

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the meeting held on Thursday 27 September 2022 in Brampton Community Centre Café. 19 people attended the meeting, which took place after soup, sandwiches and fruit salad in the community café.

Ann Oswin, welcomed members and the guest speaker, Mark Costello, of [Carlisle Sight Support Charity](#).

Ann referred members to the constitution which had been revised and updated, to make it more appropriate, by members of the committee over the summer. Members had received a copy of the revised document which they had been asked to read in advance of the meeting. Ann asked the meeting to vote on whether the new constitution should be adopted. The [new constitution](#) was adopted, *nem con*.

Mark Costello then gave his presentation. He gave a brief history of the Carlisle Sight Support Charity. It began in Finkle Street, Carlisle in 1992 as 'Carlisle Society for the Blind' - the society's emphasis now moving away from 'blind' to 'sight support' - and is now at 9 Brunswick Street. The society works with blind or partially sighted people of all ages, though the majority are old, with the aim of promoting independence, choice and confidence.

There are 1 in 30 people in the UK with sight loss.

360,000 people are registered blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired).

1 in 5 of over 75s are affected by sight loss; 50-70% of over 65s have sight loss that could have been treated. Adults with learning difficulties are 10x more likely to have sight loss.

Only 4% of registered blind people are totally blind.

By 2050 it is predicted that 4 million people will be living with sight loss.

Mark then described some of the types of sight loss, the symptoms and effects, and how the society helps. These types included: cataracts, macula degeneration, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy.

He then listed and gave details of some of the resources available: canes, magnifiers, screen readers, tactile materials, audio / digital books, household gadgets, phone apps, audio description; giving explanation or more information in response to members' questions. He demonstrated a smart-phone app, *Supersense*, which by using the phone camera can read out text or identify objects in the immediate environment.

The society also offers a home support service and provides visual awareness training. Mark, as Visual Support officer can visit and offer advice, information and assistance.

The society holds monthly 'tea and chat' events in Carlisle and occasional hosts exhibitions such as the VisionAid exhibition on 29th September.

After Ann had thanked the speaker the meeting closed and cups of tea were made available.

The Forum made a small donation to Carlisle Sight Support Charity.

The date of the next 50+ Forum meeting, the AGM, has yet to be confirmed but will probably be at the end of October 2022.