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Summer fun at Forward Vision barbecue

Family, friends, residents and staff came together for an afternoon of good food, live music and chat at the Adult Services’ annual summer barbecue.

With characters from Snow White and the Pink Ladies to Where’s Wally, guests donned fancy dress costumes for the party which enjoyed beautiful weather.

Residents have been busy preparing for the big day—helping with duties such as shopping and baking, as well as decorating the garden.

Forward Vision hosts a barbecue every summer to bring family and friends of residents together.

The home in Edinburgh is part of Royal Blind’s adult services—providing 24-hour care and short breaks for blind and partially sighted adults with additional disabilities.
Royal Blind calls for action to tackle loneliness

As part of Royal Blind’s mission to stand up for people with sight loss, we are calling for government action to tackle loneliness among the nearly 188,000 people in Scotland who live with a vision impairment.

Research from Royal Blind shows that almost two thirds of vision impaired people have experienced loneliness because of their sight loss. Nearly three hundred people of all ages participated in our study ahead of the Scottish Government’s consultation on loneliness in April. Almost two-thirds (60%) of respondents said that their sight loss had directly contributed to feelings of loneliness, and 90% said they had accessed services to overcome feelings of loneliness.

The top three causes of loneliness were challenges with mobility and accessing transport, problems such as other health issues, and vision impairment making it hard to make friends. The top three interventions to overcome feelings of loneliness were support from Royal Blind and Scottish War Blinded services, equipment to help with vision impairment, and contact with family and friends.

Responding to the findings Mark O’Donnell, Chief Executive of Royal Blind and Scottish War Blinded, said: “Our research shows that vision impairment can lead to loneliness at every stage of life, from making it difficult to make friends at school, to sight loss leaving older people unable to get out and about. The impact of sight loss must be part of the national discussion we are having on tackling loneliness in our society.”

Find out about our loneliness campaign at: www.royalblind.org/campaigns/loneliness

Teenager Lewis Shaw has spent the past year at the Royal Blind School to develop the crucial life skills he will need to thrive when he attends the University of Stirling from September.

Lewis, who was born without sight, graduated from a mainstream school after achieving two As and a B in his Higher exams. Now Lewis has shared his experience of loneliness.

He said: “In primary school I was accepted by my class and I made friends easily. Everyone wanted to be my friend because I was quite interesting to them because I was blind.

“When I went to high school everything changed for me. My old friends from primary school deserted me and I suddenly found I was being excluded. This was partly because the teachers asked me to stop going outside during break-time.

“It was horrible and I felt very lonely and excluded. I tried to join a music club at one stage but whenever I spoke up I felt I was being ignored. I could see that I wasn’t going to be included properly so I left after one week.

“I was expecting to go to the University of Stirling to study Politics in September 2017, but I felt that I just wasn’t prepared because I didn’t have the right life skills. I had visited the Royal Blind School in my fifth year. I felt at home here straight away and everyone was so friendly, I wanted to move here immediately.

“I’m really happy to have had the chance to come to the Royal Blind School and I wish that I had been able to come here when I was younger. Everyone is very friendly and welcoming here. It has made a big difference to me.”

If you have ever experienced loneliness, what contributed to that?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unable to get out and about/access to transport:</th>
<th>Vision impairment makes it hard to make friends:</th>
<th>Other problems including health problems:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53.7% (151)</td>
<td>33% (93)</td>
<td>42.7% (120)</td>
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Respondents indicating vision impairment has contributed to feelings of loneliness: 169 (60.1%)

Lack of community facilities and places to meet:

<table>
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<td>4.2% (12)</td>
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Over 90% of respondents said that either their vision impairment had contributed to feelings of loneliness or they had accessed services to overcome feelings of loneliness.

If you have ever experienced loneliness, what contributed to that?

- Unable to get out and about/access to transport: 53.7% (151)
- Vision impairment makes it hard to make friends: 33% (93)
- Other problems including health problems: 42.7% (120)

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The Royal Blind School was one of five groups in the East of Scotland in the running for a share of up to £150,000 of funding from the People’s Projects – an annual competition in which members of the public can vote for their favourite cause.

After two weeks of campaigning for votes in the local community, staff and pupils were delighted to be declared the East of Scotland winners of the competition on STV’s Live at Five show.

The school will use the grant for its Courtyards Project to renovate four disused courtyards with specialist equipment for outdoor learning and play.

Royal Blind School Depute Head Teacher, Dominic Everett, said: “We are absolutely over the moon and grateful to everyone who voted for us. I am very proud of our pupils and staff who represented the Royal Blind School throughout the People’s Projects campaign.”

“Too often children with vision impairment are unable to access play areas in the same way as their sighted peers. They are not able to experience the freedom and exhilaration of outdoor play. The courtyard improvements will have a significant impact on the development of pupils at the Royal Blind School.”
Jenny’s Well is only the second specialist care home for older people with sight loss in Scotland, with Royal Blind’s Braeside House in Edinburgh being the first. It has been designed specifically to meet the needs of older people with sight loss.

Residents at Braeside House were involved in planning the design of Jenny’s Well to ensure it provides the best environment possible. This includes a sensory garden, specialist lighting to reduce glare, tactile signage, and access to specialist equipment.

There are around 188,000 people living in Scotland with significant sight loss, around three-quarters of whom are over 65. Sight loss is projected to double over the next two decades in Scotland, to almost 400,000.

The First Minister said: “I was delighted to officially open Jenny’s Well, meet Josie and some of the new residents, as well as the Royal Blind staff who are taking such good care of them.

“With an increasing number of older people in Scotland experiencing sight loss, I would encourage anyone with concerns, either for themselves or a family member, to ensure they take advantage of the free sight tests available on the NHS and seek advice from health and social care professionals.”

Josie on life at Jenny’s Well

One of Jenny’s Well’s first ever residents, Josie Lewis, spent time with the First Minister during her visit.

Josie, aged 98, moved to Jenny’s Well in October – just one day after the home opened. A former nurse, Josie began to lose her sight as a result of macular degeneration.

She had been living in a care home for several years after moving from her home in Paisley. But she was struggling to cope with her sight loss, often remaining in her bedroom for long periods of time.

Now, with the help of Jenny’s Well staff, Josie has been able to make steps towards regaining her independence.

Commenting on the atmosphere in the home, Josie said: “I’m very happy here. My room is lovely and bright, it’s very comfortable and peaceful. The staff are fantastic, they’re so friendly and I enjoy the food very much.”

Josie was born in Shotts, Glasgow. When she was a small child her family moved to France and then Belgium to be closer to her maternal grandmother. Following the war, Josie’s father, a First World War veteran, decided to move the family back to Scotland.

After attending school, Josie trained as a nurse and worked in hospitals throughout Scotland from the age of 18 until she finally retired aged 65.

She said: “I loved working as a nurse and caring for people. It was very busy and hard work sometimes but I enjoyed it very much. I would have liked to continue working because I think keeping busy takes your mind of your own aches and pains and keeps you active. I’m quite content to relax now, I’m very happy in my new home.”

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New building for Scottish Braille Press

Royal Blind has begun a modern chapter in the production of Braille, large print and audio publications with the opening of its new Scottish Braille Press building.

The new state of the art premises in Edinburgh were officially opened by Maureen Watt MSP, the then Minister for Mental Health. To mark the occasion Christina, a pupil from the Royal Blind School, read a poem in Doric, which was transcribed into Braille.

The Scottish Braille Press has moved from its Edinburgh home of over 100 years in Craigmiller Park as it expands its business and provides vital new employment opportunities for disabled people.

Moving to its new premises has enabled the organisation to grow its workforce to 103 employees, of whom nearly half are disabled, including people who are vision impaired. Currently in Scotland, people with disabilities are twice as likely to be out of work as people without disabilities.

A Royal opening for the Hawkhead Centre

His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, who is our Patron, officially opened the Scottish War Blinded Hawkhead Centre in Paisley, in an event also attended by our President, the Duke of Buccleuch.

The activity hub for veterans with sight loss supports around 120 ex-servicemen and women.

The event, attended by representatives from the Scottish veterans sector, included a performance from the West of Scotland Military Wives Choir. The Hawkhead Centre’s facilities include an IT suite, kitchen, woodworking and art studios and a fitness centre. The free service includes support with cane training, financial assistance, advice on specialist equipment and practical help making homes safer.

Hawkhead Centre Manager, Sally Ross, said: “It is a privilege to welcome His Royal Highness to the Hawkhead Centre to meet our team and members. There has been great excitement in the build-up to his visit and to the day when we officially celebrate the opening of the centre. The interest shown amongst the members of Scottish War Blinded in attending the centre has been amazing and the staff have responded to that demand with determination and hard work.”

Proof Reader Jodie meets the minister

Among the Scottish Braille Press staff to meet the Minister during the official opening was Jodie Renton.

Jodie, aged 31, of Dunbar has been a Proof Reader for the Press for three years. She has Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis, a retinal degenerative disease characterised by loss of vision at birth.

Jodie spoke about how landing her job at the Scottish Braille Press ended a cycle of being unable to find secure full-time work.

She said: “Having a permanent full-time job does a lot more good for your confidence and your outlook. It feels totally isolating not having that. I think my confidence has definitely grown. I’m much more confident meeting people both in work and outside work because of regular contact with people.”

Around 50% of the Scottish Braille Press’ staff have some form of disability, making them a Disability Confident employer.

During her career at the Press, Jodie has made new friends and is now considering returning to live in Edinburgh where she attended school and university. During the transition of the Scottish Braille Press to its new premises, she was involved in organising orientation tours for other staff members.
How I took on my fear of heights to raise £600 for Royal Blind

Fundraiser Caitlin Gould decided to tackle her lifelong fear of heights head on in June when she completed a 165ft abseil from the Forth Rail Bridge to raise money for Royal Blind. Caitlin who works in our marketing department, raised £537.

"To prepare, I was invited to the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena by Scottish War Blinded member and Team GB Paralympic climber, Garry Cowan. The hope was that by climbing with Garry, I’d be more comfortable with the equipment and little more settled with the height aspect."

"I was extremely nervous; my legs felt like lead just looking at the vast height of the wall. Despite knowing that Garry is fully trained, it was still quite daunting knowing my entire safety was in his hands."

"However, it was clear from the get go that Garry is extremely knowledgeable and a champion for safe practice. I was mesmerised by his skill as he tied my ropes to the harness."

"During the abseil, I recalled my time with Garry and I felt much more settled knowing exactly what equipment was there for and how it worked. I was surrounded by the beautiful scenes of the Firth of Forth, and I realised how lucky I was to be able to appreciate that. Between my moments of fear and panic, I had moments where I realised how grateful I am to have my sight and have my independence; there are so many occasions where I know I have taken this for granted."

"Knowing that every single penny I raised by taking on my fear enables Royal Blind to care for, educate and employ blind and partially sighted people from across the Scotland was massively motivating. I am so proud of taking on my fear of heights and I’m even more proud to have done it for Royal Blind.”

Obi-Ran Kenobi: Michael completes Star Wars Half Marathon for Royal Blind

Obi-Ran Kenobi: Michael completes Star Wars Half Marathon for Royal Blind

It’s not every day you can compete in a race surrounded by characters from a galaxy far, far away.

So when keen runner Michael Conafray, of Edinburgh, travelled to the USA for a festival, he couldn’t resist taking part in the Disney Star Wars Half Marathon – raising a fantastic £589 for Royal Blind.

"I ended up running the Disney Star Wars Half Marathon as I had previously run half marathons in London and a full marathon in Berlin. I was actually going to Coachella Music Festival in Los Angeles then on to Orlando, so I decided to see if there were any running events in America whilst I was there.

"The reason I decided to raise money for Royal Blind was that I realise how lucky I am to have the gift of sight. Some people are born either blind or partially sighted and some people become blind at some point in their life and I just thought it’s heart breaking to think that some people might never get to see the things that I do. I looked at what Royal Blind do to help these people and I wanted to be able to contribute something myself."

"It felt amazing to complete the run, as it was so humid. I had been training in temperatures here in Edinburgh around the freezing mark, and on the morning of the run the temperature was 22°c. The run was probably the hardest run I had ever competed in. I finished 203rd out of 15,104 runners so I was very pleased with that. I was also very proud to know I had represented Royal Blind in America.”

Challenge yourself

Are you up for a challenge? Why not sign up to one of our fundraising events?

Scottish Half Marathon and 10k

When is it? 
23 September 2018

What is it? 
With a flat and rapid route, this race is perfect for beginners or those looking to set their personal best. Choose from a 10k or half marathon distance, with the East Lothian Golf Coast as your backdrop. Apply now for your FREE charity place with Royal Blind.

Royal Blind Pub Quiz

When is it? 
11 October 2018

What is it? 
Put your knowledge to the test, with the Royal Blind Charity Pub Quiz! Our charity pub quiz is back by popular demand. Come and join us at The Merlin, Edinburgh, for a night of fun whilst raising money for Royal Blind! Tickets cost £5 per person. Come on your own, with a friend or as a team (max 6 players). There will be prizes for the winning team, plus our fantastic raffle.

Supernova Run

When is it? 
• Friday 9 November 2018, 8pm
• Saturday 10 November 2018, 7pm
• Sunday 11 November 2018, 5pm

What is it? 
This distinctive running event encourages participants to don all things neon and bright and run, walk, or stroll around some breath-taking views after dark! Suitable for all ages and abilities, the Supernova Run is a truly unique and memorable way to raise money and show your support for Royal Blind.

For more information about any of these events please contact our Fundraising Team: fundraising@royalblind.org or visit www.royalblind.org/events
Royal Blind provides education, care, employment and accessible print formats for vision impaired people of all ages. By leaving a legacy, you could make a lasting impact on the lives of people from all over the country.

Legacies are our lifeblood. They go towards supporting all our activities, resources and services. Your gift will help us establish new services and support more blind and partially sighted people across Scotland. Without legacies, we would not have been able to build our brand new care home for vision impaired older people in Paisley.

Get your will written for free
You already know that every adult should have a will. Without a will, the law decides who inherits. With a will you decide. With no will it will usually take longer and cost more to wind up your estate.

That’s why we’ve teamed up with McClure Solicitors who will provide a completely free will writing service. All they ask is that you consider a donation of your choice to Royal Blind.

Leave a lasting legacy

How does it work?
If you have your will made through McClure Solicitors:
• They make your will free of charge
• You consider a donation for charity
• There is no cost to Royal Blind
• 100% of your donation goes to Royal Blind

Visit www.mcclure-solicitors.co.uk/wills to find out more

Schools out!
Fun and games at Kidscene’s end of term party
Kidscene celebrated the start of the summer holidays in style with an end of term party.

It has been a great year for Kidscene with its fun-packed programme of games and activities. This year, the party was extra special after a local supermarket donated nine new toys to the club.

A parent of a child attending Kidscene organised the donation of the Flow Ringz through her employer, Scotmid Co-Operative.

The sensory toys ‘flow’ along the arm like a metal bubble and are a big hit with the children.

Kidscene Manager, Lisa Donaghue, said: “They’re brilliant because they feel fantastic on your arm. All the children absolutely love playing with them.

“They’re especially great because they’re suitable for the children with sight loss and additional disabilities or complex needs.

“This came about when we saw one of the children playing with one of them and we thought it would be great to get some in. The next thing I knew Leann brought nine of them in with her. I would like to say a huge thank you to Leann and the team at Scotmid for making this donation.”
Christina’s work experience

Each year pupils in their fourth, fifth and sixth year at the Royal Blind School have the opportunity to take part in work experience.

These placements are essential for developing pupils’ employability and knowledge of the workplace.

This year, Christina joined Royal Blind’s Marketing and Communications department for her placement. The 18-year-old did a fantastic job as she helped conduct interviews, visited other pupils of the Royal Blind School and performed a poem in Doric at the official opening the Scottish Braille Press’ new premises (see page 8).

Monday
On the first day of my work experience, I met everyone in all the different departments of head office and I had a chat with the Head of Marketing and Communications, Davina, about the organisation. This afternoon I am going to test the Royal Blind website to see how easy it is to for people with sight loss to navigate and access information.

Tuesday
Today I went to the new Scottish Braille Press office for the official opening of the new building. I have been asked to read a poem in Doric at the ceremony. When I arrived I practised my poem Nicky Tams, and then I was introduced to the members of the Board.

Then I was introduced to the Minister for Mental Health Maureen Watt. I read my poem out to the Minister and she really enjoyed it. Then we went down stairs to the production room to cut some ribbon to officially open up the Press.

Wednesday
Today I went out with Marketing Officer Caitlin, to Scottish War Blinded’s Linburn Centre and we had a tour of the building. After lunch, I interviewed a man called Robert, a Scottish War Blinded member. He was very interesting to talk to and he told us about his experience of serving in the army for 24 years. We came back to the office and I wrote a blog for the Bugle magazine telling Robert’s story.

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Friday
On my fifth and last day of work experience Caitlin, Laura from fundraising and I went to Braeside House to interview Hazel who is a senior carer. She had been working there for 12 years in December. The activities that they do in Braeside include quizzes, bouling and board games. She said the best thing about Braeside was the residents.

Next, I interviewed Mary, who is a resident at Braeside House. Mary has been a resident for two years on the 29 June. She said that Braeside House is a very homely place and she has a very big family.

I have learned that interviews are important because they raise awareness about the good work Royal Blind does. I now know how to write up interviews and I think that is a good skill for the future.
Stranded at sea for 19 days: World War II veteran Sandy shares his story

Former Merchant Navy sailor, Sandy Davidson, was just 17-years-old when a torpedo struck his vessel in 1943. He and his fellow survivors spent 19 days on board a lifeboat in the shark-infested waters of the Indian Ocean with little hope of rescue and under threat of enemy machine gun fire.

But after a peaceful start to the journey, disaster struck when on Thursday 9 September 1943, the Larchbank was hit by a torpedo, launched by Japanese submarine I.27.

“I was standing on the bridge when I saw the torpedo heading for the ship,” said Sandy. “At first I thought it was a porpoise bobbing along in the water. The first torpedo missed, but the second one hit us.”

“When it hit, the ship started to sink quickly. I made for the lifeboats to assist with getting them ready, but by the time I got to the main deck it was already awash.”

“I was scared but I did what I had to do. We were attempting to launch boat number four, but the ship sunk so quickly it went down as well. I had no choice but to swim for India. I had it in my mind that a boat might find me. I knew that Japanese submarines would turn their machine guns on survivors. Luckily I caught a lifeboat and persuaded the other survivors to let me on board because of the sharks.”

46 of Sandy’s fellow servicemen perished, with 24 survivors making it aboard the lifeboat. Sandy was in charge of rationing the food and water supplied.

He said: “There wasn’t time for a radio signal so we knew that we were on our own. We had a compass, so we decided to sail towards Ceylon, our original destination. We weren’t optimistic that we would find land, but hopeful that a ship would spot us.”

Sharks stalked the boat for 11 days as wind from the monsoon in the South UEst provided enough wind for the men to sail an average of just 24 miles per day. After nearly two weeks at sea, the crew believed a submarine was surfacing near the lifeboat.

“We ripped off our insignia as we knew we could be shot if it was an enemy vessel,” said Sandy. “But it was just a huge whale surfacing near the boat.”

The men were down to their last day of food and water when they finally spotted land on the horizon, on 28 September 1943. After landing on the beach in Ceylon, they crawled up the beach on their hands and knees, where they were given water and food by the local people and taken to a police station.

Sandy said: “We were very weak so we were obviously happy to see land. We grounded on a beautiful sandy beach. The natives gave us food and water, collecting coconuts so we could drink the milk they contained, and took us to the police station.”

A naval officer based in Ceylon arranged for the men to be brought to the Naval Air Station where they were given clean clothes, showers and a hot meal.

After returning to the UK Sandy continued his career in the Merchant Navy, reaching the rank of Captain before he retired in 1986. Sandy returned to Sri Lanka in 2013 with his son Neil, and on 28 September – seventy years exactly after he first landed on the beach, they revisited the landing spot again.

Neil, of Edinburgh, added: “It was an honour for me to visit the very beach where dad washed up all those years ago. I think we should be grateful for the incredible sacrifices that the generations before us made in order that we can live as we do today.”
I would like to help support Royal Blind

Please complete and return this form or donate online at royalblind.org/donate

Title: ____________________ Forename: ____________________ Surname: ____________________

Address: ____________________________________________________________ Postcode: ___________

E-mail address: __________________________________________________________

By giving us your email address you consent to receiving email updates from Royal Blind

1. My special gift:

I enclose a cheque or voucher made payable to Royal Blind □ Individual gift amount ......................

Please debit my Mastercard □ Visa □ Delta □ Maestro □ American Express □ CAF Card □

Card no. ____________ ____________ ____________ ____________ Expiry date __/___ Issue no. ____________ Security code* ____________

Name on card ...............................................................................   Signature(s) ...............................................................................

*The last three digits on the signature strip (four for American Express)

2. My monthly gift to support Royal Blind

There's no need to fill in this section if you just want to give a one-off gift to support Royal Blind.

Please complete and return this form or set up a direct debit at royalblind.org/donate

I would like to make a monthly gift of £3 □ £5 □ £10 □ My own choice of £ ................

Starting on the 1st □ 15th □ of month ____________ year ____________

To: The Manager __________________ Bank / Building society __________________

Address ........................................................................................................................................................................ Postcode........................

Name(s) of account holder(s) ...............................................................................   Signature(s) ...............................................................................

Account no. ____________ ____________ ____________ Sort code __________ / __________ / __________ Date __/___/____

3. My Gift Aid

Make your donation worth 25% more with Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax payer, we can reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate - just tick the box below.

□ Yes, I am a UK tax payer and I would like Royal Blind to reclaim tax on all donations I have made in the past 4 years or will make in the future until I notify you otherwise. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or if you no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

4. Communication Preferences

If you would prefer not to hear from us or would like to change the way we communicate with you please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or privacy@royalblind.org

I would like to help support Royal Blind

Please complete and return this form or donate online at royalblind.org/donate

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□ Yes, I am a UK tax payer and I would like Royal Blind to reclaim tax on all donations I have made in the past 4 years or will make in the future until I notify you otherwise. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or if you no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

4. Communication Preferences

If you would prefer not to hear from us or would like to change the way we communicate with you please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or privacy@royalblind.org

I would like to help support Royal Blind

Please complete and return this form or donate online at royalblind.org/donate

Title: ____________________ Forename: ____________________ Surname: ____________________

Address: ____________________________________________________________ Postcode: __________

E-mail address: __________________________________________________________

By giving us your email address you consent to receiving email updates from Royal Blind

1. My special gift:

I enclose a cheque or voucher made payable to Royal Blind □ Individual gift amount ......................

Please debit my Mastercard □ Visa □ Delta □ Maestro □ American Express □ CAF Card □

Card no. ____________ ____________ ____________ ____________ Expiry date __/___ Issue no. ____________ Security code* ____________

Name on card ...............................................................................   Signature(s) ...............................................................................

*The last three digits on the signature strip (four for American Express)

2. My monthly gift to support Royal Blind

There's no need to fill in this section if you just want to give a one-off gift to support Royal Blind.

Please complete and return this form or set up a direct debit at royalblind.org/donate

I would like to make a monthly gift of £3 □ £5 □ £10 □ My own choice of £ ................

Starting on the 1st □ 15th □ of month ____________ year ____________

To: The Manager __________________ Bank / Building society __________________

Address ........................................................................................................................................................................ Postcode........................

Name(s) of account holder(s) ...............................................................................   Signature(s) ...............................................................................

Account no. ____________ ____________ ____________ Sort code __________ / __________ / __________ Date __/___/____

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