

BucksVision Autumn/Winter Newsletter 2020

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Welcome

Welcome to our Autumn/ Winter newsletter. As you may have guessed, we have combined the two editions because of the continuing pandemic and lockdown.

Blind and partially sighted people face obvious barriers when it comes to complying with social distancing and getting out and about safely. We are here to help.

Our staff and volunteers continue to stay in regular contact with members to check that they are coping with lockdown and to offer support as needed. Our ECLO continues to help people attending our local eye clinics. If you are worried about anyone with sight loss, please contact us.

I want to thank all of you who continue to support our work during these uncertain times, especially our volunteers. All of the staff and trustees of BucksVision are grateful for your efforts.

I also want to thank those of you who have sent thank you letters and donations to us; we really appreciate your support.

Looking ahead to 2021, we hope that things will begin to return to normal. Like many other charities, we are using lockdown as an opportunity to review our services and will be seeking your views in the months ahead. Please do contact me if you have views on whether any of our services could be changed, improved or added to.

In the meantime, I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

BucksVision Service Update

BucksVision staff remain available by phone and email to provide help and support, no matter the national situation.

During lockdown we suspended our Resource Centre Appointments. However, we will resume them as soon as we are able to.

In the meantime, if you would like advice or help with equipment please don't hesitate to contact us.

Our Telephone Befriending service remains open for referrals. A Telephone Befriender will call you on a regular basis for a friendly chat and to make sure all is well.

If you are interested in receiving a Telephone Befriender during this time please do let us know.

ECLO Update

We are delighted to confirm that Dee Emanuel is the new RNIB Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) covering Amersham and High Wycombe Hospitals.

Between July and September this year, the ECLO at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Julian, supported 247 patients and 39 carers and families. He also noticed an increase in enquiries about emotional support services as the increase in social isolation, in conjunction with the myriad of challenges that sight loss can bring, left some people struggling (find information on support with your mental health on pages 5 and 6).

ECLO contact details

Julian Padmore (Stoke Mandeville Hospital)
07701 393 524 or julian.padmore@nhs.net

Dee Emanuel (Amersham & High Wycombe Hospital)
07395 243 171 or dee.emmanuel@rnib.org.uk

BucksVision Calendar 2021

We are just putting the final touches to next year's BucksVision Calendar. It will be printed in late November, so in plenty of time for Christmas.

We have been blown away by the quality of the pictures taken this year by supporters of BucksVision. The theme was Flora and Fauna with photos being taken in people's gardens and the local countryside.

By purchasing this calendar, you are financially supporting us as, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, this is one of the only ways that we can raise vital funds this year.

It will make an ideal gift for friends and family this Christmas and it's only £8 (plus P&P).

To order call or email us:

01296 487 556

reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Support with your mental health

Dealing with sight loss can be difficult in normal times, but the pandemic is also affecting many people's mental health. If you are struggling there is support available.

RNIB Emergency Mental Health Sessions

RNIB's Sight Loss Advice Service has worked with Mind, the mental health charity, to offer free emergency mental health sessions over the phone by BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) registered counsellors with sight loss experience, to give emotional support during these difficult times.

In an hour-long session with a counsellor, you will have space to share feelings, explore coping strategies and any further support needs.

The session will address some of the feelings created by the current situation including anxiety and distress, and help you recognise that accepting you have these feelings is a positive step. The sessions are on offer until June 2021.

If you are struggling with your mental wellbeing and would benefit from support, you can register for a one-off session by contacting RNIB helpline on 0303 123 9999.

Macular Society Counselling

Their team of professional, accredited counsellors are available for free confidential telephone sessions for anyone with macular disease or their family, in the UK or internationally.

All their counsellors are members of BACP and abide by its ethical framework and procedures.

If you would like more information about their Counselling Service, please call their advice and information service on 0300 3030 111.

RNIB Counselling Service

RNIB also offer emotional support through their Sight Loss Counselling team, a group of professional online and telephone counsellors.

The service is accredited by BACP and is completely confidential.

How can they help?

- One-to-one telephone counselling - This gives you the time and support to talk through your situation and feelings.
- Online counselling - Get in touch with their team through email, video or instant messaging.
- Telephone support groups - Discuss your feelings and experiences in small groups facilitated by one of RNIB counsellors.

To find out more call RNIB helpline on 0303 123 9999.

Private counselling

Alan Chamley is a BACP registered counsellor who is based in Cambridge. He can offer sessions by telephone or Zoom and can work through issues such as:

- Social anxiety
- Depression
- Stress
- Low self-worth
- Lack of confidence
- Bereavement, grief, loss
- Management of anger

Alan is severely sight impaired himself so has enhanced empathy with the stresses and adversities of being visually impaired.

What are the charges?

If you receive ESA, PIP, DLA or Universal Credit benefits the charge is £22 per hour. If you do not receive any of these benefits the charge is £43 per hour.

Contact Details

Phone: 07857 007 883

Email: alan.chamley@virgin.net
alanchamleycounselling.co.uk

Staying Connected

We are delighted to announce that one of our neighbouring societies has kindly opened up their remote activities to BucksVision members.

Berkshire Vision are running a calendar of activities each month including coffee mornings, quizzes, meditation sessions, a football group and more.

If you would like to join the mailing list to receive the calendar and details of how to join, please let us know.

Accessing remote activities

You can access the activities using your landline or mobile phone. You will be given a number to call and an unique ID number for each activity to input so you can join the meeting.

Alternatively if you have a computer or tablet you can join online by following a link. Berkshire Vision use a video calling software called Microsoft Teams. You can download the app for free.

Charles Bonnet Support Group

Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) is where people who have sight loss experience visual hallucinations. These often cause great anxiety as people worry something is wrong with their mind, but it is a natural occurrence where it is believed the brain fills in gaps left by the vision loss.

It can therefore be very beneficial for people to speak with others who also experience CBS so that they realise they are not alone.

Consequently Esme's Umbrella, which campaigns to raise awareness of CBS, has advocated the setting up of support groups, many of which are now operating remotely.

Berkshire Vision have recently set up a monthly support group which BucksVision members are invited to join. Should enough BucksVision members participate we may set up our own group.

Join us for some Quizmas fun!

We are inviting you to join us on Friday 11 December from 6pm, online or by telephone, for The Ultimate Quizmas! We have come up with some fun festive questions for the greatest end of year celebration.

Take part in our "Christmas Carol The Remix" challenge where each team will be invited to rewrite a well-known Christmas carol whilst trying not to be too rude!

So, don't end up on Santa's naughty list, wear your best Christmas jumper and join us online for a fun and festive lockdown frolic.

You don't need to have an internet connection or a computer to join, you can simply dial in from your phone. The call is to a regular UK landline and will be either included in your call plan or charges may apply.

If you are new to remote activities or are feeling nervous, let us know and we can arrange for someone to give you a call beforehand. BucksVision staff will guide everyone through this extra special seasonal experience.

Book your place now:

01296 487 556

reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Lowdown on Audio Description

Audio Description (AD) is additional commentary that explains what's happening on screen. AD describes body language, expressions and movements, making the programme clear through sound.

If you feel you are missing important parts of your programme, turning on AD might help you to fully enjoy them. As long as you have a digital television, you should be able to turn on audio description.

Visit [RNIB website](#) for more information on how to set up AD on the different TV platforms (i.e. Freeview, Sky, Virgin, etc).

Audio Description is also available at cinemas, as many film screenings are now audio described. When you purchase your ticket you will be provided with a headset, therefore AD is only audible to you.

Finally AD is also available for theatre productions. In the run of a play there may be one or two audio described performances to go to.

Here are some thoughts of people who use AD, taken from a video on [RNIB website](#).

“A lot of those little subtleties in the way a person looks, or something they do with their hands, is actually a massive part of the story. All that tension, a lot of that is based on seeing what's happening, and getting a sense of the atmosphere. And that's really brought to life by audio description.” Stacey

“For blind people, having that audio description, it becomes their eyes. I use it for watching TV programmes, for films at home, films in the cinema. I don't watch anything without audio description.” Sam

Learning about technology

In June 2019, a Technology Group was set up in Milton Keynes by a local BucksVision volunteer.

When the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that the group had to stop meeting face to face, they started meeting virtually instead. Although not being able to meet face to face has its challenges, one big positive of becoming virtual is that the group has been opened up to anyone in Buckinghamshire and beyond.

Towards the end of October we contacted some of our Technology Group members to gain their feedback on the virtual sessions so far and to find out what support they need moving forward.

The results of this survey will help us to plan our programme for 2021. If you would like to be added to our Technology Group mailing list please get in touch.

However, in the meantime, if you have any queries or would like support with your technology, whether its accessing Zoom, using a smartphone or help with your computer, get in touch with us. We can either match you with a BucksVision Technology Volunteer or refer you to another organisation that can assist.

Next Technology Talk

Smart Televisions and associated gadgets.

Thursday 3 December

2.00pm

The talk can be accessed via phone or online, so get in touch with us if you would like to join. You can also request a recording of the talk if this is short notice.

01296 487 556

Reception@bucksvision.co.uk

You're never too old!

BucksVision member Patricia Smith has at the age of 83 become a published author.

Patricia's book 'A Dangerous Inheritance' is an adventure book which begins at the end of World War Two before moving to the modern day. The story involves the theft and concealment of the Akbar Shah diamond and follows the characters attempts to locate it.

Patricia was inspired by her travels and her husband finding a potential hiding space in his new car.

Patricia was also a keen artist and pianist before she lost her sight suddenly due to Temporal Arteritis.

"I'm totally blind now. I can't even tell night from day. It happened suddenly and it was really hard, but I am finding ways to adjust. I can't read music any more, for example, so I'm composing my own pieces now."

Patricia was helped by volunteers from the Milton Keynes Reader Service who helped her proofread her novel and get it published.

Patricia writes under the name Patsy Smith and her book is available on Amazon now.*

Some information, including the quote from Patricia, has been taken from an article featured in the MK Citizen.

*If you do purchase Patricia's book or any other items on Amazon don't forgot to do it through [Amazon Smile](#) and select us as your charity. For every purchase we will receive a small donation from Amazon.

Giant Cell/Temporal Arteritis

Giant Cell/Temporal Arteritis, is one of the most common vascular conditions affecting around one to two persons per 10,000 people in the UK.

It happens when the large and medium sized arteries become inflamed and constricted. Commonly, the blood vessels in the temples of the head are affected which gives us the name Temporal Arteritis.

It is three times more common in women than in men; seven times more common in white people than in black people; and is seldom diagnosed below the age of 50.

Giant Cell/Temporal Arteritis can cause optic neuropathy, i.e. damage to the optic nerve. This occurs when the arteries supplying blood to the optic nerve are inflamed.

Symptoms of this can include loss of vision, temporary loss of vision and frequent or throbbing head pain. There may also be pain on eating if the blood supply to the jaw has been affected.

If you have any of these symptoms, it is imperative you seek medical help. Early treatment with steroids usually stabilises the vision but if there is damage to the optic nerve it does not always recover.

If you have Giant Cell/ Temporal Arteritis it is important that you report any changes of vision to your doctor or optician and it is advisable to visit your optician on a yearly basis for an eye check.

Giant Cell/Temporal Arteritis is one of many vasculitis diseases so for more information on it please visit:

<http://www.vasculitis.org.uk> or call the Vasculitis UK helpline on 0300 365 0075.

Moorfields Eye Hospital Oriel Update

What is Oriel?

Oriel is the proposal to build a world-leading, integrated new centre for eye care, research and education at the St Pancras Hospital site in the London Borough of Camden. It is a joint initiative between Moorfields Eye Hospital, the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology and Moorfields Eye Charity.

Why move from City Road?

The buildings at City Road were built over 120 years ago at a time when hospital care was provided very differently to how it is now. The ageing structure of the hospital is growing increasingly difficult and costly to maintain.

In developing their plans, they assessed a number of options for improving services and facilities for their patients and a major renovation of City Road was considered but was found to be more expensive and disruptive (especially to patients) than building a new centre.

Although intermediate refurbishments go some way to improving the environment for their patients and staff, they are no substitute for purpose-built facilities that can modernise patient pathways and meet the growing demand for eye health services.

Why St Pancras?

The St Pancras site provides an excellent location, ideally situated close to the UCL Bloomsbury campus and several of their voluntary sector and charity partners, including the RNIB and Guide Dogs.

The five-acre site of St Pancras Hospital is currently owned by Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust. They are proposing to develop two acres of the five-acre St Pancras Hospital site.

The new location is close to three mainline railway stations (King's Cross, St Pancras and Euston), making it very accessible to large parts of the UK as well as to six London underground lines and the Overground.

What happens now?

The Oriel team has been working throughout the summer to promote a public planning consultation on early designs of the proposed new integrated centre for the St Pancras hospital site. The project partners submitted a planning application to Camden Council in October.

The next phase of Oriel will focus on paving the way for a successful planning outcome, gathering further feedback on aspects of the design such as lighting, acoustics, accessibility and getting to the new centre from transport hubs using technology or other means.

The Oriel team will be holding a number of events which will focus on each of these aspects. If you would like to get involved in shaping the design or would like more information about the new centre for eye care, research and education please email moorfields.oriel@nhs.net or visit www.oriel-london.org.uk.

You can also call Freephone 0800 3077 967 where you will be invited to leave a message for one of the team to call you back and take note of your views.

Covid-19 Impact Report

In line with many other organisations, BucksVision sent out a brief survey to measure the impact that Covid-19 has had on our members and to assess what assistance people needed and the role BucksVision had in the situation.

We sent the survey to 310 members and received 43 responses. The majority of respondents were female, aged between 66 and 85 and lived with other people.

During lockdown respondents struggled in particular with missing leisure activities, being isolated from friends and family, getting food and cancelled appointments.

Most practical support was received from family, friends, neighbours and home delivery services.

Respondents mainly found that staying in touch with family and friends helped them cope with lockdown, but technology and Radio/TV were also rated highly.

People mostly kept in touch by telephone, but video calling technology and messaging apps were used.

Nearly all respondents sourced their information about the pandemic from Radio/TV, while 27% sourced it from BucksVision's website and updates.

As lockdown eased the main concerns were around visiting crowded places and not feeling as confident or independent as once did.

On the whole, respondents found BucksVision to be helpful, with newsletters followed by our advice and information especially useful. The service they received was rated as good.

We took on board some of the suggestions about what additional actions we could have taken. For example it was suggested we could have communicated more, so during the latest lockdown we sent an email and letter to all members letting them know we are still here to help.

Thank you for your Kindness

In our Summer Newsletter we included a Covid-19 appeal.

We were overwhelmed by the response and are extremely grateful to everyone who donated.

In total we raised a fantastic £3,440 and donations are still coming in.

If you would like to donate to us you can do so by card over the phone, by cheque or online at virginmoneygiving.com.

Our many thanks again to all who donated. The money we raised has helped us to continue to support blind and partially sighted people.

Bucks in 100 Objects

Buckinghamshire has a rich collection of artefacts dating back over 300,000 years. Together, these objects tell the story of Bucks, and there are even more objects which help to define us and tell our story.

Buckinghamshire Culture has created an online campaign to develop the story of Bucks in 100 Objects, with the ultimate aim of producing an exhibition.

Eventually, they hope to hold a public vote to help decide the final 100 objects.

We are delighted to announce that we nominated our 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.

They are still inviting nominations, so if you have an object you would like to nominate email culture@buckscountymuseum.org with an image of the object and up to 500 words describing why the object is important to you and what Buckinghamshire means to you.

Showing their creative side

BucksVision South East members have been getting creative during the pandemic. With the assistance of volunteers, operating a doorstep service, they were able to produce these fantastic log creatures.

The members chose a selection of household items such as combs and buttons and came up with a design which was then brought to life by volunteers John Warren, John Ensby and Peter Brogden; thank you to them and to all the volunteers for their hard work.

Alex Brown has used broken plastic curtain hooks for his teeth along with curtain rings for the main facial features and metal springs for horns.

Jackie Sprules has designed a log witch with a great deal of detail. There is a pointy hat, purple hair, a beauty spot and even a handmade miniature broomstick.

Graham Woolcott has used a variety of wire, toggles, textiles and twigs to create his devil which has a slight cowboy look.

New Products

RNIB Talking Microwave

RNIB have developed an easy to use microwave oven. It is fully talking (with adjustable volume) and for simplicity there are only four controls: the cooking power, the minutes, the seconds and start/stop. There are no complicated menus or features and the buttons are tactile.

RNIB £195 excl VAT

Miele's GuideLine Washing Machine

This new machine combines typical Miele quality, performance and economy with intuitive controls designed specifically for blind or partially sighted people.

Thanks to Miele's innovative tactile control panel design and audible programme signals, the GuideLine washing machine is simple and safe to operate without compromising on laundry performance.

RNIB - £749.17 excl VAT

RNIB Tactile Christmas Cards

Choose from three festive designs (reindeer, stars, robin) with embossed images, braille and print greeting, and a description of the image in uncontracted braille and print.

RNIB £3.25 for 10 (excl VAT)

RNIB Talking ear and forehead thermometer

This talking thermometer measures your temperature from either your forehead or ear and announces the reading within two seconds in a synthetic female American voice, in either degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit.

RNIB - £24.99 excl VAT

VIP Diaries 2021

2021 VIP Diaries and Calendars are available to order from BucksVision.

Costs

A3 Calendar - £7.50

A6 Pocket diary - £6.25

A5 Midi diary – £8.25

A4 Diary - £10.25

To order call 01296 487 556 or email reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Giant Print Library

The RNIB Giant Print Library and Moon Library in Peterborough will close on Sunday 31 January 2021.

The shift in the way RNIB library users access books through mainstream devices such as the iPad and Amazon Kindle, where font sizes and colours are easily adjustable, has meant that operating a traditional giant print and Moon library is no longer sustainable.

The RNIB will continue to offer accessible books and reading materials in other formats. These are available through RNIB's free Online Reading Library, which is the largest of its kind in the UK, their braille library and Talking Books service.

For more information call their helpline on 0303 123 9999.

Second Hand Items

Several second hand items have been donated to us over the last few months.

Some of the items include:

- Penfriends
- Talking kitchen scales
- USB players
- Talking cube clocks

These items are free.

Optelec Clearview Desktop Magnifier

Second hand but in good condition.

Private sale. £50-£100 or nearest offer.

Collection from BucksVision office.

Clover Handheld Digital Magnifier

Second hand. Two years old but in excellent condition.

Private Sale. £400 or open for offers.

If you are interested in any of these items contact us on 01296 487 556.

Colin Lucas

We were very sad to hear that Colin Lucas passed away on 21 August.

Colin was the husband of one of our longest serving volunteers, Beryl Lucas, and consequently donated much of his time to supporting Beryl with running the visually impaired club in Aylesbury, as well as BucksVision events.

Loving husband of 66 years to Beryl and beloved father and grandfather. A true gentleman, he will be missed by many friends. From The Bucks Herald

Colin will be much missed by his family and all who knew him.

Useful Contacts

Government Coronavirus Updates

Visit <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 231 123