

RSBC

Royal Society for **Blind Children**

IMPACT REPORT 2018



**Life
Without
Limits**
For Blind
Children

FOREWORD



Tom Pey,
RSBC Chief Executive

At RSBC, I've learned the difference between losing one's sight as a child, or, like myself, as an adult. Sight loss is devastating at any age, but adults have retained memory and have learned lots of things prior to losing their sight. A child has not had that opportunity and unless we all do something differently than before, the life chances of a person who loses their sight in youth is very poor.

I am extremely proud that the RSBC is making a real difference by changing the traditional approach to working with those affected by childhood sight loss. We put parents firmly at the centre of everything we do. Remember it is the parents who find out that their child is blind. It is their lives that are traumatised by this diagnosis and it remains their responsibility to bring up their child whose life chances are, at best, uncertain.

Something incredibly traumatic happens when a family finds out their child will live with sight loss for the rest of his or her life. The parent's dreams for their child's future are shattered. The feeling of being alone and without help is overwhelming. We must be there to support parents at that time, and when we are needed as their child develops into a young adult ready to take their place in life.

Through our Family Support and other services, we help the family to develop the skills they need to overcome the challenges faced by their child and support the child with the skills they need to get around, look after themselves and make friends. It is by working together as a team that the vision impaired child will be better able to live life on life's terms.

We simply do not have enough resources to support everyone who needs our help. We rely on voluntary income and donations and we are incredibly grateful to our loyal donors, legators and charitable trusts, volunteers and supporters without whom we couldn't make the difference we do.

We need to double our income over the next five years to be able to support even more young people and their families. Your generosity is appreciated.



Our Family Support Service delivered nearly 1,500 interventions with families in 2018 helping them to find the confidence, resilience, and resources they need to guide their child through sight loss.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

When Josiah was diagnosed with retinopathy as a result of his premature birth, it came as a shock to his mum, Janelle: **"I cried a lot. I felt guilty and scared."**

Being told that your child is losing their sight can feel life-shattering. In the aftermath there's a whole host of practical things for parents to consider, often while dealing with intense emotions of loss, sadness, fear or anger.

Having access to help with practical and emotional matters can make a real difference.

Janelle and Josiah, like many, were referred to us by their hospital consultant: access to the service is possible through vital partnerships with a host of organisations in nine cities and regions of England. We give each family a designated RSBC contact. Someone they can call, text or email when they need support.

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR 1105 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN 2018

In 2018 **LIVE LIFE GO FURTHER** was a lifeline out of isolation for many. Through the programme hundreds of young people did day-to-day things independently to follow their interests, and achieve their goals. Young people like Marcus.

Marcus joined the programme and was partnered with his own RSBC Youth Mentor. Mentors work at the pace of each child, progressing through a range of activities towards their personal goals.

As his mum, Elaine explained, the impact was huge:

“Marcus’s mental health started to suffer as he became more aware he was different. We set about trying to search for groups with other blind children. I came across RSBC and messaged them straight away. The kindness and understanding they showed was amazing. Marcus felt instantly accepted and for the first time we felt supported. Marcus’ hopes and dreams for the future since have changed from thinking he cannot do anything with his life to now wanting to study Law. He’s even talking about changing the blind world and making it more accessible, because of RSBC’s amazing positive outlook on life and their passion to tell these kids they can be anything they want to be.”



ON A SCALE OF 1-5, YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN **LIVE LIFE, GO FURTHER** RATED ITS BENEFITS AS:



135 YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVED A RECOGNISED AQA ACCREDITATION THROUGH RSBC, IN AREAS RANGING FROM COOKING TO BUDGETING.

“I enjoyed learning to crack and whisk eggs. I’ve never done that before.” **Zaynah**



In 2018, the children and young people we work with represented themselves and other VI young people at:

- ✓ the European Youth Event in Strasbourg
- ✓ the Mayor’s Fund for London’s Youth Board film
- ✓ in Oxford University’s Everyday Mobilities research project

“ I've been trying to find work and make money in my gap year, without ever really recognising that I was already doing something - making music - that people would be willing to pay for. Being involved in this project has given me the confidence to create an income from my music and understand how I can make it work for me. ”

Al-Ameen Ali, 23 - singer/ songwriter/ producer



PARTNERSHIPS

RSBC increases its impact by working in partnership with other organisations, ensuring that our services are always complementary to the work of others. We work in formal partnership with 25 organisations across England and Wales: they may have a dedicated focus on

visual impairment or disability more generally or be providers of mainstream services.

In this way, children, young people and families across the country benefit from a much broader range of activities, as well as increasing their local connections and networks.

EMPLOYMENT

5

young people took businesses to market

In 2018, 222 participants in our employment projects developed the vital skills they need to compete in the job market. Recognising that self-employment could be a key option for young people, 2018 saw the launch of our Young Entrepreneurs Project. It surpassed our expectations, with 32 young people participating and 10 developing business plans.

70%

Over 70% of participants either obtained paid employment; completed apprenticeships, work placements or volunteering assignments or entered further education.

“ As a blind person it can be a hard sell to find a role that's accessible and fits around my academic commitments. Self-employment as a Braille tutor is the ideal solution as it plays to my strengths and gives me control over when, where and how I work. The project has helped me to clarify my ideas and present them confidently to my target audience. ”

(Jessi Inaba, 20 - private Braille tutor)



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

THE CHART BELOW SHOWS THE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR FUNDING FOR EACH SERVICE IN 2018.

18% ON FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

57% ON LIVE LIFE GO FURTHER

24% ON EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

18%

24%

57%



RSBC IN BRIEF

WE BELIEVE THAT NO FAMILY SHOULD FEAR FOR THEIR CHILD'S FUTURE BECAUSE THEY ARE BLIND.

THERE ARE...

- ✘ ...an estimated 45,000 blind and visually impaired children and young people living in the UK.
- ✘ Many families feel overwhelmed after receiving a sight loss diagnosis. They find it difficult to see a positive future for their child.
- ✘ We believe that with the right support families can face their sight loss journey as confidently as possible and help their child achieve their potential.

SO, WE...

- ✔ ...provide emotional support, practical help, life skills and fun for blind and vision impaired young people between 0 and 25 years, and their families.
- ✔ Since 2016 we have worked with more than 3,500 children, young people and families, reaching 695 new beneficiaries in 2018.
- ✔ We work in London, the North East, North West and South West of England and the West Midlands. Soon we're expanding into North Wales and Kent. Eventually we want to cover the whole of England and Wales.

BECAUSE TODAY...

- ✘ ...vision impaired children aged eight to 11 are three times more likely to develop a mental health problem than children with no visual impairment.
- ✘ ...nine in 10 of those who lose their sight in youth will never work for more than six months in their lives.
- ✘ ...most will never have someone to share their life with.

OUR AIM IS...

...that blind children and their families should have our support whenever they need it.

By 2020, our goal is that 11,000 blind children, young people and their families will have accessed our services and that by 2025, our services will be available to all 45,000 across the UK.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP US SUPPORT MORE CHILDREN WITH SIGHT LOSS CONTACT US ON **0203 198 0225** OR VIA OUR WEBSITE **WWW.RSBC.ORG.UK**



RSBC

Royal Society for **Blind Children**

WE BELIEVE THAT NO
CHILD IN THE UK SHOULD
GROW UP TO BE POOR AND
LONELY JUST BECAUSE
THEY ARE BLIND.

**Life
Without
Limits**
For Blind
Children

Charity No: 307892

Cover photo: Alex Brenner, RSBC - RPO concert performance