



BucksVision e-newsletter September 2020

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BucksVision Service update

At end of August BucksVision staff reviewed our face to face social activities to consider whether they could restart.

Unfortunately, we concluded that, until there are changes in social distancing guidelines, we sadly cannot resume these activities.

However, some of our services have been able to resume in a limited capacity, for example from the 1 August we restarted some of our Befriending, Reading and Shopping relationships on a case by case basis.

We also reopened our Aylesbury Resource Room for appointments. We only book one appointment per day, allowing us time to sanitise the room and equipment thoroughly, and appointments are kept to one hour. Unfortunately at this current time we cannot provide any transport.

In addition, our volunteers also continue to stay in touch with people and we are exploring other ways to keep people connected during this time, see **New Services** below.

New and Virtual Services

Virtual Services – what do we mean?

You may have heard a lot about virtual meetings over the last few months, but do you know what they involve? Well for a start you don't have to be technically minded to join virtual meetings or even have a computer or the internet, as many virtual meetings can be accessed by telephone. We also have volunteers who can talk you through how to access virtual meetings if you would like more information.

Accessing virtual activities

While our face to face groups are still unable to resume we have been looking into organising our own virtual activities. We may also be able to offer you the opportunity to access activities run by one of our neighbouring sight loss societies. We will be sending something out about this shortly but in meantime if virtual activities are something you would be interested in please do get in touch.

Esme's Friends Support Group

We are investigating starting up a telephone support group for people experiencing Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS). CBS causes people with sight loss to experience visual hallucinations, sometimes they can be benign but other times they can be terrifying. A support group gives people a chance to talk about their experiences, coping strategies and to realise they are not alone. If this is something you would be interested in joining let us know.

Book Club

As mentioned in Summer newsletter we are still exploring setting up a virtual Book Club and will be in touch soon about how this would work in terms of when it will run, the first book it will discuss and how you can access the book.

Brief Survey

In the next few weeks we will be emailing you a brief survey to discover the impact that COVID-19 has had on you, our members, so that if this situation was to arise again we know what support you need and what more we can do. If you do not wish to receive the survey, please let us know.

Tips for getting back out there

RNIB have put together some tips to help you get back out into your community now lockdown is easing.

Be aware, be prepared and give yourself time - places that you used to visit may have made significant changes to their environment, you may be able to discover these changes by calling in advance or perhaps you may feel more comfortable visiting them with someone else for the first few times.

Equip yourself and don't be afraid to ask for assistance - you could consider carrying a visual indicator of your sight loss if you don't already have one such as a symbol cane. Remember you can ask for help if you need it.

Stay safe and comfortable - face masks are mandatory in many places now, if you are worried they may interfere with your glasses or remaining vision you can try out different masks at

home. If you are unable to wear one you can wear an exemption badge if you wish.

If you have experienced positive customer service, don't forget to share your stories with us, or if you are a Facebook user you can share them with your local RNIB Connect Group – [RNIB Connect South East](#) (this is a private group so you will need to request to join it).

Remember we are here to help - let us know if you have any useful tips, questions about things you are struggling with, or if you have encountered any problems.

Sighted Guiding and Social Distancing

Sighted Guiding

On 3 September the Department of Health and Social Care confirmed that blind and partially sighted people in England can now be guided by someone outside their household or social bubble. The RNIB have put together guidance on how this can be done while minimising risks - [sighted guided guidelines](#).

Some of the key points include wearing face masks (unless exempt), practising good hand hygiene, limiting time spent together and only undertaking permitted journeys and activities.

Social Distancing

RNIB have tips for helping people with sight loss to social distance at this time on their [website](#).

They also announced on Friday 7 August that they have worked with the Cabinet Office to design a 'Please give me space' social distancing indicator. This is an optional indicator that RNIB have jointly designed to make it applicable for anyone who finds it difficult to socially distance or who is anxious about people getting too close. It means you can avoid having to disclose the specific reason why you need others to keep their distance. For more information about this please visit [RNIB website](#).

NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme

If you live in England and either need to self-isolate for any reason or you are choosing to stay at home as much as

possible because you are cautious about going out, you can request assistance from the NHS Volunteers Responders Scheme. NHS Volunteer Responders can help you with shopping and prescriptions, lifts to medical appointments and regular friendly calls. Call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm, seven days) or visit [their website](#) for more information. The service will run until at least December.

Looking after your eye health

Despite the changes and restrictions brought on by coronavirus, it is still essential to look after your eye health. Whether it's a regular or follow-up appointment, an injection, or emergency advice or treatment, you should attend essential and routine eye appointments, unless you are advised otherwise, or are displaying coronavirus symptoms. For more information and advice visit [RNIB](#) website or call their helpline on 0303 123 9999.

The RNIB have also created an online leaflet '[Eye health during coronavirus What to do and what to expect](#)'

National Eye Health Week – 21 to 27 September

We will be promoting National Eye Health Week across social media this year, keep an eye on our channels to see what we get up to – [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

TV Licensing for over 75s

Further to the article in our summer newsletter this is a reminder that you do not have to act until the TV Licensing company contacts you.

For more information call 0300 790 6117 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am - 6.30pm).

Bucks in 100 Objects

Buckinghamshire Culture is working on a project to develop the story of Bucks in 100 Objects. They are asking for nominations of objects that represent Bucks and are valued by you. We are delighted to announce that we have nominated BucksVision's Ellen Margaret de Fraine Shield, which was awarded for over 50 years to the winning Division of our annual de Fraine arts and craft competition. You can read the [full nomination here](#). If

you would like to nominate an object you can find instructions on how to do so [here](#).

BucksVision Blog

We have recently started a blog on our website. Our latest blog post was written by Lisa, our Volunteer Supervisor, and is about using the Tesco shopping app for the first time, you can read it [here](#). If you have something you would like to share, a hobby; apps you find useful; tips that help you manage your sight loss etc. we would love to publish it on our website.

2021 Calendars and Diaries

2021 Calendars and diaries are now available to order. This year's prices are below. Please note that the A6 pocket diary no longer comes with a plastic cover.

A3 Calendar - £7.50

A6 Pocket diary - £6.25

A5 Midi diary – £8.25

A4 Diary - £10.25

For Leisure

Ian Reynolds, Artist

Ian Reynolds, a blind artist with a passion for painting, shares his tips for beginners, so you can discover the benefits of using art as a creative outlet too. He says “after my diagnosis, people assumed it would be too difficult for me to continue with my artwork. But I was determined to carry on expressing myself through paint – so that’s exactly what I did.”

For more information on Ian, his website and YouTube video, visit [RNIB Connect](#).

Simon Mahoney, Author

Simon Mahoney is totally blind and years ago published a book called Descent into Darkness about his transition to blindness. Now, after very sadly losing his wife earlier this year, he has written a book about cooking as a blind person – First catch the rabbit. This book is due to be published soon. You can find out more about Simon on his [website](#).