

Centre Report February 2018

There has been lots happening at the Centre in recent months, including an Audiology consultation event by Scottish Health Council, a Tinnitus awareness event by NHS FV and Scottish Council on Visual Impairment (SCOVI) Trustee meeting. The Centre has also been open evenings and weekends for events and meetings such as Lip-reading classes, NDCS Family Sign Language, Talk and Sign social group and the Friday night Deaf Club. Local MP John McNally continues to host his morning surgery at Centre on the first Friday of each month.

1.Sensory Garden Refurbishment

Refurbishing work is underway within our Sensory Garden. Unfortunately recent spells of wintry weather have hampered progress, however, the construction of a pergola covered seating area is underway and the “Welcome Wall” has been built. Centre User individually designed tiles will be affixed to the wall after the main construction phase as we want to protect our new work of art and keep it under wraps for our opening ceremony later in the year. We are working with local environmental charities to source items such as raised beds, bird boxes and an insect hotel made from reclaimed materials.

2.Publicity and Partnership

Partnership work has progressed over recent weeks. We have sensory impairment awareness training planned with an existing partner, **Solicitors for Older People Scotland**, and we have dates in the diary to train frontline staff from 2 new organisations based in Stirling; Historic Environment Scotland “**Engine Shed**”, an interactive exhibition and heritage centre which allows people to discover more about buildings and the environment, and the **Thistles Shopping Centre**.

We recently established a new partnership with **Edinburgh Printmakers** who are keen to hear from our Centre Users about how they can ensure their art exhibitions are as accessible for blind and deaf people as possible. Printmakers will be offering an opportunity to take part in art based print session for our Centre Users in the next few months. FVSC have offered to provide sensory impairment awareness training for their staff.

Tesco Fareshare and **Falkirk Foodbank** are now making regular food donations to our café. Café staff are quick to rise to the challenge of creating new and adapting recipes to include these donations. These have been well received by customers and have contributed to lower costs and increased sales in the Café.

Our cook, David Black, now has a weekly interview slot on RNIB Connect Radio taking over from London based blind cook, Ian Jentles. Each week David shares a favourite recipe and hints and tips with a generous measure of humour thrown in. This is a great opportunity for our Centre to reach a wider audience. Rave reviews have already been received from several listeners. You can hear David on air every Tuesday at 12:10.

The Centre features weekly in the local press, promoting our café, groups and classes. Our work with other organisations, such as delivering personal safety training with **Deafblind Scotland**, is likely to lead to more coverage in the weeks to come.

Our Social media presence continues to grow. The Centre website is now receiving over 100 visits each day with most people searching for where we are and what services we offer.

3. Volunteering

- Sensory awareness information and interactive session for First Bus drivers delivered with great success. We had 3 volunteers from the deaf community and 3 from the blind and partially sighted community. The training was very much appreciated by the First Bus drivers and some of our centre users have already reported that they can see a difference.

- 38 volunteers including 6 corporate volunteers from DWP who helped make the Winter Fayre a success
- We have a potential new corporate volunteering link with Network Rail who are keen to come in and do specific team activity – we are planning to involve them in refurbishing the sensory room
- A volunteer “Thank-you” event was held in early January to acknowledge the great contribution of those who helped with the Winter fayre. A celebration/recognition event for all volunteers will be planned to coincide with Volunteer Week in early June.
- FVSC have registered to become a “Playlist for Life” help point which we hope will be run by a volunteer. The Playlist for Life charity, founded by Sally Magnusson aims to make it possible for every person with dementia - whether in their own home or in a care setting - to have access to a playlist of personally meaningful music from their past life, delivered via an iPod.
- CVS Falkirk are carrying out an accessibility audit of all their printed materials and website/social media. They will be contacting FVSC to invite centre users to take part in a focus group.
- A new volunteer pupil from Falkirk High School who is undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Award will be working with David Sutherland in the role of caretaker volunteer – Zoe our BSL student is facilitating communication.

4. Fundraising

A draft fundraising strategy will be shared with our Board of Trustees at our meeting on 8 March. The new strategy includes a proposal to recruit a fundraising officer who will concentrate on preparing bids and applications for grants and trust funding.

Our new strategy also puts our Centre Users at the forefront of our fundraising activity working alongside us to help identify gaps in services and to support our community fundraising activities. Our Centre User fundraising group meets at 12:30 on the third Monday of each month. All Centre Users welcome to attend and contribute ideas.

Recent fundraising successes include an award of £1800 from Falkirk Council Digital fund. This money is being used to upgrade equipment in our IT suite. Our Winter Fayre was a record breaking success in

fundraising terms, raising over £2500. We recently received donations from Grangemouth Rotary and Bonnybridge Co-op Ladies Guild.

We are hoping to break our community fundraising records with our pop up Charity Shop at La Porte Precinct in Grangemouth which will be open from Monday 5 March until Saturday 10 March, 9am – 4pm. Centre Users are invited to donate unwanted goods and to come along and pick up some bargains.

If walking is your thing then please consider signing up to support us by taking part in this year's Edinburgh Kiltwalk on 16 September. FVSC will pay your registration cost and provide a free T Shirt. All we ask is that you pledge to raise a minimum of £60. Please contact Martin at the Sensory Centre if you are interested. We hope to get as many people as possible walking for our cause. The Hunter Foundation will add 40% to all fees raised.

Centre Maintenance and Development

Our IT suite has been adapted and we now have a separate Team room for Centre Staff.

Groups and Classes

****New Class Starting Soon**** We are excited about a new "Voices Off" café. BSL user volunteers will meet in our café on Wed 28 Feb 11am – 12noon to teach conversational BSL to anyone who would like to come along and learn.

We are also in discussion with the curling organisation regarding setting up a curling group for BSL users and establishing a regular group for visually impaired people.

BPS Social Group – Meets fortnightly on a Monday 10:30 – 12 noon. At our last meeting the group enjoyed singing along to songs from the old movies. The next meeting of the group will be on Monday 18 Feb and will a talk on personal safety from David Black

Bo'ness Outreach Group –meets on the last Wednesday of the month. This month the group visited the Sensory Centre for lunch and a catch

up. Next month the group will have Afternoon Tea at Torwood Garden Centre.

Dining Group next meets on 2nd March. A change of venue for the next meeting and it will be at the Sanam restaurant in Falkirk at 12.00pm. Places limited.

Stirling Outreach Group Meet monthly at Mayfield Centre. Group enjoyed a Burns lunch this month. Next meeting will take place on Tuesday 13th March 11am – 1pm and will be a talk and taste session from Blueberry Hill Meals.

Wednesday Group – Local historian Ian Scott will be giving talks on areas of local interest on the 7th March 10am – 11:30am.

Knit and Natter Group – Meet fortnightly on Mondays at 12:30. Next meeting Monday 26 Feb.

Tennis – classes are so popular they are now running weekly on Fridays from 12:30 until 13:30 all welcome.

Art Group – Meets from 1 – 3pm every second Wednesday at Camelon Community Centre. Class participants are supported to work on their own projects. New members always welcome. An exhibition is planned for 2018. Next meeting Wednesday 21 February.

Carers Wellbeing Project – Carers and people they care for meet weekly on Thursdays at 12noon. Sessions include free healthy lunch and activities such as art, chair yoga, ten pin bowling, information talks from NHS disability team, Police and Falkirk Carers.

Lip Reading Classes – Tutor led every Monday 6pm – 8pm. Fortnightly self-led group on Wednesday mornings

Personal Safety Class – Next 8 week block will start in April 2018

BPS Reading Group – Are looking for new members. Anyone who enjoys reading and chatting informally about books, contact reception. Meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. The group are currently reading Val McDermid's The Retribution. Next Meeting 20 February 10.00am – 11.00.

Slimming World - holds classes every Wednesday from 5.30pm

Drop-in Groups – Various monthly social groups on Monday evenings

For further information regarding any groups or classes please contact reception or email brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org

Up & Coming Events:

5- 10 March 9am – 4pm Charity Shop

22 March 6pm – 8:30pm FVSC Pop- Up Restaurant

Afternoon Tea, Bingo Evening, Quiz night – dates tbc

Report prepared by Jacquie Winning, Centre Manager, 16 February 2018