

Sensory Inclusion Service

Visual Impairment Newsletter

Issue
35
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Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA



Mum and daughter, Sharn and Maya, sat on the BBC Breakfast sofa live on air. Sharn has one arm around Maya, looking down at her with a big smile.

Maya and Sharn are the faces of the RSBC Bedtime Donations campaign. Back in September, they appeared on the BBC Breakfast sofa to promote RSBC's Bedtime Stories campaign.

The free app - available to download on the App Store and Google Play - allows parents to record themselves reading a children's book from the app's library at the same time as they read to their own child.

By encouraging parents, volunteers, and well-known voices to share their bedtime stories, RSBC are building a library of free, accessible books that will help children feel included, inspired and connected to the magic of storytelling.

Following the show, the charity received a phenomenal response from people all over the UK. So much so, the app was struggling to cope at one point! By 10am, they had already registered over 500 people wanting to donate their voices to create free audiobooks for blind and partially sighted children or listen to the stories on the app.

Maya was diagnosed as blind at just nine weeks old. "It was crushing," says her mum, Sharn. "I knew something wasn't right, but the confirmation still hit me like a train."

Six years on, Maya's thriving - a vibrant, confident six-year-old who loves singing, dancing, swimming and trampolining. And she adores books!

Maya is currently learning braille, which can be mentally and physically demanding. "She's often exhausted after school," Sharn explains. "Audio stories give her that calm, comforting moment before bed."



Meet Penny - CYP Activities Coordinator

Penny has a strong personal connection to sight loss, as her mum is blind. She has volunteered with Guide Dogs for nearly 10 years and chairs her local fundraising group. She is passionate about fostering and supporting training dogs on their journey to becoming life-changing companions.

She has been actively part of her local scout group for many years, enjoys crafting to raise funds for charities, and runs a Facebook group supporting a school and baby clinic in The Gambia.

Penny worked for 11 years as a primary school HLTA and 1:1 teaching assistant, gaining valuable experience in supporting children and young people.

Today, she collaborates with Telford & Wrekin to organise events for children and young people aged 14 and above.

"I am really excited to be working with Sight Loss Shropshire. It's a wonderful opportunity to create some incredible memories for children and young adults across the county."

Events spring term 2026

February 7 th	Escape Room, Shrewsbury town centre	16.40-17.40
February 17 th	Rifle shooting, Aldersley, Wolverhampton (mini bus pick up)	13:00—16:00
March 6 th	Ice Skating Session, Telford Ice Rink	17:00 - 18:00
March 28 th	Activity day, JCA Condover Hall	09:00 - 16:00
April 2 nd	Horse experience day, Cavalier centre, Much Wenlock	10:00 - 15:00
April 11 th	Raft building, Arthog outreach, Telford	13:00—15:30

Penny has begun organising activities for young people aged 14 and above.
Here's what is planned.

If you would like to know more or are interested in attending an event, contact

penny.norris@telford.gov.uk

Children's Glasses by Sarah Hovington (QTVI)



Why does my child need glasses?

Glasses are needed when the eye cannot correctly focus on an image to the retina, the light sensitive lining at the back of the eye and so the eyes see a blurry picture.

Long sighted (Hypermetropia)

This means the child is more likely to see better at a far distance than for close work. Sometimes, the child will need to wear their glasses for hypermetropia for all distances especially if they have accompanying factors such as a squint. A hypermetropic prescription starts with a plus (+) sign.

These lenses act as a magnifier and so your child's eyes may look bigger through the lenses.

Short Sighted (Myopia)

This means the child is more likely to see better at near than in the distance. A myopic prescription starts with a minus (-) sign. These lenses will make things look smaller and so your child's eye may look slightly smaller through the glasses lens.

How often should my child wear their glasses?

Your child should wear their glasses all the time. This will help them to settle to the glasses and help increase the chance of their vision improving faster.

Will my child always need glasses?

It is difficult to predict this when your child has only just started wearing glasses. It will depend on their prescription and how it changes over time, and also depends if they have a squint.

Vision continues to develop until a child is 7-8 years old. It is important your child wears their glasses as much as possible in this time to allow their vision to achieve their best level.

Visual acuity can also change after a growth spurt, so teenagers may need to have their vision checked at an Opticians, even if they haven't needed glasses previously.

What do I do if my child will not keep their glasses on?

It can take some time for your child to settle in to their new glasses. Try not to feel disheartened if your child does not adapt to them straight away and keep encouraging them to put them on. Start with small amounts of time and gradually build up if you can to full time.

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Where do I go to get the glasses?

You can take your hospital glasses voucher to any Opticians. Choices of frame vary greatly from one optician to another. Shop around to find the most comfortable frames that your child is happy with.

Will I have to pay for my child's glasses?

Your child will be given one voucher by the hospital.

What do I do if the glasses get broken?

You will need to go back to the Opticians who made the glasses. The hospital prescription is valid for 12 months and so the Opticians can repair or replace the frame within this time.

The glasses look strong! Is the prescription correct?

Sometimes, it can look blurry to another person when they look through glasses that are not their prescription.

Do I need to bring my child back to the hospital after they've had their glasses?

Yes, the hospital needs to monitor how your child's vision improves.

Can I have a spare pair of glasses?

Unfortunately, the hospital cannot normally give you a second voucher to pay for a spare pair of glasses, but you can purchase a second pair at your community opticians.

Useful contact telephone numbers

Shrewsbury Orthoptic Clinic
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital

01743 261000 extension 3324

Telford Orthoptic Clinic
Princess Royal Hospital

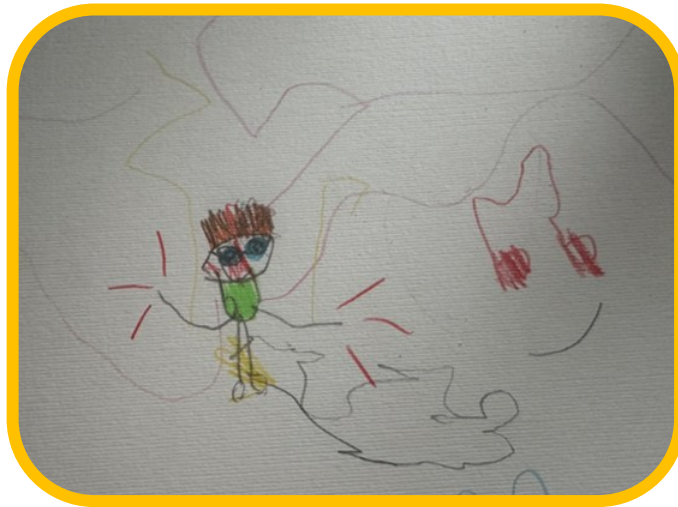
01952 641222 extension 4167

Young Writers

We're so proud of Presley, one of our amazing young learners! At just five years old, Presley entered the Young Writers competition to share what life is like with Nystagmus. His story and illustration were so powerful they've been published in a book. Huge congratulations to Presley—what an incredible achievement!

Nystagmo the Great

Like myself Nystagmo has Nystagmus, an involuntary eye movement which is our superpower - when you look deep into our eyes, we put you in a trance and you can't stop yourself from dancing along with our dancing eyes. With our big, blue eyes and fire red hair and our super sonic speed, we will have you in a spin of circles. We wear super stylish glasses to disguise our dancing eyes and control our urge to make you show your moves, but as soon as they are off, you best have your dancing shoes on.



Presley's picture of Nystagmo the Great

Freedom Pass for Travel

Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council provide a Concessionary Travel Scheme for individuals with disabilities who meet the Department for Transport eligibility criteria.

As part of this scheme, you can apply for an English Concessionary Travel Pass, which offers free travel on local bus services across England:

- Monday to Friday - between 9:30 AM and 11:00 PM
- Weekends and Bank Holidays: - at any time

Proof of certificate of vision impairment (CVI) signed by a consultant ophthalmologist (eye specialist) is required when making an application.

To find out more information, visit

www.telford.gov.uk/roadworks-transport-and-streets/public-transport/concessionary-travel/

www.shropshire.gov.uk/concessionary-travel/

An Open Letter to Every Vision-Impaired Child

To the child who walks a path unknown,
Who faces the world and stands on their own,
Who learns to adapt, to rise, to be free
This letter is yours, from someone like me.

You are powerful, fearless, and strong,
You've had to be brave your whole life long.
You see with your heart, you lead with your soul,
You prove every day you are fierce and bold.

Your vision is yours whatever that means,
Through touch, through sound, through talking screens.
Through Braille, through light, through echoes near,
Through memory's map, through what you hear.

You move with grace, with skill, with pride,
With a cane that taps or a friend as a guide.
With tech in your hand, with courage so wide,
You show the world how high you can rise.

You don't need to "keep up" or fit in their mold,
You set your own pace, you break through the old.
You find new ways, you shatter their doubts,
You show them what strength is really about.

Yes, some days are tough, some moments unfair,
But you are unstoppable fierce, self-aware.
Not limited, lesser, or weak in their view,
But limitless, boundless a force breaking through.

So walk with your head up, proud of your name,
Your story, your journey, your fire, your flame.
The world isn't ready for all you will do,
But I know your power because I am you.

To find out more about The Blind Poet visit
www.theblindpoet.net

David is supported by QTVI, Louise. He is currently learning Braille.

Louise said "I am overwhelmed with his progress. Within 4 weeks he has learnt to read and write letters a, b, I, l, k and g." Keep up the good work David!

A photo of David practising his braille.



British Blind Sport

British Blind Sport aim to ensure that sport and leisure facilities are accessible to every blind or partially sighted person in the UK, with the intention of improving their physical health and self-esteem.

Adults and children are encouraged to participate at whatever level they choose be it grassroots or up to international competitive level.

Blind and partially sighted people who enter competitions nationally and internationally need a sight classification. British Blind Sport provide this service to enable competitive participation on a fair and equal basis.

Back in October, Alfie signed up to their 50th anniversary event and he smashed it!

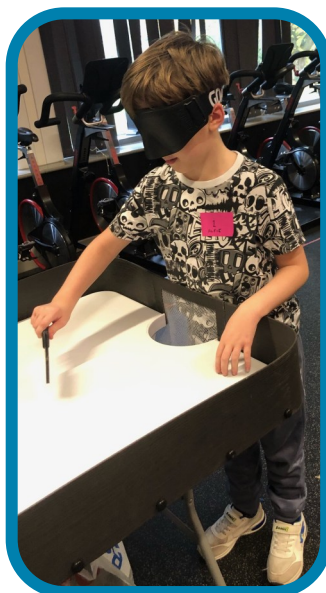
Mum Mia said

"It was a great event and so inspiring for him to see Paralympic athletes share their stories and team GB athletes or visually impaired instructors showing them the different sports. He did bouldering, cricket, football, goal ball, archery, showdown and tennis. The instructors were all so supportive and this gave him a huge confidence boost. Him knowing everyone taking part had some level of visual impairment really empowered him.

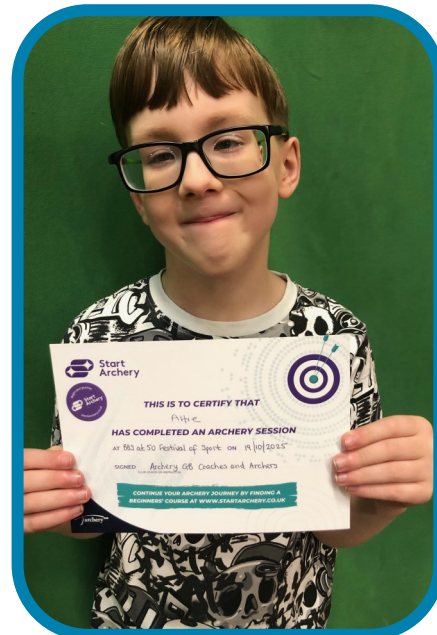
He is now wanting to try cricket, tennis and showdown in his spare time which hearing from Alfie is amazing. A shame there isn't any local clubs for VI children but lots of contacts made for us to travel and take him to participate in clubs. Also me seeing the adapted equipment so I can look into buying these for him to help him enjoy these sports at home."



A photo of Alfie holding a cardboard frame



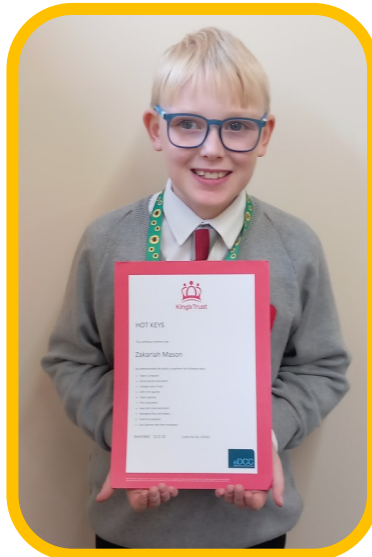
A photo of Alfie playing showdown



A photo of Alfie with his certificate

If you would like to find out more about upcoming events, visit

<https://britishblindsport.org.uk/events>



A photo of Zak holding his certificate

Shining Through: Zak's Journey with Ocular Albinism

Zak is a remarkable young man whose story is one of resilience, growth, and success. Due to his visual impairment, Zak is unable to access the curriculum in the same way as his peers. He cannot see the board, and all of his reading materials need to be enlarged to Point 36 for him to be able to read them. These challenges stem from his diagnosis of Ocular Albinism, a condition that affects the pigmentation in the eyes, causing light to scatter and blur vision. Zak also experiences photophobia, meaning bright environments are uncomfortable and overwhelming. In addition, Zak has Nystagmus, an involuntary movement of the eyes that makes it difficult to fix, follow, and focus—especially when tired or stressed.

Despite these barriers, Zak has never let his visual impairment define him.

A Nervous Start, A Strong Foundation

Zak was understandably nervous about starting secondary school. He worried that teachers might not understand his needs or how best to support him. But thanks to the Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) and a proactive school team, Zak settled in well and is now thriving in Year 8.

SIS played a vital role in ensuring Zak's smooth transition. His Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) met with the school's SENCO before Zak started, and his needs were discussed in detail during his annual review. The QTVI also provided training for teachers, helping them understand how to support Zak effectively in the classroom.

Practical Support That Makes a Difference

Zak's success is also thanks to the SIS Access Support Assistants (ASAs), who trained teaching assistants to modify his work into Point 36 print, ensuring he can fully participate in lessons. Zak is especially grateful to those assistants who adapt his work at short notice, enabling him to keep up with his peers.

While the goal is to equip schools to independently support students with visual impairments, the ASAs continue to assist with modifying key materials, such as assessments, to ensure Zak has full access to the curriculum.

The SIS IT Officer recommended appropriate technology for Zak, enabling him to use touch typing and access lesson materials digitally. All PowerPoint presentations are emailed directly to his laptop, allowing him to follow along with ease. Zak began touch typing lessons with an ASA in Year 3/4, and his dedication paid off - he recently passed an accredited King's Trust EDcc course in touch typing.

Empowered and Included

Zak also wears tinted glasses, which help reduce glare. His QTVI even attended a hospital clinic with Zak and his mum to ensure the tint was properly assessed and suited to his needs.

In class, teachers and assistants follow SIS recommendations, such as reading aloud board work or providing Zak with his own copy. These small but vital adjustments make a

big difference. Zak has said that without the support from SIS and school staff, he wouldn't be able to achieve what he has in school. He feels happy and included.

Beyond the Classroom

Zak is not only thriving in school —he's also a vibrant and outgoing young man. In his spare time, he enjoys showing classic cars with his dad and has a passion for drama, having appeared in many plays and musicals.

Zak's journey is a testament to what can be achieved when the right support is in place. His story highlights the importance of inclusion, understanding, and teamwork in helping young people with visual impairments reach their full potential.



A photo of Ivie tasting her school lunch

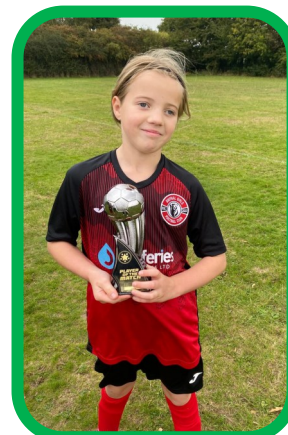


A photo of Ivie sitting

A huge well done to Ivie who was awarded the Headteachers Award for having a super week at school. She is making really good progress and the staff were thrilled to see her try her school lunch and touch a range of objects. Ivie has been practising her walking and sitting. Well done Ivie!

Ella plays for Shifnal Girls FC under-10s, despite being only 8. She trains twice a week, with matches at the weekend. Ella plays as a defender and is affectionately known as "Hulk" on the pitch. She recently underwent surgery on her eye and couldn't wait to get back to training. Her first game back, they won 16-1, as you can imagine, Ella was very happy about that!

A photo of Ella with her player of the match trophy



Here is a photograph of Ryan playing the drums with his college band at Albert's Shed.

Ryan is a 16-year-old young man, he studies at Shrewsbury College and has aspirations to be a musician.

Ryan has been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), a condition which is already known within his family. RP affects the back of the eye, the retina, and is known to progress over time. Ryan has experienced a reduction in his peripheral vision and has difficulties in low light conditions. The condition also affects his ability to see in the distance and small print close. He is registered severely sight impaired.

Ryan shares his excitement as he tells us—in his own words—about the amazing opportunity he recently had to perform live on stage.

"I performed at Albert's Shed in Shrewsbury on the 22nd on October as a part of my music performance and production course at Shrewsbury college. This course has taught me skills for my future musical career. In the future I plan to produce my own music independently using the skills my course has taught me. I started playing music 3 years ago as it helped me learn to work around my visual issues."

I wonder what's in store for him next. Ryan also plays the guitar, trombone, bugle and cornet. He is keen to join the band with the Sea Cadets.

We're all bursting with pride at the Sensory Inclusion Service as we celebrate Ryan's incredible courage and talent—stepping up to play drums in a live band, performing confidently in front of an audience. What an inspiring achievement!



A photo of Sophie in her graduation cap and gown

The Sensory Inclusion Service is incredibly proud of this remarkable young woman and all that she has accomplished. She stands as an inspiring role model—not only for other teenagers navigating a visual impairment diagnosis, but for anyone who needs a reminder that with determination and belief in oneself, anything is possible.

Here, she shares her story in her own words.

Hello everyone! My name is Sophie Arnold; I'm 21 years old and I live in Telford. When I was 12 years old, I underwent a long period of testing due to a loss of vision, which happened quite suddenly. During this time, I was petrified, the unknown was so scary and I wasn't sure what the near future would look like.

After being sent to Birmingham eye hospital, it was revealed I had Stargardts disease. This is a rare genetic eye condition that affects the macular, meaning I was left with no central vision. This was petrifying! Being in my teenager years by this point, I was told I wouldn't be able to drive and I wouldn't be able to take on my dream job as an air traffic controller. This was utterly heartbreaking to hear at such a young age.

Following this, I struggled in secondary school. While I still came out with GCSE's I am proud of, I found those years really difficult. My life had changed completely and navigating that was really hard.

However, moving onto sixth form, I was offered a lot more support. I studied Psychology and Performing Arts, alongside an AS in English Literature, with the sixth form team looking out for me, paired with teachers of the visually impaired from Telford and Wrekin Council, I felt like I was finally being supported, in the best way.

I left sixth form with amazing grades, some I never thought I would achieve, and moved on to study Psychology at Aberystwyth University, after I received an unconditional offer to study there. Psychology is my biggest interest so I was really looking forward to making this academic jump.

3 years passed and I have recently graduated university with a 2:1. With help from Disability Student allowance (DSA) and the university, I was able to complete my university years the same as any other student, something I am very grateful for.

Now, remaining with my love of Psychology, I am completing my teacher training year, to become a social sciences teacher. I am so passionate about education and ensuring the classroom is an accessible space for everyone!

As I embark on this journey, I would like everyone to know that regardless of your differences, you can achieve your goals! With the correct support, truly anything is possible, and I am so grateful for everyone that has helped me along the way.

Sensory Inclusion Service Family Group

SIS (VI) Family Group Little Stars My Time to Play takes place every Tuesday during term time for visually impaired pre-school children and their families.

Families can arrive anytime between 9.30 am - 11.30 am.

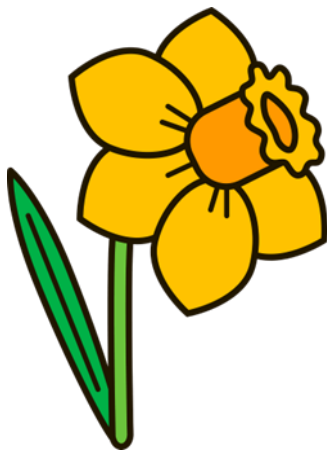
Spring 2026

January

- 6th - Guide Dogs session
- 13th - Walker books
- 20th - Guide Dogs session
- 27th - Chinese New year crafts

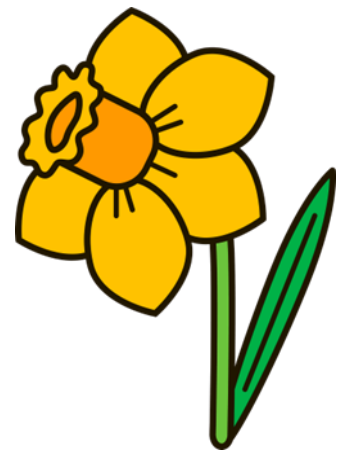
February

- 3rd - Guide Dogs session
- 10th - Heart crafts
- 17th - No group
- 24th - Guide Dogs session



March

- 3rd - Mother's day crafts
- 10th - Guide Dogs session
- 17th - Easter crafts
- 24th - Party
- 31st - No group



The Stepping Stones Centre, Brunel Road, Malinslee, TF3 2BF Sat Nav TF3 2HZ

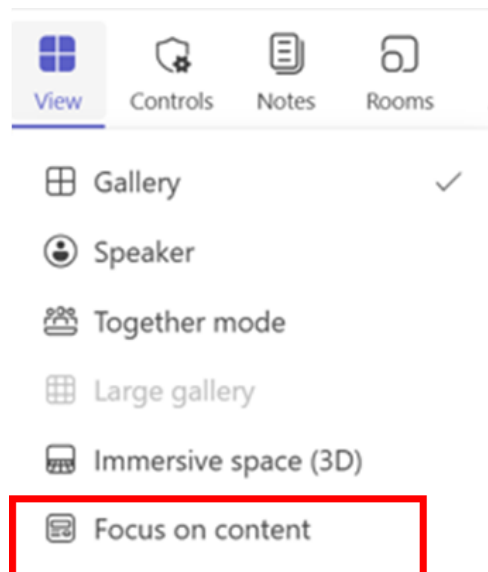
If you would like to attend Little Stars My Time to Play, contact Nicky
nichola.clark@telford.gov.uk or 07581 035047

Claire's ICT Top Tip

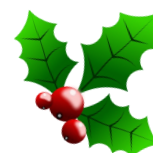
Focus on Content

To enlarge shared content, first go to the View menu then select 'Focus on Content'

Then you can use Ctr & + or Ctrl & - to zoom in and out.



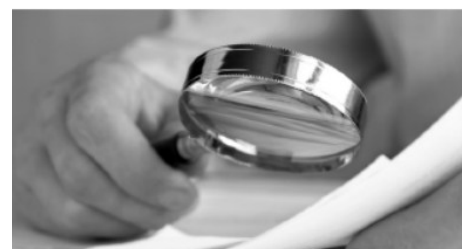
Wishing you seasons greetings for a happy holiday!



Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Discover everything you need to know about education, health and care services in your local area for children and young people with SEND 0-25yrs at...

www.telfordsend.org.uk



Key features...

- Search for clear and accessible information, advice and sources of support.
- Explore leisure, fun and short breaks activities.
- Find out about specialist services and education health and care plans.
- Learn how schools support special educational needs.
- Use the interactive map showing what is available near to where you live.
- Have your say through our online feedback form.



www.telfordsend.org.uk

Need this in large print or Braille?

If you would like to receive this newsletter in Large Print or Braille, please email

**sendandinclusion
@telford.gov.uk**



[Shropshire's SEND Local Offer](#) is a single place for information and services for children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities, their families and the practitioners who support them.

Take a look at the [SEND Family directory](#) for local events, groups and things to do. For news and updates please like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Email: Local.Offer@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 0345 678 9063

Sensory Inclusion Service, Floor 6, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford. TF3 4JA