

Chair's Report 2020

2019-2020 has been a good year on the whole. 3 events in Worcester, Liverpool and Swindon. Worcester was our usual event with 3 speakers, we also had stands from various organisations and speakers. We learnt a valuable lesson from Worcester and have made the decision not to have stands at future events. They weren't very well attended and as there are many other opportunities to visit exhibitions throughout the year, we won't be doing this again.

New College Worcester were wonderful hosts and I think it is a venue we will revisit in the future. Liverpool was the first of our arts and crafts events and Andrea did a fabulous job of teaching everyone to make bath bombs. Other activities included modelling with air dry clay and tactile art using pasta and pulses to recreate a piece of art by Kandinski. We decided that we could run more arts and crafts events and facilitate the crafts ourselves. Swindon was the perfect venue for us, a large room with a kitchen off it and easily accessible facilities. Jodie one of our volunteers is definitely our bath bomb making pro. She is also wonderful with the attendees, guiding and helping where she can. Paul and Rob 2 of our other volunteers did various things to make sure the day ran smoothly. Picking people up from the station, making teas and coffees, washing up, guiding and just helping whenever they could. The trustees are great, Sam helping with card making and Dawn with clay and bath bombs. Dawn also provided hand massage for those who wanted it. Another venue that we will definitely revisit. We received lovely feedback from our attendees, a lady said "It was a breath of fresh air, can you visit again?"

Christmas saw us run countdowns on several of our Facebook groups, including the book club where we posted a festive read every day leading up to the 25th. The kitchen, arts and crafts and music all featured with dawn, Katie and myself posting regular items for discussion.

In April last year we opened VI Talk in the kitchen. This has proved very popular with almost 150 members. All our other groups are going from strength to strength.

Tracy stepped down from volunteering with social media last year but before she did, she helped me recruit Maxine, who now covers Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter 2 days a week. Sam and I cover the other 5 days. Tracy still puts together our monthly social media stats update and she produces our monthly newsletter full of information, not only from VI Talk but other charities and organisations.

2020 has had it's challenges and we are still in the midst of these. The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that all charities are having to adapt and make changes. We cancelled our arts and crafts event which was due to take place in York on 4th April. Fortunately we lost very little money from this. We decided to hold more of our online chats to help break down social isolation during lockdown. As a consequence people came forward and offered to help facilitate these. I wanted a more stable platform for this and when I suggested using a little of the money allocated for York to purchase a years licence for Zoom, it was agreed. At the time of writing we have 3 volunteers, all DBS checked. We have run 2 Zoom chats which have been well attended. We've had a suggestion to run a couple of pamper evenings, where attendees describe their desert island products and share tips and ideas. A friend who is a qualified counsellor has offered to run a couple of emotional wellbeing sessions which will be interactive. We want to use Zoom to it's fullest potential and make the best use of it that we can.

Our main Facebook group has been so busy with members reaching out for support but also sharing advice and information with each other during this difficult and stressful time.

Blind and partially sighted people can face social barriers and isolation at the best of times but not being able to see family and friends or access services easily can lead to anxiety or even depression. We hope that what we are doing will help in some small way.

The Team

Sam, She is still our treasurer, she also runs the book club. She is an admin on all other groups and helps organise events. Sam has also signed up to be our first aider but has had to postpone her course until the pandemic is over.

Katie admins groups, she has run Messenger chats and is going to learn how to use Zoom. She helped liaise with NCW last year as this is her former school. Katie doesn't attend many events but keeps an eye on Facebook whilst we are there.

Dawn is also a group admin. She helps with funding applications and is very proactive at events helping wherever she can. Dawn helps organise events finding caterers and products amongst other things.

We have been advertising for another trustee but no one suitable has come forward to date. We are a small team and we work well together, playing to our strengths and supporting each other when things don't go exactly as we would like. We have a lot of laughs along the way too.

Our volunteers young and old bring a lot to the charity. Ian runs the blog, Chris reading the posts so they can be loaded onto Audio Boom and widely shared. Tracy with the newsletter, Maxine with social media, Lacey, Justine and Karen new but I'm sure will prove invaluable during the current time. Jodie, Paul and Rob without whom the events would definitely be more challenging. None of us know how long the current situation will go on for but I am sure that we will rise to the challenges and find as as many ways as possible to support our members. We all hope that the pandemic won't be with us for too long and when it is over, we will begin organising events again. These might be different as I am sure lots of people will need emotional support. All in all it has been a pleasure chairing VI Talk for another year. It isn't always easy but I am proud of the trustees who show flexibility and strength of character when things are changing so quickly.

VI Talk Financial Report

End of year Summary 16th February 2020

Balance Brought forward 2019/2020	£4,826.58
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INCOME for 2019/2020

Donations	£519.00
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Grants	£7,807.50
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TOTAL INCOME FOR 2019/20	<u>£8326.50</u>
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EXPENDITURE

Events	£1736.26
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Travel	£700.61
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Accommodation	£3335.90
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Sundries	£312.92
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Equipment	£1250.00
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Printing	£260.83
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Website domain	£324.00
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Audio boom and Skype	<u>£137.08</u>
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Total expenses for 2019/2020	<u>£8057.60</u>
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BALANCE carried forward to 2020/2021 £5,095.48