

Who are Forth Valley Sensory Centre?

Forth Valley Sensory Centre has been supporting people with sight and hearing loss as well as carers and family members from across Forth Valley since 2006. The Centre typically welcomes 500 visitors a week. Most Centre users are people over the age of 70 who have age related sight or hearing loss.

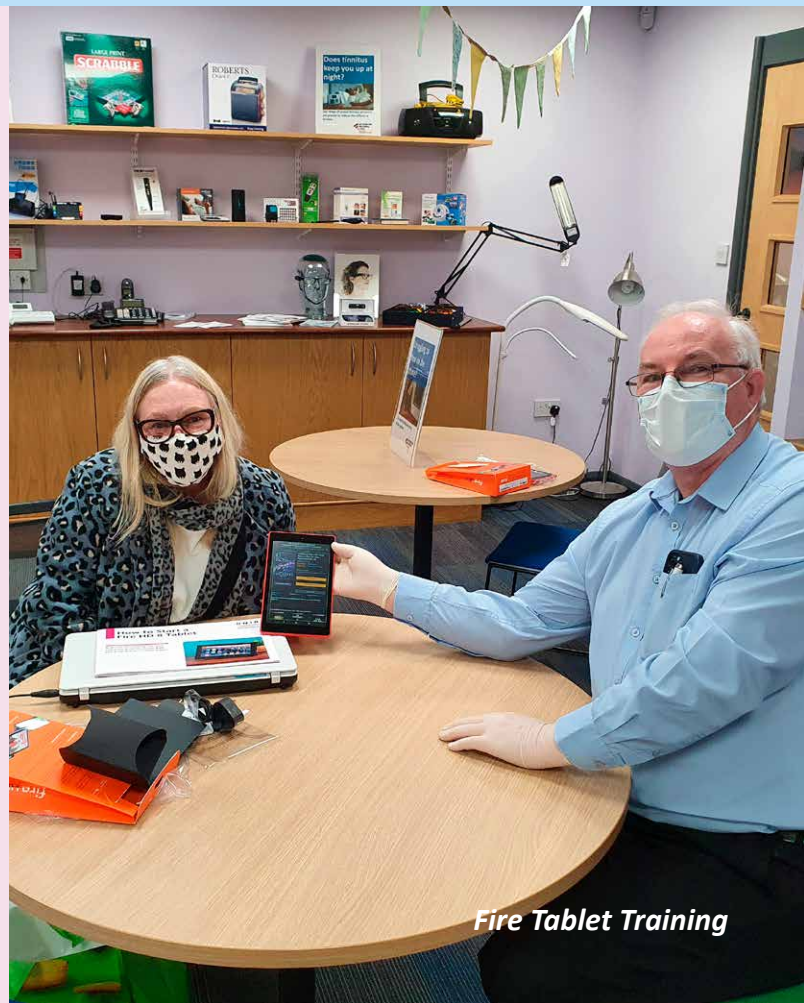


The Centre focuses on providing social activities, groups and classes to help people stay independent for as long as possible. They offer classes covering a huge range of topics, such as cooking to self-defence and art to history. They also have knitting groups that welcome deaf and blind people as well as Braille classes, IT classes and free BSL (British Sign Language) classes to help those with hearing issues to communicate better with others.

Normally, the groups take place five days a week and the centre often arrange transport for people to attend. As well as sensory loss, often there can be other health challenges, such as mobility issues. Sensory loss can be very isolating, for example, not being able to hear conversation, especially phone calls or staying in for fear of a fall in poor light. The Centre aims to give people a reason to make friends and try new activities.

How was the grant used?

- The grant has enabled the Centre to make use of BSL translation for a number of activity videos. This is costly and time consuming but important for accessibility. It is only right that people who speak BSL as their first language are included in activities and this funding has helped the Centre to continue reaching out to an easily excluded section of the community.



Fire Tablet Training

What had to change due to Covid-19?

- Since closing the Centre to the public on 21st March, they have been providing telephone befriending services to all Centre users during the periods when they would have been attending one of the face to face groups.
- This service focuses on listening and connecting with individuals. The Centre has been working closely with other partners, especially Falkirk and Stirling Council Sensory Services team, NHS Forth Valley, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Action on Hearing Loss and Deaf Scotland, to provide accessible information on Covid-19 and to make sure that as many members of society are as informed and safe as possible.
- The organisation have also taken over the production of the local talking newspaper, forced to close during the pandemic and started a number of online groups. The needs of Centre staff are also taken very seriously. For the staff members who are registered deaf or profoundly deaf and who live alone there is a befriending system in place, to offer them additional help at this time.

What difference has the grant made?

- The Forth Valley Sensory Centre's Art Group in particular has been extremely active making air dried clay sculptures on the theme of the sea. The response on social media has been very positive and until very recently they were looking forward to bringing a number of art group members to the centre for a live class. Sadly those plans are on hold but it is testament to the support this group has that they would have been the first to come back under strict social distancing guidelines.
- The funding from the Health Promotion Service enabled Forth Valley Sensory Centre to make sure as many people as possible were able to take part in these groups. Without this funding it would have been difficult to do so. The funding showed how much support the community had for these projects and although individuals are not able to meet physically at the moment, all the plans are now in place for when it is safe to do so.

'It has been brilliant. I'm very grateful for the regular phone calls.'

(Stirling resident who has sight loss)

