

Centre Report- July/August 2018

Introduction

Welcome to our summer edition Centre Report. Whilst many of you have been enjoying the holiday period there has been lots happening at the Sensory Centre and I hope this report provides you with a real flavour of our activities, news and plans for the future.

1. Sensory Garden Refurbishment

Those of you who have had a chance to visit our Sensory Garden during the last few weeks will hopefully have noticed some real changes. We are proud to have adopted “Big Wave Vortex” tactile sculpture, created by internationally acclaimed Sculptor Tom Allan, which is now located beside our fountain. Local woodworking expert David Pain has created an extensive, flowing oak bench, crafted using traditional methods and artist Fiona Fleming has begun work adding mosaic features around the grounds. Volunteer Clarissa has planted some salad crops in our raised beds and these will shortly be available to sample in our healthy choice café salad menu. Look out for even more improvements over the next few weeks.

2. Partnership and Publicity

Centre Users requested a meeting with a representative from **First Bus**, to discuss concerns regarding the closure of Falkirk Bus Station which is planned for 20 August. We hosted a meeting on Monday 30 July which was attended by Alasdair McNiven, Staff Manager at First Bus Larbert and a group of over 20 Centre Users with vision and hearing loss.

Centre Users voiced their concerns which included losing a central location with clearly marked bus bays, having no central point for travel information including timetables or First Bus representatives on hand to help with enquiries and changes to certain routes. Centre Users also felt that signage on bus stops could be improved to display clearly which bus service they serve and timings. They requested braille on signage and more effective attempts by the authorities to prevent other vehicles parking in or near bus bays making it difficult for people to recognise when a bus is waiting and which service it is. There was concern regarding possible over-crowding at certain bus shelters and insufficient provision to provide shelter during inclement weather. Some Centre Users felt that the layout for buses at FV Hospital works well as the bays are clearly marked, accessible and sheltered and this should be used as an example of good practice. Centre Users asked whether First Bus and Falkirk

Council had carried out a feasibility survey involving more vulnerable members of the community before making the decision to close the amenity. Alistair McNiven agreed to take back the concerns and suggestions to First Bus Managers. He agreed to propose to their marketing department that the Sensory Centre becomes a distribution point for timetables for central bus routes and to suggest that First Bus have a representative on hand and clearly distinguishable on Newmarket Street during the initial phase of the new arrangements to answer queries and direct people as required. We will share any updates and information following this consultation on our Website.

We recently met with **NHS FV** Dementia Care nurses and consultants and discussed ways in which we can make the Centre more dementia-friendly. Suggestions included improving signage and layout. These suggestions have been shared with local, award-winning Architect firm **Arka**, who are supporting us with planning a re-design of the resource area. The Centre has also been invited to form part of a consortium of organisations including **University of West of Scotland** and **Edinburgh University** in their bid to deliver an ambitious Scotland wide dementia research and policy shaping project. The role of FVSC would be to ensure that the needs of people living with sensory loss are taken into account by this project.

Following discussions with **Police Scotland**, we are now considering providing sensory training for **Scottish Fire Service** staff. In return, they could support a fundraising car wash at Falkirk Fire Station (subject to any emergency call outs on the day). We continue to speak with both parties to arrange dates and opportunities for joint support.

We are working with **DWP** to put together a Workplace Equality Bid for funding. The Centre recently signed up as a 'Disability Confident' employer and we are hoping to have the opportunity to address other businesses and organisations looking to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities including sensory loss.

We continue to grow our publicity and news coverage in a variety of ways, for example, our new cooking class news story was covered across Forth Valley and included an interview on **Central FM** and a news story in the NHS Staff Magazine and front page on the NHS Forth Valley website.

3. Fundraising

Our Centre User Fundraising Group is having a positive impact on fundraising efforts. The can collection at the Howgate Centre raised £188 and the recent Afternoon Tea raised over £500 for the Centre. The latter event was entirely catered in-house by our fabulous Café team of staff and volunteers. Not only did this help to promote our Café and significantly reduce event costs, we received great feedback from attendees. The return has been above the projected takings and we hope this will be a pattern for the future. A group member is considering running a race night at St Xaviers Church hall in October with proceeds going to the Sensory Centre, more

info to follow following the next Centre User fundraising Group meeting on Monday 20th August at 12:30. New members welcome.

The final opening of Malvina's Garden on 5th August was another great success which, thanks to the hard work and organisation by Vina and her family and friends, raised £1140 for the Centre. The garden looked beautiful, the weather was kind and several of our Centre Users, Board members and volunteers made it along on the day to support the event.

It's not too late to join the growing number of people have already signed up to take part in the Edinburgh Kiltwalk on 16th September. Promise to raise £60 for us and we'll pay your entry fee and give you one of our unique, collectable Forth Valley Sensory Centre t-shirts. All funds raised are topped up by The Hunter Foundation who will add 40 per cent to the total. If you raise £100 we will receive £140. Claim your free charity place now – email: sensory@forthvalleysensorycentre.org

We are looking forward to our World War 1 Sing-a-long with 'Singing' Provost Buchanan on 27th September. Tickets are on sale at reception for £5 which includes unique entertainment, tea, coffee and cake.

We are applying to different funding streams to support different projects at the Centre. NHS Forth Valley have supported our bid to the Annual Development Fund for new kitchen equipment which will be appreciated as we launch new cooking classes which will feature our own cook, David Black as the course trainer.

We also need to generate funding to upgrade our heating system by replacing the boilers. We are in discussion with some private companies to establish whether this could be supported by encouraging Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR)

4. Volunteering

We have some new volunteers who have recently joined us to help out in the garden, reception and to provide support for cookery classes. Five new volunteers received sensory awareness training.

Existing volunteers have been helping with fundraising and events which included Braveheart health and wellbeing event, can collection in the Howgate, ASDA Time 4Tea and our Afternoon Tea.

Sensory awareness training events were delivered at First Bus Stirling depot. This practical session was aimed at bus drivers and was supported by centre users Ann and Stuart Lavery, Gordon McNeill and Kyle Somerville. Sessions were also delivered for Rape Crisis staff and they have subsequently requested a follow-up session in basic BSL to assist them in working with their client group. A Sensory Awareness session was delivered at Edinburgh Printmakers in advance of the training session they provided for a group of our Centre Users. Two awareness sessions were delivered for frontline staff and management at Stirling Thistle Centre

Our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Caroline, attended a PVG consultation event and submitted a response on behalf of FVSC to the Government consultation. Caroline also attended a Level 3 Sensory Awareness Training event delivered by Falkirk Council to help ensure that we are delivering consistent and up-to-date training.

5. Groups and Classes

Some of our groups have been busy over the summer with a variety of outings including a trip to Loch Lomond by our BPS Social Group and a trip to the Falkirk Wheel by our Stirling group.

Our popular Falkirk Knit & Natter and Reading Groups continued over the summer

We are looking for new members to join our Stirling Knit & Natter group at the Engine shed every 2 weeks on a Friday morning.

The Art Group enjoyed a visit to Edinburgh Printmakers 6th August. The group were introduced to printing techniques during an interactive session. Group members enjoyed the experience and have requested a further trip to build on their printing skills. The art group will start back at the Sensory Centre on Wednesday 5 September 1pm – 3pm. All abilities welcome.

Carers Group starts back weekly on Thursday 16th August. BPS Social group starts on the 20th August. A full programme of activities has been planned for these groups.

Sensory Singers will restart on Monday 27 August from 10:30 – 12 noon. The Singers will begin rehearsals for a concert performance at the Centre later in the year. New members welcome, no audition required.

Coming up during the first week in September there will be a trip to the International Blind Sailing Event at Helensburgh for a group of visually impaired Centre Users. Transport provided from the Centre. Date to be confirmed.

Our lunch group will restart on Friday 7th September

On the 10th September a group from the Sensory Centre will visit the Scottish Parliament to attend RNIB's "The Sound of Vision" event. This is a public speaking event for visually impaired young people. Board member and Centre User Laura Cluxton will be taking part in the speaking event.

For more information on any of these groups or classes please contact Centre reception or email brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org

Up and Coming Events

Tuesday 4 September (date tbc) – Visual Impairment World Sailing Championships,
Rhu Helensburgh

Monday 10 September – Scottish Parliament Sound of Vision event

Sunday 16 September - Kiltwalk Edinburgh

Thursday 27 September – 2- 4pm Singing Provost Event

Friday 12 October – Race Night at St Xaviers Church Hall (details tbc)

Thursday 25 October – 12 noon– 1pm Open Meeting following our AGM

Report prepared by Jacquie Winning, 13 August 2018

www.forthvalleysensorycentre.org

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