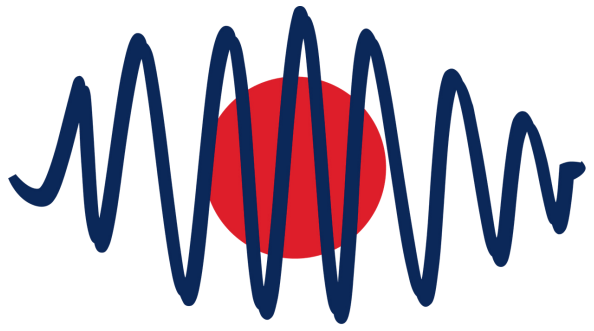




Dorset
Blind
Association



IMPACT REPORT

Supporting people living with
sight loss across Dorset

*"Kindness is the
language the blind can
see and the deaf can
hear"*

Mark Twain

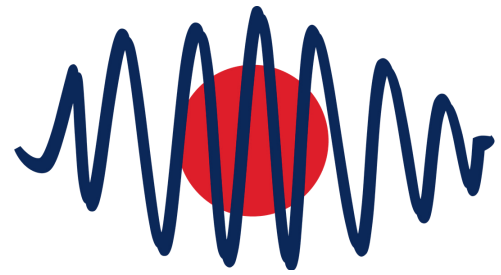
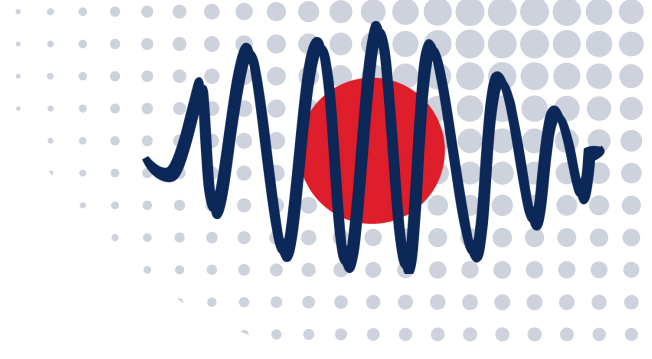
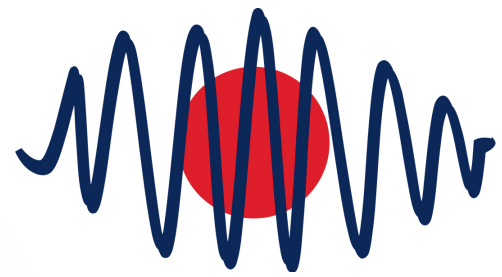




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Our Mission:

**To ensure that
everything we do
makes life better for
people living with
sight loss in Dorset,
and their families**

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



Dear Readers,

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Dorset Blind Association and for taking the time to read the latest version of our Impact Report. I hope this will help you to understand the value of our work and what that achieves.

Our charity provides help and support for visually impaired people in Dorset in ways we are confident help to make a real, positive difference in those people's lives. Our starting point is to listen and look, to make sure we learn and understand the real needs of the people who come to us for help. Our support is then as closely tailored to their personal needs as possible.

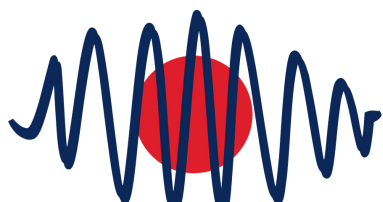
Our aim is also to always be kind. That costs nothing but is so important. It sets the scene for the relationship we hope to build with our service users. If we are kind to the people who need our help, it shows them we care, and if we care, it means those people matter and deserve to still have meaningful and positive lives, notwithstanding the impact of their sight loss.

Demand for our services continues to grow, and we will always strive to meet as much of that demand as possible. That means working hard to keep generating and finding the finance and other resources vital to running our charity. Since our last Impact Report, we have continued to develop our small chain of charity shops, and their importance as part of our funding mix has steadily and noticeably increased. The shops now contribute over half of our annual income and provide hubs for Dorset Blind Association in the community where people can directly access our services and support.

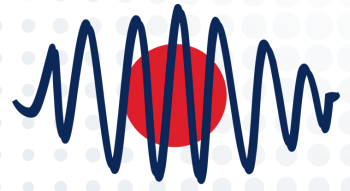
Dorset Blind Association has served blind and partially sighted people throughout Dorset for more than 100 years. For the foreseeable future, potentially even the next 100 years, the need for our charity will continue to exist, so whatever your interest in Dorset Blind Association, please support our work in any way you can to help us continue to meet that need.

With my best wishes,

Jonathan Holyhead
Chief Executive Officer



ABOUT DORSET



Dorset prides itself on being home to an impressive coastline and beautiful countryside, making it especially popular as a holiday and retirement destination. The largest individual town is Bournemouth and, together with neighbouring towns of Poole and Christchurch, comprises a conurbation in the South East corner of the county where just over half the population lives.

According to the latest Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates (2024), Dorset's population is approximately 798,914. Dorset has one of the oldest populations in England, with 207,897 residents aged 65 and over (26% of the population).

Just over half of residents live within the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole conurbation, while approximately 8% live in Weymouth and Portland. The remainder are spread across largely rural communities.

Across Dorset, 66 neighbourhoods fall within the bottom 20% nationally for barriers to housing and essential services.

Poor public transport provision is a key factor, which impacts disproportionately on blind and partially sighted people, who consequently have real difficulty accessing key everyday services, such as health care provision, post offices and shops.



Data Sources: ONS 2024/RNIB Sight loss data tool V5/ONS 2019

SIGHT LOSS - THE NATIONAL PICTURE



- Every day, 250 people start to lose their sight in the UK
- Every 6 minutes someone is told they're going blind
- 1 in every 5 people will experience sight loss in their lifetime
- People living in the UK with sight loss that is severe enough to have a significant impact on their daily lives:
 - Today 2 million
 - By 2030 2.7 million
 - By 2050 4.0 million
- Of those people, currently around 360,000 are registered blind or partially sighted.
- In the UK, around 79% of people living with sight loss are over the age of 64.

2 million+

are living with sight loss in the UK which is expected to rise significantly as the population ages.

Sight loss affects people of all ages, but as we get older, we are increasingly likely to experience sight loss. One in five people aged 75 and over are living with sight loss, which increases to one in two people aged 90 or over.

Our ageing population and other factors mean that this number is set to increase dramatically in the future.

Reflecting that women have greater life expectancy than men, nearly two-thirds of people living with sight loss are women.

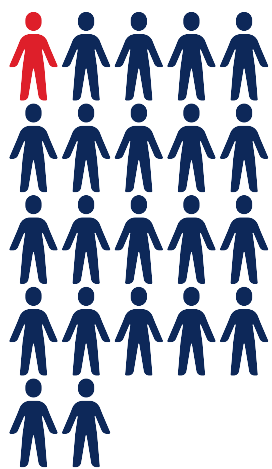
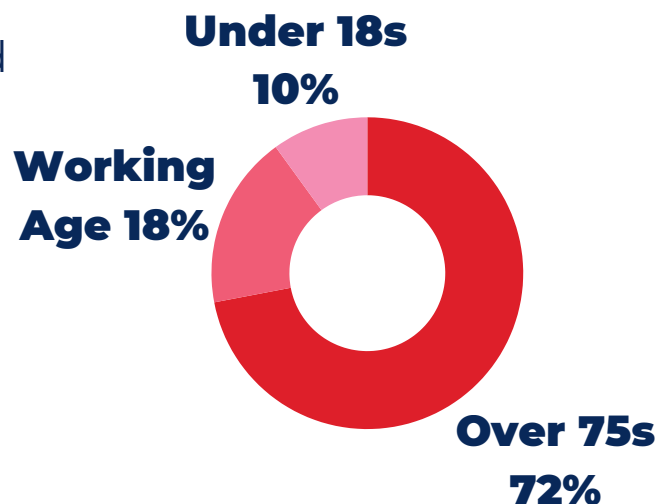
Serious sight loss significantly affects each individual it touches, and each person will be affected differently, both practically and emotionally. Family and friends are also affected, and everyone needs help to cope with the changes which sight loss brings.



SIGHT LOSS IN DORSET

There are **4,400** registered blind or partially sighted people in Dorset

The total number of people living with serious sight loss in Dorset is estimated to be **34,700**



This is equivalent to **4.5%** of the Dorset population

Or **1 in every 22** people living in the county

This figure will rise to **42,200** by 2032

Local authority support for people with sight loss in Dorset has reduced dramatically over the past decade and continues to do so. Only a small handful of specialist social services staff are currently employed by the two Councils or through sub-contracted services.

Low vision assessment services provided by local optician practices have also reduced dramatically and are now non-existent in some parts of the county.

The help provided by national sight loss charities is limited. It reduced markedly during the Covid pandemic, with services that ceased then never returning. Remaining services from these charities are primarily phone or web-based rather than in-person, which is what people want and need.

These factors combine to mean that the need for Dorset Blind Association, a truly local charity offering direct, face-to-face help and support throughout the county on an ongoing basis, grows ever more significant.

DORSET BLIND ASSOCIATION - WHAT WE DO

We provide practical and emotional support to people with sight loss, helping them to live well, stay independent, and remain connected to their communities. Established in 1918, we now support over 1,000 people each month across Dorset.



PRACTICAL

We deliver practical, accessible support across Dorset, bringing services directly into communities and into people's homes where needed. This removes barriers created by sight loss and helps people maintain independence in their daily lives and routines.



EMPOWERING

We work alongside people experiencing sight loss to build confidence, develop practical skills, and provide the tools needed to adapt. This enables people to regain control, maintain independence, and continue living life on their own terms.



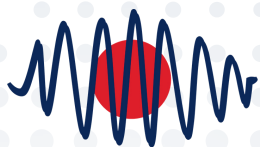
LIFELONG

Our support is not time-limited. We remain alongside people as their sight loss or circumstances change over time, ensuring continuity of care and preventing people from reaching crisis points or being left without support.

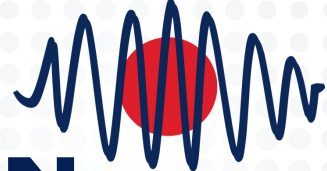


UNRESTRICTED

We support anyone experiencing sight loss, not only those formally registered blind or partially sighted, and we work with families and carers too. This wider support helps reduce isolation and ensures people feel informed, supported, and connected.



DORSET BLIND ASSOCIATION IN ACTION



Dorset Blind Association works to help blind and partially sighted people throughout the county adjust to living with serious sight loss. We help them feel their life still has purpose and enable them to lead full, healthy and socially active lives in their local community, lived as independently as they choose.

Community Support Service

Our team of experienced support workers are experts in sight loss, as well as the services and practical support available. Located across Dorset, they'll visit members across the county to talk through the help available. They'll also check in with people regularly to ensure the support they're getting continues to be right for them.



Social Clubs

A significant challenge for many visually impaired people is maintaining an active social life. We provide over 20 social clubs and activity groups across Dorset where people can meet regularly. People with sight loss face mobility challenges so we provide transport for many of these clubs.



Activities

We understand that many of our members still have varied interests and hobbies they would like to explore.

Our activity clubs include book club, film club, indoor bowls, acoustic shooting and more. We even have an annual driving day!

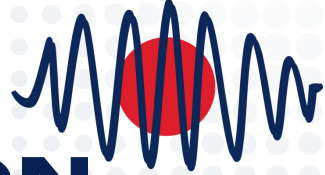


Equipment & Advice

Our Equipment and Advice service, based in Poole, has a range of specialist items and aids to help make living with sight loss easier. There is a resources and equipment section in each of our charity shops. We also offer a mobile service which makes home visits across the county to ensure the service is fully accessible to all, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances. In addition, we offer an extensive audio library and a transcription service.



DORSET BLIND ASSOCIATION IN ACTION



Dorset Blind Association works to help blind and partially sighted people throughout the county adjust to living with serious sight loss, to still feel their life has purpose and to enable them to lead full, healthy and socially active lives in their local community, lived as independently as they choose.

Charity Shops

Our charity shops play a significant role in funding our services, but also are themselves a vital part of our service delivery. As well as the essential task of generating income, the shops act as a hub for Dorset Blind Association in their area. Each shop also includes a mini equipment and advice/resource centre making our services even more accessible to the public.



Our Staff

Our small, dedicated staff team has one thing in common - a passion for bringing happiness to blind and partially sighted people's lives! A dynamic group of individuals, they strive to work hard to meet each member's needs and the charity's goals. There is a wealth of experience across the team which is further complemented by the skills, knowledge and dedication of our Trustees.



Fundraising

As we are not funded by the government or any national charity, 100% of what we do needs to be supported by fundraising. In addition to raising awareness of Dorset Blind Association, our team organises fundraising events, charity collections while supporting individuals and organisations fundraising on our behalf.



Volunteers

We have over 400 trusted volunteers who are essential in helping deliver our vital services. Our volunteers fill critical roles, from home visitors, phone buddies, drivers and companions to shop workers and event staff. Without our volunteers, a huge amount of what we do would simply not be possible. And the volunteers themselves gain too, with almost all gaining a sense of accomplishment and feeling that their volunteering makes a positive difference to their own lives.



THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

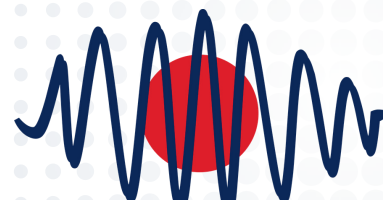
The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) is the highest award given to UK volunteer groups and recognises exceptional work done by volunteer groups in their communities. In 2017, Dorset Blind Association was honoured to be the recipient of this esteemed award.



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

Equivalent to an MBE, QAVS awards are the highest awards given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life. The award also reflects well on the small, dedicated staff team at Dorset Blind Association who manage, motivate and steer our volunteers.



MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

OUR SUPPORT IN NUMBERS

Feedback from Dorset Blind Association members, 2025

94%



would recommend Dorset Blind Association to someone else living with sight loss

83%



say they would be worse off if our support was reduced or unavailable



How our support helps



72%

can access practical support and equipment when they need it



62%

feel able to talk to someone about their sight loss



60%

feel better able to deal with the problems caused by their sight loss



64%

better understand the practical and emotional challenges of sight loss



59%

feel less isolated



In their own words

“Sudden eyesight loss can be a very lonely place. Being told about Dorset Blind Association was a real game changer. Always help at hand”



“If I have a problem, I know I can pick up the phone and get help from someone who cares

The help, kindness and support of the charity have been amazing. At the club, the fun and laughter is a real tonic and isolation is a thing of the past.



Based on responses to the 2025 Dorset Blind Association member survey.

DORSET BLIND ASSOCIATION - THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE

Dorset Blind Association makes a significant difference to our members' lives, both practically and emotionally. Our support helps people improve their wellbeing, maintain independence and feel more connected.

The survey results show this impact clearly, but our members' own stories bring it to life. They show how practical help, trusted relationships and regular contact can restore confidence and reduce isolation.

Sam, member since 1977

I've been registered blind since birth and have been in contact with DBA all my life. Since the specific social services for the blind were cut back, many people lost all support. From then on, DBA became even more valuable to me - offering practical and emotional support that cannot be found anywhere else. Quite simply, they are a lifeline for many. As I find it difficult to work, DBA also gives me the opportunity to volunteer and fundraise so I can give something back.

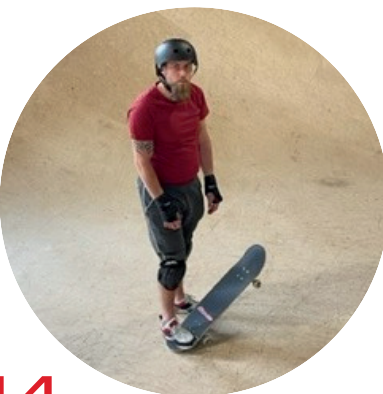


Maria, member since 2000

DBA has had a huge impact on me, I was helped in accessing services that I needed and also by meeting people in similar situations. I volunteer for DBA in various ways and have served the charity as a trustee since 2010. I am proud to be part of our growth in expanding and delivering our services across Dorset.

Jess, member since 2016

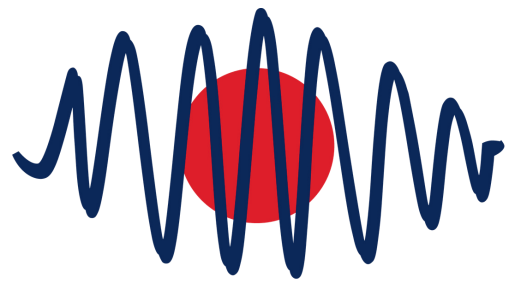
I've been registered blind for about 30 years. I became a member 8 years ago and am now a Trustee, as well as volunteering for DBA. I've had the privilege of attending some great activities like an aerial acrobatic workshop, boat trips along with museum & cinema trips. We also have online zoom groups, which have been a lifesaver for many, especially through the pandemic. DBA's service is life-changing and enhancing for so many people, opening up a whole world of friendship and support.



Tom, member since 2014

Dorset Blind is great for social activities and a great way to meet other blind people and share experiences. I've done some great activities with them, such as driving a car! It's a great organisation to access support and resources. The charity has also provided plenty of volunteering opportunities, including being a poster boy for DBA!! This has given me the confidence to live a reasonably independent and very outgoing/adventurous life.





Dorset
Blind
Association

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**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**