

BucksVision Winter 2021 Newsletter

Front cover is a photo of the Mayor of Aylesbury, Steve Naylor and the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire with BucksVision logo in background – [page 6](#).

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

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

Christmas is almost here. My sense is that normality has almost returned but people continue to be affected by Covid-19, and times still feel rather uncertain.

I attended a conference this week, online of course, and mental health was one of the topics. The presenter's research had highlighted that feeling anxious seemed to be the most common issue for people with sight loss during the pandemic.

I found this interesting; it seems to me that one of the most important things that you can do if you feel anxious is to tell someone how you are feeling. That might be difficult if you live alone or if your friends and family live in another part of the country.

Whilst some people are comfortable being on their own, I suspect that most people prefer to have company over Christmas.

If you have sight loss and are worried about being alone this Christmas, or know someone who is, please get in touch.

We are here to listen and help. Our network of brilliant volunteers run social activities across the county. Our staff provide information, advice and a wide range of support services, including help with gadgets and devices.

This has been an eventful and challenging year for us. I hope you enjoy reading the updates in this Newsletter.

As always, sincere thanks for your support. I wish you a restful Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year.

BucksVision Staff Update....a goodbye and a hello

Saying Goodbye

The BucksVision team were very sad to say goodbye to Carol Banfield in October, after 20 years working for the charity.

Carol joined, what was then Bucks Association for the Blind, in 2001 as Secretary and during her 20 years saw the charity go through many changes; from our change of name in 2009 to becoming associated with RNIB in 2014.

Carol will be very much missed by everyone she worked with over the years.

We celebrated her time with BucksVision with an afternoon tea party in November, where we presented Carol with flowers, a vase, a braille necklace and a memory book.

Here are some messages from Carol's memory book:

"It is always strange having a relationship that exists mainly on email but with Carol that still managed to feel personal and not just digital. Thank you, Carol, for keeping the register so efficiently and for being so approachable when queries arose. Have a wonderful retirement. You will wonder how you ever found time to work!"

"I was very sorry to hear you were leaving; I will greatly miss you. I've really appreciated all of your help over the years."

Saying Hello

We were thrilled to welcome a new member to the BucksVision team in November. Sarah Fox joins our Fundraising Team as Grants and Trusts Fundraising Officer.

Some of you may remember Sarah, as back in 2019 she volunteered with us through her work at John Lewis, so she joins us with prior knowledge of our activities and services.

Sarah will work closely with Lynn, our Fundraising Manager, to help raise funds for BucksVision by applying for grants from Trust and Grant organisations.

Sarah says, "I am delighted to start my new role with BucksVision. It's been great to meet some of our groups around the county and I look forward to working with our funders to tell them more about our work."

Our 110th Anniversary Celebrations

Visit of the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire

On Thursday 14 October, we hosted a small event at our office to celebrate our anniversary with our staff, volunteers and members.

We were honoured to be joined by the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, George Anson, and the Mayor of Aylesbury, Cllr Anders Christensen.

The High Sheriff gave a fascinating presentation about his role and described in detail his ceremonial outfit.

We ended with the High Sheriff and the Mayor presenting appreciation awards to our wonderful volunteers, including a 50 year award to Joan Woodward.

Social Club Celebrations

Throughout October and November we visited our social clubs to celebrate with our members and volunteers.

We enjoyed visiting our clubs, where we presented awards to volunteers celebrating milestone years and shared a birthday cake with all of the club attendees.

Virtual Celebration

On 28 October we held a virtual celebration. We were delighted to be joined by staff, members and volunteers, including a former Chair of the organisation, to raise a toast to BucksVision.

After sharing a few key moments of our history and some personal recollections of events, we enjoyed a light hearted quiz about 1911 before finishing with the toast.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, we really enjoyed celebrating with you.

Social Media

We shared key moments of our history and the history of sight loss on our social media channels, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Resource Centre – Low Vision and Magnification

Did you know that we have a Resource Centre at our office in Aylesbury?

We provide people with an opportunity to try out various items of equipment which can help with everyday tasks.

Many of our appointments involve assisting people with magnification and helping them to discover ways to continue reading and maintain their independence.

For anyone with an eye condition that affects their central vision, reading can become a frustrating task. However, there are options you can explore to help you continue to read.

Lighting

Good lighting can be very important, especially if you have an eye condition.

Lighting comes in different temperatures, Kelvins, ranging from soft yellow lighting to very cool white lighting.

Daylight lighting, which is a higher Kelvin, often benefits people with conditions such as Macular Degeneration, however each person is individual and what works for one may not work for another.

A Rehabilitation Officer can advise you on lighting within your home.

Magnification

There are two types of magnification, optical handheld and digital.

Optical Handheld Magnifiers

It is very important you use the correct strength magnification for your eyes. This can be assessed at a Low Vision Clinic, a free NHS service.

If you are interested in getting a Low Vision appointment you can discuss it with your eye consultant or GP, as they will need to refer you to the service. BucksVision can, however, provide a basic assessment at our Resource Centre.

Once you know what strength magnification you need there are lots of different styles of magnifier. Many come with built-in lighting or stands. We can show you a range at our Resource Centre, while the Low Vision Clinic can provide one on free loan.

Digital Magnifiers

These come in various sizes, but all provide a wider range of magnification and allow you to change the colour contrast of what you are reading (i.e. change the colour of the background and text).

Digital magnifiers range in price from £350 up to £1,500. We can demonstrate a variety of magnifiers at our Resource Centre, enabling you to try before you buy.

Technology

So much technology has been developed to help people with both low vision and blindness. For example, all smartphones have accessibility settings to increase text size and contrast, as well as magnification and zoom capabilities. You can also download magnification apps which act much like digital magnifiers.

Beyond Magnification

If you find you are struggling even with magnification, there are other ways you can continue to read and be independent. You can access talking books, use your smartphone/tablet by turning on the built in screen readers and even read out text by using

equipment that can take a picture of text and translate it into speech (through apps or stand alone devices).

If you would like to find out more please get in touch to book an appointment at our Resource Centre.

If getting to Aylesbury is difficult we can look into arranging for a volunteer to drive you.

Get in touch with us today: 01296 487 556 or reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Living Well with Sight Loss

RNIB's Living Well with Sight Loss courses are open to all adults with sight loss and their family and friends.

It offers a chance for you to meet and share experiences with other people in similar situations, boost your confidence and get practical advice and information.

The topics covered include:

- Sensory Support Services
- Certification/Registration
- Welfare and benefits
- Staying independent
- Daily living skills
- Technology
- Eye Health (ECLOs)
- Wellbeing
- Leisure
- Mobility (Guide Dogs)

We have worked with RNIB to deliver courses in Buckinghamshire for many years. Our most recent course took place in November and was very well received.

"I found it really helpful, really really good. It was nice to share with others in the same position as yourself. It makes you feel you're not on your own. It was extremely useful and was very well done."

"The different perspectives from other participants meant it was well worth attending. I found it interesting and invaluable."

The next Buckinghamshire course will be in March 2022. It will run on a Tuesday and Thursday across two weeks. Each session starts at 11am and lasts for 60-90 minutes.

Course dates: 15, 17, 22 and 24 March

If you would like to join call us on 01296 487 556..

We are looking for new Trustees

Did you know our Trustees are volunteers? They have overall responsibility for our charity, from planning our strategic direction to realising our vision and values.

Have you ever considered becoming one yourself?

There are three great reasons to become a Trustee:

Help others

As part of our passionate team, you can apply your unique skills and experience to help our members, volunteers and staff.

Give back

You have the chance to support and shape our work; you can make a significant difference to a cause that matters and may have supported you.

Be part of the solution

Being a Trustee means you have one of the most important and exciting roles, contributing your ideas and knowledge to our organisation.

"It's enjoyable and rewarding work for a long established and active charity" **Jeremy Browne, Trustee since 2019**

If you like the idea of becoming a BucksVision Trustee, we will be recruiting from February 2022. Anyone with passion, time, enthusiasm, and inspirational ideas should consider applying. To find out more, please contact Alison on 01296 487 556.

You could be the star on top of our tree!

Ways you can help us

Christmas is one of the busiest times for post!

You can donate your used stamps to raise much needed funds for BucksVision.

All kinds of stamps are welcome, on or off paper. Simply cut or carefully rip the postage stamp from the used envelope, being careful that you don't damage the stamp, and send them to our office (you can ask us for a Freepost envelope).

We also have BucksVision branded collection boxes for you to pop in any loose change to donate to us. You will receive a thank you letter and certificate for all money received. Alternatively you could make a donation online

www.bucksvision.co.uk/support/bucksvision-donate

Or by phone 01296 487 556.

Each donation will help us deliver our vital services.

Leaving a Gift in your Will

Leaving a gift in your Will to BucksVision can enable us to continue to support people living with sight loss in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

There are also benefits to you, for example you can reduce the Inheritance tax on your estate from 40% to 36% if you leave at least 10% of your entire estate to charity.

The 111 January Challenge

BucksVision celebrated its 110th anniversary in 2021. In 2022, it's all about 111!

Traditionally, January is the month for new challenges as we set ourselves goals for the year ahead. Why not combine your New Year's resolution with a fundraising challenge and see how much you could raise in January 2022 by completing a challenge with a target of 111.

If running 111 miles is not your thing, don't worry! You could hold a sale or undertake a sponsored activity, run an event or even plan a party. Your challenge could be done individually, or you could work with others e.g. it might not be possible to run/walk for 111 miles on your own, but with a team you might meet your target!

Here are some ideas to get you started. You could...

- Dance to 111 tunes
- Bake 111 cakes to sell
- Skip or hop for 111 meters
- Raise £111 at a car boot sale
- Sing/play music for 111 min
- Knit 111 items

What other 111 challenges could you do? Be creative and inspire us with your ideas.

You can set up your own fundraising page from our website and share it with your friends, family and social media to get as much sponsorship as possible.

www.bucksvision.co.uk/support/fundraising

We look forward to hearing about your 111 challenge plans. For more information, contact our fundraisers on 01296 487 556.

CBS Research Study

Tuesday 16 November saw the fifth Charles Bonnet Syndrome Day take place.

A research group at Oxford University Hospital, who are studying the neurochemistry and connectivity in Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS), are looking for participants for their study. Please see more information below.

We are looking for people who have reduced vision aged 18-70 years to understand how the brain can generate hallucinations linked to eye disease.

Hallucinations are perceiving things or people that are not actually there. We need people with reduced vision who experience visual hallucinations and also people with reduced vision who have never experienced visual hallucinations.

Participants would be asked to answer questionnaires and undertake a non-invasive brain scan (MRI). This research study hopes to understand the changes in the visual part of the brain that cause hallucinations to occur to help guide us in treating these.

Your participation would involve a single visit to the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging, FMRIB based at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. The visit will take up to 2 hours.

We can only accept NHS registered UK residents. Travel expenses will be covered.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact the research team at brain@eye.ox.ac.uk.

A Christmas Chat

We know that the Christmas and New Year period can be very lonely for many people.

Social activities close for the festive period and friends and family are often busy.

If you get lonely over the Christmas period and feel you would benefit from a call from a BucksVision volunteer between 27 December and 3 January, please phone Lisa before 20 December on 01296 487 556.

Christmas Gift Ideas

Talking Tactile Globe

RNIB's tactile talking globe has clearly discernible tactile topographical features and 122 audio hot spots embedded in its surface, which can be used with your RNIB PenFriend.

RNIB: £135

LED Vanity Mirror 10x

This stylish, premium-quality LED-lit mirror is perfect for changing contact lenses, applying Christmas make-up or other close-up work. This mirror has dual magnification: 10 times magnification on one side, and a true image on the reverse side.

RNIB: £44.99

Talking Magazine

Buckinghamshire's Talking Magazine is produced by Tony Hawkins.

Tony has been involved in raising awareness of vision impairment and blindness for many years.

The Talking Magazine is sent out on a USB stick on a monthly basis. It consists of recordings of relevant articles, music and interviews.

Requests for content are also accepted!

If you would like to receive the Talking Magazine please contact Tony on 01296 421 780.

Useful Contacts

NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme - 0808 196 3646

Bucks Integrated Sensory Services - 01296 479 970

Sensory Advice Resource Centre - 01908 401 135

RNIB - 0303 123 9999

Macular Society - 0300 3030 111

Glaucoma UK - 01233 648 170

Esme's Umbrella - 020 7391 3299

Age UK Buckinghamshire - 01296 431 911

Age UK Milton Keynes - 01908 550 700