

## **Eye-to-Eye Report: Charities in Focus: Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022**

This month's Eye-to-Eye saw us focus on charities from the sight loss sector that have had close associations with the Spectacle Makers' Charity. The SMC is a grant giving organisation supporting better vision for all, providing support for charities and organisations that work towards improving the lives of people with vision impairment and support those who treat eye health. Additionally, charity is an essential part of Livery Company life.

The Spectacle Makers' Charity aims to achieve its mission through:

- bursaries for new optical students
- support for pilot small scale research studies
- education and employment opportunities for people with little or no vision
- training to increase eye health care provision in underdeveloped areas of the world
- prizes and awards for research
- improving access to sports, leisure, and culture for vision-impaired people



For further information on the Spectacle Makers' Charity or to find out more about donating please follow the link: <https://www.spectaclemakers.com/charity/>

We were joined by three speakers, each from a different charity the SMC has supported & they gave us an insight into the work they do & the differences a grant has made to them.

First to speak was Charlie O'Doherty, Head of Fundraising at St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. The St John Eye Hospital has been serving patients in one of the most inhospitable areas of the world for 140 years. The group of hospitals in the Middle East transform lives by offering free at the point of service delivery operations & eyecare which transform patients' lives, often patients from the poorest backgrounds who have lost everything.

Charlie joined StJEHG with a proven track record in trust & foundation fundraising having previously worked with charities such as NSPCC & Mind. He is a graduate in English Literature from Birkbeck.

Second up was Melanie Denning, Fundraising Manager at Royal National College for the Blind. The RNC is the UK's leading specialist residential college of further education for people living with a Visual Impairment. 2022 is a big year for the RNC – formed in 1872 this year sees them 150 years building on expertise & successes. Their vision is to have a world where every person with a VI has true equality & their mission is that everyone with VI achieves education, employment & empowerment. Notable school alumni include Lord David Blunkett, and a young actress called Ellie Wallwork recently seen in the BBC drama 'Call the Midwife' as a young blind single mother in 1960's London – good on the BBC for casting a blind actress in this role!

Melanie is a fundraiser with over 15 years experience and is currently leading her team on a variety of projects for the RNC's 150th Anniversary legacy projects.

And our final speaker was Alexandra (Alex) Britton, Director at Clear Vision Project. ClearVision is a postal lending library of children's books designed to be shared by VI children with their sighted counterparts & adults in the UK & Ireland. All books have BRAILLE/PRINT & PICTURES and with over 14,000 titles to choose from the choice is vast. The really unique thing about this service is that books can be enjoyed and shared with sighted friends, family & teachers. Specialist titles such as space, trains etc help with school projects or Peppa Pig for a bedtime story or the Katie Morag series - a feisty independent read headed Scot who often finds herself in hot water!

Alex is a passionate advocate for reading & books – this was very evident during her talk!

As has become our custom a lively Q & A session rounded the evening off & we were played out with a video clip of an audio-described clip of the Ballet 'Merlin' by the Northern Ballet Company – another recipient of a SMC grant. The grant enabled this audio described performance which was live streamed in cinemas across the UK & allowed both sighted & visually impaired fans to watch together.

The Renter Warden, Liz Shilling, who is also the Chair of the SMC, thanked each of our speakers for the wonderful work they do and for highlighting just how important it is to continue to support the SMC, not only to give grants to improve the life of its recipients, but to encourage the next generation of trainees in eyecare professions, to nurture & promote research and improve access for all living with visual impairment.