

BucksVision Autumn 2019 Newsletter

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Our newsletter comes in large print, audio (CD or USB), braille or email format. If you would like to receive your newsletter in a different format, please get in touch.

Welcome

As predicted, things quietened down a little bit for us over the summer, although we did attend several events, including the ever-popular Bucks County Show.

We attend events to help with our fundraising efforts, but also so that we can meet local people with sight loss and thank our supporters.

As a small local charity our resources are limited, but I am delighted that we continue to work with the RNIB in order to support people in the most effective way possible. We continue to run social activities and practical courses across our local area, including demonstrating useful gadgets from our two resource centres in Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.

Part of our work is to help people understand the various eye conditions that cause sight loss and to prevent people from losing their sight where avoidable. This edition of our newsletter includes information on glaucoma.

Glaucoma is a particularly worrying condition because in the early stages loss of vision starts gradually with no pain. However, an eye test can pick it up early and help ensure that the condition does not deteriorate. This is one of the reasons that we recommend that everyone has an eye test at least every two years. So, if you (or someone you know) have not had your eyes checked in recent years, please do book an appointment.

As always, sincere thanks for your support, we really do appreciate it.

Creative Writing Competition

This is a reminder that you still have time to enter our creative writing competition as the deadline is not until 11 October!

The categories are below:

Age 18 and over

Short Story

700-1,000 words

Theme: Discovery

Poem

No more than 40 verse lines

Theme: Hope

Young Person 12-17 years old

500 – 700 Word Story

Theme: Adventure

Children 5-11 years old

100 - 500 Word Story

Theme: Adventure

Volunteers & General Public

Short Story

700-1,000 words

Theme: Discovery

Prizes

1st Prize – Calibre Membership

2nd Prize – 3 month Audible sub

3rd Prize – 1 month Audible sub

Volunteers & General Public

1st Prize – £15 Book Voucher

2nd Prize – £10 Book Voucher

3rd Prize – £5 Book Voucher

How to enter

Please request an entry form from the office:

Tel: 01296 847556

Email: reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Letters, Tips and Advice

Some of the feedback we received in our customer survey earlier this year suggested that our readers would like an advice section where people could write in with their tips on how to undertake daily tasks.

If you have a question you would like the sight loss community of Buckinghamshire to answer, please write in to the editor and we will include it in our next edition.

Alternatively, if you have any useful tips you would like to share, let us know and we will also include these in our next newsletter.

To start you off we have included the following tip from our Volunteer Supervisor Lisa Redford.

If you are a Facebook user you can join the RNIB Connect South East group where you can post and answer others queries.

How to safely fill a hot water bottle (HWB)

1. Empty the kettle. Fill the HWB until you feel the water rise to the level you want, either by placing two fingers down into the neck or by feeling the outside of the bottle.
2. Empty the contents into the kettle (you will now have the correct amount of water for the HWB).
3. Place a washing up bowl in the sink and stand the HWB in the sink (preferably on the draining board side) between the edge and the washing up bowl, making sure it is securely wedged.
4. When the kettle has boiled, bring it to the HWB and line up the spout ready to pour.
5. Move your free hand away and gently tip the kettle filling the HWB with the correct amount of water. Any spilled water will end up in the bowl or sink.

Don't forget about our other services!

Resource Centres

If you are interested in a specific piece of equipment or would like to find out what is available why not visit one of our Resource Centres?

Aylesbury

Located at our office our resource centre is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm by appointment. If you are unable to get here don't worry we can try and arrange for a volunteer driver to bring you.

Call us on 01296 487 556 to book an appointment today.

Milton Keynes (MK)

Managed by volunteers the MK resource centre is located at the Peartree Centre in Peartree Bridge. It is open 1 to 4pm on Tuesdays and 10am to 1pm on Wednesdays. When they are open you can contact them directly on 01908 395 498.

Social Clubs

Our fantastic team of volunteers run social clubs across the county. If you are interested in finding out about your local club please get in touch with us.

Fitness Activities

Activities that can gently improve your fitness include walking groups and bowls clubs.

Walking groups run in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury while our Bowls Clubs run in Aylesbury and Wycombe (with two independent clubs located in Chesham and Milton Keynes).

And don't forget if you live in Milton Keynes you can also join the Tandem Club, Ballroom Dancing Class, Tai Chi Group or simply get help with transport to a local Gym.

For more information about any of our activities please don't hesitate to give us a call.

Christmas Fair

On **Saturday 23 November** we are holding a Christmas Fair at Quarrendon & Meadowcroft Community Centre, Aylesbury from 12 to 5pm.

Come along for:

- Stalls selling decorations, gifts, food and drink
- Christmas carols sung by a choir
- Santa's Grotto
- Fun games
- Showcase of artwork
- And of course plenty of mulled wine and mince pies!

Entry is £2 per person with under 5s going free.

If you would be interested in exhibiting any of your artwork or know of anyone who would be interested in having a stand at the fair please get in touch with Lynn using the details below:

Tel: 01296 487 556

Email: lhitchcox@bucksvision.co.uk

Technology Terminology

Sometimes, terms used when discussing modern technology can cause confusion. As technology increasingly plays a part in making certain things accessible to people with sight loss, technology support is something we are looking to develop.

The Basics

For those of you who don't currently use technology or feel it is something to fear please find below a glossary of some of the terms you may hear.

Amazon Echo (Alexa)/Google Home – these are devices which connect to the internet in your home. They are completely voice activated, so you can ask questions, such as what is the time, or ask it to set reminders for appointments.

Android – a type of operating system that tablets and smartphones use. Android is used by various different companies such as Samsung and Nokia.

Apps- short for applications. These are programs that you can download on to a phone or tablet. They range from games, email, maps and specific ones created to help people with sight loss.

Bluetooth – a wireless system of connecting devices to each other. For example, Bluetooth can connect a mobile phone to a car's speaker system.

iOS – a type of operating system used only on Apple iproducts, e.g. iphone, ipad. Unlike Android Apple are the only company that can use the iOS operating system.

Smartphone – a mobile phone that also acts as a computer. You can access the internet, send emails and download apps.

Tablet – a hand held computer that comes in different sizes.

Wi-fi – this is a system by which you can access the internet without using any cables. The internet enters your home or a building via a cable which plugs into a central box called a router or hub. This then sends out a signal (similar to how a radio works) to any compatible devices in building and they can connect to the internet.

Advanced

For those of you who are already users of technology here are some tips:

Applevis.com

This is a community-powered website for blind and low-vision users of Apple's range of devices. It seeks to encourage and support people to explore the ways in which Apple products can offer opportunities for personal independence and empowerment.

Clew

Clew is an Augmented Reality indoor navigation app designed for visually impaired users to help them retrace their steps in unfamiliar environments. It is free but available only on iOS.

Just Press Record

A recording and transcribing app. Record your ideas and they will automatically be transcribed into text which you can save and share as you wish. Cost: £4.99, only available on iOS.

What3Words

What3Words is a free app available on both Android and iOS. It is a different way of locating where you are. The App has divided the world into 3m squares and each square is allocated three words in unique combinations. These three words can be used to locate you and the app has been used by UK Emergency services to locate people.

Volunteering

We are always looking for Digital Support Volunteers to help members who need advice to use their devices. If you have the knowledge to impart to others, we would love to hear from you.

VI Tennis Player Bronzed in Benidorm

In our spring newsletter we featured visually impaired (VI) tennis player, Sarah Fortescue, who was preparing for the International Blind Tennis Tournament in Spain. We promised we'd let you know how she got on, so Lisa Redford caught up with her.

Sarah, for those people new to BucksVision, just explain briefly how you came to be involved in VI tennis.

I started playing in 2013, at a VI tennis club, then two years later I started entering tournaments. In 2018 I was runner up in the national championships and this led the LTA to select me for Team GB in the international tournament.

So, who runs the international tournaments and how often do they take place?

They're run by the International Blind Tennis Association (IBTA) and take place annually. This year's tournament was the third one to take place.

What happened at the tournament?

Overall the experience was amazing, I was so proud to have been selected.

We did have a difficult start though, as we were unable to play outdoors because the foam ball we play with does not cope well in wet or windy conditions. As there was no indoor tennis court, we had to play in a basketball centre where it was hard to decipher the marked out tennis court due to all the conflicting lines.

The other frustration was that we had to play with a black ball, which I find harder to see, as we could only play with a yellow ball if both players agreed (in some countries they regularly play with a black one).

Despite all this I just tried to play my best tennis.

And how did you and the GB team do?

I came third in my category, so I won a bronze medal, which I am very pleased with! And the GB team came away as the highest medalling country with nine medals between us.

Congratulations! Do the organisers of the tournaments provide guides for you or do you need to bring your own?

We had a representative from the LTA and a team coach. We were a group of eight and we all helped each other. Friends and family were welcome, but our meals and accommodation were booked as a group.

Did you get any time off to explore Benidorm?

No, we had little free time. The first two days were for practicing and sight categorisation while the tournament ran from Wednesday to Saturday.

Will you be aiming for another international tournament?

I'd very much like to be selected again but we'll have to wait and see.

Thank you, Sarah, is there anything you would like to add?

I would like to thank BucksVision Milton Keynes Area for their kind sponsorship of my travel to tournaments around the country. It is a great help to be sponsored as finding sponsorship is extremely difficult.

If you are interested in playing tennis and live in the Aylesbury or Milton Keynes area please contact BucksVision and ask about the local VI clubs.

Low down on Glaucoma

National Eye Health Week runs from 23 to 29 September this year. The aim of the week is to raise awareness of the importance of looking after your eyes and getting regular eye tests.

Many people believe going to the opticians is simply about finding out whether you need glasses, but it also involves looking at the health of your eyes. In particular opticians are able to spot the early signs of eye conditions such as **glaucoma**.

What is Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is an eye condition where your optic nerve is damaged by the pressure of the fluid inside your eye. This may be because your eye pressure is higher than normal, or because of a weakness in your optic nerve.

The early stages of glaucoma don't cause any symptoms as there is no pain and it can be difficult to notice any vision loss as it starts in your peripheral vision. It is therefore vitally important that people have regular eye tests so any signs of glaucoma can be detected early, especially as any sight loss that occurs before diagnosis and treatment is irreversible.

Is there more than one type of Glaucoma?

There are five different types of glaucoma with varying causes and symptoms. For more information request a copy of RNIB Glaucoma leaflet from the BucksVision office.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can develop glaucoma but there are some factors that increase your risk including:

Age – being over 40

Family – having a close blood relative with glaucoma.

Race – being from an African-Caribbean or East Asian ethnic background.

Eyesight prescription – being short or long sighted.

Being diabetic

Using steroids for a long period of time

What is the treatment for Glaucoma?

Most people with glaucoma can be treated successfully using eye drops. Eye drops will need to be used every day for many years or the rest of your life.

Sometimes laser treatment or even surgery is required although this is rare.

Using Eye Drops tips provided by IGA

- Eye drop dispensers are available if you struggle to put in your drops.
- After putting in a drop, close your eye gently and press softly on the inside corner with a finger for one or two minutes. Then wait five minutes, or according to medical advice, before instilling any further drops, to prevent the first being washed away.
- Keep eye drops in the door of your fridge (not the freezer) so you can feel them go into your eye more easily (but check the information leaflet or ask your pharmacist to find out whether your drops can be stored in the fridge).

Remember if you experience any side effects or problems with your eye drops do discuss them with your Ophthalmologist.

What support is available?

International Glaucoma Association (IGA)

See next page

RNIB Eye Health Information Service

Can help you understand your eye condition, its effects and what treatments are available

Telephone: **0303 123 9999**

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Email: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)

Contact BucksVision for details of your local ECLO.

International Glaucoma Association

The **International Glaucoma Association (IGA)** provides information for people who have just been diagnosed, or anyone living with glaucoma.

They run a helpline, provide free glaucoma leaflets, set up patient support groups, provide a buddying scheme and fund professional research that helps with the detection, management and treatment of glaucoma.

They also run glaucoma awareness campaigns and have a membership scheme, which helps people keep up to date about their condition and treatment. All of their services are free.

IGA Sightline 01233 64 81 70
Monday - Friday 9.30am – 5.00pm

For general enquiries, including advice about glaucoma or membership please email: sightline@iga.org.uk

Local Support Groups

Glaucoma patient support group allow patients to meet their health care professionals in a relaxed atmosphere, away from the time restriction of outpatient clinics, so the condition and treatment can be discussed in more depth.

Milton Keynes

There is a support group that meets at the Academic Centre at Milton Keynes University Hospital. The next meeting is **on Friday 18 October** from 5.30 – 8.30pm.

Contact Jill Kimber on 01908 995 523 for more information.

Buckinghamshire

Currently there are no other support groups in the Buckinghamshire. If this is something you would be interested in seeing set up please get in touch with Alison Deuchars on 01296 487 556 or adeuchars@bucksvision.co.uk

Better Housing, Better Health

Better Housing, Better Health has been commissioned by Local Authorities across Buckinghamshire to help keep residents warm over winter.

Their free to use helpline provides residents with a single point of contact for services, advice and grants in order to stay warm and well in their homes.

Residents who call the helpline can have their needs assessed over the phone and, where eligible, can be referred for:

- Free LEAP Home Energy Visit
- Energy Bill Discounts
- Grants and funding (for energy efficiency measures such as insulation or new heating systems)
- Other council services

Although the service is mainly aimed at residents with a health condition that can be negatively affected by living in a cold home and households with a low income who struggle to heat their home affordably, any resident who is looking for free advice can contact the helpline.

The helpline number is below, and it is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

0800 107 0044

For more information about Better Housing, Better Health please visit www.bhbh.org.uk.

Calendars and Diaries for Sale

It's that time of year again when you start thinking about your diary for next year!

This year VIP Diaries have a new product, an A3 Landscape calendar. Prices for their calendars and diaries are below and they can be ordered from us now.

A6 Pocket Diary w/cover - £5.95

A6 Diary insert - £5.75

Yellow or Blue cover - £2.00

A5 Midi Diary - £7.95

A4 Desk Diary - £9.95

A3 Portrait Calendar - £6.95

A3 Landscape Calendar - £7.95

BucksVision 2020 Calendar

You can still order your copy of the BucksVision 2020 Calendar which is large print and includes the winning photos from our photography competition. These cost £8 plus £2.95 P&P.

It would make a lovely present or stocking filler for Christmas so get your order in now!

Handy Helpers Scheme

Community Impact Bucks has launched its free Handy Helper project to help people with odd jobs, small repairs and maintenance tasks that they may find difficult to do themselves. It also provides some social interaction to help tackle loneliness.

Helping vulnerable and isolated Bucks residents who are **65+ and infirm or living with a disability**, the project enables people to live safely and securely in their own homes for longer by.

The **free** service offers visits and help from DBS-checked Community Impact Bucks staff members and volunteers.

The service can be accessed for free or on a donation basis, according to an assessment of need. As part of the service befriending is offered, providing much needed social interaction.

The service is funded by a grant from Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils.

Types of jobs we do:

- Home Safety and Falls prevention
- General maintenance services (replacing light bulbs, batteries, resetting clocks/thermostats)
- External maintenance (e.g. garden clearance, leaf collecting, path clearing)
- Removal and Disposal of small household items, green/general waste
- Home security measures (e.g. locks, wireless alarms)
- Do-it-yourself tasks (e.g. putting up shelves, pictures, coat hooks)
- Moving furniture and other items
- Putting up/taking down Christmas decorations

They are not able to undertake electrical or plumbing works.

To access this service contact Community Impact Bucks.

Tel: 0300 11 1250

Email: handyhelpers@communityimpactbucks.org.uk

Summer Report

Shows and more!

This summer we have been attending various carnivals, shows and activities including the Bucks County Show, Bucks Young Farmers Rally, Armed Forces Day, Newport Pagnell Carnival and Play in the Park.

These events are a chance for us to get our name out there and make people aware of what we do.

Our Lucky Dip/Prize Draw which we ran at the events, raised a total of £728!!

Thank You

We would like to thank the following organisations for supporting us by donating prizes for our Grand Prize Draw.

SEBO Vacuum Cleaners
Pink & Lily Public House
Duran's Hair Studio
The Hop Pole
Waitrose
National Trust – Stowe
Aurora Toys

We would also like to thank all the volunteers who helped us on the stands throughout the summer, so a big Thank You from the BV team to David Fuller, Sarah Fox, Vanessa & David Jones and Susan Guthrie.

If you would be interested in helping at our events next year, please get touch with the office on 01296 487 556 or reception@bucksvison.co.uk

New Penguin tins

We were delighted to welcome Sarah Fox in July who joined us on a 12-week secondment placement from John Lewis as result of Golden Jubilee Award.

Sarah has been working on distributing our brand-new penguin collection tins in Milton Keynes area. Sarah is half way through her placement and has placed 60 tins so far. She is currently looking for other places to put them, so if you have any ideas please get in touch.

Let us know if you spot one!

Second Hand Items

Perkins Brailier

In immaculate condition
£200 ONO

Optelec Clearview Easy Reader

Desktop Magnifier.

In excellent condition, only a few years old and barely used.

Comes with an Ikea table.

Will need to be collected from Milton Keynes.

No cost.

Useful Contacts

Bucks Integrated Sensory Service – 01296 479970

(For support dealing with sight loss at home in Buckinghamshire)

Sensory Advice Resource Centre – 01908 401135

(For support dealing with sight loss at home in Milton Keynes)

RNIB – 0303 123 9999

Advice and support with all aspects of sight loss.

Macular Society – 0300 3030 111 (Helpline)

Information and support for people with macular conditions

Age UK Bucks – 01296 431911

Support for older people living in Buckinghamshire to help them achieve and maintain independence and wellbeing.

Age UK Milton Keynes – 01908 550700

Support for older people living in Milton Keynes to help them achieve and maintain independence and wellbeing.

MK Reader Service – 01908 231123

Support with reading and shopping in Milton Keynes.

British Wireless for the Blind – 01622 754757

Radio sets on free loan for people who meet the criteria.

Esme's Umbrella – 020 7391 3299

Support for people experiencing Charles Bonnet Syndrome via RNIB Eye Health Team.

BucksVision – 01296 487 556

143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury HP19 9HH

www.bucksvision.co.uk