

Vision North Somerset – ‘Seeing Friends’



Vision North Somerset supports over 1500 blind and partially sighted people across North Somerset, including through social and support groups, befriending, help registering visual impairment, and representing those with visual impairment in local groups.

Vision NS used their Community Grant to develop and support weekly in-person social groups, monthly phone groups, and to create new groups in response to people's wants and needs (e.g. a gardening club). They also engaged new people in volunteering and training.

UKSPF Achievements

1 project completed
231 people engaged

Wider impact

There is a growing body of evidence to support the connection between social isolation, loneliness, and depression, particularly for older people and/or those with disabilities. Those living with sight loss can have few, if any, opportunities to social, pursue leisure interests, or take part in community activities.

The work of Vision NS through this project allowed more people with visual impairment to improve their wellbeing through social activities and befriending, and also can provide a boost to local businesses and community groups. There were some heartwarming case studies:

“A man lost his sight and sold his bowling equipment, assuming that he could no longer bowl. He and his wife used to enjoy bowling together and hadn't bowled for 10 years before they came to us. After we set up the visually impaired bowling group at the local club, the man has now joined VI bowling and has also joined the regular bowling club and is making new friends. He and his wife can enjoy their hobby again.”

“We organised sighted guide training through Guide Dogs and are now able to offer

some befrienders who can walk with their befriendees. This will enable someone who is currently housebound to get out for some exercise.”

“We have deliberately worked in partnership with local businesses and organisations to support our local community and to integrate people with visual impairment into their local town. People have attended 65 The High Street community centre for the first time, and regularly visited local cafés and pubs due to our social groups - boosting the local economy.”