Henshaws webinar

**Kerry Firth:** [00:00:00] hello everyone. Welcome. Thank you so much for coming to this webinar today. Hope you're all enjoying the nice sunshine. I'm Kerry and I'm the program manager for Social Change here at Fight Site, and gonna be joined today by Haley Middleton from Henshaw.

**Kerry Firth:** We'll talk more about that in a bit. Really excited to have. So before we get into the main focus of the webinar, I just want to do a couple of housekeeping bits. So live captions will be available during the whole webinar for those who will find that useful. We may use illustrated slides throughout the presentations, but if we do, we will always describe of course, what is on those slides.

**Kerry Firth:** So no need to worry about that. Slides, a transcript and a recording will be available after the webinar. So if you've got, no need, sort, take notes or anything, you'll be, they'll be available. We won't share publicly the final discussion recording in [00:01:00] the q and a. We just wanted this to be a bit more of a safe space for you to discuss things that you might discuss in terms of the sector and what things that come out of Haley's presentation.

**Kerry Firth:** But we may use the recording internally just for references to it, just for our own learning as well, really. And as I said there, there'll be a q and a. We've disabled chat function for this webinar, but you will be able to ask questions in the q and a function. This is just because it can be a little bit jarring.

**Kerry Firth:** And also it's easier for us to monitor the q and a as well. The webinar will end when it does quite abruptly. This is just the nature of the program that we're using, so it's not like a, we're not trying to be rude or to get rid of you. But it will just end quite abruptly. So now I'll tell you a little bit about what you can expect from today's webinar.

**Kerry Firth:** I'll tell you a bit about our organization of those who might not know and why we fund the project that we're funding. And I'll talk about a little bit more about our research and that [00:02:00] we commissioned into loneliness and isolation because it explains this sort of an ongoing theme that we've got at the moment for many of our projects.

**Kerry Firth:** And Haley will be speaking to this as well, so I just thought it would be quite good to talk about that. And then Haley, she'll be talking about Henshaw and the independence model and the learnings and challenges and indeed successes of. Her project or their project, which we are currently funding as well.

**Kerry Firth:** And again, there'll then be a q and a and it's just going to be a really safe space for us to have what I hope will be a productive discussion. So now to the next slide, just a bit about our organization, A bit of background. We fund the brilliant minds and bright ideas that put change into sight for everyone impacted by vision loss.

**Kerry Firth:** We've got sort of two arms of our funding, right? We've got our social change funding and that's what we're concentrating on today and our projects under this [00:03:00] funding streams improve. So what it's like to be lion and vision impaired and living in the uk. So it's talking about all sorts of different barriers there.

**Kerry Firth:** And we then have our scientific research arm and we fund innovative projects to better understand, diagnose, prevent. And treat vision loss. And so now I just want to, as I said, I really want to talk a little bit more about the research that we commissioned. So we're an evidence-based funder, and so we really want to make sure that our funding, is responding to the most critical challenges or needs within our sector.

**Kerry Firth:** And to do this, we often commission research. We will conduct sector analysis. We will conduct an organized focus group. Some of you might have actually been in those, just to really make sure that how we're using our funding is relevant to, to you, to the sector, and really can drive that change that we want to change.

**Kerry Firth:** [00:04:00] And as I said, one of the recurring themes and a big theme of ours at the moment is tackling loneliness and isolation. And on the. He see a picture of pe of a bunch of young people and a coordinator sitting around a kitchen table at something called Jamie's Farm. And Jamie's farm was a project that we did last year in partnership with Look uk.

**Kerry Firth:** And we organized for some young VI children and vi children, young people really to go to Jamie's farm. And there, there are various Jamie's farms scattered across the country actually. And Jamie's farm is all about people getting outside, getting into the outdoors, really making the most of nature, looking after animals, having a really HandsOn day.

**Kerry Firth:** And it can help people to connect and to talk about feelings of loneliness and isolation that they might have. And just really for people to make those friends and really valuable social connection. And that came out of this research that we have [00:05:00] commissioned into loneliness and isolation. And VI people are three times more likely to experience loneliness and isolation.

**Kerry Firth:** And this is a finding of our report funded by us and conducted by researchers from AB University. And we asked the question, what is loneliness and isolation? Loneliness and isolation like for people who are vision impaired? And it's a really tricky question. It can be quite subjective. It can be quite complex.

**Kerry Firth:** And people who are lonely or isolated are by definition less engaged and less visible in our communities. So it can be really hard to reach those people and to find out what's going on. And loneliness. Loneliness and isolation are severe as a fierce threat to public health as obesity.

**Kerry Firth:** For fight for sight, knowing how and why people experience loneliness and [00:06:00] isolation is really important. And it's a really big part of our mission to, to drive that change. And our goal is that everyone affected by site loss as access to ways to increase the joy and connections that make loneliness and isolation less likely.

**Kerry Firth:** So just before I do hand over to. To give you a bit of an idea about some of the projects that we funded and things like that our webinar series has delved a bit more into this, and we've had we've had webinars that talk about emotional support, creative and practical ways for VI people to get out and about, which I know Haley's gonna talk a bit more about.

**Kerry Firth:** And also we've got our webinar in June. I will just plug this while I can, and that's talking about social connections and we've got such a vision coming in to talk about a fantastic be branding project that we are currently funding and that they have. And it's really brilliant. I went to visit it and it's just wonderful.

**Kerry Firth:** But now I think you've heard enough from [00:07:00] me. So I will introduce Hailey. I want to introduce Hailey by the way of a quote from her colleague Steven. Preventing loneliness and isolation has always been a part of the charity's work, and the organization's approach has changed in line with changes in our society and communities.

**Kerry Firth:** But the work of the organization is as relevant today as it was 200 years ago when we were first founded. And without further ado, I will now welcome Haley. Thanks Haley. Thanks Kerry. So yeah, I'll introduce myself. I'm I, my role title is restricted fund Manager, so I.

**Kerry Firth:** Seeing this one come to life has been really lovely. And I've also got Josh with me, who is our enablement officer, and he's working directly on the grant. Hopefully Josh can jump in with any additional things that he thinks I've missed. That's his main help. So I thought I'd start with a bit about Henshaw in case anyone doesn't [00:08:00] know of and would like a.

**Kerry Firth:** We've been around a very long time. Officially, we were established in 1837. And so thankfully, yes, along with that quote, we have changed a lot since then because the world has changed a lot since then. We, with our site loss support, we support people across Greater Manchester, and then we also support children and young people in Merseyside as well.

**Kerry Firth:** And it's changed a lot over the years. So in, we did a little research recently and in 2007 we supported around 250. We got 250 new referrals each year. So just new people to us. And we worked across three of the boroughs in Greater Manchester, and now we work across nine of the boroughs in Greater Manchester.

**Kerry Firth:** And. New people. We get around thousand people each year and in we support.

**Kerry Firth:** Exciting opportunities, support more people, but also all the challenges that come with that. So the things that we have to offer people is it all [00:09:00] starts with our Pathway to Independence model. And the first question we always ask people is, how can we help you? And that might be over the telephone, it might be through our patient support service at the hospitals.

**Kerry Firth:** It could be people in person like Josh who gets to go out and meet people. Yep. But yeah, it's all creating a plan around that and whether Henshaw has the ability to support them or whether we can work with somebody either locally or nationally to support them with anything else that we don't do.

**Kerry Firth:** So some of the things that we offer are enablement services, which Josh does, and he does one-to-one support living with site loss courses. What have I missed? Yeah, so we do the personal plan. Yeah. So that's obviously where I would work with someone on a one-to-one basis. And those sessions are very much shaped by that person.

**Kerry Firth:** So anything that they're come to us with, that's where I would look. As I said to the services locally, I actually they say, okay, we can do this, we can do this. And we also [00:10:00] refer to digital and also to the counselor service as well, which is really good, gets utilized a lot as well, which is really positive.

**Kerry Firth:** And it all links in together. Yeah. So like Josh mentioned, we have a counseling service, a digital support service, which is really. Popular. We also have a children's service. So in a nutshell, that's all we do. So when we applied to this funding, I think we'd known for some time that. Our sort of social offer wasn't meeting the needs of the people that we're supporting.

**Kerry Firth:** If you were 10 years old and you came to us and you wanted to do some fun activities and social stuff, great. We've got things for you. If you're maybe above 70 and you wanted to do, cup of tea, bingo with other visually impaired people. Great. But I think Josh would agree with me. If you are in that middle ground, you don't wanna go to either of those things.

**Kerry Firth:** So yeah, we had a legacy of social groups that were getting older and older. The volunteer support was becoming really challenging in all honesty. [00:11:00] Finding the volunteers to be able to run those groups or sometimes having to staff those groups, it was just becoming really challenging. And so we knew we weren't meeting people's needs in that way.

**Kerry Firth:** And from the phone calls we got, we knew other people weren't either. It's one of the first things I noticed when I started working here. Again, I would speak to people, all the people. And I'd be like, okay. I've got told about, the historical groups that we had and it was okay. That's great.

**Kerry Firth:** I can refer into that. Won't eventually start working again because I started working during.

**Kerry Firth:** But what about people like me? 'cause I'm bi working age. What about what is there out there for me? And they're like not much really. I was like, okay, we need a lot to change that. So it's been about nearly five years, but we're getting there with it now, which is really good. And this project's something that, something personally I'm very passionate about as well, to be fair.

**Kerry Firth:** So hopefully we can make it work. Exactly. And so we did a bit consultation work [00:12:00] and we asked people what do they want? When do they want it? What sort of things do they want? And we got a whole ream of activities that people wanted to do. They wanted to do mechanics, ukulele groups DIY, chess walking groups.

**Kerry Firth:** So as soon as that started to come through we did a bit of online stuff and in person we realized there's no way we can meet all these needs. So that's when we started to look at mainstream groups and how we can make the things that were already out there accessible. Josh, you work a lot in community centers and libraries and there's a lot of things, a lot of groups already out there that are offering some of these things, but they're on a poster somewhere that's not, that's not gonna help people.

**Kerry Firth:** And people don't know if they're gonna have a good experience when they actually do go to these groups as well. So that's how we came up with the idea of our project. So we wanted to deliver visual impairment awareness training. To create a sort of portfolio of accessible groups to be able to say to people in Greater Manchester, this [00:13:00] group has been trained, they have been supported to be accessible.

**Kerry Firth:** These are all the ones that are available to you. And we were very, luckily we got some funding for it. So yes, we were very excited to do the project. That was when some of the challenges came about. As any project you have, there's ups and downs. So as part of it, we wanted to recruit somebody so that they could specifically work on this and go out to do this.

**Kerry Firth:** Recruitment is challenging at the moment. I don't know if any of the other organizations are trying. It's really challenging. So we did three recruitment rounds. We finally got someone in who was. Brilliant, great. Started to work in the community, make those connections, work with our service users to get connections with them and see what they wanted in their communities.

**Kerry Firth:** Unfortunately, after three months, she decided to leave for her own reasons, and we were go deep breath, what do we do now? And the first thing you do, obviously is try and create a. Talk to your [00:14:00] funder and say, we've come to a bit of an issue. We're trying to do everything for us. And from my experience and in this experience, funders are so supportive.

**Kerry Firth:** They know that it's not always gonna go smoothly. What we did in that case was we looked to our existing staff because recruiting again seemed like it was gonna take a long time and pause everything for everyone, and we started to get that momentum. And so we have enablement offers in the community like Josh, who already have those connections with some community venues, some ledger, some groups.

**Kerry Firth:** And so what we've done now is. We've split the project across staff members who are working in those communities, and so we've definitely had some delays there. We'd love to be further on than we are, but I think we're getting, we are, we're starting to get some bookings and things for Yeah.

**Kerry Firth:** Long bookings. Yeah. So it finally feels like we're starting to get things off the ground, which is. Exciting. And we're starting to create our portfolio of groups as well. And one things that we have [00:15:00] learned as we've gone along. We've learned a lot through all the challenges and things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** But one thing we have learned is to be able to also look out for the groups that are already there. So we're working locally with the Macular Society, very Blind Society, and putting the groups on that there on our sort of portfolio. Are already existing that, we can go and chat to them, make sure they, they're supportive, they want those referrals and things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** So that's been a bit of learning for us as well, is not reinvent the wheel. And then there's obviously other groups that we're going out to and we have a use of voice group, so they've been great at suggestions of places in their local area and things that they wanna do. And Josh, you've delivered one to cycling UK, haven't you?

**Kerry Firth:** Yes. I dunno. You wanna tell us a bit about your experience of that? Yeah, they're really good. They come to. Through my manager Justine got an email off them and she sent it to me, said, don't this [00:16:00] organization sofas got in touch. Just find out what they offer, how, and how they can do it from a bi sort of perspective.

**Kerry Firth:** They told me that they have adaptive vehicles. They do vi specific sessions. But they just wanted a little bit more advice in terms of supporting people when they, where they were going to, to those sessions in terms of getting 'em on the bikes and in terms of being able to guide them, I just thought the language and the general sort of support to offer.

**Kerry Firth:** So I went down there base at Sanford University. I went down and a session to them. In the in a classroom there. And then they also taught them some cited guide techniques as well around the university and within the sports hall. We had a private session of Sports Hall, so it was completely enter gave me the space, the time to be able to go through it with them, and they really enjoyed their feedback was really good.

**Kerry Firth:** They have now been added to our portfolio online. I believe they were the first. They were really pleased to be on there as be part of it. And they've [00:17:00] been really supportive in terms of helping us get people to them and in terms of sending the information over of what they want listed, what they wanted listed within the portfolio of what they specifically offer.

**Kerry Firth:** So yeah, that's been really good. We've got some other ones come up as well within. They're booked in twice, I think. The cricket round. They've got a big session booked in with us in the next couple of weeks. We've got sessions with the energize sensor, a wellbeing Hub in Sulford. Another wellbeing hub in Trafford blue, signing up to it.

**Kerry Firth:** Hopefully just need to. They're all being added. Even ones over in Oldham and Bolton in Manchester, there's a lot as well. So we're slowly but surely building up a real portfolio of places that are having this training that we can add to this portfolio and say to people, these places that have got things going on, the staff have been trained.

**Kerry Firth:** You can go to the. And [00:18:00] they basically, they won't panic when a load of blind people turn up, which is the main thing. We don't want people to panic when, a load of blind people turn up and they, oh God, what do we do? That's what our jobs is doing is going into them and saying to them, this is the way to guide this is what to say, what not to say.

**Kerry Firth:** And this is how you can best help them. So it's really working well, and I think groups have been really receptive to it so far. And really interesting. Like Josh says, some of them are very set up for it. They have the equipment. There's a shooting club we spoke to who had acoustic shooting equipment.

**Kerry Firth:** Nobody had ever used it. It was in a cupboard somewhere. Because they wanted to be accessible, but. They didn't know how, and they definitely didn't have the referrals coming into people to be able to go to that group. So I think we're at a really interesting point where we're building up those groups that we have around Greater Manchester, they're accessible, and then the next stage of the project is to refer people to those groups and hopefully see some successes with [00:19:00] that.

**Kerry Firth:** So it's a real pilot for us. It's been based on a lot of consultation, a lot of work to get to this point. But it's really exciting and I think the staff and service user engagement to be able to see this become a reality because for so many years we've seen it as a gap in what we're doing. Yeah.

**Kerry Firth:** That's really exciting to see. And so I think that's the successes, the groups and things like that's. Their sort of receptiveness has been really good. The challenges have been one was the recruitment challenge and things like that. I think the other challenge is just working with people who are very busy, other groups are very busy.

**Kerry Firth:** And so sometimes the logistics of getting to people and making sure you've got the right people in the room is some of the challenge. And then, so yeah. So where the future kind of. Where this project leaves us. I think we've got to see the next couple of few months and then see how that goes and we're analyzing as we go the data we've got, what's coming, [00:20:00] but yeah.

**Kerry Firth:** I think we want to see what people's experience are like going to these groups and whether that does, and I think that's something really interesting. We went somebody said, I really want to go to a chess group. I really want accessible chess group. So we found one in their area, did some training.

**Kerry Firth:** They bought an accessible chess set. Okay, but you can't make people go. And this person decided that, oh they're too busy. They've got lives, they've got all sorts of things going on. And so I think we need to see a bit more of that coming through and seeing how hopefully this can really support people who can get cycling or whatever it is that they want to do.

**Kerry Firth:** So yeah, we'll hopefully get that kind of data and see hopefully the success. And then in the future, I think it's where we go from this project, whether. We, whether we look to what we'd love obviously is greater to Manchester, become an accessible city. That's a huge dream. And we're [00:21:00] gonna have to chip it at piece by piece and work with other charities to try and get that.

**Kerry Firth:** But so we've really got to focus in on areas. So there's an area in Manchester called the Printworks, which has leisure and food and things like that. So one of our, one of our thoughts is, okay, could we target a place. That's small and say, okay, this area is an accessible area in Manchester. All the restaurants have been trained the, they we've assessed 'cause it's a little walking route and things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** So that's one of our sort of queries in the future, whether where that could go. And the other thing we have people tell us all the time is, yes, we want social places to be accessible, but also my GP and my hospital isn't accessible. So it's not on the social side, but that's the other interesting thing that comes out and says, great, I can now go to this group and I can now do this, and this, but when I go to have my appointment, actually the receptionist or the space is actually really difficult to navigate and nobody knows how to support me.

**Kerry Firth:** I think that's really [00:22:00] interesting for us where we could track our visual impairment awareness training and how much we could go with it. But it's one of those things that could either be really big or we could go really small and centered, and so we're just gonna have to work and see the project and see how that works.

**Kerry Firth:** I dunno if you have anything to add, Josh, about the project and how it's going or how you can see it's going. Yeah, I. Obviously you said there about challenges. Again, a lot of a lot of people when we're put it to them are asking how much gonna cost. And again, we've been able to go back to 'em and say actually it's funded.

**Kerry Firth:** So again, a lot of people then have been like really up for it. But then. What we do as well on the back of that is we say, oh yeah, we've got, x amount of people signed up at each of a day and people drop out of it because they haven't paid for it, invested into it. But the one that have turned up.

**Kerry Firth:** They're really they're the ones who are invested in it. So they're the ones that are like okay, I'm gonna focus on you and you'll be the [00:23:00] ones who'll be my go-to people to really get this off the ground. And the ones that cycled the uk, it was a very small team, did it, but my word, they'd been really helpful and useful with it all.

**Kerry Firth:** So yeah, it's just about finding more ones like them, which luckily we have done. Everyone else that's come to us from. Receptive of it, and I wanted to do it. I spiral because. They're doing it. And then after the back of it, they're giving me contacts. Actually, we also work with this other organization who I think will be really interested.

**Kerry Firth:** Brilliant. Gimme the email address, gimme a name. I'll get in touch with them. I'll get them booked in as well. So today for One contact, three have potentially been booked. So it's definitely getting there. Definitely getting there with it. Yeah. And I think that's one of the things we're gonna have to, so we we do, after our training, we do some surveys to ask people whether what they feel confident in and how they found the training and things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** And something we've got to be aware of is you are only ever training those people in the room. The ones that weren't poorly that day or [00:24:00] had a meeting they had to rush off with. And so I think that's one of how. Say some, something is accessible for if there's a staff turnover and things like that. So that's something we're interested in assessing.

**Kerry Firth:** 'cause our nightmare is that somebody goes to these groups and has a bad experience and they've taken a long time and a lot of confidence to go to that. And we actually make it worse rather than better. Yeah. One thing we're quite aware of is. Choosing, getting to the right people in the training room, the managers that maybe can then filter down to staff and yeah, making sure we've got those people and it, that can be more challenging in some areas than others.

**Kerry Firth:** We spoke, I think, spoke to a coffee shop and they said our staff turnover is just so high. It would be very challenging. That's not to say we can't do it, it's just trying to find ways to work around it. A lot of places as well have volunteers. That will do a lot of front facing stuff, so it's asking for the volunteers to be part of it as well.

**Kerry Firth:** But obviously there's always, sometimes with that, there's always certain days of volunteers work. [00:25:00] So it's having to work around that a little bit as well. But we get there with it. I found we do get there with the volunteers and the volunteers tend to be really engaged with it as well, that 'cause they're learning something which they can take away.

**Kerry Firth:** Yeah. So our hope is this becomes part of our model, that part of our Pathway to Independence model that we can offer people. So when people are calling up or meeting with Josh and saying, look. I want to be able to do more. There's not a lot in my area that can offer me, or I want to do this specific thing that we can have a chat to 'em about those groups or point them to our website, send them out a book, whatever's that they need and say.

**Kerry Firth:** We recommend these groups. They've had training. We think you'll have a good experience there and they can meet your needs. It's something that I've been asking more about within the personal plan as well, because I know now the places are getting trained up and there are more accessible places within the city.

**Kerry Firth:** It is a question that I've been added into the personal plan. What sort of things are you actually interested in? What do you want to do? And then they've told me, [00:26:00] rather than in the past where I've been a bit like, oh, I dunno if there is anything for that. I've been able to actually turn around to a couple of 'em and say, actually, I do know something that's out there because we trained them or we going to train them and I can link you to it.

**Kerry Firth:** And it's just, again, it's just creating more opportunities, which is what this is all about. So I think that's probably our project in a nutshell, Kerry. Brilliant. Honestly, thank you both. I think I just, this is such a great example. That we like to fund, those projects that really try to open up cities, make more space accessible and to raise that awareness.

**Kerry Firth:** And as you say, hopefully, the more it's done, the more it will spread. And I suppose when some people see certain organizations do, and it, or certain venues, others might want to, and it's all about that. What a brilliant way to be setting it off. So thank you so much. Oh, thank you.

**Kerry Firth:** That's absolutely fine. It's just honestly just really wonderful. So we're coming into our q and a and as I said, I we want this to be a sort of safe space. We really want people to ask [00:27:00] questions and I know Haley's been Haley and Josh have been really great about sharing those challenges as well as the successes.

**Kerry Firth:** So thank you so much for that. 'cause, as you said, any project has, its, has its challenges. So I wondered whether I might just get the conversation going. In terms of, does anyone absolutely fine if not, please feel free to answer, but does anyone have, are there any sort of themes that, that have come out of Haley and Josh's presentation or any sort of challenges that, that you can relate to within your org organization?

**Kerry Firth:** Or is there anything that you think is going on in the sector that, that is quite similar?

**Kerry Firth:** Haley, do you think it's just kicks off? Do you think it's a sort of set the, potentially a sort of sector wise, some of these challenges of trying to set up these these projects? I think so. Definitely when we've spoken to other people and other charities the traditional way of having [00:28:00] groups and social groups is quite common and those.

**Kerry Firth:** You, it's not an appropriate place for a lot of people to be able to go to those groups, and definitely the volunteer support as well. A lot of these groups are traditionally volunteer led and volunteer run, and what we had is our volunteers were also aging and struggling to keep up with those demands.

**Kerry Firth:** And it's not to say volunteers aren't out there and they're really good. But it can take a lot of work to be able to get those volunteers and people to commit to coming every week to, running that group or supporting running that group and things can be really challenging.

**Kerry Firth:** So that's what led us to look at a different way of doing these things. So we've had a suggestion actually as well in the chat. Creating some sort of certified system to endorse organization. So in terms of, could that give people more of an incentive, to get some kind of, or not qualify, some kind of recognition, for doing these kind of accessibility training?

**Kerry Firth:** Is, do you [00:29:00] think that would, could make them a bit more receptive? It's tricky, isn't it? There should be. They should really be wanting to, but I do get that places are busy. But yeah. Wondering if that could be some sort of incentive. Yeah. We have talked about it, a sort of quality mark of these have, these organizations, these groups have received this training.

**Kerry Firth:** We've definitely talked about it before and we've talked about it before. We had funding for it and were able to. Put some time and energy into doing this, we wondered whether that might be a way to incentivize places to maybe pay for some training, which would be really nice. And, in the future that might be a nice more self-sustaining model.

**Kerry Firth:** And if we can use the outcomes of this to go to people and say, actually you've got an unmet audience here. We have this many people in Manchester and they wanna do this, and they wanna come to your group. So yeah, it's definitely think something we talked about. The risk is obviously if you say it and then somebody goes and has a bad experience, but that [00:30:00] is tricky.

**Kerry Firth:** But then you've gotta weigh up the risk there, haven't you? You couldn't. We can do as much as we can to make that group accessible and hope that they have a thing and maybe tell them they have to commit to, training every 18 months or refresher training, doesn't it? And things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** So yeah, I definitely think that could be a really good idea. And yeah, with my funding head on, trying to think of ways to, that the project can continue in the future possibly. I think we've had another question come through the chat. If someone, one could just read that out. I think that's it. Hi there.

**Kerry Firth:** Last question, Hailey. And Josh, if you could go back to the start. Hello, it's Kim from Fivey. If you could go back to the start and give yourself some advice based on that, what would it be? I have some from me. I dunno if you have it, Josh. So I think the recruitment I know I've mentioned it a few times.

**Kerry Firth:** I think recruitment has changed both in our sector and wider, and getting somebody in for a year project is not like [00:31:00] it used to be. And that can take a really long time as well if they've got another job they've gotta come from and train them up and things like that. I think I'd have, I should, I think we'd have initially sat down and go what expertise have we got in the team and what links have they already got in the community?

**Kerry Firth:** Because yeah, the idea of getting someone in to work on a project for a year, that'd be their sole interest, is it's, we thought was the best one. So it would focus it. But really by the time you've got somebody trained, recruited up and running and the recruitment landscape as it is I think we can now see with you guys doing it with the enablement officers, actually you already have these connections in the community and that really helps.

**Kerry Firth:** All of us within the enablement team, we've been here a fair few years already, so we've already, others have already built up a bit of a backlog of connections that we have reached out to with that. Some of them did come from Georgia, who, who worked for. But [00:32:00] some of those connections were people that I've spoken to or that my colleagues have spoken to in the past as well.

**Kerry Firth:** It was like, oh, like it's great to hear from you again. So I think we didn't know that she reached out, but it's great that she has, I'm really glad that you want this. Let's get it in, let's get it arranged. Yeah. Yeah. And it'll be you that's referring people to these groups at the end,

**Kerry Firth:** these. And I know how nerve wracking it must be to go to those group and how much support you have to give to be able to get people the confidence to then do that. So for you to already also have the connections with service users to be able to give them that confidence. Yeah, I think as well, like from my point of view being vi as well when I go or when someone gets in touch, I always sort say to myself what would be, what would keep me from coming to it? What would I want to know? When I go to it, I ask them the questions. I say, can you do [00:33:00] if I was to, if I was to show you how to accommodate this, can you do it? I'd be like, yeah, that's fine. Not a problem. For most of the time they say, obviously, every, everyone has their limits on things.

**Kerry Firth:** But for most of the things I ask him yeah, we can accommodate that, no problem. As long as they show us how to do it. In terms of guiding or even just he was just making something a bit, a little bit more accessible. However that may be they have said, yeah, if you could show us ways around it we'll, by all means, we will offer it.

**Kerry Firth:** So that's been really positive to hear as well. Brilliant. I actually have a couple more questions, but do we have any more in the chat for I no. Jump, jump straight in. Okay. So I was wondering, this is probably a question for both of you and you touched on it, but it'd be good to talk a little bit more.

**Kerry Firth:** Do you find that people come to you other recurring like themes or ideas for actually what people want to do? I know you said there were like lots of different, like ukulele groups and that sort thing, but do you get now that's launched and kicked off properly as well? Do you Yeah.

**Kerry Firth:** Are there similar things [00:34:00] that people want to do, similar sort of scenarios that people want to see for, in terms of access? I guess there will be, but yeah. Just wondering about that. Yeah, I think so. I'll say the feedback we got from the consultation, but yeah, people speak differently to Josh probably than consultation because he's seen it for a lot longer.

**Kerry Firth:** The thing that many some, a very few amount of people said to us, we want to do a group with just visually impaired people. Yeah. I think was what the main feedback was. I just want to. Meet people with similar like-minded interests or even if that interest is just going for a coffee or just doing, a bit of social stuff, but it could be an open group.

**Kerry Firth:** And I think that was really interesting for us. But also definitely that consultation proof that everyone's different. Everyone has their own. Thoughts and feelings? I think what does come up a quite a lot is physical things, isn't it? Like walking? Yes. Like you say cycling, things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** Yeah. A lot. A lot of stuff regarding exercise comes up to be fair, but it is just exactly what you just said there, Hailey. It is the fact that a lot of people want to. [00:35:00] With a visual impairment because a lot surprising the amount of people I speak to who say to me that I'm the first person with a, I'm a first person with a visual impairment they've spoken to.

**Kerry Firth:** I'm like, okay, that's that's quite here, but we can connect you to others. 'cause a lot of people want that. But what a lot of people want as well is to be able to go to the setting.

**Kerry Firth:** Places, normal and places and not feel abnormal, or not feel excluded or can't do, it's all. So that's been the main bit of feedback that I've had from all of this really since sort focusing on that. Brilliant. Thanks Josh. Haley, a question for you just a bit more. Open ended one.

**Kerry Firth:** I think you, you've been hen now around 12 years, just wondering like how, I suppose the challenges have changed. Are there still, you were mentioning these challenges. Do you think these challenges are newer? Do you think the [00:36:00] different challenges that might have been 12 years ago?

**Kerry Firth:** Kind of, yeah. Where do you think that's going? Yeah, it's changed a lot. Thankfully I haven't been here since 1837, but I've been here a long, feels like I've. So I think I spoke about the volume of people we work with. That's been hugely changing over the 10 years I'm here. We now have data sharing agreements with the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, which is brilliant because people are automatically opted in to hear about us unless they opt out, which means we have much less people coming to us saying, I wish I'd known about this sooner.

**Kerry Firth:** I wish I'd been told about this sooner. Why didn't I know I've. And then they've become entrenched in their isolation or lack of confidence. And Josh's job is much harder to be able to give people that confidence to come out and do things. So that's really brilliant. But obviously the challenge then, and I think that this comes back around to how many different things that people want now is we've got a [00:37:00] thousand new people, 2000, 3000 people a year to be able to support with all their different needs. And and we also support people more regularly now. We support them at, we ask them, we talk to 'em at three months post-diagnosis or post certificate of visual impairment, six months and 12 months.

**Kerry Firth:** And their needs obviously change through that. We've had to really change some of the ways we work. And so maybe if you wanted digital support or support from Josh years ago, you'd sit down and you'd do a personal plan, and that could take a couple of hours and maybe it'd be in person or you'd have a digital training session for a couple of hours.

**Kerry Firth:** Now we realize that not everybody may need that. They might need a quick support with their phone to be able to access this, and this, or they may might. So we used to do living well with site loss courses and you'd have to go on all six sessions and you'd have to go through all of the modules.

**Kerry Firth:** That doesn't work for us or for people. Now they are busy, they don't have things so they can access different modules in our living with, well with site loss courses. [00:38:00] And Josh, instead of referring to our digital enablement offices. Josh might be able to do a quick little support on the phone, so yeah.

**Kerry Firth:** That's one thing that's changed. And the other is the sort of funding landscape that it's completely different now. So I mainly work with grants, but I do all sorts of funding within my team. And it's much more competitive. Funding is much more short term, and we've gotta be on our toes with things.

**Kerry Firth:** But in some ways that's challenging and in some ways it makes us more creative, but Josh, I, you've 12. You've started in the pandemic, so definitely things have changed. Oh, definitely. Yeah. I can actually see people in person for a change now. Yeah. Everything was over the phone, all like this through Zoom.

**Kerry Firth:** But yeah, 'cause it's weird 'cause I, when I started I initially covered the Manchester area. And since then I've then,

**Kerry Firth:** because. Places of self trafficked are really accommodating for [00:39:00] me to be able to go and meet people in the community. When I ask them, can I use a space or use a room or what have you, a lot of them have said, yes, not a problem. It's absolutely fine. 'cause they've had that lasting relationship either with myself or with Henshaw previously.

**Kerry Firth:** So again it's I found that I'm in the community a lot more, which obviously I didn't have the, when.

**Kerry Firth:** That's great because of, I, again, as Haley alluded to there when I first did it, meeting people face to face it, a personal plan will take me two, three hours because you go through everything with them. Whereas now it's a bit like it can be, can still take me that long. But I know that there's things that I don't have to spend time referring to because I've had training to show people how to do something, read a message on the phone so they don't have to.

**Kerry Firth:** It takes the need for them to wait six to eight weeks for an appointment out as, 'cause I could do it with them in 10, 15 minutes there because I've had the training [00:40:00] now. Whereas I didn't have that at the start because I couldn't do it over the phone with them to try to explain it over the phone.

**Kerry Firth:** They get confused and I get confused as well. So that's definitely changed for the better, I think. Yeah, and I think, so the socialization is a huge thing. The other themes that we've seen are digital support. When I started trying to convince people that they could get support from their phone or whatever it was, that team found very challenging.

**Kerry Firth:** People didn't want anything to do with accessible phones. They didn't want to. Now we have a six to eight week waiting list because. So many people, the world has changed and everything. People want it. And the same with our sort of, so we have a counselor, offering people counseling years ago.

**Kerry Firth:** People go, no, that's very not for me. But again, the world's changed and people are much more open about it. Counselor is very busy and helps a lot of people, and sometimes that's really important for people to be able to go onto these social groups as well. They might not feel ready for it, but possibly after some counseling sessions, a bit of wellbeing support, they do [00:41:00] feel ready for it.

**Kerry Firth:** We hope.

**Kerry Firth:** That's brilliant. Thank you. It's Kim from Fight For Site again, I think. We're just about to wrap up. I've got one last question to ask on behalf of Fight for site. You, Haley and Josh is what it look like for you and your members? I think it comes back to what we said earlier or what I said earlier of.

**Kerry Firth:** The thing that we hate to hear is, I wish I'd known about this sooner. I wish I'd heard.

**Kerry Firth:** Oh gives me, I, it gives me a bit goosebumps actually. We really hate to hear that. We want to be help people at the earliest opportunity so that it doesn't become really difficult for people and really difficult for Josh. Yeah, it's about the, so a phrase that gets used a lot that I've used that gets totally me a lot.

**Kerry Firth:** Is about stopping people or preventing crisis point, [00:42:00] preventing people from reaching Crisis Point. So if they don't hear about us soon as Haley says, you find you can find someone very far into their seller journey who are very, either they're either they've reached crisis point or they're very close to it, and it's about getting them back from that, pulling them away from that, which can be quite hard.

**Kerry Firth:** We are able to make like this and say, actually there's X out there that you do. It gives them uplifting for them as well as it. So I think that is just more people accessing more services, overreaching, more people. I think that's what God looks like to me anyway. Probably different view. I dunno.

**Kerry Firth:** No I think that is, it's for me especially especially if we an adult in Greater Manchester who is maybe had a visual impairment since they were child and we've offered children services. And we have lots of ways of reaching people, but there are still people that get through the gaps, obviously.

**Kerry Firth:** And so the prevention of that and somebody saying, I wish I'd had [00:43:00] this support as a child or a young adult, and now I'm this. So it's preventing that really, that's what good looks like. I think. I agree. And I think, you said that prevention is so important and I think you are doing a really wonderful job to try and tackle that.

**Kerry Firth:** I think just so just to wrap up now, but I think all of this has just been so relevant today in terms of, what, what's going on in the sector and what we can do. And it seems to be that sort of the main challenges around these sorts of projects, face recruitments as you say, sustainability and also just getting people and training on the, on the go get, getting people engaged and things like that.

**Kerry Firth:** But, having said that, obviously these challenges are going to be with us and we've got to find innovative ways of getting around them and. That's not to, I don't want that to take away from clearly the success that this project is having. So thanks so much Josh and Haley for sharing all of this, and thanks also to everyone for coming and listening.

**Kerry Firth:** Really hope that you found some some sort of thought provoking things there [00:44:00] to take back to your organizations. And before I let everyone go I just want to introduce or to advertise. The next webinar in our series, which is going to be on the 22nd of May this one between one and 2:00 PM and it's going to be one of our scientific research webinars.

**Kerry Firth:** I believe the signup link will be coming at you on the slides now. But this is looking at artificial corneas comparing artificial corneas for transplantation. And it's quite a significant area at the moment. There are lots and lots of people throughout the UK and indeed the world waiting for cornea transplant.

**Kerry Firth:** And as as they're waiting for these, because there is a shortage of donors and of corneas for transplant people, site is worsening. We're going to be speaking to Dr. Hannah Levi and her team who have come up with a, or are coming up with a more sort of efficient way of getting these waiting lists down.

**Kerry Firth:** So if you are interested in that, I think it'll be a [00:45:00] fantastic a fantastic webinar. Then please do sign up and come along. Also, if you want to read our outside report so you know the report I was talking about with our loneliness and isolation research, it's also on our website as well. So you'll be able to access that when you like.

**Kerry Firth:** And it's, it is a really thought provoking read. So if you haven't read it would urge you to have a look at that. But again, thanks everyone for coming. I hope you enjoy the rest of your day and indeed the rest of your week. And Hailey and Josh, thank you so much again and we'll look forward to seeing you all at future webinar.

**Kerry Firth:** So thank you very much.

**Kerry Firth:** Thank you very much. Bye bye everyone.