has introduced them to other people with hearing loss, making them realise that they’re not on their own. An estimated one in six people has a hearing loss that affects their day-to-day life – if you or someone you know is struggling, learning to lipread could be a big help. Both the signing and lipreading courses are open to people with sight or hearing loss,

carers or family members, or professionals working with people with sensory loss.

The photo to the right shows Debbie introducing lipreading to a group on one of our Making the Most of your Hearing courses.



Walthew House supports a wide range of social and activity groups for people of all ages with sight or hearing loss as well as regular day trips and events.

One group recently enjoyed a trip to Buxton, with the cost of their train travel generously covered by Northern (the rail company). They went for a walk, visited the Jurassic Encounter at the Pavilion Gardens and finished the day with a pub meal. The



The photo above shows the group waiting for the train at Stockport station.

Other recent trips have included a sign language interpreted and sighted guide tour of Quarry Bank Mill, and a canal boat trip on 'New Horizons' finishing with lunch at the Ring O' Bells pub in Marple.

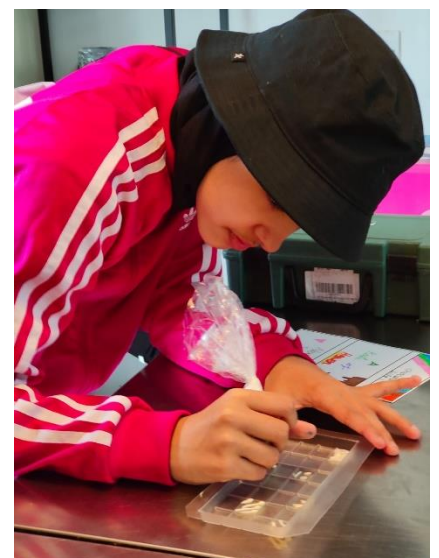
In addition to our regular social activities at the centre, we also put on special events from time to time, recently including a herbs 'planting

party' with a 'guess the herb from its smell' quiz. Another popular event was the 'Walthew Proms'. Our steel band were amongst the performers, show tunes were performed on the piano, and the Bluebells of Scotland was performed on the violin. This tune was performed as part of the first blind tea party hosted by John and Mary Walthew in 1866, creating a lovely link to the charity's founder in the year of the 200th anniversary of his birth. Another popular performer was our regular volunteer Jennifer pictured right, who has clearly been hiding her light under a bushel, and who treated everyone to renditions of Disney themes and pop songs.

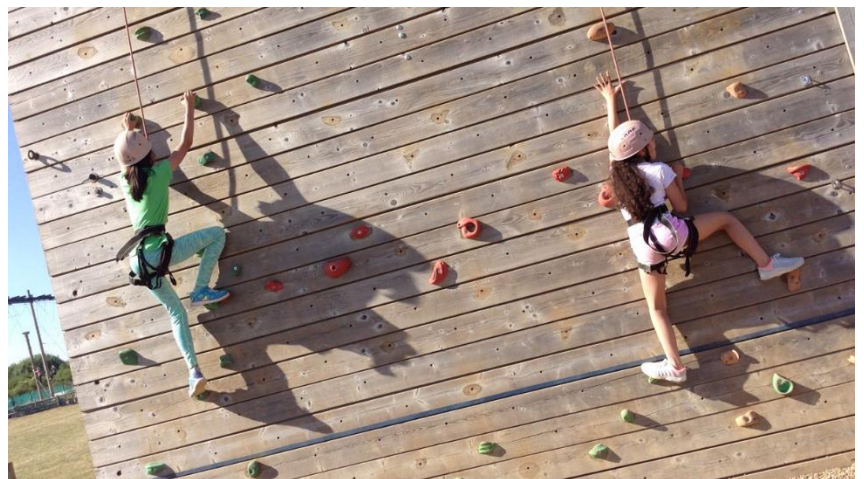


Most of our trips and special events are subsidised for Friends of Walthew House members. Members pay a one-off subscription of £10 per year.

Our younger members have also been out and about this year. One of the most popular trips was a chocolate making party with Oli at Simon Dunn's Chocolatiers in High Lane. Kumail said it was 'absolutely extraordinary' and commented that 'It's cool how you can make and eat mostly anything out of chocolate!' Wajiha, pictured right concentrating hard on her chocolate mould, said she 'had a blast'!



Another favourite was a weekend trip to Whitemoor Lakes. The photos below show members abseiling, on the zipwire and on the climbing wall.



Coming up we have Halloween and Christmas activities planned, including Christmas wreath making and our very popular 'Breakfast with Signing Santa'. If you don't receive regular updates on our activities and you'd like to keep in touch, just contact the office and we'll add you to mailing list.

Walthew House has a long-established connection with the Greater Manchester Lieutenancy, starting with the first Lord-Lieutenant Sir William Downward. Sir William cut the ground for the extension of Walthew House in 1987, when Lieutenant Colonel Haldon Hole, who

served as a Deputy Lieutenant, was chair of Walthew House. The Lord-Lieutenant is President of the charity. Sir Warren Smith, pictured below right with guide dog puppy Freda at the opening of the refurbished Walthew House resource centre in 2017, and who retired from the role in July this year, was a regular visitor for ribbon and cake cutting on special occasions. He was also generous and creative with his time, once bringing his sword, cap and other parts of his uniform so that visually impaired people could get a tactile view of how he looked on royal visits.

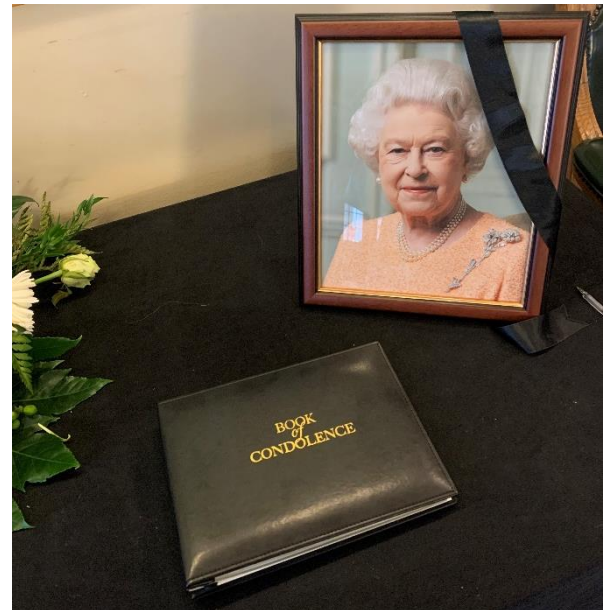


We are delighted that the new Lord-Lieutenant, Mrs. Diane Hawkins, pictured left, who was appointed on 4th July, 2022 after serving as a Deputy Lieutenant since 2008 and as High Sheriff during 2021/22, has agreed to continue the tradition to become President of Walthew House. We look forward to welcoming her in due course.

Along with many other organisations, Walthew House closed as a mark of respect on the day of the Queen's funeral. The following day, instead of our usual luncheon club, we got out the bunting and Union Jack flags and served a traditional afternoon tea, with



sandwiches, cakes, and scones, pictured on the previous page, during which everyone shared their memories and recorded messages of condolence. Afterwards the messages were transcribed into the Book of Condolence at Stockport Town Hall, pictured right together with a framed photograph of Her late Majesty the Queen.



Walthew House is a well-known place in the wider local community and people who are passing often pop in if they need help. It made sense then to sign up to Stockport Council's new **Safe Places** initiative. The scheme promotes buildings or organisations where people can just call in if they feel vulnerable for any reason. This could be because they are lost, worried they are being followed for example, or have been a victim of crime. As part of the initiative Walthew House will offer immediate assistance and then signpost the person on to the appropriate place to get help. It is hoped that many places of safety will be created making Stockport a more welcoming and safer place for everyone.

We have been involved in other community activities to promote the services Walthew House offers including an Emergency Services Day in Merseyway and Stockport Pride. The photo right shows our office assistant Sandra, wearing a Walthew tee shirt and carrying a rainbow placard that reads 'Inclusive support for everyone with sight or hearing loss'.



We were interested to read the RNIB's recent cost of living survey, which asked more than 100 blind and partially sighted people how price rises were affecting them. More than two thirds said their financial situation had got worse over the last six months, and worryingly more than a third "often" go without essentials such as food and heating, or have struggled to make ends meet. Despite some visually impaired people needing more light to safely move around their home and for other tasks, more than two thirds reported using less energy to try to save money. This compares to a third of the general population. If you, or someone you know is struggling financially because of increasing in living expenses, please let us know and we'll signpost you to organisations that can help.

We welcomed our new Fundraising and Income Generation Manager Sarah Mollitt in April, pictured below left with Stockport County mascot Vernon Bear at a recent Stockport County collection, and threw her straight into the deep end, organising our fundraising at Stockport Beer and Cider Festival. The event, the first year of our three-year stint as Festival Charity, raised a fantastic total of just over £5,900. Thanks to the Festival Committee for their support and to our amazing volunteers, some of whom are pictured below right, for all their hard work.



As an independent charity, Walthew House relies entirely on income from fundraising and charitable sources, and tries to offer as many ways as possible for people to support our work. We are part of a weekly Weather Lottery draw for example. When you join, you're given a unique 6-digit lucky number. Every Monday, the winning number is based on the last digit of the Fahrenheit temperature from six popular European destinations (Corfu, Athens, Tenerife, Vienna, Amsterdam and Stockholm). You can win prizes for matching 3, 4, 5 and 6 numbers, and it costs just £1 a week per ticket with a chance of winning up to £25,000.

Another way to help is by shopping online using the Easy Fundraising website. Your purchases don't cost extra, but anything you buy from the hundreds of retailers that are signed up to the scheme generates a small donation to the charity. We've raised nearly £1,500 through Easy Fundraising since we signed up.

If you are in a position to provide us with a regular donation, this can be set up on our website as a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or yearly payment of an amount of your choosing. Other people help by asking for donations instead of gifts for birthdays and special occasions, and a number of supporters make donations in memory of friends or relatives. In memory gifts alone have contributed over £2,000 to our work in the past six months, and are very much appreciated.

For those seeking more exciting ways to help, we offer activities as sponsored events or for a donation to the charity. Six supporters joined the Blind Driving Challenge at the Three Sisters Race Circuit in Wigan recently, raising over £500. The photo right shows Arthur at the wheel of a very green HGV.



We need to raise £385,000 this year to keep our services running to support people with sight or hearing loss in Stockport, so any regular, one-off or thrill-seeking support is very welcome. Sarah is happy to help sign people up to the best way for them and can be contacted through the office.

Fundraising at Christmas is always an important source of income for Walthew House, and a time when we rely very much on our volunteers to help with collections, card sales and Christmas activities. If you have time to spare and would be able to help, we'd love to hear from you.

The photos below show the steel band with volunteers fundraising at Handforth Dean and Mother Christmas drawing the Christmas raffle with the help of one of the elves.



Raffle tickets are now on sale for our Christmas raffle which offers a first prize of a Christmas hamper worth over £100, together with smaller hampers as second and third prizes. We also have lovely Christmas cards, designed by volunteer Lee Parker, on sale for £1.50 for a pack of five.



The design, shown on the left, is of a silhouetted skyline, with bright lights, below a swirly starlit sky. Cards, raffle tickets and Christmas novelties are on sale at Walthew, and we can post out to you if you're not able to get to us.

Finally, for this issue, a shout out for volunteers. We are looking for a regular volunteer to take on the cooking for our Tuesday luncheon club, and have many other interesting opportunities. The photo right shows volunteer sighted guide Bev being eaten alive by one of the dinosaurs at the Jurassic Experience – just kidding, we take excellent care to ensure our volunteers are never eaten alive! If you'd like to offer your support as a volunteer, please contact the office.



You can contact Walthew House on 0161 480 2612 and our main email is admin@walthewhouse.org.uk

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