

# BucksVision Winter 2019 Newsletter

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## **Welcome**

This year has been dominated by two topics: Brexit and climate change. The continuous “one step forward, two steps back” saps the spirit, doesn't it? It seems that in every decade there is some kind of crisis.

At times like these, I take comfort in the fantastic work that I know is happening across our local community. I believe that people are kind, helpful and wish to help their fellow man (or woman).

I want to thank all of you who support our work. In particular, I want to thank you if you volunteer with us and have recently completed our safeguarding training. This has been a major initiative led by our parent charity, RNIB, to ensure that our members and beneficiaries are safe from exploitation and other forms of abuse. Sadly, disabled and older people are significantly more likely to experience some kind of abuse, so it is essential that we know the signs to watch out for. In common with other charities working with vulnerable people, we hope that it never happens, but we will take action if it does.

Nonetheless, let me repeat my previous observation. The vast majority of people are kind, compassionate and want to help people less fortunate than themselves.

We could not help local blind and partially sighted people without you. Whether you volunteer at one of our social clubs, drive members to activities, or make a financial donation to us, thank you. I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and look forward to catching up with you in the New Year.

## **Welcome to our new staff member**

We are delighted to confirm that our new staff member, Claire Carey, has joined the team as an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (“ECLO”) working at Amersham and Wycombe Hospitals.

Claire will support patients with sight loss and make referrals on their behalf to other organisations as well as BucksVision. Claire is our second ECLO; Julian Padmore is our ECLO supporting patients from Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Claire will be working at Amersham Hospital from Tuesday to Thursday and at Wycombe Hospital on Monday and Friday. There will be a post box in both hospitals so referrals can be made to Claire even if she is not in the eye clinic that day.

Prior to joining us, Claire was a Supported Housing Manager at Raven Housing Trust, managing a number of their housing and homelessness services.

Claire, therefore, has an extensive background of providing practical and emotional support to people and we are delighted that she has joined us.

## **BucksVision Calendar – Stocking Fillers**

Looking for a stocking filler for your family and friends?

Why not purchase our calendar featuring beautiful pictures of the Buckinghamshire countryside.

Throughout the year you can enjoy pictures of Brill Windmill (including it in the snow and at sunset), bluebells in Great Missenden, a mandarin duck on the grand union canal and yachts on Caldecotte lake.

The calendar will make a lovely present and it's only £8 (plus P&P).

Contact us on 01296 487 556 or email [reception@bucksvison.co.uk](mailto:reception@bucksvison.co.uk) to order your calendar today.

## **Large print calendars and diaries**

Don't forget you can still order your large print calendars and diaries for next year too.

You can order a pocket diary, an A5 or A4 diary and an A3 calendar.

## **Christmas Goodies**

Are your friends and family looking for some gift ideas?

### **Talking Photo Album**

With this photo album you can record special messages or music to accompany your photos. It has 20 pages and a total of six minutes recording time. Each page holds a single 5x7 inch photo and you can record and playback a separate voice message on each page.

RNIB DH427 - £29.95

### **SockSnaps**

We all know socks are pretty standard Christmas gifts but how about asking for something slightly different this year? SockSnaps are circular plastic rings which are designed to keep your socks paired together in your washing machine, tumble dryer and sock drawer.

RNIB DK190 £6.95 (for pack of 20 discs)

### **Solo USB Player**

Solo combines the technology of the Sonic USB players with the portability of your phone.

Small enough to fit in your pocket it also has the latest generation of digital amplifiers which provide clear sound and easily accessible headphone jack. It comes with the same yellow tactile buttons as the sonic.

RNIB DH447 £66.65 excl VAT

### **Communiplayer**

Designed to look and feel similar to the best-selling RNIB Communiclock, this USB memory stick player is easy to use and can be easily moved from room to room, or even into your garden or shed.

The Communiplayer has black casing, a white underside and large, tactile white buttons which contrast with the casing. The player has built-in Bluetooth for remotely connecting to devices, such as smartphones and tablets, to play music, podcasts or audiobooks. RNIB DH446 £34.99

## **Partially Sighted Badge**

If you are looking for an alternative to using a symbol cane, why not try a partially sighted badge?

This uses the international symbol of a sight problem (an eye partially shaded) with the wording partially sighted to inform others of your vision loss. The badge is yellow so will stand out on most clothes.

Partially sighted Society £1.65

All the above items can be ordered directly from their supplier or through BucksVision.

RNIB – 0303 123 9999

Partially Sighted Society – 01302 965 195

BucksVision – 01296 487 556

## **Our Year in Review**

Some of you may be wondering just what we got up to this year... well here is a brief recap of 2019!

### **Experience Days**

This year our Experience Days have revolved around history and music.

Back in March we took part in Bucks County Museum's touch tour all about glass, we had a smashing time! In May we enjoyed a visit to Windsor Castle, where sadly we didn't meet the Queen, but did enjoy a wonderful guided descriptive tour of the Castle grounds.

In June we enjoyed listening to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra play film music and we were so impressed we went back in November to hear them play the classics.

*"Enjoyable experience, gave a sense of well being"*

In July we enjoyed a descriptive touch tour of Sulgrave Manor, George Washington's ancestral home before some of our members took part in Baluji Shrivastav's Music workshop in Milton Keynes.

In September we enjoyed a modernised version of Macbeth at Oxford Playhouse. We rounded off our history tours with a visit to the Battle of Britain Bunker where we learned about RAF operations in WWII.

### **Awareness and Low Vision Days**

We held three Low Vision Days across the county in June, where we invited companies and other charities along to have exhibition stands. We had over 100 people attend across the three days. And we held sight loss awareness sessions for staff from Calibre, NHS, Library service and National Trust.

### **Volunteering**

We have held 10 Volunteer Induction sessions this year, recruiting a total of 33 new volunteers. Back in June we celebrated Volunteers Week with cakes and "Thank You" postcards to highlight the fantastic work our volunteers do.

## **Resource Centre**

So far this year 70 people have visited our resource centre to have a look at our equipment and discuss what is available for them.

*“It was the best I have seen and I am very grateful for your help once again”*

## **Sporting activities**

The Whiteleaf Archers invited us back in June to take part in another great archery session. And each month our walking groups explored beautiful Buckinghamshire.

## **Working Age activities**

Our local Working Age Group has enjoyed a full programme of activities, from flower arranging to a talk on the “History of Nursery Rhymes”.

## **Divisional Activities**

Our volunteer run clubs have continued to grow and provide a varied programme of entertainment across the year.

Volunteer Padma launched a Technology Group in the Milton Keynes area which was a great success and we look forward to it continuing next year.

We are looking forward to 2020. If you have any ideas of what activities you would like us to arrange, we would love to hear them!

## **Remap**

Remap is a charity that helps disabled people of all ages to live more independent lives. Their network of skilled volunteers design and custom-make equipment free of charge.

They help to improve quality of life and increase independence for disabled people of all ages, providing solutions to everyday problems when there is nothing commercially available.

### **How does Remap work?**

When you contact them they will ask you for a few details about what you need, to assess whether they can help you. If the equipment that would help you already exists, they will encourage you to buy that. Their help is for situations where there is nothing commercially available that is suitable.

If they think they can help, a volunteer from their nearest group will visit you to discuss your situation and understand what you need. They like to have an occupational therapist there too. Following that, they will design and make a piece of equipment specifically for you, in a way that meets your needs. Sometimes they will modify existing equipment to make it more suitable for you.

They make no charge for the devices they make and each item is made for an individual person.

### **What sort of equipment do they make?**

The list is endless. They know that each person is different, and they want to understand what challenges you face. They will work with you to devise a gadget that will help you.

### **Who to contact?**

#### **Milton Keynes**

Martin Hughes 07713 156137

#### **Buckinghamshire South**

Nigel Matthias 07413 455787

Email: [SouthBucks.Enquiries@remapgroups.org.uk](mailto:SouthBucks.Enquiries@remapgroups.org.uk)

## **Echoed Location Project**

It's a noisy world out there – planes overhead, hustle and bustle in the street, birds calling to each other, the hum of the fridge – but how often have you stopped to listen? Every place has its own 'soundscape', and the Central Chilterns, with its wide range of environments is no exception.

These sounds can provide a way into discovering the world around you, through people telling stories, making sound recordings of wildlife or a village street, or investigating sounds we can't usually hear. By creating a sound picture of the Central Chilterns, almost everyone will have a chance to hear, and feel part of, this unique place.

The Echoed Locations project will engage community groups and individuals in recording the sounds around them – all you need is a mobile phone – and then uploading them to an online 'sonic map' of the Central Chilterns, which will be available to all.

The project is keen to involve BucksVision members, to share your experience of the Chilterns soundscape. This could be from the perspective of sounds that make you feel at home; sounds that are useful to you; or sounds that have significance for you!

They would like to hold a meeting at the BucksVision office in Aylesbury early in the New Year, to tell you more about the project.

So, if you like the sound of being involved and want to find out more, please get in touch with Alison at BucksVision.

01296 487 556

adeuchars@bucksvision.co.uk

## **Tips for coping with sight loss at Christmas**

The Macular Society have recently shared some top tips provided by Anna, a Macular Society member, on coping with sight loss at Christmas time.

### **Writing, or receiving Christmas cards**

Use white labels for writing addresses on coloured envelopes.

Don't write who it is to in the card, just write who it is from at the bottom.

Take a picture on a phone or tablet of the cards you receive, so you can zoom in.

### **Buying and wrapping presents**

Use Easy Fundraising or Amazon Smile to do your shopping, as it's a gift for BucksVision too.

Use a wrist Sellotape gadget, that way you know where the dispenser is.

Wrap each person's presents in different paper so you don't need to look at gift labels when giving them out.

### **Unwrapping presents:**

Give each person a place to stack their presents, that way you won't throw one away in error.

Use the camera on your tablet to watch people opening their presents.

When opening presents, try to get people to say what they have received, so you don't feel left out.

### **Preparing the Christmas dinner**

If you have used the same recipes for years get your favourite recipes printed in very large print and put them in a display book.

Download your favourite recipe videos onto your tablet and get a tablet holder for the kitchen.

Use pre-prepared vegetables.

Set all your timers via a smart device, such as an Amazon Echo. For example: 'Alexa, set reminder for carrots in 10 minutes'.

Don't be afraid to ask for lots of help!

### **At the Christmas table**

Use wine glasses with coloured stems.

Always keep your red wine at least half full, it makes it easier to see it against a white tablecloth.

Buy crackers that are a different colour to the tablecloth.

### **Washing and clearing up**

Get someone else to do it....

Keep a page of labels and a black felt tip pen in the kitchen and stick the opening date on chutney, relishes and anything else you have in the fridge.

We hope you all have a good holiday!

## **Retina UK – Support Group**

Retina UK is the leading UK charity for people affected by inherited retinal conditions such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Usher syndrome and Stargardt disease.

They hold information events and run a helpline and local peer support groups.

### **Helpline**

Your call will be answered by a trained volunteer who has or knows someone with inherited sight loss.

You can ask condition-specific questions, seek information about benefits, employment and education or anything else. They will be able to answer your question or signpost you to a relevant organisation that can.

**0845 123 2354**

Monday to Friday

9.30am to 9.30pm

[Helpline@RetinaUK.org.uk](mailto:Helpline@RetinaUK.org.uk)

### **NEW Peer Support Group – Milton Keynes**

This is the first meeting of a new group so come and join us; whether you have specific questions about living with sight loss, or simply seeking new friendships, everyone is welcome. Spaces are limited so please book.

### **Saturday 8 February**

10.00am-12.00pm

Community Room at John Lewis, centre:MK

For more information and to book attendance please email [Local@RetinaUK.org.uk](mailto:Local@RetinaUK.org.uk) or contact Clair on 01280 821 334.

## **In Memoriam**

We are always grateful to receive any donation, large or small, and are frequently amazed at the generosity of people living in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

One of the ways to support BucksVision that has become increasingly popular in recent years is that of “In Memoriam” donations at funerals. These are given at the request of the person who has died (or their family) in lieu of flowers.

Another method is that of leaving BucksVision a gift in your (or a family member’s) Will, by leaving a legacy. In fact, legacies are often the largest donations that we and other charities receive. It is a little-known fact that many charities would not survive without gifts in Wills.

These donations mean that at a very sombre and difficult time, local blind and partially sighted people benefit and something positive is passed on.

Should you wish to consider leaving us a legacy, this is easier than you might think.

1. Please make a note of our details and charity number:  
BucksVision, 143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire,  
HP19 9HH. Registered Charity No. 1147814
2. Find a solicitor or professional Will writer to write your Will.
3. Provide your solicitor or Will writer with our details and your wishes.
4. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01296 487 556 or email [reception@bucksvision.co.uk](mailto:reception@bucksvision.co.uk)

## **Getting transport to hospital**

### **Non-emergency patient transport services (PTS)**

Some people are eligible for non-emergency patient transport services. These services provide free transport to and from hospital for:

- people whose condition means they need additional medical support during their journey
- people who find it difficult to walk
- parents or guardians of children who are being transported

PTS may not be available in all areas. To find out if you are eligible for PTS and how to access it, you will need to speak to your GP or the healthcare professional who referred you to hospital.

### **Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)**

You may be able to claim a refund for the cost of your transport to hospital through the HTCS if you:

- are not eligible for PTS
- cannot afford the cost of travelling to hospital
- cannot get a friend or relative to take you

To qualify you must meet 3 conditions:

1. At the time of your appointment, you or your partner (including civil partners) must receive certain qualifying benefits or allowances.
2. You must have a referral from a healthcare professional to a specialist or a hospital for further NHS treatment or tests.
3. Your appointment must be on a separate visit to when the referral was made.

**Tel: 0300 330 1343**

## **Bucks Community Transport hub**

For information on different community transport schemes across Buckinghamshire.

0800 085 8480  
01844 348 834

## **Good Neighbours Community Transport Schemes**

Hazlemere, Widmer End & Holmer Green

If you have an appointment at a local doctors, medical centre, dentist or hospital on a weekday and find travelling by public transport difficult due to age, infirmity or disability, then Good Neighbours can provide transport to take you door to door. They can also provide car transport to attend local group meetings etc.

01494 716363  
10am – 1pm Mon - Fri  
Please call two days before transport is needed.

## **Hospital Car Service in North Bucks**

The Hospital Car Service provides transport to enable people in North Bucks to access their hospital appointments.

Their volunteer drivers pick the patients up from their home, take them to their appointments and then take them home again.

## **How does it work?**

Referral is by GP only. In order to use this service, you must be registered with a GP in Buckingham, Steeple Claydon or Winslow.

## **Fenny Cabs Milton Keynes**

A taxi service that is happy to take animals.  
01908 787787

## **VIP Bus Passes**

Transport help for people with sight loss  
01494 586 539 or 01296 585 656

## **Creative Writing Competition Winners**

We were delighted to announce the winners of our Creative Writing Competition at our Christmas Fair on 23rd November. Prizes were presented during the Fair and the winners are listed below:

### **Poetry**

1<sup>st</sup> Annabelle Brown - 'I hope for good things to come'

2<sup>nd</sup> Pat Smith - 'Faint Hope'

3<sup>rd</sup> John Hearn - 'Hope for the Hopeless'

### **Short Story**

1<sup>st</sup> Claire Rider - 'The Wrong side of the Mountain'

2<sup>nd</sup> Jeni Ferguson - 'Discovery'

3<sup>rd</sup> Pat Smith - 'Needs and Solutions'

### **Volunteers & General Public**

1<sup>st</sup> Bryan Ward - 'A Moveable Feast'

2<sup>nd</sup> Christine Lewis - 'A Mould in a Million'

Congratulations to all of our winners!

## **Queen Alexandra College (QAC)**

**QAC is a Specialist College based in Birmingham. They welcome students aged 16-25 from all over the country.**

The College has been at its current location since 1903. Its original purpose was to provide education for young people who were blind or visually impaired.

Today, in addition to supporting people who have a visual impairment, they now offer support and guidance for students on the Autistic Spectrum, those with moderate to severe learning difficulties, students with physical disabilities and those with other needs.

They offer courses covering art and design, health and social care, performing arts, sport and more.

For more information visit [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk) or call 0121 428 5050

## **Not for Sale**

### **Second Hand Boomboxes**

We have several second hand boomboxes at our office. Some of them do not have chargers but they can be purchased directly from Kings Audio.

Call 01296 487 556 if interested.

And don't forget to buy a BucksVision calendar. An amazing collection of photographs for only £8 (Plus P&P)

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