

Well, 2020/21 was a year like none other, none of us realised how long the crisis would be. Whilst there have been many challenges, I am immensely proud of what Vista has achieved, and even more proud of the outstanding contribution, dedication and commitment we have seen across our workforce, often in the most difficult of circumstances. I hope you enjoy reading about our activities over the past year and the impact we have had.



Our fundraising team have made sure that some income continued to flow but this year has hit us hard financially. Therefore, I am also asking for your help - to support our emergency appeal if you are able, to fundraise for us or to encourage your friends, families, communities or colleagues to support Vista. Any help you can give is vitally important.

Our objectives for the year ahead are to stabilise and recover from the impact of Covid and ensure Vista is sustainable for the future. Part of this is realising our long-held ambition to develop our site at Leicester Forest East.

Finally, thank you to our staff, volunteers, trustees, supporters, donors, families and most importantly, you the members, affected by sight loss who we exist to support and care for. We could not have done it without you.

Best wishes,  
Susan

## A summary of the year

Vista is proud to have remained “open” throughout the pandemic, and although we reached less people than we normally do, or we need to, we still did lots between April 2020 and March 2021.

In the first 4 months of the pandemic, we were only able to visit people in crisis so the Vista team made 4422 **welfare assessment calls to adults and children with sight loss** on our database, prioritising the 1200 people known to live alone.

Later we recruited volunteers for our **Let’s Talk** project - volunteers, trained by Vista, stayed in regular contact with people by phone providing support and companionship to those feeling isolated.

The **Digital Vision** project went virtual and supported 300 people to adapt and use communication technology to stay in touch and access services. We also introduced a series of virtual support groups and sessions.



The **Children and Young People’s** team had to find ways to move their highly interactive and practical support onto virtual platforms, supporting 97 families during the year. Video content has been uploaded to our website for families to access again if

required. Feedback on this support has been exceptional, reporting positive outcomes of reduced anxiety, improved access to information and schools’ support, increased confidence, learned skills and stronger peer networks.

Our **Eye Clinic Liaison Officers** were unable to go into the hospitals for a while, but we got them back as soon as possible working with the Ophthalmology team. They supported 1618 people to access the registration process and get referrals to relevant local services, giving vital support to people throughout their diagnosis and treatment.

The **Low Vision Clinic** offered 270 appointments once they were able to reopen in June 2020, but 29% were either cancelled or not attended, not surprising in the context of restricted travel and reduced confidence.

The **Rehabilitation and Reablement teams** adapted to carry out assessments remotely, supporting 2931 people with visual impairments and 59 individuals with dual sensory loss. The waiting list for support grew significantly but additional funding has now been secured to address the backlog as restrictions ease.

All of our **residential homes** experienced Covid outbreaks leading to severe restrictions on new admissions during long periods of the year. The pandemic also meant restrictions on residents' activities. In particular, visits by family and friends and trips outside the homes ceased to only those necessary for medical reasons.



Our amazing homes' teams came up with lots of creative ways to keep everyone active and support their health and wellbeing. These included arts and crafts sessions, baking, movie nights, themed days, garden parties, picnics, pampering and sports!

All our homes were subject to **Care Quality Commission emergency support framework inspections** in the year, which were passed, with commendation of our infection prevention and control measures.

Vista hosts two funded programmes:

**Work. Live. Leicestershire** is a programme to support adults in rural Leicestershire into employment, funded by National Lottery and European Social Investment Fund. They moved quickly to offer keyworker support over video and telephone calls and saw their workload increase as more and more people in rural areas needed support to build their confidence to get into employment.

**Leicester Ageing Together** supports older people in Leicester and is funded by National Lottery Ageing Better. Established specifically to highlight and reduce the risks and impacts of social isolation and loneliness in people aged 50+, they used existing and new links to create a huge range of virtual and DIY activities and resources that have supported thousands of people across Leicester in 2020-21.

Members will have previously heard much talk about our ambition to develop our Leicester Forest East site, currently home to the residents of Applegarth and Kathleen Rutland Home. Throughout the year we have worked with our design team to develop plans further and were delighted to submit a planning application for Vista's Centre for Sight Loss in March 2021.

The centre will provide a space to bring together the local sight loss community with low vision services; training, learning and social activities; information, advice, and residential care, as well as a range of community facilities including a café, gym, and shop.



Work is underway to raise the finance to build the development, through fundraising and investment.

## Staff news

In January 2021, after 24 years, Julie Rudd retired from her role as manager at New Wycliffe Home. Julie has made an incredible contribution to Vista, creating a happy and caring home for our residents over many years. This work was celebrated further this July when Julie was awarded Care Home Manager of the year at the Great British Care Awards - East Midlands Regional Awards. Julie has not left Vista entirely though and is now working in our admissions team.

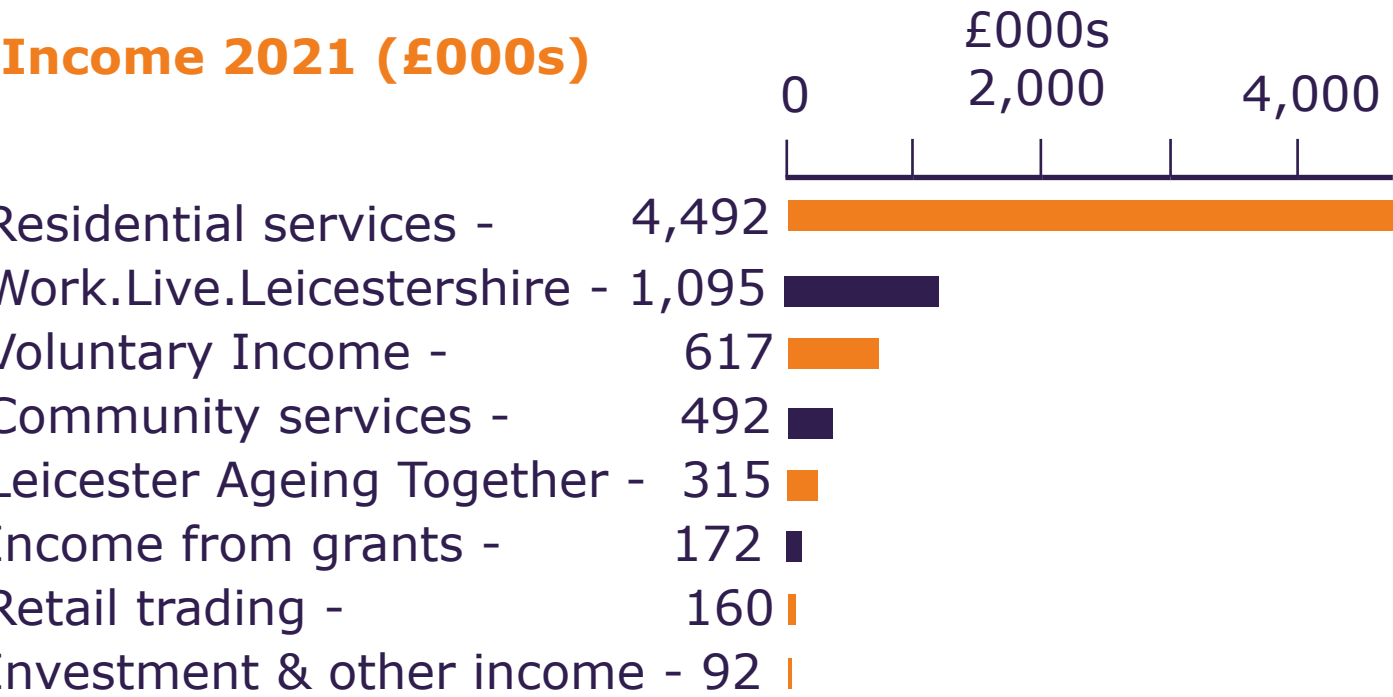


It is with great sadness that we also report the deaths of 2 of our staff over the past year. Ben Wright, IT and data support officer, had been a part of Vista for 18 years, with other members of his family also working in the charity. Bina Kanani had been HR manager for 5 years. Their deaths were a huge shock to everyone, and they are both greatly missed by their colleagues.

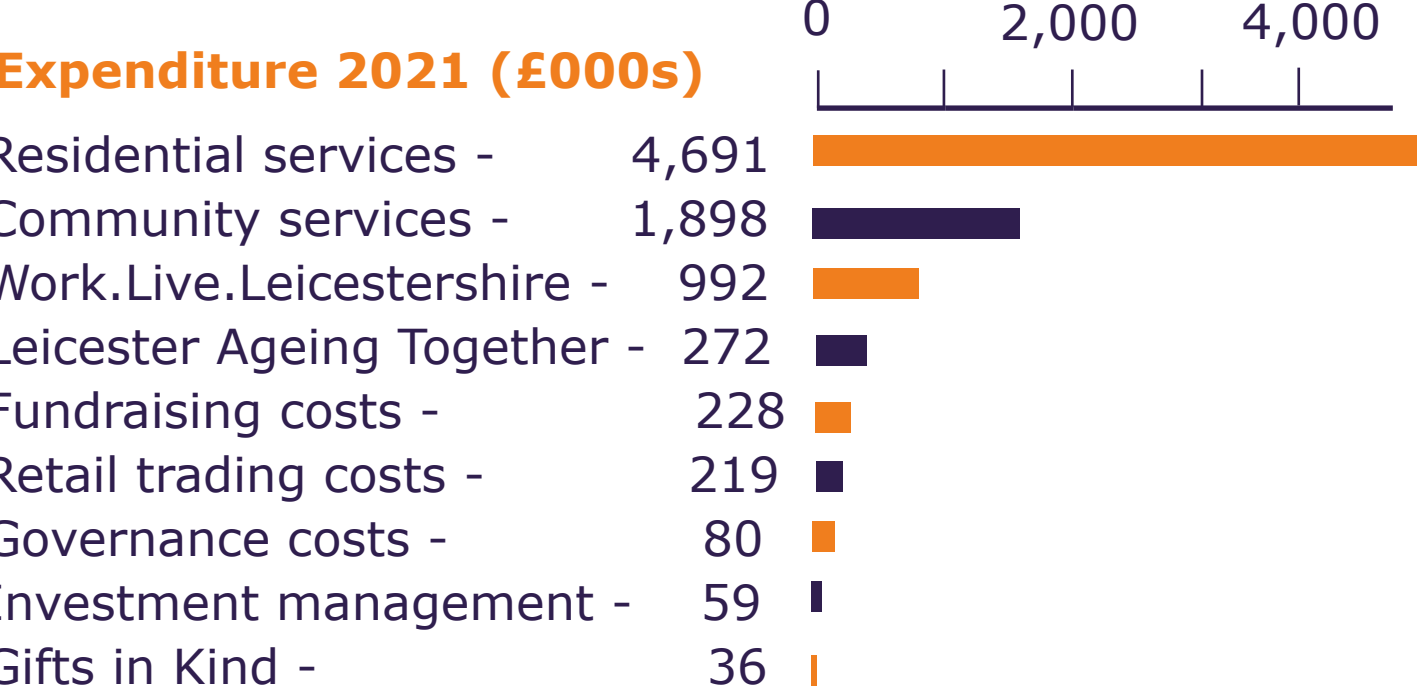
This was a difficult year for everyone. 63 of our staff tested positive for Covid-19, 38 of them unwell with symptoms and after-effects, some of them severely ill for some time. Staff had to adapt to new ways of working, be it increased PPE and infection control measures, or moving their office to their home. We also had several staff on furlough, especially in our retail team. We thank everyone for coping so well and working so hard in exceptional circumstances.

# Financial summary

## Summarised statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March, 2021 (£000s)



**Total income: 7,435**



**Total expenditure: 8,475**

If you would like to receive a copy of the full annual report and financial statements for 2020/2021, please contact Eiron on **07715 078735**.

## A message from Phil Smalley, Chair of Vista's member forum



The forum provides a way for the Vista Board of Trustees to have access to a diverse group of visually impaired people with lived experience of sight loss. It offers a space where visually impaired individuals can share experiences and knowledge relating to both visual impairment and anything else suitable for sharing amongst the group.

The forum also provides a platform for any external body or organisation wishing to consult with a diverse group of visually impaired people. Recently, this has included University Hospitals of Leicester regarding their Transformation of Ophthalmology Services in Leicester, Leicestershire. We have also had presentations from Curve Theatre and on occasions organised trips.

We are very keen to have a diverse membership and thus positively encourage anyone to join us, young, old, anything in between, partially sighted or completely blind. The only criteria being that you have some degree of visual impairment and want to share and learn with others.

We are an inclusive group of individuals, keen to be available to as many visually impaired people as possible. Because of this, our monthly meetings are both face to face and over the telephone.

To get in touch, please either email Phil at **[forumvista@gmail.com](mailto:forumvista@gmail.com)** or on **0783 264 7898**.

## Fundraising Appeal

Vista, like most charities, has had a difficult year. We have worked hard to maintain services and continue to be here to support and care for people affected by sight loss, but the financial impact has been considerable. Our income, from residential fees and from fundraising has been severely impacted, whilst extra costs were incurred to keep our staff and the people we support safe in unprecedented times.

Vista has reserves, and we have been able to use some of these to cover the shortfall in income, but the crisis is not over yet.

And the need is greater than ever – there are over 3000 local people waiting for ophthalmology appointments and Vista has seen a big increase in requests for support over the past few weeks.

This is where we need to ask you, as our members, for help. If every member could help us to raise an extra £20 that would contribute over £50,000 of vital funds to support others affected by sight loss locally.

Please donate if you are able, using the enclosed donation form or via our online appeal page:

**[www.justgiving.com/campaign/vistaappeal](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/vistaappeal)**

Perhaps you could take part in one of our events, or encourage your family, friends or colleagues to do the same? We have a walk around Rutland Water, trek up Snowden, Skydive and a virtual balloon race all in the diary this Autumn. For more information call Paul on **07736 910786** or visit **[www.vistablind.org.uk](http://www.vistablind.org.uk)**