

## **BucksVision Summer 2021 Newsletter**

Front cover shows a photograph looking out of an oven with a woman smiling in process of putting an apple pie into the oven. Caption is Cooking Without Fear, page 10.

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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BucksVision, 143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH

Telephone 01296 487 556

Open 9am - 5pm weekdays

E-mail [reception@bucksvision.co.uk](mailto:reception@bucksvision.co.uk)

[www.bucksvision.co.uk](http://www.bucksvision.co.uk)

Charity registered number 1147814

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## **Welcome**

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

I had hoped when I wrote this introduction that we would be out of lockdown. However, the Government has extended it by four weeks to allow more time for the vaccination programme to suppress the spread of the Delta variant of Covid-19.

Despite the delay in ending social distancing, we have been able to resume some of our services and we hope that our social activities will be able to restart in the next few months, see page 6 for more details.

You will find an important update about BucksVision overleaf (pages 4-5). We are going to become independent from RNIB, something that will be challenging but will also present lots of opportunities for us.

Feedback from our members and volunteers has emphasised how important our services are, particularly our range of social activities. It is essential that these continue.

We continue to help local people with sight loss during this difficult time, providing information, advice and support as needed. Our resource centre in Aylesbury is open, simply make an appointment to learn more about useful equipment.

We celebrated Volunteers' Week in June and even though we were not able to meet, we were delighted to spend the week thanking all our volunteers. You can read more on pages 7-9.

Stay safe and well.

## **BucksVision News**

We have exciting news to share with you. As you may know, for several years now, we have been part of RNIB Group and have been delighted to work with them to support people with sight loss across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We joined forces in 2014, at a time when BucksVision was looking to improve its services and its financial position.

Our partnership has worked extremely well, and we have improved our service delivery across the board, not least because RNIB have provided the financial platform that we needed to do this.

Nonetheless, our partnership with RNIB was never intended to be a permanent one and we knew that sooner or later we would reach a crossroads where we would need to decide whether to become independent from RNIB or whether to merge fully into the national charity.

Further to recent discussions, BucksVision and RNIB have mutually agreed that BucksVision is to become independent from RNIB with effect from April 2022. Importantly, our plans for independence will include a level of financial support over three years to enable BucksVision to build its fundraising capability.

The main reasons why we have agreed to become independent include:

### **Improved governance**

BucksVision has its own Board of Trustees who are responsible for governing the charity. This arrangement does not align with RNIB's increased focus on tighter (and consistent) governance across its services, as it feels this needs to be driven by the RNIB board.

## **Change in strategic direction**

RNIB is increasingly moving to peer-enabled rather than volunteer-led social activities. This does not fit well with our current model of social activities.

## **Financial sustainability**

Supported by an independent feasibility report, we believe that despite the tumultuous times we are living in, BucksVision has the potential to develop its fundraising capability over the next few years so it can replace RNIB's financial support with other sources of funding. We believe this will enable us to continue to focus on local service delivery, supporting our beneficiaries.

Clearly, there are risks in BucksVision separating from RNIB, in particular the obvious financial challenge, but also the need to transition many of our back-office services such as IT and HR from RNIB to new providers in the year ahead; however we are confident that we will be able to do this.

Of course, we recognise that it is in the best interests of our beneficiaries to collaborate with other organisations, so we will continue to work closely with RNIB. For example we will continue to deliver the ECLO service to patients attending the eye clinic at Stoke Mandeville

So, we are excited to be moving towards running fully independently as a local society again, as indeed we did for many years prior to joining forces with RNIB.

We are extremely grateful to all of our volunteers as without them, we simply could not help as many people as we do. We are also extremely grateful to those of you who make regular donations to us, these make a real difference and will be even more important in the years to come.

Thank you.

## **Resuming our Services**

We are delighted to have restarted some of our activities.

In June, the Aylesbury Rollers Bowls Group returned, and despite it being such a long time since they last played they were thrilled to be back on the green.

Next month, a few of our social groups will take advantage of the (hopefully) good weather and have their initial meetings outside.

Most of our social activities are preparing to resume from September, allowing time for volunteers and members to prepare for returning. Some of our activities require more attention than others and may not be able to resume until next year.

If there are any activities that would you like us to run, please let us know.

01296 487 556

[reception@bucksvision.co.uk](mailto:reception@bucksvision.co.uk)

## **Volunteers' Week – Thank You**

Thank you – these two timeless words felt incredibly important this Volunteers' Week (1-7 June). During such an exceptionally difficult year, we wanted to say an extra BIG thank you to all our volunteers; to those who over the past 15 months of the pandemic have provided essential help to blind and partially sighted people in our county, and to those who have not been able to volunteer with us because of the situation.

## **Hours and Hours**

We have an inspiring team of volunteers, 269 in fact. Each volunteer lends their time, talent, voice, and support to our charity. If we added together the volunteer hours generously given each year, we could travel the circumference of the earth approximately 253 times (based on an average of 4 hours per month per volunteer). What an incredible gift!

## **Our Personal Thanks**

As we were unable to meet face to face, the BucksVision team recorded their own personal messages of thanks to our valued volunteers. You can view this video on our [YouTube channel](#).

## **Something New**

In the next few weeks, we will be introducing a new way to volunteer – "Micro Volunteering". It's a simple idea that people share their time in short and convenient, bite-size chunks. People will be able to manage how often they take part and can fit tasks flexibly around other commitments.

We are always looking for new volunteers. If you or someone you know would be interested in volunteering visit our [website](#) or talk to Samantha, our Volunteer Manager on 01296 487 556.

## **Meet our Volunteers - Volunteers' Week cont.**

Meet Christine and Mark who, like all our volunteer team, make an incredible difference to blind and partially sighted people.

### **Christine - Befriender**

“I have been a volunteer Befriender with BucksVision for 17 years, visiting visually impaired people in their homes for a friendly chat once or twice a month. Being visually impaired can be very isolating, so my visits are always much appreciated and enjoyed. When I took on the role, little did I know I would get as much pleasure from my visits as I give to those I visit. Giving just an hour or two of my time each month to help alleviate their loneliness and feeling of isolation is extremely rewarding.”

### **Mark – Eye Clinic Volunteer**

“This is my third year volunteering with BucksVision at Stoke Mandeville Hospital within the eye clinic department.

I enjoy the contact with people, offering help and advice on eye and vision impairment related issues. Being able to assist with advice, information and useful aids following a diagnosis or eye related procedure, at what is a very stressful time for patients, is very rewarding.”

Befrienders like Christine provide meaningful companionship, while Eye Clinic Information Volunteers like Mark, offer advice and support to patients before and after eye clinic appointments.

## **Hear from our Members – Volunteers’ Week cont.**

Our volunteers give their time and effort to make an invaluable difference; Audrey, Barbara and Charles tell us how.

### **Audrey**

“During this last year, I’ve been housebound by the pandemic. I’ve received kind phone calls, checking on my wellbeing and having a chat, this was often the only person I spoke to.

It’s given me something to do, and something to chat about when I phone my family... The difference these have made to my wellbeing is impossible to put into words.

I know that so many have given up their time to make my days better. Thank you.”

“Thank you so much, the volunteers have given my sisters and me, a cheerful chatty mother and helped us when we live so far away. Thank you.” **Jane, Audrey's daughter**

### **Barbara**

“I go to the High Wycombe social group, all the volunteers there are so helpful and kind, especially since lockdown. I have had a phone call from them every week, mostly from Mary, and we have a long laughing chat.

The first time I went to the social group was just after my husband died, I knew no one, but every volunteer came and spoke to me which made me feel very welcome and very much included.”

### **Charles**

“I was put in touch with South East Division two years ago by the team at Windsor Eye Hospital. Since then I have been a regular attender at their monthly meetings, which I enjoyed very much before Covid-19. I cannot praise too highly the team of volunteers for all their help and support during this period.”

## **Cooking Without Fear**

Back in May, we were very pleased to welcome Simon Mahoney who gave a talk about his cookery journey. Simon lost his sight several years ago and when his wife sadly passed away in 2020, he decided to take on the challenge of cooking for himself.

Simon was also joined by Betty, one of our members, and Lisa, our Volunteer Supervisor, who shared their knowledge.

The following tips and ideas are ways that the contributors cook, and hopefully you will find them useful. However, there is no right and wrong way to cook, the best thing to do is to find out what works for you. If you have any useful tips, why not get in touch and we can share them in a future newsletter.

### **Simon**

Simon's key tip is to keep things as simple as possible and maintain a routine. He created the acronym SLOPE to help him do this:

Safety – make sure you keep yourself safe.

Lazy person principle - make sure everything you need is to hand.

Organisation - make sure everything is ready to use e.g. clean, sharp etc.

Preparation – get everything prepared and ready to cook.

Execution – cook and serve your meal.

### **Betty**

Betty shared a way to boil an egg without using a hob.

Put the egg in your kettle and fill with water. Boil the kettle with the lid open, once boiled leave for 5 minutes and then put the lid down. After 2-3 hours you will have a hard boiled egg.

## **Lisa**

Lisa shared several tips:

- Use a horseshoe shaped peeler - they are simple to use, widely available and it is easy to feel the peel coming off.
- One way to chop onions is to use a sharp knife to slice the onion and then use kitchen scissors to chop them up finely.
- George Foreman-type grills are a lot safer for sausages, burgers etc than conventional grill pans because they remove the fat from the meat and the food doesn't require turning, but use gloves and/or a spatula to remove the items and always let the hotplate cool before cleaning.

### **Additional tips**

- Cook vegetables in a microwave if you have one, as it can be easier than using a hob. You can also use a microwave steamer, which works for cooking fish as well.
- A sandwich maker can be used to roast cauliflower. Cut it up into small pieces and grease the maker.
- As part of his SLOPE process Simon prepares everything on a tray as it is easier to clean.
- Simon, Betty and Lisa all keep a bowl of hot soapy water ready so they can throw used utensils into it.

### **Question Time**

#### **How can you differentiate between food packaging?**

RNIB Penfriend is an audio labelling system that can be used to label food. Simon uses plastic milk bottles to make re-usable labels – so instead of putting a label on the item you can attach it to the plastic and re-use it.

#### **How to know if your pan of water is boiling?**

You can use a boil alert, a thin metal disc which you place in the bottom of the pan and it will rattle when the water boils.

## **What hobs are accessible?**

Cobolt sell a standalone talking induction hob. Induction hobs turn off when the pan is removed and they also cool down quickly. Many visually impaired people are also able to use conventional electric hobs.

Our thanks go to Simon, Betty and Lisa for sharing their cooking tips.

Simon has published his own cookery book full of his tips and recipes. The book is called 'First Catch Your Rabbit! Or Cooking Without Fear' and is available on Amazon to purchase as a paperback (£7.50) or a kindle version (£4.99). You can enjoy a sneak peak of one of his recipes opposite.

## **Simon's Quiche Recipe**

### **Ingredients**

Ready rolled shortcrust pastry (shop bought or own)

Three eggs

Five handfuls of grated cheese

Half a mug of milk

Medium onion

Dozen button mushrooms

Eight asparagus tips

Two tomatoes

Mixed herbs

Pepper and salt to taste

### **Method**

1. Turn oven to 170°C or gas mark three and unwrap the ready roll shortcrust pastry.
2. Grease the oven dish well and lay the pastry on the dish. Press gently into the sides of the dish and trim, leaving a slight lip standing proud of the edges of the dish.
3. Top, tail, skin and halve the onion. Slice thinly and put in small dish.

4. Wash and slice mushrooms, put in a small dish.
5. Put a good layer of grated cheese into the bottom of the pastry case and dust with mixed herbs.
6. Add a layer of sliced onions and top with another layer of cheese. Dust with mixed herbs.
7. Now add a layer of sliced mushrooms and cover with cheese.
8. Lay the asparagus on the cheese with the tips to the middle. Form a star with end of the stalks against the side of the dish. Cover with cheese.
9. Put three eggs into mixing bowl and beat well. Add a little milk and continue to beat. Add pepper and salt to taste.
10. Gently pour the egg mixture over the oven dish. Make sure it covers the whole dish. Be careful to pour from the outside in to the middle, use your thumb as a guide to the edge of the dish.
11. Leave for ten minutes to allow the mixture to filter through the entire dish.
12. Take the two tomatoes, slice thinly and layer on the top. You might need three tomatoes, depending on their size.
13. Bake the dish for thirty minutes or until the egg mixture is set.

Your quiche can be enjoyed hot or cold.

## **Fundraising Thank You**

We would like to say a BIG thank you to Ian Tarvit. Ian is on track to complete his 1,000 miles as planned by the end of June. He has so far raised £1,240, which has exceeded his target of £1,000. Well done Ian!

A BIG thank you also goes to everyone who took part in our 60k Through the Month of May Challenge. We have raised over £2,000!

Don't forget, you don't have to take part in a physical challenge to raise money for us, there are lots of other ways. For example did you know you can raise money for us when you shop online?

### **Amazon Smile**

If you shop with Amazon why not sign up to [Amazon Smile](#). You can choose a charity to support so if you pick BucksVision every time you make an eligible purchase Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to us at no cost to you.

### **Easyfundraising**

Easyfundraising works in similar way to Amazon Smile. Set up your [Easyfundraising](#) account and select BucksVision as your charity, and when you purchase goods from over 1000 stores, such as John Lewis, you will help raise money for us.

Read on for more ways to raise money for us.

## **Help us raise much needed funds**

### **Want to raise money to support BucksVision, but don't know where to start?**

Whether you're a first timer or a regular fundraiser, everybody needs a little inspiration sometimes.

So, take a look at our A-Z of fundraising ideas. It's packed with fun activities you can do as a fundraiser. A few examples can be found below.

### **Already have a unique idea and want to get started?**

Visit the [fundraising page](#) on our website and click on the [A to Z of Fundraising](#), then set up your fundraising page and share with your friends and family on social media.

Let us know what you are doing, and we can publicise your event/activity, so you get lots of interest and donations.

Get going today and help us to keep our services running.

H - Head Shave, Hook a Duck, Hula Hooping

E - Easter Egg Hunt, Eighties Party, Egg & Spoon Race

L - Ladies Night, Lottery, Lucky Dip

P - Picnic, Pool Competition, Plant Sale

B - Bingo, Bring & Buy, Book Sale

V -Variety Show, Vintage Car Rally, Video Night

## **Leaving a Lasting Legacy**

We were recently contacted by a local solicitor who informed us that BucksVision had generously been left a gift in someone's Will.

This gift will make a real and lasting impact on our work, helping to ensure that blind and partially sighted people across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes continue to receive our support.

You will, naturally, want to ensure that your friends and family are provided for in the first instance. But once you have looked after those closest to you, leaving even a small part of your estate to a charity can make a big difference.

**Less than half of UK adults have a Will.**

### **Remembering a charity**

If you wish to leave a gift, you will need to state this in your Will. If you already have a Will and need to amend it, this can be done through a codicil, which allows for minor alterations to be made. If you have more than one or two minor changes, it is generally recommended that you write a new Will.

### **Do you need a solicitor?**

We recommend that you speak with a solicitor about adding a codicil or leaving a gift to a charity in your Will. You will be charged for this – check fees in advance – but it is worth making sure that any changes are made properly, otherwise your Will might be contested.

**In 2020, £3.1 Billion gifts in Wills was left to charities.**

### **Benefits of leaving a gift**

Peace of Mind

Leaving a gift to charity will ensure that your money is being distributed in accordance with your wishes and will have a lasting impact.

Remembering a loved one

Most people who have left BucksVision a gift in their Will have been touched by our work, usually when we have helped close friends or family when they have been at their most vulnerable.

### **In England, getting married revokes a Will.**

Make a profound difference

As a small and local charity, your gift will have an immediate impact on our income and our work.

Reduced Inheritance Tax

You can cut the Inheritance Tax rate on your estate from 40% to 36%, if you leave at least 10% of your entire estate to charity.

### **Unmarried partners are not entitled to assets.**

### **Need further help?**

If you have any questions about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact us on 01296 329 680 or [reception@bucksvision.co.uk](mailto:reception@bucksvision.co.uk)

### **Travel Light**

If you're hoping to get away this summer why not try out the TravelBright 3 portable light. This small lightweight lamp, it weighs 199g/7oz, can be easily transported and provides you with decent lighting wherever you stay.

### **Features**

3 LED light temperature

5 Brightness levels

Magnetic charging

Flexible design

Long battery life (est. 8 hrs)

### **How to Buy?**

The light costs £42 and you can order it through BucksVision, or directly from VisionAid Technologies or the Partially Sighted Society.

## **The Albinism Fellowship**

Sunday 13 June was International Albinism Awareness Day.

Albinism is an inherited genetic condition, which occurs in all racial and ethnic groups throughout the world. It affects the production of melanin, the pigment that colours skin, hair and eyes. The reduced amount of melanin often causes eye problems which vary in severity. This is because melanin is involved in the development of the retina, the thin layer of cells at the back of the eye. Problems can include low vision, Nystagmus and astigmatism. Around 1 in 17,000 people have albinism in the UK.

In 1979, [The Albinism Fellowship of UK and Ireland](#) was founded. It is volunteer-run and aims to provide information, advice and support for people with Albinism and their families. They also provide information about the condition to professionals. All of their Trustees are people with Albinism or parents of children with Albinism.

They offer support by phone or email; publish a twice yearly magazine called 'Albinism Life'; run regional meetings on a regular basis as well as annual events and a biannual conference when funding allows.

01282 771 900

info@albinism.org.uk

## **For Sale – Second Hand Items**

### **Mezzo Vario - Reinecker Magnifier Reader**

Screen size 19 inches.

Ultra HD Camera with wide magnification range.

Offers premium image quality.

Unique rotating screen ideal for reading columns in newspaper & magazines, tables and a whole lot more.

Unique NELE LED lighting eliminates reflections on glossy documents.

Comes complete with mobility pack including a carry case and battery pack.

It is in an excellent condition, only used a few times.

Purchased new the total package cost £2,064. The seller is looking for £800, but is open to sensible offers. Located in Milton Keynes.

### **PEBBLE HD Hand Held Magnifier**

4.3 LCD screen with magnification range from 1.25x to 13.5x. Comes with its own carry case.

Excellent condition with box, instructions and charging cable.

£250 or sensible offers. Located in Milton Keynes.

Contact BucksVision for more information.

01296 487 556

reception@bucksvision.co.uk

## **Useful Contacts**

### **Government Coronavirus Updates**

Visit [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for latest updates.

### **NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme - 0808 196 3646**

Volunteer support with shopping and hospital transport.

### **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.

### **Age UK**

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

Buckinghamshire - 01296 431 911

Milton Keynes - 01908 550 700