

**Kingston Upon Thames Association for the Blind Annual Review and Summarized Accounts**

**For the Year ending 31 October 2024**

**Note from Chairman Roy Smith MBE:** A very warm welcome to our extremely friendly and active charity. I enjoy steering the trustee’s; staff and continuing thanking them all for their hard work including our loyal volunteers. Without trustees/volunteer’s support KAB would not exist.

We are expanding our services and representation within the NHS; RBK plus other local charities, ensuring the Voice of our members is heard concerning the issues faced by those living with Sight loss.

Yes, it has its challenges; Fundraising; recruiting volunteers and a new treasurer. But the excellent feedback from our members makes this all worthwhile.

Give us a ring today if you can help!

KAB has been supporting blind and partially sighted residents of all ages in and around the London borough of Kingston Upon Thames since 1966. Empowering individuals living with sight loss to lead

independent and fulfilled lives. We do this through a program of social activities, sports and services.

**Our aim:**

The RNIB estimates there are 5,000 residents living with sight loss in Kingston, KAB membership is 259 members, our aim is to reach all residents living with sight loss so those who need our support are aware of us, so no one is left struggling alone and are equipped with relevant information, skills and confidence to adapt to life with little or no sight and reach their potential.

**Our team:**

KAB is a Disabled Person-Led Organisation, with 7 of its 9 Trustees and the CEO being vision impaired. Their lived experience is central to the leadership and direction of the charity.

We currently have four members of staff:

**Odette Battarel**, our CEO, **Niro Jayawardena**, our Administrator, **Soumaya Poll**, our Welfare Officer

In June, thanks to a grant from the City Bridge Trust, we welcomed **Becky Newman**, our new Outreach Officer, who has been developing services and activities during evenings and weekends, helping us better engage with members of working age across

the borough and supporting our efforts to recruit more volunteers.

**We have been working hard to deliver on the goals outlined in our three-year Strategic Plan.**

**Strategic Aim 1: Be more sustainably funded and resourced**

By Intensifying and diversifying our fundraising efforts.

**Strategic Aim 2: Extend our reach in the community**

By attending events in the community as well as offer services and activities across the Borough, in member’s homes and outside of office hours.

**Strategic Aim 3:  Be the best KAB we can be**

We have been reviewing our policies and office processes to make our work more efficient.

**KAB’s achievements and Impact in 2024**

A total of 104 individuals participated in our activities and services over the year. These included social lunches, ten-pin bowling, bowls, cycling, swimming, IT sessions, golf, climbing, and our newly launched book club.

We also welcomed 40 new members referred into our services, bringing the total number of visually impaired members to 261.

We recruited 12 new volunteers during the year. While some have already started supporting our work, others are currently undergoing training before taking up their roles.

In addition, we delivered visual awareness training to 32 individuals.

Our newsletter, *The Eyeopener*, was distributed to 306 people over the year. Additionally, 60 people received the Kingston Talking News on USB sticks. However, it is difficult to determine the exact number of listeners, as some access the service via Alexa or on their mobile phones.

Our Welfare Officer supported 49 individuals both in the office and through home visits, helping them to access or renew a wide range of benefits and concessions. These included Taxi Cards, TV licence concessions, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disabled Travel Passes, Blue Badges, and more.

**Our members help us shape our services and activities**

In September 2023, KAB conducted a survey to gather feedback from members about our existing activities and services, as well as to learn what additional support or events they would like to see. Based on the responses, we introduced several new initiatives: an audiobook club at the library, a Macular Support Group, regular meet-ups at the café in the Rose Theatre, and tech sessions to help members learn how to use mobile phones with Voiceover.

**Feedback from Members**

From a member attending better bones exercise classes

Just thought I would email about my appreciation of the Better Bones course. I find it very helpful in my day-to-day movements. After suffering for many years with my neck, the exercises have really improved my neck movements.  Thank you very much.

From Member given help in the office

Dear everyone. I am writing following my recent visit.  It was lovely to meet you and have help with the forms.  Your organisation works incredibly hard, giving

opportunities for people to share activities, get togethers for lunch, and meet and make new friends.  I have received your newsletter for many years and feel you really enrich the lives of all those you help. Thank you very much.

From a Members helped with Attendance Allowance

left a message saying a big thank you for receiving her attendance allowance, which means now she can afford a cleaner and that will make a big difference to her life.

From a  member taking part in climbing

It is very important to have contact with VI friends because you are rarely excluded by visual interaction which often happens with sighted friends.  We also get to laugh about similar experiences which is a great release.  It is crucial to talk to people with similar experiences as then you feel that you are not alone.

**Launch of the Queen Promenade audio guide**

The idea of creating an audio guide first emerged during the COVID-19 lockdown, proposed by our Chairman, Roy Smith. His main aim was to encourage blind and partially sighted residents to walk along the

riverside, enjoy the experience, and stay active and well during a challenging time.

KAB successfully secured funding from both Sport England and the Royal Borough of Kingston. The project became a collaborative effort involving the Surbiton and District Historical Society, Kingston Museum, and the Friends of the Queen’s Promenade, who kindly contributed a wealth of fun, interesting, and informative historical anecdotes to create a lively and engaging script.

We were also fortunate to work with VocalEyes, a national charity that provides audio description for theatres, museums, and art galleries. Their team walked the route several times to ensure the guide included rich audio descriptions of the built environment, helping to orient and guide our visually impaired members along the way.

Several of our members were directly involved in testing the guide. They walked the route, gave valuable feedback, and helped us refine the final version.

We officially launched the project on 25th March 2024, with 26 people in attendance, including Councillor Sue Ansari and Rachel White from the RBK Disability

Network. Although it wasn’t the warmest of days, we were lucky with the weather as the rain held off. We began in Kingston Market Place, making sure everyone had access to the audio guide, either via a link, a USB stick, or a boombox. The walk began with a description and history of the Market Place, continuing down to the riverside past the kiosk, all the way to the sensory garden, before finishing with a well-deserved tea and cake at the Boatyard Pub.

As well as making Kingston a more inclusive and accessible place to live, this audio guide is a resource for everyone. A QR code has been created, linking to our website where the guide can be accessed by anyone wishing to enjoy the walk on their mobile phone.

We hope to develop more audio walks in the future, giving our members a variety of interesting places to explore and enjoy.

**New Projects**

**Disability Justice**

In July 2024, KAB was awarded a two-year grant from Trust for London to support our work in raising awareness of the issues and barriers faced by our members. This funding enables us to engage more

actively with professionals, politicians, and decision makers to advocate for improved accessibility and greater equality. It also allows us to strengthen our involvement in the Disability Justice movement and lend our voice to both local and national campaigns.

KAB has since joined the Kingston Disability Network, the Public Transport Forum, and the Health and Wellbeing Network. We have participated in various surveys and consultations concerning the planning of cycle routes, new developments along the riverside, the accessibility of public parks, and the NHS.

Our advocacy work also includes reporting practical issues affecting accessibility, such as broken tactile cones, faded pedestrian crossings, cluttered pavements, and overhanging branches. We continue to encourage our members to report any accessibility challenges they encounter so that we can take action on their behalf.

**Climate Change Action**

In June 2024, thanks to a grant from the Royal Borough of Kingston, we launched a three-year project to identify barriers and develop solutions to increase the engagement and participation of blind and partially sighted residents in all aspects of climate change action. This includes areas such as recycling, food choices, renewable energy, and nature walks. As

part of this initiative, KAB has also joined the Kingston Environmental Forum.

**Challenges for the Future**

Due to an ageing population, we anticipate a nationwide increase in sight loss, which will likely lead to greater demand for our services. More individuals will need support accessing benefits, managing the rising cost of living, and navigating the increasing digitalisation of health, social, and everyday services.

Supporting NHS priorities such as prevention will become increasingly important. KAB aims to help our members stay active and well, while promoting eye health messages to the wider public to help prevent avoidable sight loss.

KAB is preparing to meet these upcoming challenges with a strengthened team, upgraded IT and financial systems, and close collaboration with partners across the voluntary, statutory, and health sectors.

We will continue to drive our fundraising efforts to expand our resources and meet rising demands. Our partnerships with organisations like Kingston Voluntary Action, who have supported us in developing our skills and fundraising capacity, remain vital to our growth.

**Summary of Accounts for the Year Ending 31st October 2024**

Firstly, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our donors for their support and generosity, your contributions truly make a significant difference.

**Income**

Donations £15,445

Grants £111,950 - Including trust for London, City Bridge foundation, National Lottery, Primary club and other smaller grants

Direct charitable activities £3,841

Investment income £7,342

Other activities £838

**Total:** £139,416

Net Gains on investment £12,653

**Expenditure**

Employment costs £72,812

Recruitment expenses £468

Insurance £649

Office £2,138

Electricity £1,053

Telephone and Broadband £2,315

Clubs, activities and projects costs £14,036

Rent and rates £8,300

Printing and postage £1,229

Accountancy and payroll £4,739

Talking News Costs £1,549

Repairs and maintenance £294

Equipment £241

Training £959

Legal fees £147

AGM and trustee expenses £925

Depreciation of tangible fixed assets £417

Total expenditure £112,271

Net income against expenditure £39,798 pounds

This document is a summary of our annual report and accounts 2023/2024, full version of both is available by request.

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