

BucksVision Summer 2020 Newsletter

We do hope that you look forward to receiving our newsletter and find the articles interesting. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please do let us know.

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Welcome

Welcome to our Summer 2020 newsletter, reaching you in unprecedented times. The pandemic has impacted us all and we have all had to adapt.

As I write these words, the Government has confirmed that the 2 metre social distancing rule can be relaxed to “1 metre plus measures”. This is one of the first steps to us moving back to normality and a welcome one (even if some anxieties about keeping safe remain).

Our thoughts continue to be with all of our members who have had to deal with more challenges than usual during lockdown.

BucksVision has remained open throughout lockdown and has continued to provide help and support as needed.

As you know, our social activities have been suspended until it is safe to resume them.

I want to thank all of our volunteers for their support during lockdown and I very much look forward to the time when our face to face services and social activities are able to resume.

As a small local charity, the lockdown has impacted our finances and I am grateful to all of you who have made donations to us. Please do continue to support us so that we can continue to provide the help that people need.

Many thanks to you all. Please stay safe and well.

BucksVision Service Update

Although the BucksVision office has been closed since March, BucksVision staff have continued to provide support by telephone and email.

Our phone lines have remained open for anyone needing advice and information and our staff and volunteers have been actively contacting our members to ensure they are safe and getting the help they need.

Our wonderful technology volunteers have come together and are running the Milton Keynes Technology Group virtually using Zoom video call technology.

We have extended our Telephone Befriending Service to ensure that our members have someone to talk to during this time.

Our ECLO at Stoke Mandeville, Julian Padmore, has continued to provide support to eye clinic patients and reports that he is busier than ever (see next page).

We are currently looking to recruit a second ECLO to support patients from Amersham and Wycombe as, sadly, Claire Carey is no longer working for us.

The coronavirus and lockdown situation is ever changing but we are constantly monitoring the situation. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will look to resume our face to face services and social activities.

In the meantime, we are also considering some online and digital services and value your thoughts on any services that we could offer at this time.

If you would like to share your ideas with us please get in touch.

Telephone: 01296 487 556

Email: adeuchars@bucksvision.co.uk

Eye Clinic Services and ECLO Support

The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically affected the way in which the eye clinics at Amersham, Stoke Mandeville and Wycombe hospitals have been able to function for these last few months.

Eye appointments have been triaged in advance. Some patients have received a letter postponing their appointment (where postponement has been deemed safe). Some patients have received a phone call (where further assessment has been required).

Only patients requiring urgent assessment and treatment (such as those with wet AMD) have been seen face to face. Stringent measures have been put in place to ensure the continued safety of patients and staff within the eye clinics.

As the lockdown begins to ease, we are now starting to see some very gradual and cautious changes taking place in the eye clinics (for instance, a small number of cataract operations have begun to take place again). Further changes are likely to follow in the coming weeks and months.

Throughout the lockdown the ECLO service has operated remotely and referrals to the service have continued to flow in from a range of sources. In the last few weeks Julian has returned to the eye clinic at Stoke Mandeville hospital for short periods in order to process essential paperwork. In the coming weeks his presence there is likely to increase.

It's important to note that you can continue to access the ECLO service via telephone or email. No appointment is required.

ECLO service: for emotional support and practical information / advice regarding sight loss.

Tel: 07701 393 524

Email: julian.padmore@nhs.net

Photography Competition

Following the announcement of our Photography Competition in the Spring newsletter, we are delighted to confirm that the competition is still taking place.

So, if you would like the chance for your photo to be included in our 2021 Calendar, please do enter.

We have made a few changes to the competition. The deadline has been extended and, to allow people to enter while staying at home, the theme has changed to:

"Flora and Fauna"

We are looking for fantastic photos of plants, flowers and wildlife taken from your garden, window or on a walk, so why not use this time to be creative with your photography!

You could also look through your photo albums to see if there are any suitable photos you could enter.

How to enter

The competition is free and open to all ages.

Please download an entry form from our [website](#) or call 01296 487 556 to request one.

Please send your photographs with your entry form to BucksVision, 143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury HP19 9HH or email reception@bucksvision.co.uk

If the person entering is under 18, a parent or guardian will need to complete and sign the form.

Deadline - 30 September 2020

Virtual BucksVision Showcase

Due to the coronavirus pandemic we sadly had to postpone our Showcase, which was due to take place in July, until 2021.

However, so that anyone who planned to enter could show off their hard work, we decided to organise a virtual showcase and below you will find some of the entries.

If you have something you would like to share with us, please get in touch; we'd love to see your creativity.

This stunning model, created by Brian, is of Queen Street, Oxford as it was last century. Using his magnifier, Brian created his masterpiece from card and it is beautifully detailed.

David, who is totally blind, has shared this photo of his wall hanging which he has hand weaved. In fact everything is handmade including the beads!

Finally Robin, a member and volunteer from Milton Keynes, has created this garden scene showing a mini croquet golf tournament between England and the Rest of the World. Bill and Ben, made of course from flowerpots, are about to start the final round while Miss Weed officiates!

Social Distancing

Social distancing can be extremely difficult for people with sight loss and RNIB are campaigning to raise awareness of this both within the wider community and with the Government.

They are asking the Government to:

- Issue guidance to service providers, businesses and employers to explain how to make social distancing measures accessible.
- Communicate to the public why people with hidden disabilities like sight loss find it more difficult to social distance, so that other people keep their distance, making it easier for blind and partially sighted people to get out and about.
- Create tailored guidance for blind and partially sighted people on social distancing, including clear rules around guiding, to help people feel more confident that they are able to get around safely and recover their independence.

In the meantime, please see the tips on the following page to help with social distancing if you are starting to get out more.

Face Coverings

A face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head.

Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after taking it off. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store reusable face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them.

Both fabric and disposable face coverings can be purchased from shops.

Social Distancing Tips

Henshaws society, based in Manchester, have published some social distancing tips written by their Rehabilitation Officer, Simon, who has sight loss himself.

Tip 1 Don't be put off letting people know that you have a visual impairment.

If you've got a cane, use it! Keep it in view at all times. I know not everyone knows what a white cane is, but most do. It makes you noticeable.

There are lots of other ways to make yourself visible, such as a high visibility vest or sash. Some shops and venues use the Sunflower Lanyard to help identify hidden disabilities.

Tip 2 Take your cane even if you are with someone; hold it to the side and make it obvious you are together and being guided.

Tip 3 If you're using your long cane, make it obvious you are using it! Make sure your starting sweep is wide enough.

Tip 4 Keep to the inner path line, away from the kerb, and let others step nearer to the road.

Tip 5 If you think someone is too close, tell them you have a visual impairment and ask them whether they are at the correct distance.

Tip 6 If you are using public transport, ring and book assistance if possible.

Tip 7 Carry hand sanitiser and wipes and try not to touch your face when out and about.

Tip 8 Disinfect your cane handle, and the end of it too if it's been on the ground.

RNIB News

Shopping

People with sight loss have found getting delivery slots very difficult during this time.

Supermarkets were asked by the Government to give priority to those classed as extremely vulnerable if they were to catch the virus, which meant many people with sight loss were left unable to secure slots.

However, what this request didn't take into account was the difficulties people with sight loss face when accessing shops, due to social distancing measures.

The RNIB campaigned for people with sight loss to be recognised as requiring home deliveries and they can now refer people directly to the supermarkets to be added to their list for priority delivery slots.

This is for people who cannot get to the shops themselves and have no one to help them. For more information please call 0303 123 9999.

Reading Services

As well as providing braille and audio books (in CD/USB formats), the free RNIB library service also offers books via digital download.

For the last six years RNIB have used Overdrive as the app for accessing their digital books, but in June this year they switched to using the Dolphin EasyReader app which can be downloaded on Android and Apple phones. Books can also be downloaded onto Windows computers.

For more information on RNIB Library service and how to join call 0303 123 9999.

Virtual Book Club

If you have been reading more during lockdown, you may wish to share your opinions, on the books you have enjoyed, with others who also have a passion for reading.

We are investigating launching a virtual book club for anyone living in Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes.

If this is of interest, please do get in touch with us on 01296 487 556.

Fish Pie Recipe

If you have used this extended time at home to improve your cookery skills here is a recipe from our Volunteer Supervisor, Lisa Redford, for you to try.

Ingredients:

6 potatoes (mashed)
100g grated cheese
Half a tin of tomatoes
2 tins of any type of fish
1 beaten egg
125ml milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. Layer the mashed potato in the bottom of a casserole dish, mixing a small amount of the cheese if desired.
2. Layer the tinned tomato on the potato then add the fish.
3. Mix the egg and milk with some salt and pepper and pour it over the top of the pie and sprinkle on the cheese.
4. Bake in the oven on 190°C, fan 170°C, gas mark 4 for 35 minutes.

Volunteers' Week 1-7 June

We feel very fortunate to work alongside such a wonderful team of volunteers.

This year's Volunteers' Week was very different and although we could not thank them in person, we spent the week celebrating the amazing work our volunteers do across our social media channels.

Here Chantelle, a volunteer Reader, shares her story.

“My client is a lady in her 90s and I visit her once a week. I read the book reviews from the cultural magazine.

We both enjoy reading the magazines. I like learning about new subjects and my client enjoys listening to articles that her electronic reader can't read.

It's a win-win situation. I've got to know her well and I really enjoy her company.

Volunteering for BucksVision is a wonderful thing for both parties, I would really recommend it.”

Here Bea, a BucksVision member, explains how support from Robert, one of our Technology volunteers, has helped her.

“Robert is my Captain Marvel, Batman and Superman rolled into one!

He stays calm when I panic and reassures me. With his help I was able to connect to the MK Technology Group meeting using the Zoom app.

Thank you, Robert, for making something seemingly impossible happen during these days of isolation.”

A very BIG thank you to every one of our volunteers; without your kindness and support, we would not be able to help hundreds of people living with sight loss in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Remembering Sue

We were very sad to hear of the passing of our long serving volunteer, Sue Hunt.

Sue was a volunteer in Milton Keynes for over 20 years and her roles included running the Partridge social club and acting as Referral Secretary.

Sue is fondly remembered by her colleagues below.

"Sue was a wonderful volunteer. She was always willing to help anyone, in whatever way she could. She had a great sense of humour which all members and volunteers enjoyed."

"Sue and I became friends through our involvement with the Partridge Club. Even when she had to step away from running the club, she still continued to help by organising the transport. I will miss her company very much."

Sue was a kind and generous volunteer who will be greatly missed by all of the members she supported, and by all of the volunteers and staff who worked with her.

The 2.6 Challenge

The 2.6 Challenge was set up to help charities who would normally raise their funds through the London Marathon. The aim was for people to raise money by completing their own personal challenge using the numbers 2 and 6.

Our thanks to all who took part and donated to the appeal. Below we highlight two challenges completed by our volunteers Padma and Sally.

Sally's challenge was to cycle 26 miles across three days which she completed shortly after the challenge launched in April. Sally raised a fantastic £488, thank you so much for taking part and raising money for us.

Padma's challenge was slightly different. She decided to complete 26 sit ups and 26 windmills every day for 26 days! Padma started on 1 May and successfully completed her challenge on 26 May.

Another volunteer, Alison, supported Padma to complete her challenge each morning. Below is how she confirmed that Padma had completed her challenge.

"SHE NAILED IT! Her sit ups were impressive and she even managed a smile after each set, but the smile on the last day was by far the biggest."

Padma raised an amazing £868. Well done and thank you for your brilliant effort!

TV Licensing

Some of you may be aware that from 1 August people aged over 75 will no longer automatically qualify for a free TV Licence.

From that date you will only receive a free licence if someone in your household is over 75 and receives Pension Credit. Everyone else over 75 will need to start paying for a licence.

However, if you are registered as severely sight impaired (blind) you will be entitled to a 50% concession.

Please be aware that you do not need to take any action. The TV Licensing company will be in contact with you before 31 July to let you know what you need to do.

Remember you will need a TV licence if you use BBC iPlayer to watch programmes on demand through your computer, smartphone or tablet, even if you don't watch any live TV.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us on 01296 487 556.

Useful Contacts

Government Coronavirus Updates

Visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus for latest updates.

Bucks Integrated Sensory Services - 01296 479 970

Practical support for people with sight loss in Buckinghamshire.

Sensory Advice Resource Centre - 01908 401 135

Practical support for people with sight loss in Milton Keynes.

RNIB - 0303 123 9999

Advice and support with all aspects of sight loss.

Macular Society - 0300 3030 111

Information and support for people with macular conditions.

Glaucoma UK (formerly IGA) - 01233 648 170

Information and advice for people with Glaucoma.

Esme's Umbrella - 020 7391 3299

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

Eye Casualty - 01296 315 939

A telephone triage service for patients concerned about sudden changes in their sight.

Ophthalmology Outpatients - 01296 315 988

For questions about your appointment or to change an appointment date/time.

Age UK Support for older people to help them achieve and maintain independence and wellbeing.

Buckinghamshire - 01296 431 911

Milton Keynes - 01908 231 123