

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2025 - 2026

SSC  
scottish sensory centre



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Professor John Ravenscroft

[www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk)



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Who are we?

### **John Ravenscroft, SSC Coordinator and Head of Centre**

John directs all SSC staff and programmes. His specialism is Childhood Visual Impairment.

### **Elizabeth McCann, CPD Coordinator in VI Education**

Elizabeth has increased her hours this year and is working on both the usual CLPL programme and the VI service projects.

### **Brian Shannan, CPD Coordinator in Deaf Education**

Brian has increased his hours this year and is working on both CLPL and the Assistive Listening Technology projects.

### **Nancy Conley Pinkerton, Habilitation Specialist**

Nancy started working in August 2025 on additional grant Habilitation services, including CLPL, a Hab Qualification and a support service.

### **Jenny Morrison, Specialist Teacher in Autism**

Jenny started in January 2026 and is starting to build up a portfolio of CLPL and an advisory service on Autism.

### **Diane McLellan, Braille Course Tutor**

Diane has continued to refine the Braille Competency course and increase support to students.

### **Sheila Mackenzie, Resources & Website Administrator**

Sheila currently supports the CLPL programme in addition to managing the SSC's physical and virtual resources.

### **Carolyn Mason, Administrator**

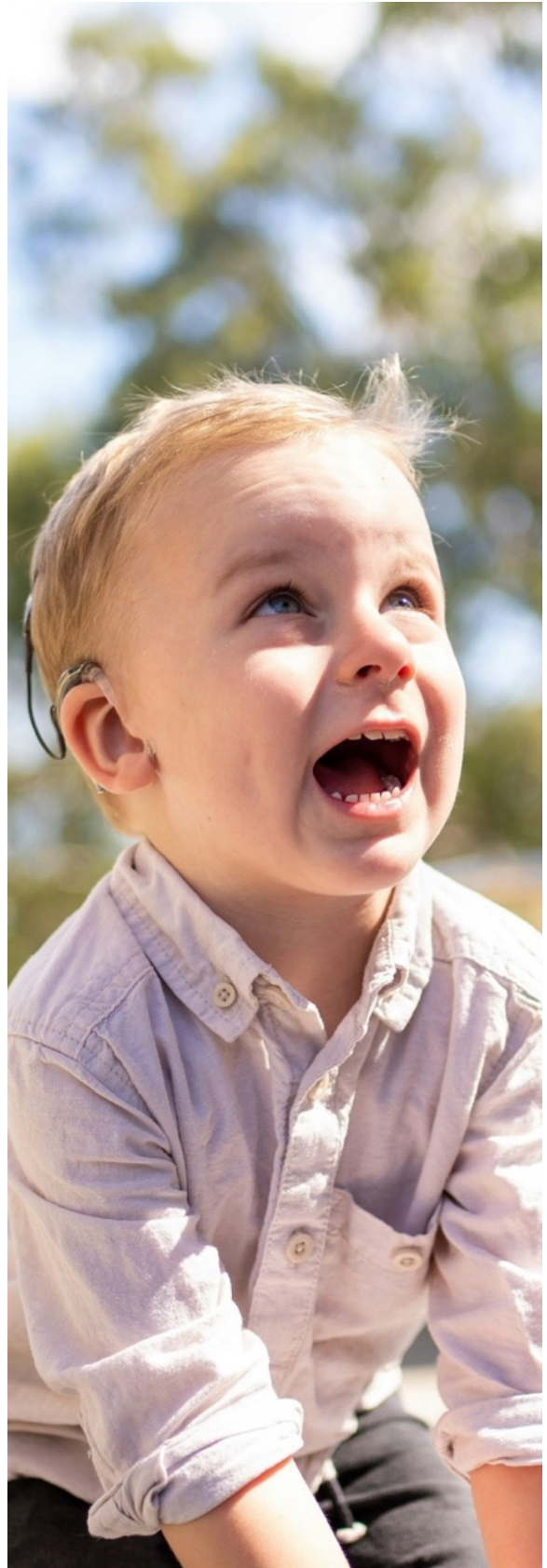
Carolyn joined the SSC in September 2026 and since then has been pulling together finances and reports and is the Qualifications Scotland Coordinator for our Braille courses.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) has delivered a year of significant national impact, strengthening Scotland’s capacity to support children and young people with sensory impairments through coordinated professional learning, targeted service development, and system-level leadership. This work aligns closely with Scottish Government priorities across inclusive education, the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) legislative framework, and the recommendations of the Doran Review.

During 2025–26, the SSC engaged over 1,200 practitioners across Scotland through a comprehensive programme of Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL), consultancy, and national events. This scale of engagement reflects both the increasing complexity of learner need and the continued demand for specialist knowledge within the system. In direct alignment with the Doran Review’s call for improved national coordination and access to expertise, the SSC has played a critical role in addressing variability in specialist provision across local authorities.

A major strategic development this year has been the expansion of habilitation services. The recruitment of a qualified Habilitation Specialist has enabled the SSC to move beyond awareness-raising into direct system support, including engagement with local authorities and the development of a structured national training pathway.



This work directly contributes to improving independence, mobility, and life outcomes for children and young people with visual impairment, aligning with GIRFEC wellbeing indicators—particularly Achieving, Included, and Active—and reinforcing the ASL Act’s commitment to removing barriers to learning.

The SSC has also strengthened its leadership in assistive technology, a key enabler of equitable access to education. Through targeted training, equipment procurement, and innovative pilot work, the Centre is supporting practitioners to embed technology effectively in learning environments. Importantly, this work extends beyond implementation into influencing development, positioning the SSC as a bridge between educational practice and technological innovation that ensures access to learning for learners who are deaf.

Resource development has continued to play a central role in improving national consistency. The dissemination of visual impairment toolkits and the expansion of digital platforms, including British Sign Language (BSL) content and emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, are supporting practitioners, families, and services access high-quality, evidence-informed guidance. This contributes directly to Doran’s emphasis on reducing inequity and ensuring consistency of provision across Scotland.

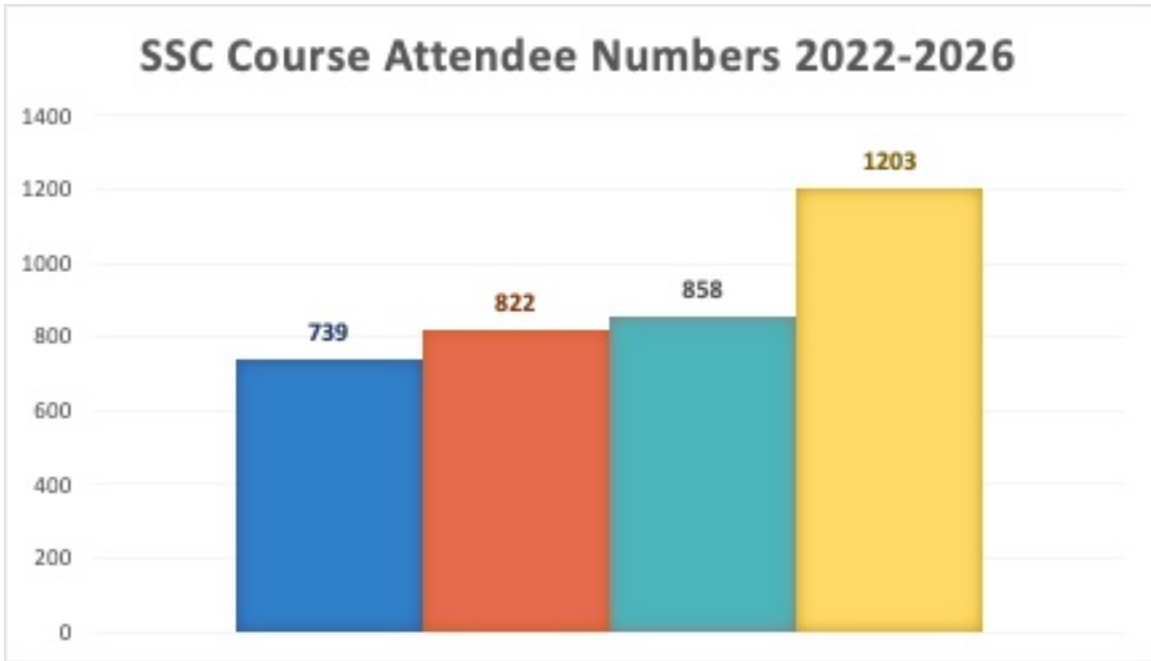
Collaboration remains a defining strength of the SSC’s approach. Engagement with local authorities, national organisations, and Qualifications Scotland has supported more integrated service delivery and strengthened national infrastructure. The establishment of new professional networks, particularly in habilitation, demonstrates a commitment to sustainable system development and aligns with GIRFEC principles of coordinated, multi-agency working.

The SSC is proactively preparing for the transition of Doran-related funding through strategic planning and business development. This ensures that the Centre remains well-positioned to provide national leadership, deliver value for public investment, and continue improving outcomes for children and young people.

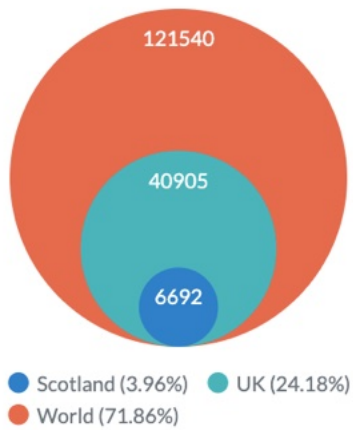
Overall, the SSC is not only delivering on its current remit but is evolving as a national centre of excellence—supporting Scotland’s ambition for an inclusive, equitable, and high-performing education system.

Professor John Ravenscroft  
Director and Head of SSC

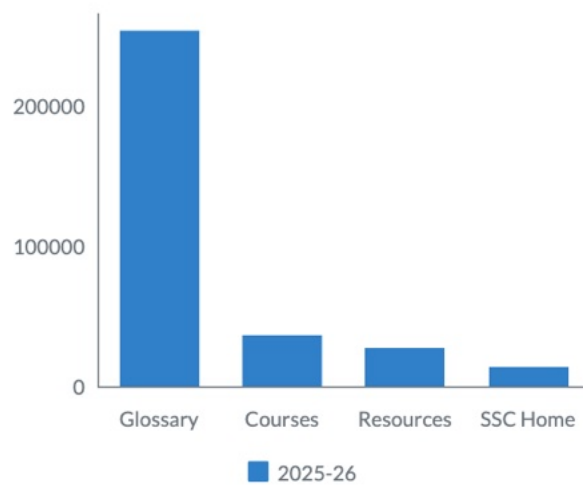
# AT A GLANCE



### Website Sessions 2025-26: Scotland to World



### Top Web Visits

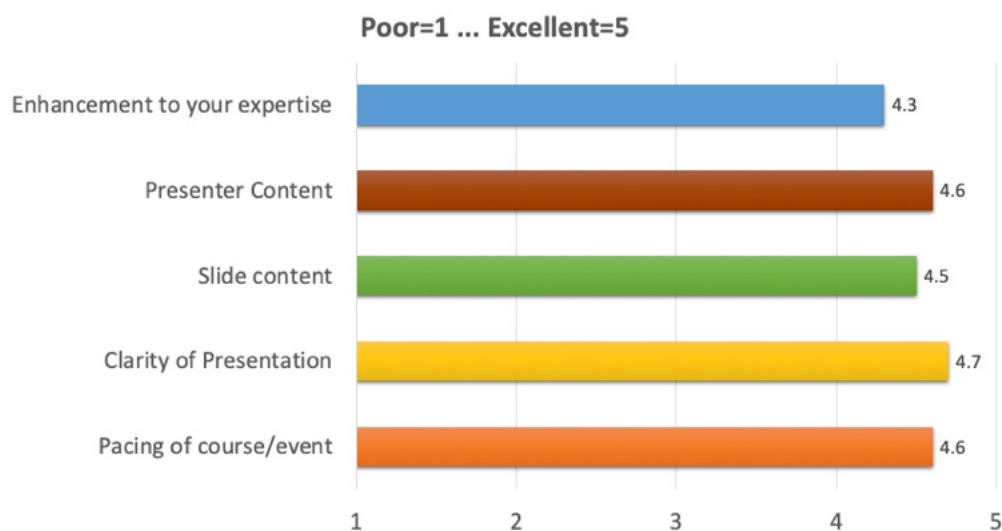


## Course Date and Title

## Participants

2025-26	Distance	Braille Competency Course: Uncontracted (3-month)	7
2025-26	Distance	Braille Competency Course: Contracted (18-month)	25
25/04/25	Hybrid	Supporting Children & Young People Who Are Visually Impaired & Blind in Scotland: Toolkit Launch	30
26/04/25	In person	Event for Families of Newly Identified Children who are deaf or hard of hearing (with NDCS)	17
12/05/25	Webinar	Outreach Belfast Cerebral Visual Impairment	20
2/09/25	Webinar	Turning Picture Books into Sensory Stories	198
9/09/25	Webinar	'VICTA' information session	16
26/09/25	In person	Assistive Technology Day: Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students	17
28/10/25	Webinar	Habilitation for Complex Needs session 1 - Assessment	59
29/10/25	In person	Accessible Formats in Focus with Sight & Sound Technology	37
10/11/25	Webinar	Assessment Arrangements for D/deaf learners and learners with visual impairment	44
12/11/25	Webinar	Making devices accessible and aid habilitation with Triple Tap Tech	81
21/11/25	In person	VINCYP: Introduction to Childhood VI Day 1	27
25/11/25	Webinar	Habilitation for Complex Needs session 2 - Adaptions and Strategies	60
02/12/25	Webinar	Curriculum Improvement Cycle (Visual Impairment Education)	48
13/01/26	Webinar	Habilitation for Complex Needs session 3: Evaluating progress	57
19/01/26	Webinar	Importance of the Role of the QTVI & Habilitation Specialists in the Education of CYP with Visual Impairment	61
21/01/26	Webinar	How can AI tools support deaf and hard of hearing students?	123
5/02/26	Webinar	Brain Injury Related to Sight Loss	152
23/02/26	In person	Carrying Out a Functional Vision Assessment	18
2/03/26	Webinar	smiLE Therapy Taster	27
24/03/26	Webinar	Speech to Text approaches to support deaf students	27
25/03/26	In person	Personal Safety for People with Low or No Vision	21
26/03/26	Webinar	Inclusive approaches to access and education and best practice for neurodivergent learners	31
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1203</b>

## Average of the year's course evaluations



# Q1 HIGHLIGHTS

## Successes

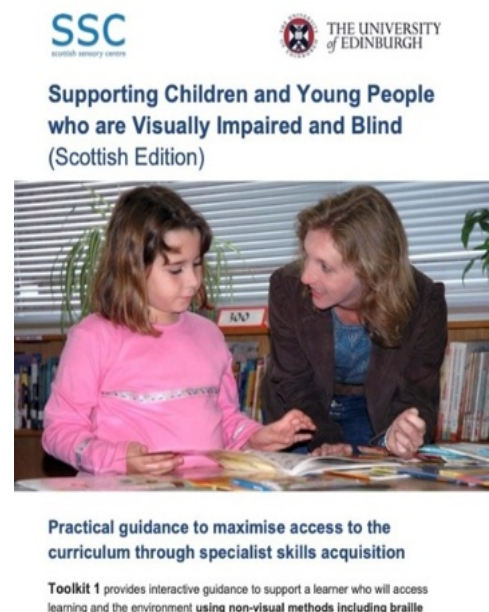
Quarter 1 focused on strengthening organisational capacity, enhancing the quality and reach of national resources, and establishing the foundations for expanded service delivery. These developments align closely with national priorities relating to workforce development, early intervention, and improved access to specialist support.

A key operational milestone was the successful recruitment to a full-time administrative post. This has strengthened the SSC's internal infrastructure, enabling more efficient coordination of programmes, improved financial oversight, and enhanced responsiveness to stakeholder demand. This investment in organisational capacity is critical to sustaining national delivery at scale.

The launch of the Visual Impairment Toolkits in April 2025 represents a significant advancement in the SSC's contribution to national consistency in practice. Developed through extensive consultation and expert input, these resources provide practical, contextually relevant guidance for practitioners across Scotland. Early uptake across multiple local authorities demonstrates strong demand and highlights the sector's need for accessible, standardised materials.

Doran-funded investment has begun to translate into tangible system improvements. The procurement of specialist equipment, including braille technologies, has enabled the SSC to develop structured teaching materials that support both practitioner learning and pupil access. This work represents a strategic shift towards scalable, sustainable professional learning aligned with future-facing educational technologies.

Progress has also been made in expanding habilitation provision. The recruitment of a Habilitation Specialist marks an important step in addressing



long-standing gaps in specialist support, particularly for learners requiring mobility and independence training. This directly supports the Doran Review's recommendation to improve access to low-incidence specialist services.

Engagement activity in this quarter included a highly successful family-focused event delivered in partnership with the National Deaf Children's Society. This event provided valuable information, facilitated peer support, and strengthened connections between families and services.

***I thought the event was excellent. It was extremely helpful for me to learn about different aspects of hearing loss and speak to people and hear their stories. Extremely brilliant event.***

**Event for Families of Newly Identified Children who are Deaf, June 2025**

## Impacts

- Early evidence from Quarter 1 demonstrates meaningful progress towards improved outcomes for both learners and families. Feedback from family engagement activities indicates increased confidence, improved understanding, and enhanced connection to support networks—key components of early intervention and family-centred practice under GIRFEC.
- The development of structured learning materials for assistive and braille technologies represents a long-term investment in workforce capability. By supporting practitioners to develop specialist skills, this work contributes to improved access to the curriculum for children and young people with complex needs.
- The Visual Impairment Toolkits have been widely recognised as high-quality, practical resources. Their adoption across local authorities is beginning to reduce variability in practice, supporting a more equitable and consistent national approach.

***The toolkit will be of massive practical benefit to learners with VI Scotland and their families and to the professionals who support them. It is evident that a huge amount of expertise, consultation, thought, reflection and effort has gone into producing this toolkit to make it useful, relevant and specific to the Scottish context.***

Toolkit Launch, April 2025



**In Quarter 1 work began on a new area of the SSC BSL Glossary – Marine Species. Muffin Project funded by Erasmus+**

**[www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/BSL](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/BSL)**

BSL Marine Species Glossary - Atlantic salmon



## Q2 HIGHLIGHTS

### Successes

Quarter 2 was characterised by significant expansion in national reach, increased engagement with professional learning, and strengthened collaboration with local authorities and partner organisations.

SSC delivered its most popular webinar in its history so far when Ailie Findlay presented “Picture Books as Sensory Stories”, attracting 198 participants. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting both the quality and the immediate classroom applicability of the session. The SSC also hosted a second successful webinar with VICTA, broadening the reach and relevance of its professional learning offer.

SSC also continued to strengthen its professional learning portfolio. Two braille courses welcomed new candidates, with 26 now actively enrolled. The Centre also progressed significantly on its consultancy commitments with Highland Council, providing tailored support through tutorials, exam adaptations, and participation in professional meetings. Work on the first two VI toolkits was completed and distribution is underway, ensuring that schools, local authorities, and families have access to these practical teaching resources.



In deaf education, SSC staff provided the keynote at the Phonak Training Event, co-hosted a Medel Humanistic Counselling course for teachers of the deaf, and ran an Assistive Technology Day in September with 17 participants. The SSC library was enriched with nine new acquisitions.

The purchasing of specialist equipment for HI and VI services progressed, ensuring that local authorities and practitioners will have access to high-quality tools for teaching and learning. A Qualified Habilitation Specialist joined SSC, allowing us to move forward supporting local authorities and identifying children who will benefit from Habilitation services.

***Lots of simple, easy to follow steps to make immediate changes to the way a story can be shared in class. Many nuggets of useful information passed along.***

**Turning Picture Books into Sensory Stories, September 2025**

# Impacts

Impact in Quarter 2 is evident in both scale and depth. Practitioners report increased confidence, improved understanding of specialist approaches, and immediate application of learning in classroom settings. This aligns strongly with the ASL Act's emphasis on improving support within universal provision.

Engagement with national organisations has ensured that SSC expertise contributes to policy discussions and strategic developments, reinforcing its role as a key stakeholder within Scotland's inclusive education landscape.

The breadth of engagement and uptake of resources indicates growing recognition of the SSC as a national hub for sensory education, supporting both practice and policy development.

Planning is underway for a series of Habilitation sessions, and a professional learning programme for teachers of braille was enhanced with monthly support meetings. The Unified English Braille (UEB) courses remain up to date, with refreshed materials in development. Collaborative work with national centres strengthened, ensuring that collective priorities are aligned and that representation is secured at Doran Committee meetings.

New habilitation and assistive listening technology webpages were launched, broadening the scope of accessible resources available online.

Specifically, our impacts were notable for:

- Engagement with external organisations such as the Alliance and NDCS ensured that SSC expertise fed directly into national discussions on accessibility of the GIRFEC framework.
- Successes this quarter underscore SSC's ability to reach large audiences, deliver practical and evidence-based resources, and maintain its reputation as Scotland's national hub for sensory education.
- Early discussions with multiple local authorities signal a growing demand and recognition of the SSC's national role in Habilitation.

Collectively, these achievements demonstrate tangible progress in service delivery, professional learning, and collaboration at both local and national levels.

## Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

### Successes

Quarter 3 focused on strengthening system leadership, advancing innovation in assistive technology, and consolidating national partnerships.

Across SSC events, practitioners and service managers engaged with content and volunteered to contribute to reference groups and follow-on work. SSC input was increasingly sought at early stages of development around curriculum improvement, assessment arrangements and complex needs pathways. An example - the in-person event “Accessible Formats in Focus” with Sight and Sound Technology, attended by 37 participants. Feedback mentioned how they had benefited from trying out new technology that can support learners to access the curriculum and highlighting the opportunity to exchange ideas with others carrying out similar roles.

***Practical side to looking at various technologies that might be helpful for our service. Awareness around other services working towards the same outcome and how they facilitate that.***

**Accessible Formats in Focus, October 2025**

The braille competency courses continued to show strong outcomes, including increased enrolment, successful assessment completions, and accelerated progression for some candidates.

Collaborative work with national centres, including support for CALL Scotland’s transition to the Doran Grant, demonstrated effective partnership working and reinforces the SSC’s role within a coherent national support ecosystem. Strong progress was achieved in translating Doran Grant investment into practical, learner-centred impact through targeted professional learning, assistive technology deployment, and systems-level innovation. Braille device software update was completed and lessons were published on the website. Outreach training on assistive listening technology reached multiple local authority clusters, strengthening practitioner confidence. A notable success was the direct

resolution of participation barriers for deaf learners. The provision of specialist equipment lending was developed. This approach ensures that technology is matched to learner need before permanent investment is made, maximising inclusion and value for money.

A specialist teacher in neurodivergence and sensory impairments was recruited, strengthening SSC capacity to respond to increasingly complex learner profiles.

## Impacts

In addition to the strong delivery of planned activity, this quarter demonstrates the Scottish Sensory Centre's role as a national convenor and trusted source of expertise:

- The SSC's role in translating research, policy and theory into applied professional learning remains a key strength, evidenced by consistently positive feedback, supporting meaningful changes in practice.
- The assistive technology pilot room progressed from local testing to influencing international product development, with formal engagement from a global manufacturer. This positions the SSC as a credible bridge between educational practice and industry research, ensuring that future technologies are informed by the lived experiences of deaf learners in Scotland.
- Issues raised during outreach training were acted upon immediately through technical support to enable access to school assemblies and communal activities.
- Further impact is evident in workforce and infrastructure development. Progress on habilitation services includes growing engagement from local authorities, well-attended professional learning events, and substantive advancement in designing a validated habilitation training course.

***This was a fantastic event and I look forward to what you have in store for Hab specialists in the future!***

**Habilitation for Complex Needs, November 2025**

## Q4 HIGHLIGHTS

### Successes

Overall, the SSC delivered a highly productive quarter, with strong alignment between operational activity and strategic objectives. The combination of targeted professional learning, resource development, national outreach, and collaborative engagement illustrated a coherent and impactful programme of work that continues to build capacity across Scotland.

Across VI and deaf education, webinars and in-person sessions had very high levels of engagement. Attendance figures were particularly strong, with some webinars attracting over 100 participants. Qualitative feedback consistently highlighted the practical relevance, clarity and immediate applicability of the content particularly for teachers who may not have direct specialist support. The functional vision assessment course and the webinar on the role of QTVIs and habilitation specialists were especially well received.

Strong progress was made this quarter in delivering targeted, high-impact activity across the Doran grant objectives. The Unified English Braille (UEB) courses with refreshed materials were sent out to the new cohort of candidates. Professional learning tailored to local authority needs was particularly successful, as demonstrated by the session delivered to North Lanarkshire Visual Impairment Service. Feedback from participants indicated a significant enhancement in professional expertise, with practitioners highlighting the practical value of the content and its immediate relevance to assessment of learners with complex additional support needs.

Habilitation sessions were well attended, and the establishment of a national email forum created a sustainable mechanism for ongoing professional dialogue and development.

***Practical, down to earth and knowledge that I can use straight away.***

**Carrying Out a Functional Vision Assessment, February 2026**

# Impacts

SSC demonstrated a strong and sustained impact this quarter through high-quality professional learning, effective partnership working, and the continued development of practical resources that directly support improved outcomes for CYP with sensory impairments:

- CLPL is influencing practice, as evidenced by feedback describing increased confidence, immediate classroom application, and improved understanding of legislative and pedagogical frameworks.
- Consultancy activity has shown clear impact, enabling transition towards greater independence within local authority services and directly supporting learners. Targeted interventions, including functional vision assessments and bespoke advice, illustrate how SSC expertise contributes to tangible improvements in individual learner pathways.
- The procurement and lending of specialist equipment allowed services to trial technologies and supported more informed decision-making around technology adoption. This work is helping to further cement the SSC as a national centre of expertise in sensory assistive technology, with growing recognition of its role in both professional learning and consultancy.
- Joint activity with other national centres, for example our emerging partnerships with Enquire, enhance professional learning opportunities and contribute to a more joined-up national approach to supporting children and young people with complex additional support needs.

***Obviously the fact that the presenter spoke from personal experience was the stand out factor, however, aside from that the presentation was clear, followed a logical structure, gave space to think and consider and signposted to appropriate resources that were diverse.***

**Brain Injury related to Sight Loss, February 2026**

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) is well positioned to build on its current achievements and further consolidate its role as Scotland's national centre of expertise in sensory education. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the SSC will play a critical role in ensuring that children and young people with sensory impairments receive equitable, high-quality support that enables them to achieve their full potential.

A central priority for the coming period is the continued development of a coherent national model of specialist provision, aligned with the principles set out in the Doran Review. The SSC will strengthen its role as a coordinating hub for professional learning, specialist advice and resource development, helping to reduce variability in provision across local authorities in Scotland. This includes expanding its reach through blended and digital learning approaches, ensuring that practitioners in all parts of Scotland—regardless of geography—can access high-quality, evidence-informed training.

The SSC will also advance its work in habilitation and independence education, with a particular focus on establishing a sustainable national training pathway. This will address long-standing gaps in specialist provision and support improved outcomes in mobility, independence and wellbeing. By working collaboratively with partners across education, health, and social care, the SSC will contribute to a more integrated approach to service delivery, consistent with GIRFEC principles.

The SSC will also expand and strengthen its work in the field of autism, with a particular focus on developing a coherent national approach to professional learning and specialist support at the intersection of neurodivergence and sensory impairment. This will address longstanding gaps in understanding and provision for children and young people with complex, overlapping needs, and support improved outcomes in communication, engagement, wellbeing and access to learning. Through the development of targeted training, practical resources and advisory services, the SSC will strengthen practitioner confidence and capability across education settings.

In parallel, the SSC will continue to lead in the development and application of assistive technology. Building on its current work, the Centre will further embed technology within professional learning, support local authorities to make informed and cost-effective decisions, and strengthen its engagement with industry and research partners. This will ensure that emerging technologies are

shaped by educational need and are effectively translated into classroom practice supporting all learners with deafness.

The SSC will also expand its role in national policy and system leadership. Through ongoing engagement with local authorities, national organisations, and Qualifications Scotland, the Centre will contribute to the development of coherent approaches to assessment, curriculum access, and inclusive practice. This includes supporting the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning framework and contributing to national discussions on equity and excellence in education.

A further priority is the continued development of national resources and knowledge exchange mechanisms. The SSC will build on the success of its toolkits and digital platforms by extending content, enhancing accessibility (including BSL provision), and fostering communities of practice. These approaches will support sustained professional learning and ensure that knowledge is shared effectively across the system.

Finally, the SSC recognises the importance of long-term sustainability and strategic alignment. In the context of the Doran funding transition, the Centre will continue to develop its business model, strengthen partnerships, and demonstrate value through measurable impact. This will ensure that the SSC remains responsive to emerging needs while maintaining its position as a trusted national resource.

The SSC has strengthened workforce capacity, improved access to specialist knowledge, and contributed to system-wide innovation. It is well positioned to continue providing national leadership and delivering high-impact outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairments.

In conclusion, the SSC's forward strategy is focused on national coordination, specialist expertise and system-wide impact. By building on its established strengths and responding proactively to future challenges, the SSC will continue to play a pivotal role in delivering Scotland's ambition for an inclusive education system where all children and young people are supported to succeed.

***Interesting to hear about the speakers' own experiences in education and how things have advanced.***

**Speech to Text approaches to support deaf students, March 2026**