



Royal Society for Blind Children



# Impact Report 2021

**Life  
Without  
Limits**  
For Blind  
Children



# Foreword

**Sue Sharp,**  
RSBC Chief Executive

**In some ways, 2021 was even more challenging than the previous year. RSBC, and the blind children and young people we work with, had to be even more flexible in response to the changing restrictions that came with Covid-19. We had to draw on all of our past and recent experience to ensure that no matter if we were in lockdown, or able to meet face-to-face, we could continue to support children, young people and their families. And they in turn were able to achieve.**

The young people have built new friendships – linking with people across the country through technology. That same technology has also enabled more young people to join us for the very first time.

They have worked with us to shape new services and to develop existing ones.

And they have achieved amazing outcomes. More young people than ever before received AQA awards this year, and across a wider range of skill areas. We were even able to celebrate those achievements together – in the same space!

I was delighted to be appointed CEO in Spring 2021 to lead our staff, who have done such a great job to adapt, innovate and deliver amazing impact. We all continue to be inspired by the incredible blind children and young people, and are committed to supporting them to realise their dreams.

Thank you for your support and for showing such an interest in our work.

Please enjoy reading about what we and, of course, the children and young people have achieved in 2021. It has been quite a year!

**RSBC's support for blind children and young people, and their families, continues to grow.**



## **In 2021 we...**

**Provided over**

**616**

**instances of advice  
and support**

**Delivered sessions to**

**3,368**

**young people**

**Had**

**8,107**

**contact hours with  
children, young people  
and their families**



# Families First



## Our Families First programme across England and Wales

Our team of experienced Family Practitioners across England and Wales continued to support the emotional wellbeing of vision impaired children and young people, and their families.

We are often most needed at times of change – like the point of diagnosis, deterioration of vision, changing schools or changes within the family.

As Covid-19 restrictions fluctuated during 2021, we were able to offer some in-person support safely, as well as continuing to do all we could for families online.

**4,870**

people supported

**260**

new families reached

**9.2/10**

average satisfaction rating

**72%**

felt well supported throughout Covid-19

**93%**

would recommend Families First



# Wil's story

**12-year-old Wil was born with Albinism and is vision impaired. He needs enlarged text for close-up reading, struggles with face recognition and crowded areas, and often gets overwhelmed if there's a lot to look at.**

He wears lenses to support his sight, but it has brought him embarrassment in the past, as he doesn't like to be seen as different among his peers.

Wil's mum Shelley contacted RSBC after noticing that her son was lacking confidence and didn't want to go to school.

"We found out about RSBC when we were doing Wil's Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)," says Shelley. "He was finding it hard trying to fit in, particularly when we moved house and he moved schools. The transition and making friendships was difficult and he needed support. He was just really unhappy at school."

RSBC's Family Practitioner in Wil's area provided online and in-person sessions to support him to cope with the issues he was facing and then start to improve things.

Together they helped Wil to understand how his thoughts led to either positive or negative feelings, and to start recognising his strengths, purposely applying them to each day.

For example, Wil is amazing at mixed martial arts, recently earning his black belt. It's a huge achievement that's given him a lot of confidence in other areas.

"It's all helped massively," continues Shelley. "Wil has always been a bit of an over-thinker. His Family Practitioner has taught him ways of being able to cope and look at things that he sees as a negative and turn them into a positive. He's coping much better with school now."

Wil is now much more positive with his outlook and is able to get through the school day with more ease.

"He is massively happier now, he's been uplifted," says Shelley. RSBC's intervention has changed his life. Without his one-to-one support, I don't know what we'd have done.

"It's reassuring to know that I have back-up and that our RSBC Family Practitioner is there when Wil needs them the most."

# Live Life Go Further

## Groups and activities

**As part of RSBC's Live Life Go Further programme, our wide range of activities continued for vision impaired children and young people.**

With the ever-changing Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines, we were able to deliver sessions online throughout 2021, as well as some face-to-face activities in the summer while case numbers and risk were low.

Our fun activities have helped hundreds of children and young people to learn new life skills, build friendships and reduce feelings of isolation.





During 2021

**1,089**

children and young  
people took part  
in RSBC's sessions

**97%**

rated 8/10 or higher on  
whether they would  
recommend  
RSBC to others

Our sessions were rated:

**8.9/10**

**Creative**

**8.2/10**

**Health and wellbeing**

**9.1/10**

**Social**

## Damien's story

**Damien joined the Audiobook Club along with his friend and immediately took a liking to it.**

As a shy young person, it was easier for Damien to enjoy the group as the sessions mainly consisted of listening to audiobooks and the more vocal members of the group would lead the discussions after.

But over time Damien was able to find his voice. As the Audiobook Club grew in numbers, Damien gained confidence, which he then took to other RSBC activities like Supper Squad.

Now, approaching two years attending the Audiobook Club, Damien is confident not only in his own opinions, but also in how he reacts to being challenged. He engages in spirited debates with his peers and staff and welcomes other newcomers with open arms.



# Employment

**Our Employment service continues to help vision impaired young people to get work experience and full-time jobs.**

We strongly believe that sight loss should not prevent people from reaching their potential and being successful in long-term employment.

That's why our tailored one-to-one support goes on throughout a young person's employment journey, developing the skills and confidence they need to get the right job for them.

**In 2021 we supported 231 children and young people to get:**

**22**

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**paid jobs**

**19**

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**internships/  
apprenticeships**

**1,022**

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**AQA  
accreditations**



# Terrelle's story

**23-year-old Terrelle has made incredible progress with RSBC's Employment service.**

**In 2019 and 2020, Terrelle managed to get two part-time jobs in customer service and youth projects, which helped his confidence.**

"It was the kick start I needed," says Terrelle.

"Working with my RSBC Employment Support Advisor, we decided 2021 was a good time to use the experience I'd gained and target full-time positions.

"I knew I needed to get better with my interview skills, so we focused on preparing that side of things."

Terrelle's hard work paid off – he was successful in a job application with the Theatre Royal Stratford East (TRSE), where he now works in the marketing and communications team, leading on social media.

"I love my new job! I don't think I'd be there without the support I gained from RSBC and the Employment team." he says.

We know that Terrelle is a fantastic communicator who puts inclusion at the heart of everything he does and will prove to be a great asset to the TRSE team.





# Emma's story

**As Covid-19 restrictions varied in 2021, Emma's parents were concerned about her continued isolation from her classmates and friends. It was the last thing she needed after months of lockdown.**

**They knew technology was the answer, but Emma wasn't confident in using it to help.**

Emma signed up for RSBC's Assistive Technology sessions, where we identified that accessible communication was the priority. She also wanted to make remote school learning more accessible, too.

The fortnightly sessions started with Emma using her phone with VoiceOver, how to navigate settings to suit her needs, and gestures to manipulate the screen reader to do what she requires it to do.

After just a few weeks, Emma was able to answer and phone her friends and text them over popular messaging apps. It made her more independent and feeling much less isolated.

"I used to ask my mum to read and send my texts. I trust my mum completely, but it wasn't that cool to have her texting for me!" says Emma.

"I think my confidence has grown during my sessions," continues Emma. "It helped me to join other activities and groups and now I'm a part of Sisterhood, where I meet online with other vision impaired girls. I love it."

# Our funders

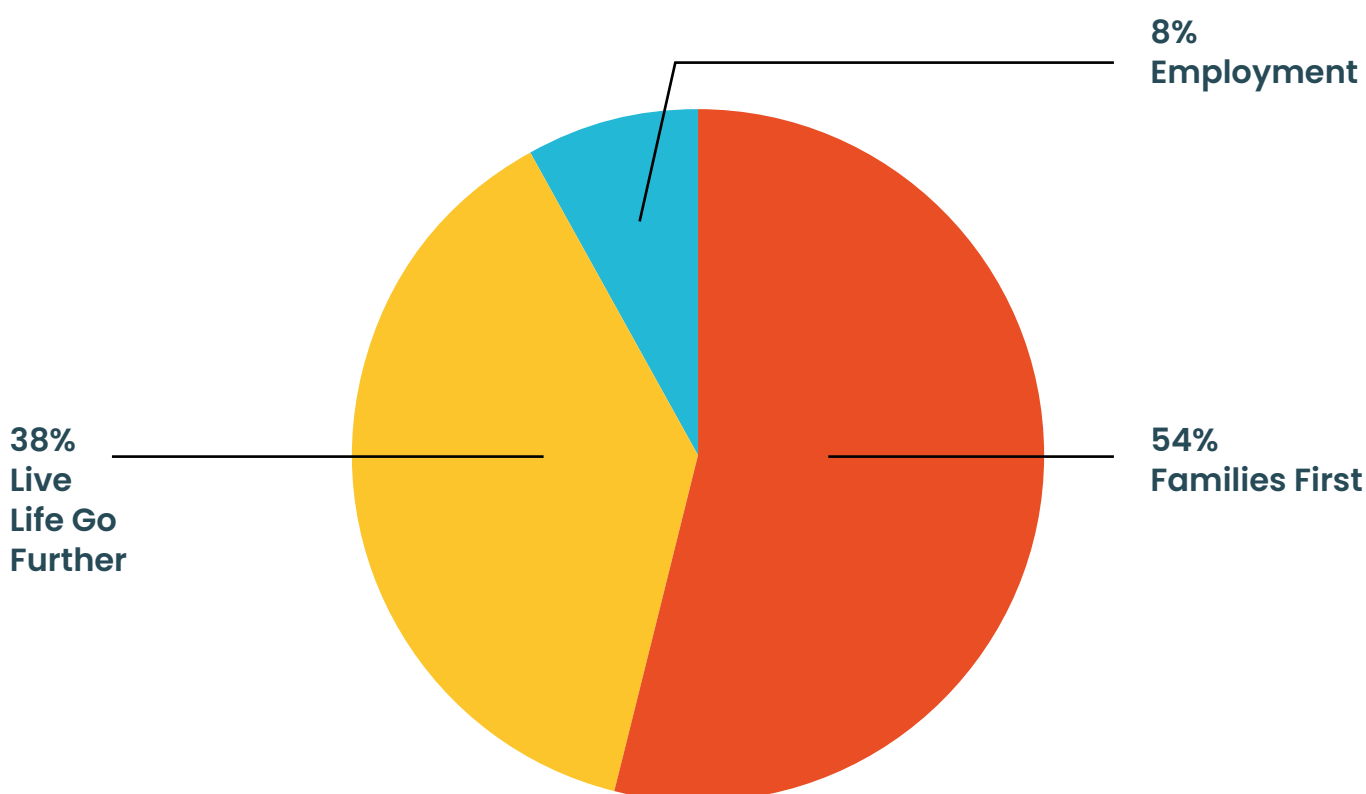
We are incredibly grateful to all our funders and supporters who have made the work included in this report possible. Here are some of the amazing funders of our work in 2021:



BENECARE FOUNDATION



# How we spent funding on our services





# Our six promises

## Our commitments to our stakeholders

**In 2021 we restated in clear, unambiguous language our commitments to all those we work with or who support us. These are now enshrined in the RSBC's 6 Promises:**

1. We help families access practical and emotional support, from the moment of diagnosis
2. We bring blind children and young people together to build friendships and develop skills for life
3. We deliver education and help blind young people get qualifications and jobs
4. We champion the use of new and existing technology
5. We fundraise passionately to support our work
6. We work with local partners to make sure that blind young people and their families can access services wherever they live.

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# Partnerships

## Collaborating with like-minded organisations

RSBC increases its impact by working in partnership with other organisations across England and Wales

We want to ensure that our services are always complementary to the work of others. In 2021, RSBC collaborated with organisations that focus on vision impairment or disability, as well as 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.



# 52

**formal partnerships**

# 7

**new partnerships in 2021**

# 65

**VI training sessions delivered**

# 113

**sessions delivered by partners**

# 623

**children and young people participated in partner sessions**



**Our aim is that  
vision impaired children  
and their families should  
have our support  
whenever they need it.**

**If you would like to help us,  
please get in touch.**

**E. [connections@rsbc.org.uk](mailto:connections@rsbc.org.uk)**

**T. 0203 198 0225**

**[rsbc.org.uk](https://rsbc.org.uk)**

# Thank you

Registered charity no: **307892**

**[rsbc.org.uk](https://rsbc.org.uk)**

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**RSBC**  
**Royal Society for Blind Children**