Torch’s values make a difference

Torch is guided by values that help us make good choices and set key priorities.

Before I went to the Torch weekend I wasn’t coping – I put on a brave face, but thought I was a failure and that life as I knew it was pretty much over. Being there has given me a hope that I never knew possible.

Our values

WE ARE CHRISTIAN:
Torch is founded on the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. We serve people of all faiths and none.

WE ARE RELATIONAL:
Torch is people-focused, creating opportunities for people with sight loss to develop enabling relationships that nurture mutual giving and receiving.

WE ARE OPEN:
Torch is welcoming, hospitable, inclusive, inclined to working in partnership and committed to community.

WE ARE CREATIVE:
Torch is constantly seeking better ways of doing everything it does to the benefit of people who are blind or living with sight loss.

This brochure sets out the vision and purpose of Torch – who we are, where we work, what we do and why we do it.
Torch Trust has a worldwide vision for people with sight loss!

It is a distinctive vision – rooted in the Christian faith and characterised by care and hospitality. Torch’s vision is for people with sight loss to lead fulfilling lives and to bring their God-given gifts to communities across the UK and around the world.

It is a hopeful vision – helping define our purpose. For us this means being there at every age and stage of the sight loss journey – blending specialist services, companionship and engaging resources:

...for people who struggle with the loss of their sight – that they have the support they need when they need it most.

...for people who live isolated and lonely lives because of sight loss – helping them find support, companionship and wellbeing along the way.

...for blind and partially sighted people as they search for truth and meaning in their lives – providing them with opportunities to creatively explore the Christian faith.

...for churches of all denominations to become places where people with sight loss are valued, included and able to fully participate within the Christian community and beyond.

...for people and families impacted by sight loss to find their place in supportive communities whatever their background or belief.

I passionately believe that our Christian faith drives us to foster community – community where all are welcomed, included, valued – given opportunities to find wholeness and to flourish.

I hope you will discover more about Torch’s vision for people with sight loss and I invite you to partner with us in making that vision a reality.

Dr Gordon Temple CEO, Torch Trust
“I didn’t have anyone to talk to about my sight,” says Isabel. “I wouldn’t have talked to other people because they have problems of their own. I would have kept it all to myself.”

Isabel is losing her sight. She found dealing with it on her own to be hard. Loneliness is a major factor for people facing sight loss – and Isabel was no exception.

She’s not alone. There are almost two million people in the UK living with appreciable sight loss. Although sight loss is often age-related there are also over 25,000 children who are blind or partially sighted across the UK – and over half of them also have other disabilities.

Whether young or old the sight loss journey can be complex, lonely and often full of fear.

When sight is lost it is almost always experienced as a terrible deprivation, and the loss is inevitably followed by a period of grieving.

Prof. John Hull

When Michael was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at the age of nineteen (a hereditary condition) his sight began to deteriorate rapidly. “I felt trapped, disorientated and lonely,” he said.

Michael longed for someone to talk to who would understand the changes taking place in his life – emotionally, spiritually and physically. Because the condition is degenerative Michael first started losing his peripheral and then night vision. “It has been difficult for other people to understand,” he says.
Each day across the UK an average of 100 people begin to lose their sight.

The number of people in the UK with sight loss is increasing in line with population ageing:

by 2050 the number of people with sight loss in the UK could be nearly 4 million.

There is a strong link between sight loss and a reduction in wellbeing, frequently leading to depression.

Isabel’s and Michael’s stories of sight loss are different but they both shared similar needs at the time of diagnosis and a profound sense of loss.

Many people still do not understand the realities of being blind or of losing sight. Isabel is elderly and Michael is young – but both needed someone to talk to and walk alongside.

Torch aims to come alongside people impacted by sight loss.

I’m so lonely … I don’t have anyone at all to talk to about the macular degeneration. It’s what you don’t know that frightens you, when you can’t understand what’s going on in your eye.

Turn over to find out what happened next in the lives of Isabel and Michael.

Statistics from UK Vision Strategy 2014 and RNIB
A people-focused vision

Isabel’s story:
“I didn’t have anyone to talk to about my sight – but Maureen has really been a special friend. I could confide in her – she was a good listener.”

Isabel heard about Torch’s Journeying With scheme. The idea was simple – over a period of six months, a volunteer would meet weekly with a client experiencing sight loss, providing companionship and a listening ear. Isabel was soon matched with Maureen, a retired nurse, who had been looking for an opportunity to volunteer in the community.

“Maureen is a special friend – a friend who has tried to understand what I was going through. She has helped a lot,” said Isabel. But the two have also helped each other. “We have prayed together,” says Maureen. “Isabel has prayed for me and has been very supportive. It has been a two-way thing.”

Michael’s story:
“I was apprehensive, I didn’t think it was ‘me’ but it’s been so beneficial and it’s really helped me to grow.”

Michael was one of the first people to sign up for the telephone version of Journeying With. He was matched with Janet and said that he found what he had longed for – someone to talk to who would understand the changes in his life, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Michael feels that his talks with Janet have given him the confidence he needed to make the first step in really communicating with people. Michael now enjoys the ongoing link with the local church that he found with Janet’s help.
As our vision is lived out in today’s world we work hard to ensure that our response is professional, appropriate and sustainable. Ours is a holistic approach – delivering services that complement those provided by other agencies and institutions.

Our plans align with the UK Vision Strategy, that seeks a major transformation in the UK’s eye health, eye care and sight loss services.

This focus on people continues to help us deliver our purpose: to express God’s love in response to the needs of people experiencing sight loss.

God sets the lonely in families.
Psalm 68:6

Our strategy
Our Strategic Plan for 2016–2020 commits Torch to develop its diverse activities so that they flow together to support people as they progress through their sight loss journey. We aim to be there earlier and serve for longer, drawing closer to people we serve region by region, working in concert with other agencies and local churches, believing that God desires all to live whole and fulfilling lives in mutually affirming relationships within their community.

Our active participation in initiatives like the UK Vision Strategy and Churches for All has strengthened relationships with sight loss agencies and churches to the benefit of those we seek to serve.

Gordon Temple, Torch CEO

Turn over to find out more about our activities and resources
When face-to-face contact is not practical or appropriate, Torch also offers *Journeying With By Phone* – a service giving the same friendship, encouragement and support, all conveniently on the end of the phone.

There is no need or expectation for clients to have a Christian faith. However, volunteers are able to offer prayer and spiritual encouragement if requested. When the end of the six month partnership approaches the volunteer will work with the client to link them to appropriate ongoing support – this could be through local charities, churches, or another service offered by Torch.

*Journeying With* schemes take place through partnership with local churches. Once a church has registered their interest Torch will provide all necessary training and materials, as well as plenty of support along the way.

I think it’s a great thing for churches to be in partnership with... I can see that it is God’s work – it’s building relationships... So I would encourage other church leaders to embrace it, come on board with it, and they’ll be surprised at what happens.

Rev Mike Martin, Exmouth Baptist Church
Helping people lead fulfilling lives

Torch offers a number of different groups for people with sight loss.

All Torch Groups share common aims: a warm welcome, hospitality, companionship and the opportunity for Christian fellowship – where both sighted and non-sighted people can come together and where vision is not an issue.

Groups vary as much as the individuals who participate – some are focused around monthly meetings featuring speakers and activities, some organise regular outings, day trips or meals together. There are a number of book groups where all reading materials are provided in accessible formats so every member can fully engage and join in.

Groups are open to all: to any age, to people with sight or without, to those who consider themselves Christians and those who don’t. For some, the group is a relaxed environment in which to explore the Christian faith. For many it is simply the companionship that counts.

Torch Talk

Torch Talk is Torch’s telephone friendship group service, offering blind and partially sighted people the opportunity to share fellowship and friendship with others across the UK, from the comfort of their own home. Each group seeks to reflect the interests of the people involved: some prefer a closer look at the Bible, others simply an informal discussion, and for others it’s a book group.
These are run mainly at the Torch Holiday & Retreat Centre, situated in a picturesque village on the edge of the South Downs National Park in West Sussex.

A team of Torch staff and volunteers help guests join in with a range of activities, including craft, gardening, music, books, outings and adventure. A regular feature of the holiday line-up is *Moving Forward*: short informative breaks tailored to the needs of people coming to terms with their loss of sight. The centre runs festive breaks over Christmas and Easter and is also available to disability and church groups for conferences, retreats and events.

The centre surpassed my expectations, the joy and kindness of all the staff, the food, and the organisation was the best I have ever known. If you have never been here I highly recommend you come and experience it for yourself. You will not be disappointed.

The centre can accommodate up to 28 guests in 17 en-suite bedrooms (three with accessible shower rooms) and has been *lovingly developed into a haven of hospitality and accessibility*. The building has accessibility features throughout and rooms are furnished to a high standard, many having beautiful views of the South Downs.

The Torch Holiday & Retreat Centre offers a ‘home from home’ welcome, generous hospitality, fun and friendship alongside Christian care, spirituality and prayer. We want our guests to enjoy the independence our highly accessible centre supports and to enable them to join in with the varied activities our holiday programmes include.
A worldwide vision

Our reach extends overseas through a network of partnerships and the distribution of accessible Christian literature and resources.

Accessible Bibles and magazines in formats such as braille, large print and audio, are distributed by Torch to readers in a hundred countries. Giving resources away freely to Christians in some of the poorest countries of the world is an amazing way to share God’s love and to also contribute to changing attitudes regarding sight loss.

Torch has a long involvement in Africa with Torch Fellowship Groups meeting in a number of countries across the continent and through widespread braille Bible distribution. This presence is supported by Torch Trust International through an operation in Blantyre in southern Malawi. Malawi – one of the world’s poorest countries – has a high incidence of blindness due to widespread poverty.

90% of the world’s visually impaired people live in developing countries.

The base in Blantyre houses Torch’s braille and large print production facilities with Bibles and other Christian resources being produced in both local and other African languages, as well as in Easy English. The centre also houses a free lending library of braille and giant print books.

Through fostering partnerships with other international Christian agencies Torch is committed to work together to help people with sight loss to lead fulfilling lives and to use their God-given gifts in communities all around the world.
We seek to make the depth and breadth of Christian literature more accessible to more people with sight loss – more quickly and at the same price as standard print books. We are passionate about giving people with sight loss creative opportunities to access the literature they need to explore faith, grow in their Christian lives, develop their gifts and participate fully in church and community life.

Torch operates a free postal lending library of over 4,000 items, available in accessible media: large print, braille and audio. Audio books are produced on both USB memory sticks and DAISY discs, a CD and player system designed with people with sight loss in mind.

Increasingly Torch’s accessible resources are available to blind and partially sighted people for download and delivery through accessible devices wherever they are.

Torch also sells the MegaVoice audio Bible – a hand-held solar-powered audio Bible (with an optional mains charger). It is compact, easy to use and easy for the listener to easily select different books or chapters. This Bible is read by actor David Suchet, and uses the familiar New International Version.

A resourcing vision that prioritises full participation in Christian life

Torch’s vision is for people with sight loss to lead fulfilling lives – so they should be able to read what they want to read, when they want to read it, and in the most appropriate media.
Many of the items in the Torch library are also available to purchase via the Torch website or by calling or emailing the Client Services team. Torch also provides a number of magazines and resources in various accessible formats. Daily Bible reading notes are also offered in selected accessible media – such as Every Day with Jesus.

Torch makes its own automated transcription technology available via the internet for churches to provide accessible media copies of church worship resources and liturgy. This facility is called Worship For All and is a free resource which any church can use to help ensure they are providing for the needs of their congregation.

Reflections Radio

Reflections is Torch’s own national radio programme, focusing on matters of faith and disability in today’s world. The show features music, conversation and prayers, with a huge variety of guests – many of whom are people with disabilities, sharing their own personal life stories. Reflections airs every Sunday at 9am on RNIB Connect Radio and at 4pm on Premier Christian Radio. The show can also be accessed online as a podcast and as a monthly audio CD.

For more information or to hear the show visit: torchtrust.org/radio

Turn over to find out how to get involved with Torch
Torch’s aim is to integrate specialist services, companionship and engaging resources for those who are blind or experiencing sight loss. We do this by supporting, connecting and partnering with key groups of clients, churches, leaders and organisations across the UK and overseas. After nearly 60 years of serving those with sight loss, we know that everyone involved always has something to give as well as receive:

For **people with sight loss**...

If you are someone experiencing sight loss or know of someone who has been diagnosed with any sight loss condition...

…please ask for more information so we can help bring support where it is most needed.

For **church members and leaders**...

If you are a church member or leader who catches the vision to make your church more accessible and inclusive for those with sight loss or would like Torch to work with you to respond the needs arising from sight loss in your local community...

…please contact us to explore how we can partner with you to support your church and your local community.

For **agencies and service providers**...

If you are an organisation, agency or service provider and sense a connection with Torch’s vision and would like to work in a mutually supportive partnership as together we seek to broaden the complementary services we offer across the UK...

…please contact us to explore how we can work together across the UK.

For **supporters**...

If you wish to support the work of Torch by praying, volunteering, leaving a legacy or making a donation...

…please contact us to find out how you can help today.
“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
Acts 20:35

It’s only by working together we can rise to the challenge presented by sight loss across the UK and around the world.

Will you partner with us today?

torchtrust.org  info@torchtrust.org  +44(0) 1858 438260
facebook.com/torchtrust  @torchtrust