

Sight Support Ryedale – help with their finances has breathed new life into the organisation and given it a future

Financial management

With the help of Community First Yorkshire, Sight Support Ryedale has turned their financial situation around from potential closure to a confident future.

What was the challenge?

Sight Support Ryedale had reached a critical point in their organisation's life – they had a maximum three months of funding remaining before facing a possible closure. The charity got in touch with the Stronger Communities team at North Yorkshire County Council who advised that they seek support from Community First Yorkshire.

Julie Atkinson, manager at Sight Support Ryedale, said: *"We'd reached a crossroads for our organisation which had the potential to lead to closure. We needed to talk to someone who we trusted about our circumstances. Turning to Community First Yorkshire for help was probably the best thing that we could have done for our organisation and our clients."*

How did Community First Yorkshire help?

Joanne, a Development Officer at Community First Yorkshire, started working with Julie to assess what the current financial situation was, how they had got there and what their options were.

Julie says: *"Myself and a couple of our trustees met with Paddy Chandler from Ryedale Stronger Communities and Joanne to look at our options. It was a very sobering meeting. Joanne laid it on the line that our situation was very precarious and that something needed to be done. She was completely non-judgemental and simply said 'this is the situation and this is what we need to do'! It was a revelation."*

Joanne presented Sight Support Ryedale with three options – a managed closure, a merger with another organisation or to find ways to significantly reduce their costs.'

Julie says: *"Closure wasn't an option for us, nor was merging – our service is unique and doesn't really lend itself to joining with another organisation. We*

were all very upset about the situation but were determined to do everything we could to continue our work with people in Ryedale."

What followed next was a series of regular support meetings with Joanne. She worked with Julie to predict the organisation's future spend, put a strategic plan in place and suggested further changes that could be made by the board of trustees, including recruiting a treasurer; something Sight Support Ryedale had never had.



Joanne, a Development Officer at Community First Yorkshire, said: *"Sight Support Ryedale have been on a real rollercoaster – from near closure to consolidation and now planning to expand their services in the future. It's been a pleasure to guide them on their financial management strengthening journey."*

Do you need help with...

- Securing income for your organisation or project?
- Turning your ideas of becoming a new community organisation into a reality?
- Benefitting from greater security as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)?
- Thinking about reviewing your organisation and planning ahead?
- Understanding trustee's legal roles and responsibilities?
- Undertaking a financial health check?

Our advisers can help. Call us today
01904 704177 communitysupport@communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk



Julie says: *“Joanne helped us to build a cash flow and put a forward plan in place – she was brilliant and really helped clear our way. Joanne was always at the end of the phone or keeping in touch via email – she really held our hands as we negotiated this difficult period”.*

Because Julie had worked hard on developing a cash flow, she had a really clear picture of where their money was being spent and where future areas of low income and potential vulnerability would be.

Julie says: *“Sadly, one of the things we had to do was make staff reductions. Again, Community First Yorkshire’s expert advice helped. Their employment advisor, Bob, walked us through the redundancy process which was very hard for everyone but his help was invaluable.”*

During this process of recovery and planning, Covid struck; as a result, many sources of emergency funding became available. Sight Support Ryedale applied for, and received, a substantial amount of funding. This enabled them to not only continue to deliver services during the pandemic, but to also plan for the future of the organisation.

About the organisation

Sight Support Ryedale is a registered charity that provides a network of support, activities, and friendship groups to sight impaired people.

Support is provided to people with any degree of sight loss as they navigate the social, emotional and practical problems that living with sight loss can bring.

What does the future look like?



Julie says: *“Thanks to Joanne, we now know how to forecast our future income and expenditure. With that knowledge I can plan when I need to apply for more funding. This ensures our future financial security.”*

“I know exactly how much each element of our service costs and have even done a forward cash flow for the next twelve months – Joanne would be very proud of me! We are planning to expand our service and have calculated how much funding will be required to fulfil our plans”.

“Without Community First Yorkshire’s help we may have had to close and 150 visually impaired people in Ryedale would have lost our support. Joanne and Community First Yorkshire’s support gave me the self-belief that we could turn the organisation around and we have.”

How we can help you

As a registered charity, we understand your needs. Our local advisers work across North Yorkshire and can support you both remotely or by coming to you when needed to ensure you get access to the best quality advice and guidance including: funding advice, helping you set up as a community organisation, governance and trustees, finance support, marketing advice, and exploring ways to further develop your organisation.

If you know a community group, charity or social enterprise that needs some support to be even more successful, contact one of our friendly advisors initially on 01904 704177 or fill in an [online enquiry form](#).

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