

## **Sensory Impairment Partnership Board Minutes**

Minutes for Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 11.00am to 1.00pm, Online Via Zoom (Pre meeting for Independent Members 10.30am to 11.00am).

### **Attending**

#### **Present**

AWB	Andrew William-Barnes	Deaf Blind UK
BR	Bernie Reddington	RNIB
CV	Clare Vile	Blind Veterans UK
GL	Graham Lewis	Healthwatch Partnership Development Manager
HM	Helena Melbourne	CCC Sensory Impairment Team
LJ	Lisa Johnson	Starship Technologies
J	Jacinta	Support Worker (for Bernie Reddington)
KB	Karen Berkley	Commissioner, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils
MW	Micheil Wilson	Commissioner, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils
MS	Mick Scadden	Chair and Independent Member
PB	Pauline Brown	Independent Member
PMc	Paul McCloskey	Vice Chair and Independent Member
RSG	Rebecca Spalding-Green	Healthwatch Administration Officer
TR	Tom Rawlings	HuntsBlind
WW	Warren Wilson	RNIB & Independent Member

### **Apologies**

JC	Jackie Cook	Independent Member
RV	Roger Valentine	Peterborough City Council

## **1 Welcome and Introductions**

Introductions were made and GL requested permission to record the meeting for the purpose of the minutes. GL also explained the Closed Captions facility.

## **2 Recap of last meeting and Action Log Updates**

GL apologised for the delay in sending out the previous two meetings. The minutes for 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 meeting and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2022 meeting were recapped and approved. GL then discussed the outstanding actions:

- Action 121, setting up a street charter, GL apologized that is still outstanding and will action for next meeting.
- Action 122, Robot Deliveries in Cambourne, is completed with Lisa Johnson of Starship Technologies giving a presentation today.
- Action 123, email introductions of some board members completed.
- Action 124, Mike Jenkins from CamSight hasn't shared the combatting loneliness policy, so GL to follow up.
- Action 125, completed with GL sharing information on advocacy consultation.

## **3 Feedback from Independent Members**

### **Triaging in Doctors Surgery**

PMC had a story about someone's experience. A blood test was required by the hospital consultant. The patient called the doctors surgery to ask if the nurse would take the blood sample, or would she need a visit to hospital for this? The receptionist was unable to advise and offered appointments 8/9 weeks away. Instead, the individual went directly to Hinchingbrooke hospital and had the blood test. PMC explained the person will contact Healthwatch directly, when ready.

### **East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust – Patient Transport**

The board shared people's experiences of using the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust Patient Transport Service, with people spending nearly whole days travelling back and forth for hospital appointments. One story shared was about an elderly lady who had 8.45am hospital appointment but usually no carer until 9am. As one of 5 pick-ups that day with her visit being the furthest away from the hospital the journey took her all over the area going to appointment and from the appointment, so she did not return home until late evening.

The board recognised the East of England Ambulance Service Trust Patient Transport Service does an extraordinary job transporting over 700 patients around the region daily but is not necessarily delivering good customer service. Suggestion was that the service

needs to be explained prior to use, of what will happen that day so that with a better understanding (ie the long lengths of time so that all patients are included) patients are better prepared.

BR thought it may be worth considering what impact the local transport reductions and cuts have had, as people may be less likely to rely on those services, leading to an increase in the already very busy East of England Ambulance Service Trust Patient Transport Service. The Partnership Board agreed adding that because bus passes are only active after 9.30am (Monday to Friday) some people are again put off using public transport. PB agreed especially as reduced bus services between Godmanchester and Huntingdon has meant she has to walk a long distance to access public transport for health appointments.

### **Highways Maintenance**

PB highlighted a win she had after calling Highways Maintenance and discussing the difficulties she was experiencing with the tactile pavement and white lines that had been painted in various places. As they did listen and address these things shortly.

**Action** GL will re-circulate info regarding local travel service.

KB added that Community Transport is being discussed across Care Together, with some doctor surgeries discussing organising community travel.

### **NHS Hearing Aids**

PB reported that herself and several people are having problems when going for NHS hearing aids, leading them to consider going privately. Also asking if newer hearing aids still have loop system in them? PMC said it is for the patient to specify with audiologist depending on what the Trusts can offer. AWB said that most NHS hearing aids have the loop already embedded it's just a matter of asking for it to be activated, although some don't as the technology is so advanced it is not required. PMC also said its important to remember they are devices to assist and will not fix hearing issues on their own. Advising that before getting hearing devices people need to understand what they need it for, what they want to use it for and how it will best react in wider circumstances of their environment. AWB and PMC suggested Cambridgeshire Hearing Help website (<https://cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk>) has a lot of good information and agreed must follow audiologist advice, really encouraged persevering with wearing hearing aids for initial 6-10 weeks.

#### **4 Starship Presentation (Robot Delivery Pilot in Cambourne) – Lisa Johnson & Lindsay Roberts**

Starting with an explanatory video, Lisa Johnson gave a presentation on Starship about who they are, what they do and how the autonomous delivery robots operate.

Starship was founded 8 years ago by the people behind Skype. It all came about when our Chief Technical Officer Ahti Heinla entered a NASA competition to build a robot to take samples on Mars. He didn't win but thought there might be other applications for the robot, and so Starship was born.

Starship is a delivery device, partnering with businesses to help them get their goods to their customers efficiently and cost effectively, such as Co-op and Tesco's to deliver groceries. Starship is well established making over 3.5 million deliveries, traveling over 60 million road and drive crossings and driven over 1.7 miles just in the UK.

What the Starship Robot looks like:

- It looks like a box/ cooler on 6 wheels. It is white, black accents, it has grey wheels.
- Height is just over an average person's knee and width same as an average person, with a flag that comes to shoulder height.
- It's entire top is a light-weight lid that can be opened from the front and inside is an insulated space that can fit up to three bags of shopping.
- We worked with the RNIB on the flag to make it work well for people with visual impairments. The flag is on a black flagpole attached to the robot, it is bright orange and has LED lights that are on all the time. The robot also has lights on the front and the back (at the moment the lights at the back are the colour of the Ukraine flag!).

LJ then discussed in detail the robots 'bubble of awareness' as unlike pedestrians or drivers, it has a 360 degree view of its environment. The robot has a suite of 12 cameras, radar, ultrasonic sensors and time of flight cameras. Time of flight cameras are really important, because they are able to tell how quickly objects are coming towards the robot.

The sensors and programming of the robot mean it will behave like a cautious pedestrian. Where a human might look at a road crossing and think 'I can make that if I run', the robot won't. It can't because it's programmed not to take that risk. When a robot approaches any obstacle at all, its aim is to safely get out of the way, if it can't do that it will stop.

In terms of accessibility a lot of money has been invested, making sure journeys are safe and those with disabilities or impairments are offered the service.

- The flag on our robots is so that people with visual impairments are more able to spot it. We worked with RNIB on the flag bright orange colour and LED lights.
- Worked with Guide Dogs UK to test how guide dogs respond to robots – they treat the robots like every other obstacle.
- The robots also emit a purring type noise, so they're not completely silent so won't sneak up on you.
- Working with the American Federation of the Blind to get better at deliveries to those who are blind – have that service now but want it to be exactly the same each time.
- On wheelchairs, the height of the robot is such that the vast majority of wheelchair users who have use of their arms are able to collect their items from the robot. We've been doing an increasing number of tests and more learning on wheelchairs so that robots recognise them.

LJ explained that whilst the trial in Cambourne has been running for 6 months and surveys show overwhelming support for the robots, they are always interested to hear your views and any feedback, especially when you consider that 17% in Cambridgeshire of customers have a disability.

## **Questions, Answers and Comments**

### **Hearing Impairments and Cane Concerns**

PB raised concerns that for people with visual impairments and canes the pavements are already a scary experience without adding more to it and for anyone with hearing problems it's not good either. WW asked if there have been any issues with cane users accidentally knocking the robots?

Answering these queries, LR explained regarding hearing problems it is why the robots make a purring noise instead of being silent, to avoid sneaking up on people and in high level of background noise areas, this purring volume can be turned up. In terms of people with canes, Starship have done a lot of work in multiple locations and because the robots are super cautious, and they want to stay out of the way they are not even getting to the point of meeting a cane. Also, important to note, with a maximum of 20 robots in total it is unlikely that you would see more than one a day, so they should not be in anyone's way. LJ suggested could hold a bit of a show and tell event with robots to alleviate concerns and educate people on the Starship service.

AWB asked could the robots be developed so that they recognise when approaching people with canes, so they can say hello to assist in making people aware of their presence. LJ said that actually in terms of audio signalling this is something they are actively working on.

### **Pavement and Physical Rehabilitation Concerns**

AWB mentioned rural areas are excluded because of a lack of consistent pavements etc. LJ agreed that with the poor pavements in rural areas it is a problem and unfortunately not an option at this time.

HM raised concerns as one of the people teaching visually impaired and hearing loss people how to get around safely are already burdened with so much street traffic. Asked if the Rehab Workers Professional Network (RWIN) had been approached for their advice and feedback?

### **Insurance, Accidents and Theft**

PB asked what level of insurance is there should she be involved in an accident with a robot? And asked about theft/ misuse of the robots? LJ explained in the unlikely event of an accident Starship robots have got full insurance policies in place. The robots are lightweight, they are very bulky, cumbersome size to pick up, the robot screams if picked up it is also covered in cameras and has a tracker so would be easily found.

### **App Development**

WW asked from the point of view of using the Starship app as blind or partially sighted people, whether there has been any testing done to check its accessible from screen point of view and for magnification users? Have been audited by American Blind Organisation to make sure App is compliant, this is due again. LJ was unable to answer regarding magnification (before her time) but will bring this, and get back on this.

### **General Comments**

Also commenting that this technological service must mean people are losing jobs. LJ answered that in terms of technology and jobs, they offer a ethical and sustainable delivery package so you can order just a few items, which is very difficult to do with a human, fair wages, delivery costs etc.

WW asked if there were plans for sharing this this technology in other areas, ie E-Scooters, so that know if used illegally on the pavements. The plan is focused on expansion but

saying that councils are very keen for Starship to collect data on road and pavement quality in local areas.

## **5 Feedback From Other Meetings - Graham Lewis**

At the Adult Social Care Forum, we had a presentation on the development of the App called 'Joy'. The app will allow healthcare professional to see what services and organisations are available in the local area to refer their patient directly to. The idea is that this will assist social prescribers to help link patients (with more complex/ different needs than previously have been able to help) to lots of organisations and service. Joy, should reduce pressure off doctors, and better unite healthcare organisations with hopefully a better uptake of these services as it removes the responsibility from the patient to act on information signposted to them by the doctor.

The Huntingdonshire Health and Care Forum had, like us, talked about the variety of new and different roles in GP's. NHS England have published material about the different roles, however, our Healthwatch is aware that not all the roles are in all the GP's.

## **6 Commissioner Update - Karen Berkley**

Working on the new Care Together Programme, working with Health and local communities coming together in each district, with the district councils to look at how can help people more and more, with news on that in New Year once mapping and planning stage complete.

KB reminded the board of 'The Stay Well for Winter Campaign' from Public Health with allsorts of information on energy grants, cost of living grants, help from Anglian water and Cambs water, and household support fund.

**ACTION** KB and GL to re-circulate this information

## **Questions, Answers and Comments**

MS asked if the grants were mean tested? KB advised that many are but best to check with the organisation that is offering the grants/ funds.

## **7 Sensory Service Update - Helena Melbourne - Sensory Services CCC**

The service continues to be very busy, with a lot of referrals coming in delaying getting out to people but despite this the waiting lists have dropped from 10-12 weeks to 8 weeks.

Continue to triage cases working very closely with other teams in the council, Technology Enabled Care colleagues, make referrals to carers team, to caring together and many other organisations.

Winter affects expected, especially on mobility lessons and still many things to do inside, so no one is left doing nothing. Still recommending 'RNIB living well with sight loss course' as good to do whilst waiting for Sensory Services CCC.

### **Questions, Answers and Comments**

MS asked why can't get cane tips now that guidance dog is retired? HM replied that unfortunately there is no equipment budget, so allowed to give the first cane and tip to a person but nothing after that, this is the same across many areas.

## **8 Blind Veterans UK – Community Support and Rehabilitation Worker – Clare Vile**

A national charity for ex-service men and women (and anyone in Blue Lights Services who may have lost light in services), who are living with sight loss. Founded by Sir Arthur Pearson in 1915 after blinded soldiers returned from WW1.

Blind Veterans provides rehabilitation for relearning and new learning to lead as independent life as possible, can be anything from partnership working, mobility training, sourcing equipment. Network of support teams all across UK, allocated a support worker. Two centres, one in North Wales and one in Brighton, although relocating at the moment. Supported over 10,000 people, across all ages with youngest 26 years, and oldest member 103 years old, with average age now 89 years.

As result of Pandemic had to change the way delivered the service, with isolation a key issue for many veterans has led to blended model utilising both face to face support through training and rehabilitation and remote working.

Estimate that there are 1000s of veterans eligible and not claiming, so do spread the word. There is a website for information, with a helpline number and a self-referral survey.

### **Questions, Answers and Comments**

MS asked would siblings of ex-serviceman be eligible for assistance? Similarly, PB asked what the support is like for spouses of veterans, in the case of dementia? CV explained it is the ex-serviceman themselves who they primarily assist but do offer support to people caring for the Veteran if their own health is being affected. Advising the best thing to do is to contact Blind Veterans directly, who will be able to advise further on individual scenarios and signpost to other organisations as necessary.

Helena wanted to praise the service, as in all referrals its always been beneficial.

## **10 Any Other Business**

### **“Let’s Talk” campaign from the Integrated Care System (ICS)**

The ICS has launched a campaign “Let’s talk” to hear people’s views and help shape future services in health and social care. The survey can be found here:

<https://www.cpics.org.uk/>

### **Making Connections Consultation**

A consultation is taking place on proposals to improve the bus network and lower fares in Cambridgeshire. This includes other travel schemes, such as new cycle ways, active travel schemes etc. The proposals are initially funded by the Government, and then through a Cambridge Congestion Charge (to be implemented in 2027/28). There are lots of thoughts about the proposals. The Greater Cambridge Partnership really want to hear people’s views. The survey can be found here:

<https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/making-connections-2022>

### **Date Of Next Meeting**

Date: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

Time: 11am to 1pm (Pre meeting for Independent Members 10.30am to 11am)

Venue: Online Zoom Meeting