



DeafblindUK

Impact report 2022-23

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Welcome from Mohammed, Deafblind UK member

I remember it well, the day in 2011 that changed my life forever. Everyone with a visual impairment, remembers the day when they were diagnosed with an eye condition that will eventually leave them with no sight. You feel stunned, shocked, and unable to take in what you are being told.

Being registered blind wasn't the biggest hurdle I faced. I was just too overwhelmed with all that was going on in my life. I was left alone and isolated, feeling worthless. My greatest challenge was people assuming disability means inability, employers for example.

To tell you the truth, after contacting many organisations, I wasn't expecting anyone to give me a call. But I remember the day well. As usual, I had not slept, then the telephone rang. The voice on the other end of the line said they were from Deafblind UK and asked what they could do to help. That kind soul was Amanda who reassured me that she would listen and not leave me until it was fine to do so. Amanda showed me that people do care and showed the kindness that I hadn't been shown for such a long time. Kindness does exist. I was not alone anymore.

It's been a difficult journey, a journey that has tested me emotionally and physically. But in the midst of all these challenges, there's been one organisation that has stood by me, when no one else would – Deafblind UK. I can't even begin to describe the impact that Deafblind UK has had on my life. They've supported me through thick and thin, offering guidance, support, and compassion when I needed it most. Without their help, I don't know where I would be today.

We have many charities and organisations, but what I believe makes Deafblind UK stand out, is the people who work there. For these people, it's more than a job, and they all do genuinely care, show compassion and empathy. Deafblind UK means everything to me. They're more than just a charity, they're a family.

Thank you

Mohammed



Welcome from our CEO and Chair

It has been a year of change for Deafblind UK as we bid farewell to Steve Conway and welcomed Nikki Morris as our new CEO.

People living with deafblindness have always been at the heart of what we do. Our passionate team have worked hard to make the recent change in leadership as seamless as possible for the people we support. We continue to meet the unique needs of a growing population of people who are deafblind, amidst rising inflation and the consequent cost-of-living increase.

Our expert team are proud to have delivered outstanding core services in response to this increased need, whilst also creating innovative solutions to unmet needs. As the only national charity that solely specialises in supporting people who are deafblind, we are always mindful of providing support which is both effective and provides value for money.


Raising income, to enable us to continue to provide the services that people want and need, remains imperative to what we do. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported our work over the past year, as well as to our dedicated team of fundraisers, grant application writers and shop staff who work tirelessly to generate these vital funds. We simply couldn't do what we do without you!

And of course, we have worked hard to raise awareness of deafblindness and of the charity. We aim to ensure that we are there for everyone who needs us, when they need us and in a way that makes it most accessible to them.

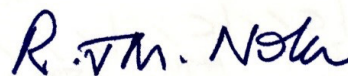
Our journey of growth will continue next year with development work at our supported living complex, Rainbow Court in Peterborough. This will provide two homes for people who have complex care needs but who are able, with our help, to live in their own home within our supported housing complex.

We would like to thank Mohammed for introducing this impact report. The charity belongs to the membership past, present and future.

This impact report gives a snapshot into our world and that of our members. It shows how we are making the difference for which people with dual sensory loss are asking. We are very proud to stand alongside our colleagues in presenting this to you.



Nikki Morris, CEO



Robert Nolan, Chair



■ Nikki Morris, CEO



■ Robert Nolan, Chair

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We can achieve, and we
can inspire. **Annette**

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We are Deafblind UK, the only charity that specialises in supporting people who are deafblind in the UK.

We are a small team, each an expert in our own field, be this care, support, counselling, research, education or finance. We are united by a desire and dedication to make the world a better place for people living with sight and hearing loss.

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■ Who are we?

What do we do?

For over 90 years, we have supported anyone who is affected by deafblindness.

We listen, advise, care, support, coach, mentor and connect people.

We give people hope, we build confidence and we enable independence. Most importantly, we change lives.

Why do we do it?

Because too many people are touched by deafblindness. Too many lives are impacted, too many minds are struggling and too many people are isolated.

Deafblindness affects over 400,000 people in the UK. Not only does it present challenges to everyday living but it brings with it wider and far more serious issues. People who are deafblind often feel incredibly lonely, isolated and unable to cope. It can lead to mental health problems and mobility and communication issues.

The impact of deafblindness is vast, yet our support reaches just a small proportion of the people affected. We need to be there for everyone who is touched by deafblindness.

Your support

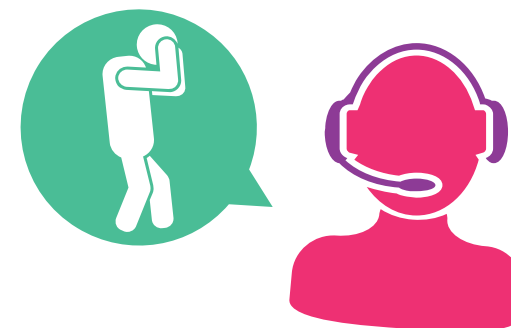
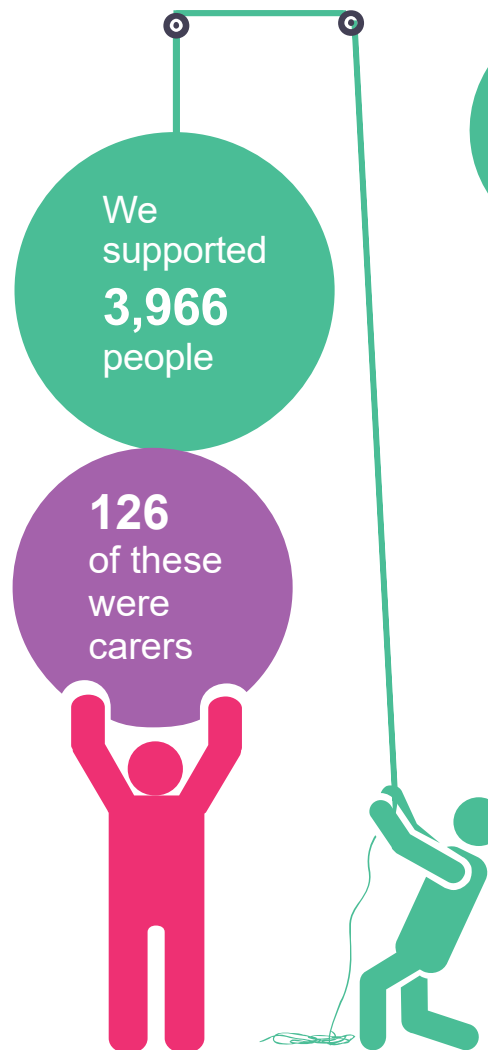
You help us to support anyone who is deafblind, their family, friends, carers, as well as professionals working with people who are deafblind. We provide:

- A friendly, accessible helpline to answer questions and offer support
- Help with technology to stay connected
- Opportunities to socialise and make new friends
- One-to-one help in accessing services and finding appropriate help
- Heavily subsidised seaside holidays to relax and unwind
- Wellbeing and mental health support for difficult times
- Care and support at home
- Supported living accommodation
- Support to develop employability skills and find work.

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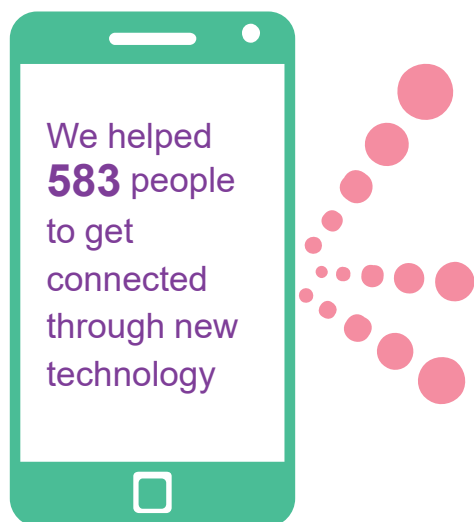
There are still challenges that I have to face on a day-to-day basis. Things like understanding that I will always have a harder time than my friends on nights out or in loud, busy environments, tripping over my black cat because he blends into the darkness, or being covered in bruises from walking into stuff all the time.

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DeafblindUK

Our year in numbers



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■ Key achievements

We hosted the UK's largest event on deafblindness

For the second year running, we hosted a hugely successful Deafblind Convention. The event connected us to over 900 professionals, academics and individuals which, it is believed, makes it the largest event about deafblindness ever held in the UK. Speakers discussed the impact that the changing world has on deafblindness, and how deafblindness forces change.

The expert panel of speakers included representatives from the BBC accessibility research team, Birmingham City University and Jadavpur University, among others. They explored all aspects of the constant change that deafblindness brings, offering insights into the emotional, practical and linguistic impact and helping us to normalise the conversation around deafblindness.

We are extremely proud to be leading the conversation around deafblindness in the UK. The event significantly developed knowledge and understanding of deafblindness, whilst raising the profile of Deafblind UK. Plans are now underway for the 2023 event.



I was on [@DeafblindUK](#) [#DeafblindConvention](#) today for the very first time. Wow. The topics are so variable and interesting. I used the mirroring from my laptop to my 65" TV, easy for me to see a BSL Interpreter!



[#deafblindconvention](#) Deafblind UKConvention 2022. Such an informative and inspiring day, talking about including Deafblind people and meeting their needs. Excellent Guest Speakers, Interpreters and Lipspeaker.



We launched an award-winning education project

Throughout the year, we proudly embarked on our education project which is motivated by the desire to give every child a meaningful education.

Throughout the year we have produced a report, 'Standing out and fitting in', which highlights feedback from teachers and parents about the provision of education for young people who are deafblind. In response to this feedback, we produced a range of resources for teachers to help young people to understand deafblindness and to help them to create a more inclusive environment.

By evolving this project over the next year, we aim to not only create more opportunities for deafblind children but to also teach hundreds of young people about deafblindness and raise awareness amongst the next generation.

This project is in partnership with representatives from the Vision & Hearing Research Centre at Anglian Ruskin University. It recently won the Education Award at the ScottishPower Foundation awards – a hugely proud moment for everyone involved.

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Huge congratulations to Deafblind UK for its success at this year's ScottishPower Foundation Awards, which were a great opportunity to showcase the legacy and positive impact of the work we do.

Deafblind UK's work to tackle the stigma associated with being deafblind and to ensure the people it supports have equal access to things many of us take for granted is truly inspiring. Their Education Project has the potential to be life enhancing for deafblind children. I'm looking forward to seeing Deafblind UK build on its legacy – and ours – for many years to come.

Melanie Hill, Executive Officer and Trustee at the ScottishPower Foundation.

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We supported better mental health

It's a sad reality that deafblindness and mental health concerns go hand in hand. This year, we have stepped up our mental health support and now offer our members a clear pathway to emotional wellbeing, to help them cope better with the challenges of living with sight and hearing loss.

We now employ two counsellors to offer all members the support they need. We are here for everyone when they need us.

We made 7,172 calls to support people with their emotional wellbeing



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Stuart mourned the sight that he had lost and cannot be recovered. As Macular Degeneration claimed more and more of his useful vision, he feared what the future would hold. Stuart knew that he was now on a scary, unplanned journey to an unknown destination.

Counselling helped Stuart to come to terms with his situation, to accept his fears and to express himself in a way that he couldn't do with other people.

Stuart's volunteer befriender has told us that Stuart is noticeably brighter, happier and more positive. Life is now much happier for Stuart.

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We reconnected Wales

Thanks to generous support from the National Lottery Community Fund, we launched a three year project to empower people who are deafblind in South Wales to overcome personal challenges in confidence, motivation and mobility. It also addresses a lack of inclusivity within local social opportunities.

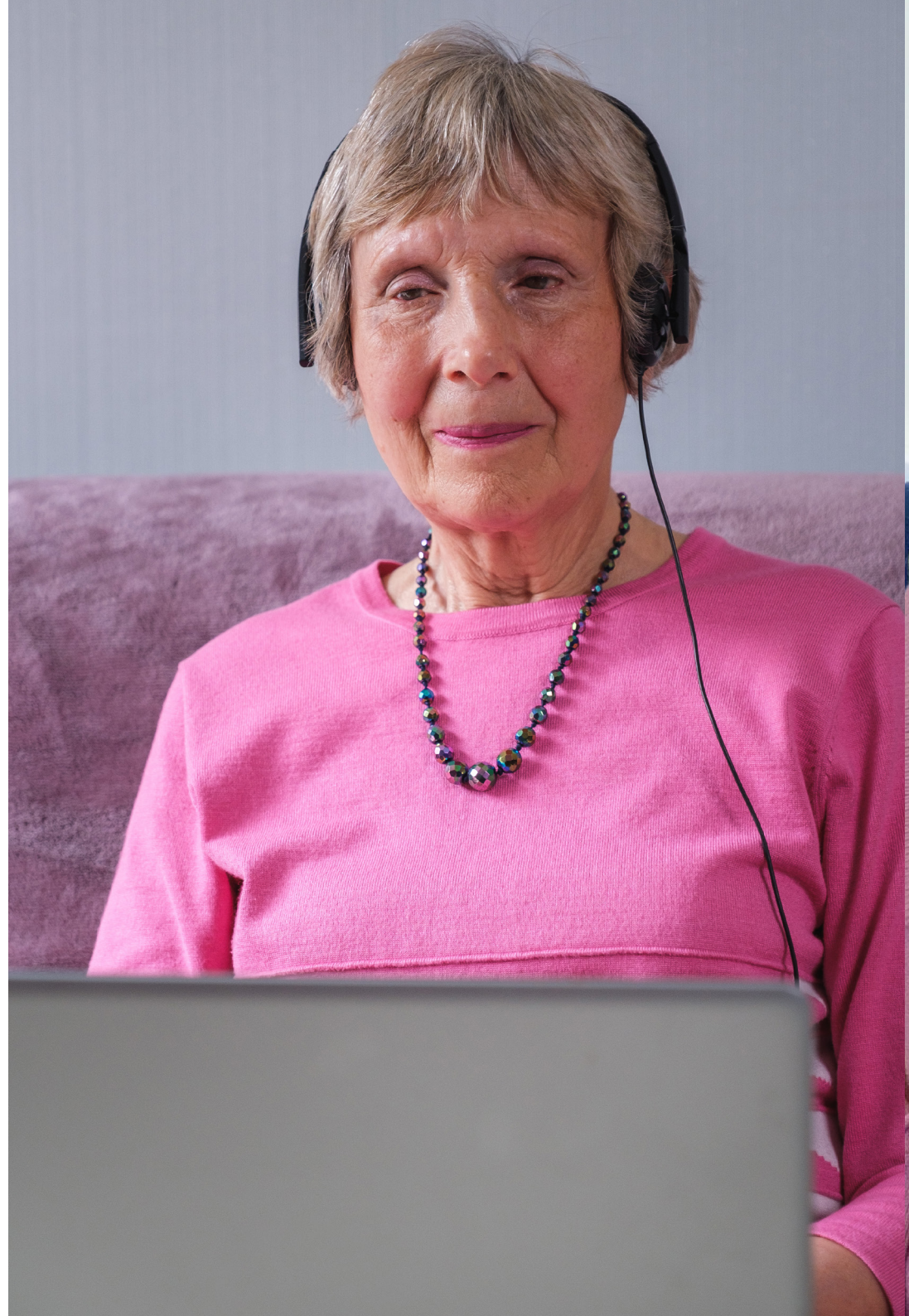
Through our 'Reconnections Wales' project, we give people bespoke support to help them achieve their personal goals – whether this is to return to a local social group, to start using their favourite café once again or to try something exciting they've never done before. We help people to feel confident enough to engage in social activities, and to have the mobility to access these activities independently.

This project is in its infancy and will develop throughout the next financial year.

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When Jane became a member of Deafblind UK, she told us: “There have been a few times when I’ve just sat at my kitchen table all day long, from morning to evening, alone with my thoughts. Not much of a life, is it?” We connected Jane to a local social group and arranged for her to have a volunteer befriender. She recently told us: “I’m getting out and about now, the group’s been really good – there are a few old eccentrics like me turning up!”

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We helped people to access employment

Knowing that only 20% of people who are deafblind and of working age are in employment, we developed a project to give people the skills and confidence to enter the world of work.

The 'Access Employment' programme addresses the barriers to employment for people who are deafblind. Sight and hearing loss presents many different challenges to daily life and as a result, people often find their confidence, social skills, resilience and energy levels take a hit – all skills that you need to find and hold down a job.

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I was given a mentor through the Access Employment Project and they are absolutely wonderful. We were talking weekly, now fortnightly. I never actually met her – it was always on the phone. They gave me lots of useful information that I didn't know about whereas the hospital consultant just said – "I'm going to have to register you as blind and you'll lose your sight completely. Goodbye". There's not enough information from the NHS about help that is available if you lose your sight. I was very surprised that they don't have someone to explain that there is help when you are told that you're going to go blind – they don't give you anything. I felt alone for months and months. Now, if I need some info all I need to do is contact my Access Employment mentor.

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“I refuse to let my diagnosis define the things I can and can't do. If anything, I've developed a newfound appreciation for my life, the experiences I've been able to have, and the people around me.” **Asia**

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■ What next?

Our dream is to provide care for everyone for every stage of their journey. This starts by developing our work with children and young people, ensuring that everyone who is touched by deafblindness has the very best start in life.

As experts in assistive digital technology, we will also continue to provide help and advice to connect those who need it. But that's not all, we will work with leading technology partners to ensure that inclusivity is at the heart of new developments and innovations, so that people who are deafblind grow up feeling familiar with and supported by technology.

We will make sure that people who are deafblind can continue to live as independently as possible, by influencing key decision makers to promote the need for deafblind assessments, and the agreement of care packages.

And of course, we will be there for people who need more support. Plans are underway to create comfortable supported housing for people with complex medical issues, and those requiring care home provision. This will give them a home where they can be part of a community whilst receiving the care they need.

Finally we will increase our knowledge of deafblindness and its impact, as well as nurturing future researchers by investing in our research infrastructure. This will increase our knowledge of deafblindness and its impact, as well as nurturing future researchers in this area.

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“Living with both sight and hearing loss can present a number of unique challenges, but with the right support, we can and do live independent and accomplished lives. There are so many harmful and negative stereotypes surrounding deafblindness, and I would like to prove them wrong!” **Megan**

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Public benefit

In setting activities and objectives each year, the Directors refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Directors always ensure that the activities, services or programmes undertaken are in line with the charitable objects and aims of the organisation.

Fundraising

Deafblind UK complies with the Code of Fundraising Practice and we are registered with the Fundraising Regulator. We have also volunteered to be part of the Fundraising Preference Service, through which when requested, we removed one individual's details in this reporting period. The vast majority of our activity to reach new donors and supporters is undertaken by our fundraising team who have significant understanding of our service delivery.

Where we have worked with an external organisation, we ensure they are registered with the relevant bodies and we conduct appropriate due diligence prior to contract commencement. In addition to a new fundraising strategy, our focus is to develop procedures to enable our staff, volunteers and suppliers to carry out fundraising activity aligned with our policy and current UK regulation and legislation.

Deafblind UK did not receive any complaints in relation to fundraising activities in 2022 – 23. As a charity that works directly with people in vulnerable circumstances, it is a fundamental value that no donation is sought from someone who may not have the capacity to make an informed and considered decision. We are fully compliant with the latest General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) ensuring that all communications are only sent to the right people.



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“I liked learning about our senses and how we see and hear. It was really fun when we guessed what was in the feely boxes, the jelly was so squishy! **Leo**”

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DeafblindUK

Impact report 2022-23

National Centre for Deafblindness
Rainbow Court,
Paston Ridings,
Peterborough,
Cambridgeshire,
PE4 7UP

Tel: 0800 132 320

Email: info@deafblind.org.uk

www.deafblind.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 802976

Company Reg No: 2426281