

I'm writing this at the end of my first year as Chair of Trustees at Vista and what a year it has been for all of us! Who amongst us would have believed we would still be struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2021, almost twelve months since the first national lockdown?

Sadly, all of us will now know someone who has had the virus, lost a loved one or is struggling with the financial consequences of lockdown. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel with the national roll out of vaccines, so let us now look to a safer, brighter, and happier 2021.



At the beginning of last year, myself, Susan, and the team were full of energy with lots of ideas for the continued improvement and growth of our services. Many of our plans have been put on hold while we continue to struggle with the impact of the virus. Our shops have opened and closed in line with government restrictions and other fundraising activities have also been adversely affected making 2020 a financial struggle for us.

Whilst COVID-19 has affected some of what we do, the essential services have continued without interruption down to the commitment, flexibility and loyalty of our amazing staff, volunteers, and you our members. Thank you.

I was hoping that we would be able to hold our already delayed AGM at the beginning of March this year, but it is now clear that it will not be possible to hold a face-to-face meeting.

I am sorry that we have had to defer this important member meeting yet again, but I hope you will understand why it is necessary. This newsletter lets you, our members know about what we've been doing during the last 12 months.

Susan and I will be holding a virtual members Q&A event in the spring and we hope many of you will be able to join us. Details are below.

Stay safe and well and I look forward to meeting many of you soon.

Kind regards

Pauline Tagg MBE

Chair of Trustees

Members Q&A

Our Members question and answer session will be taking place on Thursday 25th March at 2:00 pm. It will be held on Babl (accessible by landline, as well as mobile, tablet and desktop).

If you would like to attend, please email **susan@vistablind.org.uk** or call **07715 078735**.

Consultation on Vista's Centre for Sight Loss

We have spoken many times about our ambition to re-develop Vista's site at Leicester Forest East and over the past year we have been working with architects to design a new building.

Vista's Centre for Sight Loss will be a new home for the charity and for the sight loss community in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.



The building will have a wide range of facilities to host activities and services, provide social and leisure space, a café, shop and gym and will also include a new specialist care home for people affected by sight loss. We hope to apply for planning permission in the spring and in preparation we are holding a consultation about the new building.

Due to lockdown restrictions, we are sadly not able to do this face to face and the consultation is being held online. On the website you will find plans, designs, and documents, but also audio files to accompany these, explaining more about our plans and the building design.

It is vital that the planners hear the views of the people Vista supports, as well as our neighbours in Leicester Forest East, and understand the impact this redevelopment will have.

Please visit <https://www.vistablind.org.uk/about-vista/consultation> and let us know your comments. We are really excited about these plans for the future, and hope you are too.

Digital Vision – keeping our members digitally active

During the pandemic, our Digital Vision Service has been supporting more people than ever like Mary. Read about how we've helped Mary with using an Amazon Alexa.



Mary is 91 years old and has been on the sight loss register since April 2017. She has wet macular degeneration. Ian Watts, Vista's Digital Vision Project Officer visited Mary to show her how to get the most out of her Alexa. They started with Ian demonstrating how to compile a shopping list together on Alexa. Now Mary knows exactly what to do and can 'tell' Alexa to add the items that she needs, and they get added straight to her daughter's Alexa app on her shopping list.

Ian Watts, Vista's Digital Vision Project Officer, said; "Supporting people with technology through this difficult time has proven to be a challenge and we have adapted the service to include telephone support and online sessions. We are now visiting people at home again, safely and following all necessary precautions. The project has been running for nearly two years and Vista have successfully applied for a 6-month extension to continue this much needed and supportive service".

Our Digital Buddy service has already helped so many visually impaired people to get the most out of their technology. If you'd like to find out more about this service, please contact Ian, Vista's Digital Vision Project Officer on **07715 078845**.

Residential update – how we have supported people through Covid 19

We know that the last year has been challenging for all of us, particularly those with sight loss and especially with further restrictions. At Vista, we have been doing everything we can to keep our residents and staff safe in our care homes.



Vista operates 4 care homes for people of all ages and for people with complex needs, all rated good or outstanding by Care Quality Commission.

As you would expect our home staff are experts in caring for people affected by sight loss and we also specialise in dementia care. If you or someone you know would like a break from being alone this during these difficult times, we can offer stays in any of our homes.



We have a wide range of activities planned and would love to welcome you into our home for a few days or a few weeks. A short stay can also be a great way to try out living with us if a more permanent move is something you are considering.

For more information, call us on **0116 249 8839**.

Vista's successful volunteer companion line, launched during Covid 19

Did you know Vista launched a new companion telephone line last year?

Since the initial lockdown in March, many of our volunteers found that their roles and the support they were providing could not continue in the same way.



It is more important than ever to maintain contact with the people we support, especially those who live alone or who are vulnerable to check if they need our services. We have found that many people need practical support with shopping and other household tasks, however people also need emotional support. Loneliness and isolation are affecting their wellbeing. This has led to the introduction of a telephone support service called it 'Let's Chat'.

We contacted our volunteers, and they began making weekly calls to the people we support, just a quick catch up about all sorts of things from history to Strictly Come Dancing! Our volunteers have equally enjoyed the experience and developed lasting friendships.

If you would like to receive a weekly call or volunteer, just to have a friendly chat, please get in touch with Ray Brydson, Volunteer Development Manager,
07967 799364.

Financial Summary

We would usually have sent you a summary of our financial performance of the previous year by now. In this unusual year, the Charity Commission and Companies House have allowed us longer to prepare our annual report and accounts, giving us a year to complete them. This has allowed charities to focus resource on coping with the pandemic and managing more immediate financial needs.

We are finalising details with our auditors and trustees at the moment and will be publishing our annual report and accounts for 2019/20 in March. It will be available on our website, but if you would like to receive a summary, or the full report, in an alternative format please contact Eiron on **07715 078735**.

Fundraising update

This year has seen many changes and challenges within fundraising at Vista, with new faces in the team and the pandemic meaning our priorities and demands have shifted many times throughout the year.

The fundraising team have shown great dedication and commitment to meet demand with support from the wider Vista team and its dedicated membership.

We have had many successes despite the challenges and uncertainty. On behalf of the people Vista supports please accept a heartfelt thank you!

10,000 steps for Vista

Vista is asking you to take on 10,000 steps during the month of March and fundraise for us. 10,000 steps daily is a big challenge so don't worry if you can't do that, how about 10,000 steps per week during March instead?

Every step you take is better than the one you didn't take.

We want you to challenge yourself to get as near to your target as you can, increase your fitness levels and raise money for Vista along the way.



To register, please contact Paul Taylor at paul.taylor@vistablind.org.uk or **077369 10786**.

Vista Forum update

Did you know the Vista Member Forum is still meeting, using BABL in place of face-to-face meetings? You can join the meetings via a landline phone, mobile or laptop. It is an opportunity to be in touch and exchange thoughts with other Vista members and find out more about what is going on in the charity.

To find out more contact forumvista@gmail.com.