

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

April 2018

ISSUE 83

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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

The Editor

Essex Sight
40 Osborne Street
Colchester
CO2 7DB
01206 548196

Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 21st May 2018



The Editor writes:

Hello!

Welcome to the latest edition of Spotlight brought to you by Essex Blind Charity. We hope you will find articles that are informative and of interest to you and that you will share these with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, on tape or memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide Braille copies.

Sadly, this will be my last Spotlight as I am retiring this month. I have worked for Essex Blind Charity for over 12 years and thoroughly enjoyed my time here. I will especially miss all the wonderful people I have got to know over the years. My husband is also retiring and we are looking forward to a new phase in our life together. We plan to do some travelling but also look forward to simply pottering at home. I will be leaving you in the very capable hands of Claire, one of our Colchester volunteers who has kindly offered to take over Spotlight publication.

In this month's issue our quiz has a flowery theme and Michelle has reviewed the navigation App Blindsquare. There is also a special offer from Traveleyes holidays, something to look forward to after the long winter we have had.

Jill

Data Protection

New regulations come into force in May regarding how we store and use your personal information. We will be reviewing all our systems but, in the meantime, if you no longer wish to receive Spotlight please let us know and we will remove your details from our database. Call 01206 548196 or email carol@essexsight.org.uk.

Community Support Team by Inez Davies



Helpline Number 01206 548196

Hello,

It feels that the inevitable 'lurgy' has successfully been passed around and I do hope you have managed to dodge the dripping noses and coughs! For those who have succumbed, I hope you have recovered and now picking up some new-found energy for the coming months ahead. As for galloping through the year..... I can't believe 6 months have gone by, in what feels like a blink of the eye. It has been a busy time for the Community Support Team staff and volunteers alike. I have come to realise that several agencies and people, refer to Visually Impaired People as VIP. I like to think that we see our customers as VIP (Very Important People) when we refer to Visually Impaired People, because they are, you are!

The team continue to visit VIP at home who are vulnerable and unable to call into our sight centres or require advice about lighting and equipment. Offering information and advice about benefits, registering visual impairment, assessing lifestyle, mobility, health, care etc and identifying support mechanisms for independent living. Living with sight loss is a tricky condition to manage and often people compare it to grief, grieving for the loss of an ability. Grieving for the loss of social connections and independence. At Essex Sight, we are very aware of the emotional struggles that many face with a visual impairment and that is why we have several volunteers who have personally experienced sight loss, to completely empathise and relate to our customers. Our volunteers, sighted and non-sighted, offer much reassurance and plenty of opportunity to chat about life's obstacles, usually at our social activity groups. I know that many friendships have developed over the years with kindness and inspiration. So, if you are feeling a little lonely and perhaps isolated, why not pop along and meet some friendly faces for a cuppa and a chat! Attendance at our sight centres has increased, month on month

and I am delighted to share the usage of our services when completing our monitoring reports for our funders.

We continue to demonstrate equipment and assistive technology making life a little easier and putting people in touch with specialist services and help. There are many opportunities to come for a visit to our local sight centres, where you can drop in to some of our events. A range of speakers and learning sessions are being planned for the coming year. My office time has been busy with partnership meetings, firming up our Befriending and Hospital offer. Again, I'm putting it out there to Spotlight readers, that if you are interested in joining us to expand our befriending services, please do get in touch.

April sees the departure of Jill Shakespear, retiring after 12 full years of working with us at Essex Sight. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all the Community Support Team, to wish Jill every happiness in her future endeavours and to slow down! She has been an incredible asset to our team, full of enthusiasm and energy and will be sadly missed. We will think of her fondly, as we build on her important work and achievements over the years.

Carol Massey our Sight Centre Coordinator, is joining the full-time workers in April to cover Jill's crucial drop-ins at local libraries, home visits and hospital work in mid Essex. This creates some momentum for us to expand the work of our volunteers to support visitors at our sight centres and become more customer focussed to the public.

I wanted to finish with the word HOPE, I realise I use it quite a bit! A word that inspires me, a word that celebrates optimism and potential because life would be pretty difficult if we didn't have it. I needed you to know that we are all committed in nurturing and fostering hope within our team and for Very Important People in Essex

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it" Edith Wharton.

So, here goes.... I'm carrying my torch!
Been nice talking to you

Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey



So here we are in April and it's still really cold. Roll on some warm weather!

A large pothole has opened up outside the Sight Centre and everytime it rains and a bus goes by, the water splashes up at our windows. So, apologies if you visit and the front looks a bit dirty! Hopefully, Essex County Council will mend it soon. If not, I will plant some flowers in it and make it an art "installation!"

The Sight Centre was quiet in February, I think the snow and ice puts people off going out. Things are picking up now and our coffee morning is as popular as ever.

Coffee Morning

Until now, we have not charged for our Tuesday coffee morning. From April, we will be asking people who come along to make a donation of £1. This is a small amount, but will help us to pay for tea, coffee and biscuits and does, I think, represent great value for a morning of refreshments and social interaction.

I would also like to thank the people who donate biscuits, coffee etc. It is a very kind gesture and much appreciated.

Queen Boudica Primary School in Colchester run an after-school club for pupils and recently held a sensory week. We supplied some sim specs (glasses that mimic common eye conditions) and other items like tactile dice. The children tried on the specs and did other activities such as matching up pairs of socks while blindfolded. We received a lovely letter from the school saying that the children felt they now had a greater understanding of the different eye conditions and how much they value their own sight.

We had Paul Baker, a fire safety consultant, visit at one of our March coffee mornings. He gave a very interested talk about fire and safety in the home. Paul answered lots of questions and I think that everyone who attended felt better informed about what do to if a fire did break out.

Donated and ex-demo equipment

We have two video magnifiers and one portable text and speech machine, together with some Daisy Players. These are all second-hand and as such, do not come with any warranty, but are in full working condition and are available to view if anyone is interested. Please contact the Sight Centre for more details.

Knitting Group

Don't forget about the knitting group. We were donated so much wool by Colchester Gazette and Standard readers, that we need more members to help us knit it up into blankets, twiddlemuffs and the like. It's a very friendly group and all abilities are welcome.

Colchester Borough Council - New VIP Helpline

From April 3rd, Colchester Borough Council are introducing a priority helpline for the visually impaired. This will be a direct line to a member of their team and means you will not have to press any other buttons to get through to the right department. The staff will be able to deal with any Council issues, for example, refuse collection, council tax etc.

Please contact us for more information.

I would like to apologise to everyone who turned up on 20th February for our on-line today event, only to find that the facilitator from RNIB had double booked himself and was elsewhere in Essex on that day. Currently, I have not re-booked a date, but I would mention that we have an iPad at our Colchester Sight Centre and are able to do 1:1 demonstrations should anyone require it.

Volunteers

If you, or anyone you know, is interested in volunteering for Essex Sight, please do contact me. We are looking for people to help in the various Sight Centres, including Colchester. No experience is needed and we will provide any necessary training and support.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to my colleague, Jill Shakespear, who is retiring this month. Jill showed me “the ropes” when I first joined Essex Sight nearly four years ago and shared much of her knowledge and experience with me. I will be taking over responsibility for the Mid-West when Jill leaves and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our various sight centres.

Looking forward to some warmer weather soon!

Colchester Sight Centre Activities

Weekly

Tuesdays	10am-12	Coffee Morning iPad/iPhone sessions (by appointment only)
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Wednesdays	10am-12	Correspondence Reading (home visiting service also available).
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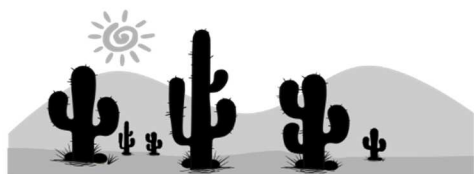
Monthly

1 st Thursday	10am-12noon	Knitting Group
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New Sensory Support Group

Are you interested in joining a new sensory support group in Colchester run by RNIB Community Connect in partnership with Essex Sight? There will be an introductory meeting on Thursday 19th April from 2-3.30pm at our Colchester Sight Centre to discuss this. Sight impaired people and their friends and families and people with dual sensory loss are welcome to come and share their views. If you can't make this meeting there will be another at the Quaker's Meeting House, 6 Church Street, Colchester CO1 1NF on Wednesday 16th May at 2-3.30pm.

News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



Braintree Brentwood
Chelmsford Maldon

A fond farewell

As this will be my last contribution to Spotlight I thought it would be nice to share some memories of my time at Essex Blind Charity.

I first came across Essex Blind Charity when I was working in Chelmsford Library and Sue Barrell approached us about setting up a new Sight Centre there in the autumn of 2005. So, I was working in partnership even before I was employed. The following Spring my post at the library became redundant and it was a great opportunity for me to join Essex Blind Charity which was expanding its community services across Essex. My first task was to launch a new Sight centre in Braintree which was opened in May 2006 by Lord Newton. Since then I have never looked back. We continued to expand our services, opening new centres in Brentwood and Burnham-on-Crouch which was later relocated to Maldon. We also developed our home visiting service and I took over the running of our support and equipment centre at Broomfield Hospital Low Vision Clinic. I also ran a variety of social activities including craft sessions, talks and book groups at the different centres. Add to this talks to social clubs and professional groups, organising annual exhibitions and most recently editing Spotlight and you can see how varied my role is and why I enjoy it so much. Meanwhile Essex Blind Charity expanded in other areas and I acquired a wonderful team of co-workers in the Community Support team.

My husband Nick is retiring too, and we are looking forward to the next phase of our life doing all those things we never get time for. Having said that our diaries already seemed booked up till the end of June – I can easily understand why retired people never have any spare time! We are hoping to spend more time at the gym and in the garden as well as more travelling and days out, not to mention the joy of helping with our new grandson.

I am really pleased to be leaving my work in the capable hands of Carol who has been running the Colchester Sight Centre for several years and many of you will have met already. I am also very grateful to all the wonderful volunteers at my Sight centres who will continue to offer their support. We could not run the service without them.

Finally, fond wishes to all of you who I have met over the years. Being in a position to help and encourage people and make a difference to their lives is the most rewarding job anyone can have, and I consider myself very privileged to have worked for Essex Sight.

Jill

Demonstration days in Mid Essex

Enhanced Vision, Dolphin Computers and Calibre Library Service will be running demonstration sessions at our mid Essex Sight Centres in May. Drop in to see the latest equipment and information. The dates are:

Maldon: Tuesday 1st May 10-1

Brentwood: Monday 14th May 10-1

Chelmsford: Friday 18th May 10-2

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Braintree: 18th April and 16th May

Brentwood: 9th April and 14th May

Maldon: 3rd April, 1st May and 5th June

Chelmsford: every Friday

Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders



Brightlingsea Clacton Harwich Manningtree

CLACTON SIGHT CENTRE

It is always lovely to see new people at Cadows on a Thursday afternoon. Please let Denise know if you wish for a demonstration of any of the larger pieces of equipment and these can be brought over from Colchester to Clacton.

Thanks for the staff of Toby Restaurant, Clacton for all their help on Friday 16th March where we gathered for a lovely carvery meal. It was a lovely warm sunny day on the seafront and seemed strange that snow was arriving the next day, but it did!

Clacton Macular Society

Just a reminder that everyone is most welcome at Clacton Macular Society; those living with macular disease or indeed living with a different eye condition. The group leader is Peter Bareham, tel: 01255 430386. The group meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month (excluding December) in Sam's Hall, Rosemary Road, Clacton, CO15 1NX. In addition, Harwich has opened a Macular Support group which meets at the Park Pavilion, Barrack Lane, Harwich, CO12 3NS on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. For further information, please contact: Colin 07494 467995.

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Brightlingsea	Wednesday 16 th May 10 am – 12.30 pm
Clacton	Every Thursday 1 pm – 3.30 pm
Harwich	Tuesday 10 th April/Tuesday 12 th June 10 am – 1 pm
Manningtree	Tuesday 22 nd May 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant



Thankfully (hopefully!) the bad weather is now behind us and we can look forward to Spring, albeit a bit late. We had some problems during the recent snowy weather with staff getting into work as some roads in our area were impassable for a couple of days. As a '24/7' operation we need to keep the home fully staffed and we are very grateful to those staff who were able to get in, and to those who worked extra shifts to cover. We even had a couple of staff who slept in for a few days, to make sure we had adequate cover. We really do have loyal, committed staff at Read House and the management team and the Directors really appreciate their efforts and hard work.

We have had some big birthday celebrations in the last few weeks. Lillian Lazenbury reached the grand age of 100 in February. Lillian celebrated with her family and other residents and the local press were on hand to record the occasion. Jo Lawrence celebrated her 85th birthday in March and her family arranged a surprise party for her at Read House. Jo's son had been planning this with us for 3 months and amazingly the secret was kept, and Jo had no idea her sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren would be there to celebrate her birthday with her. In April Gladys Petch will be celebrating her 100th birthday with her family. Our best wishes to all of them.

We recently carried out our annual survey with residents and families, as well as professionals such as community nurses and doctors who visit the home, to find out what they think of our service and how we might improve things for our residents. We had a wonderful response with everyone rating our care as 'good' or 'excellent'. We also had some lovely comments about a variety of different staff, which just shows what a good team we have working here at Read House.

Quiz

With Spring in the air I have chosen a flower theme for this month's quiz.

1. What name is given to the pollen-producing reproductive organ of a flower composed of an anther and filament?
2. Which small flower, usually with 5 blue or purple petals, is associated with Freemasonry and has the scientific name *Myosotis*?
3. Saffron comes from which type of flower?
4. Which flower inspired the William Wordsworth poem 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud'?
5. Which flower is often called the 'winter rose' or 'Christmas rose'?
6. Which flower is sometimes called the sword lily?
7. The anniversary of which prime minister's death is commemorated in the U.K. as Primrose Day?
8. Which blue flower of the genus *Veronica* is also the name of the ship which was to accompany the Mayflower with the Pilgrim Fathers?
9. Old Man's Beard and Traveller's Joy are names for a variety of which flower?
10. Which flower was once more costly than gold and has bulbs which can replace onions in some recipes?
11. Which family of flowering plants, with between 22,000 and 26,000 species, include the variety Lady's Slipper?
12. What name is given to the Japanese art of flower arranging?

App of the month – Blindsquare

Reviewed by Michelle

Blindsquare is a tracking and navigation app for the iPhone which uses data and GPS from its sister app Foursquare to provide the user with information about their current location. If you have a Foursquare account, you can login via Blindsquare but this is not a requirement. There is a one-off payment of £40 before you can download the app. However, there is a free version called Blindsquare Event which in demo mode will allow you to pick a location from a list and use the features of Blindsquare to explore this location.

If you open Blindsquare and start walking, it will tell you your location and track you as you walk. You receive audible announcements of up-coming intersections as well as nearby places of interest and their position and distance from your current location. This can get a little confusing in the centre of town as you get a constant stream of shops names and restaurants and in some cases these are for places which are no longer trading in that location. I've found that it will give you the name of a shop 60 feet to the left, but this could mean directly to your left on a parallel street to the one you are currently on. I have found it useful learning the names of shops and restaurants in our town which I didn't even know were there. Blindsquare can also tell you about other points of interest such as Night Life, Out Door Activities, and Colleges. In settings you can choose how much it tells you and in what style it gives directions. There are 44 English speaking voices to choose from though I have only used the default voice. I prefer to be told Left and Right but you can choose clock face or North South East and West. To prevent information overload I've set the search distance quite low, but that is personal choice.

You can save places to your favourites list for easy access and Blindsquare will tell you if you are approaching one of your favourite places even if you didn't do a search for it. You can enter a place name in the search box or use the on-screen categories to perform a search. If you want to plot a route, Blindsquare will offer you a choice of the map apps you have on your phone then it will work in conjunction with the map to provide you with directions.

Personally, I don't think I could trust it to take me to an unfamiliar location as the GPS is unreliable. It told me I was at my destination when I was 3 shops away from it and telling you about places that are a street away can be off putting. That said it is brilliant at telling you which street you are walking on and which streets are coming up. When I last looked a Trekker Breeze was over £300 so I think £40 for a similar thing is very reasonable, even with its shortcomings. I would recommend Blindsquare but with the warning that you get what you pay for; I do think it's worth £40. I would also suggest investing in a pair of Bluetooth Earphones as the speech can be hard to hear in busy traffic and you don't want to walk around carrying your expensive iPhone in your hand.

Entertainment

Theatres

Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Pieces of String - A new musical set simultaneously in the 1940s and in the present day, tells how Jane's father, Edward, came back from the Second World War with a secret that would change his life forever – a secret that he would carry until the day he died.

With hauntingly beautiful music and a heart-rending human story, Pieces of String is a tender, funny, emotionally-charged exploration of how three generations of one family learn to deal with a story that nobody's been brave enough to tell until today.

The audio described performance with touch tour is on Saturday 5th May at 2.30pm.

Box office: 01206 573948

New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich

The English Touring Company present A Street Car named Desire. Audio described performance on Thursday 26th April at 7.45pm.

Box office: 01473 295900

London

Greenwich – walking touch tour of the Old Naval College

Saturday 28th April 11.30am, places free but must be booked.

Box office: 020 8269 4747

Mersea Island Food & Drink Festival

If you feel like indulging some of your senses why not get out in the sunshine (hopefully!) and visit Mersea Island for their Food and Drink Festival on Sat 26th and Sun 27th May from 11am- 5pm.

There will be lots of local produce to try including wines and ales, everything from smoked foods and fresh fish and meat to ice-cream, cakes and preserves.

There will also be arts and craft stalls from local artists and a full programme of entertainment

For more information and high tide times the website is:

<http://www.mersea-fdl-festival.com/index.cfm#.Vrn4H4jwbc>

Activities

Metro Blind Sport's Athletics Open 16 June 2018!

Mile End Stadium, Rhodeswell Road, London E14 7TW, Tower Hamlets, East London.

Metro Blind Sport are thrilled to announce that this year's Athletics Open will be held on 16th June 2018 – 10.00am to 5.00pm, incorporating a Come and Try Coaching Session for vision impaired people, their families and friends.

The Come and Try Session offers those new to the sport an opportunity to experience running, jumping and throwing in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. Qualified Coaches will be on hand to advise and guide you, all ages and abilities are very welcome. If you are looking to try a new event or wanting to improve your performance, this is the place for you! Competition events will be held for Under 18's, Seniors and Veterans. Entry is free and includes souvenir T-shirts, medals and certificates and catering.

University accommodation is available close to the track; contact us for further details.

Phone: 07814 751643

Email: lan.francis@metroblindsport.org

Guided running

England Athletics and British Blind Sport have created the Find a Guide database to help you start, get back to or stay running. If you are 18 or older, simply search for guide runners near you using your postcode.

All the listed guide runners have attended a Sight Loss Awareness and Guide Running workshop, are DBS checked, passionate about running and are waiting to support you – whether it's your first time running or you're a seasoned runner looking for more support.

The database can be found on <https://www.englandathletics.org/guide-runners>

Holidays

Traveleyes

Traveleyes are the world leading travel organisation offering worldwide adventures for both blind and sighted travellers founded in 2004 by Amar Latif, the blind entrepreneur & TV presenter, to allow blind people to travel the world with freedom and independence.

On each trip, half the group are blind or visually impaired, and half are fully sighted. They pair a different sighted blind traveller with a different blind traveller for each day of the holiday. In return for being the eyes for blind travellers, sighted travellers receive a discount of their trips,

subsidised entirely by Traveleyes. This means that blind travellers don't pay any more for accessible travel, and benefit from one on one guiding for the whole trip as well as live audio description. They provide holidays all over the world, from India and China, to Peru and Australia, to Europe and the UK.

Traveleyes are offering a 5% discount to all our members off their first trip, so that you can come and experience the world with Traveleyes! To use this offer, just quote the code '5%2018'

More information about Traveleyes, can be found on the website, at <https://traveleyes-international.com> or call 0113 834 6094 for the latest brochure.

Answers to quiz

1. Stamen
2. Forget-me-nots
3. Crocus
4. Daffodils
5. Hellebore
6. Gladiolus
7. Benjamin Disraeli
8. Speedwell
9. Clematis
10. Tulips
11. Orchids
12. Ikebana

Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196
(Inez Davies, Carol Massey, Denise Sanders)

Christine Pratt (Colchester + Tendring hospitals) 07770 750108

Read House 01255 673654
(Janet Plant, General Manager, Sandra Edwards, Admin Assistant)

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

Thank you!

Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....

Post Code.....

I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:
Essex Blind Charity
Read House, 23 The Esplanade
Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU.

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....
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Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Cassette Tape..... Memory Stick.....

Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.

Essex Sight Centres

Braintree

Braintree Library, Fairfield Road
Braintree CM7 3YL
3rd Wednesday of each month
10 am to 1pm

Colchester

40 Osborne Street
Colchester CO2 7ND
Open Monday to Friday
10 am to 2 pm
Wednesday late opening to 4pm

Brentwood

Brentwood Library, New Road
Brentwood CM14 4BP
2nd Monday of each month
10 am to 1 pm

Frinton on Sea

Read House, 23 The Esplanade
Frinton on Sea, CO13 9AU
Mon-Fri. 1pm to 4.30 pm
(by appointment – tel. 01255 673654)

Brightlingsea

Brightlingsea Library, New Street
Brightlingsea CO7 0BZ
3rd Wednesday alternate months
10 am to 12.30 pm

Harwich

Harwich Library, Upper Kingsway
Dovercourt CO12 3JT
2nd Tuesday alternate months
10 am to 1 pm

Chelmsford

Chelmsford Library, Market Road
Chelmsford CM1 1LH
Every Friday
10 am to 2 pm

Maldon

Maldon Library, Carmelite House,
White Horse Lane
Maldon, CM9 5FW
1st Tuesday of each month
10am to 1pm

Clacton-on-Sea

CADOWs, Old Road
Clacton on Sea CO15 1HX
Every Thursday
1 pm to 3.30 pm

Manningtree

Manningtree Library, High Street
Manningtree, CO11 1AD
4th Tuesday alternate months
9.30 am to 12.30 pm

For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.

Email: services@essexblind.co.uk

For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:

General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant: on 01255 673654

Email: janet@essexblind.co.uk