



**Autumn/
Winter
2024**

Newsletter



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Opening Hours

Monday - Friday: 9am - 5pm

Charity Registration No. 1147814



Welcome

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

Welcome to our Autumn/ Winter newsletter.

Welcome to our Autumn/Winter newsletter. We've combined the two seasons together so that this edition is packed with interesting articles and reaches you well before Christmas.

Volunteers are the backbone of BucksVision, and several articles highlight how their time and efforts have a profound impact on the lives of our members. Thanks so much if you volunteer with us – without people like you we simply could not help people with sight loss across our local area.

Amongst the services we provide, giving people information and advice is one of the most important. Most of you will be aware that we can demonstrate a wide range of gadgets to help people with sensory loss. These can be relatively low-tech, such

as a liquid level indicator, or more advanced, such as an electronic magnifier which reads text.

There are also a number of kitchen appliances which have accessibility features built in. For example, our kitchen at Meadowcroft has a talking microwave oven and a talking induction hob. In addition, there are now washing machines and dryers that are compatible with smart devices such as Amazon Alexa, see page 32.

I also want to thank all of you who support BucksVision by making regular donations and running fundraising events on our behalf. As a small local charity this income makes a real difference and enables us to continue supporting people who need our help. Thank you.

I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and look forward to hearing from you in 2025.

Thank you, Chris Smeeton!

**Argosy Components Ltd
Director Chris Smeeton raises
£550 for BucksVision at
London Vitality 10K**

On Sunday 22nd September, Chris Smeeton, co-owner of Argosy, took part in the London Vitality 10K. His inspiring efforts were not only focused on completing the race, but also on raising funds for BucksVision.

Despite the gruelling nature of the race, Chris's determination paid off, as he successfully raised £550 for the charity.

Reflecting on his achievement, Chris expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support from colleagues, friends, and family, all of whom contributed to his fundraising goal.

“Running the London Vitality 10K was an incredible experience,” Chris shared. “Knowing that my efforts will make a difference in the lives of people who rely on BucksVision made every step worthwhile. The run was excellently organised, with

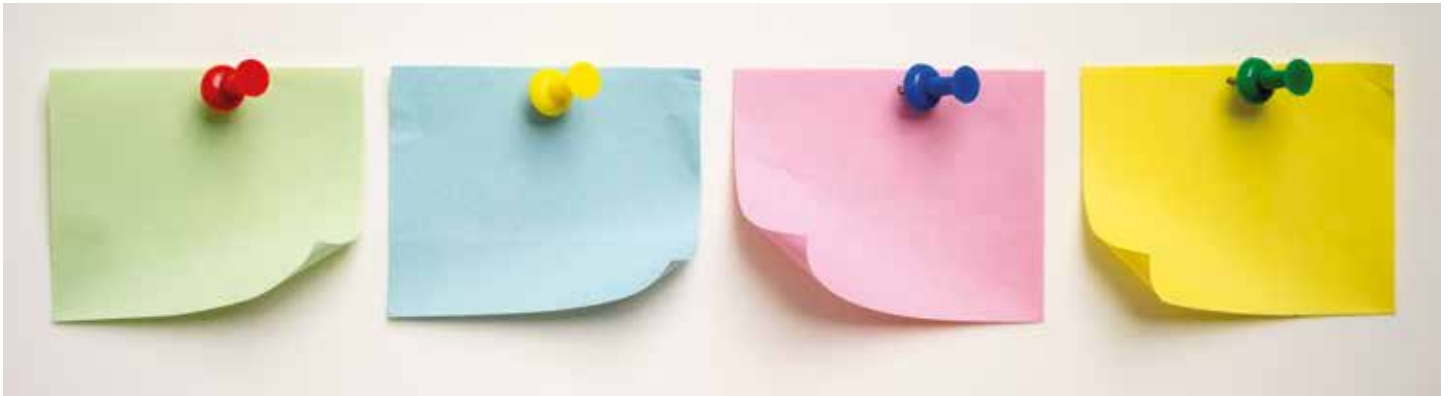


an emphasis on health and well-being throughout. A lot of charities were being supported by the bulk of the 20,000 runners.”

Argosy Components Ltd is proud to support Chris in his charitable endeavours and commends his commitment to giving back to the community. His achievement serves as an inspiration to us all, proving that even small steps can make a big impact.

Congratulations to Chris Smeeton on his successful run and fundraising effort!

Notices



Communications

“What’s the difference between an elephant and a post box?”

“I don’t know.”

“I’m not sending you out to post my letters again.”

For those of you who can see enough to read emails or can access them via speaking computer software, why not receive your BucksVision communications by email? Emails are kinder to the environment and cheaper to produce than paper correspondence. You can also have the option of general communication via email but keep the newsletter in audio or hard copy if you like. Also, BV sometimes receives information from other organisations about

their own events and services for us to circulate. We can only send these via email as posting out hundreds of paper copies would be too costly and time consuming.

If you would like to change your communication preference to email, please contact the office. We would like to assure you that we will not be stopping correspondence by post and print readers are always sent anything essential.

2025 Calendars

The VIP 2025 Large Print Calendars and Diaries are now out, so if they would like BucksVision to place an order for you, just call us and let us know.

Easy Fundraising

We are delighted to be registered with *easyfundraising*!

easyfundraising partners with over 7,000 brands (including John Lewis, Amazon, Argos etc) who will donate part of what you spend to BucksVision. It won't cost you any extra as the cost is covered by the brand. It's really simple to get started;

1. Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk and search 'BucksVision'
2. Sign up for free
3. Get shopping – your donations will be collected by *easyfundraising* and automatically sent to us. It couldn't be easier!

There is also an *easyfundraising* app if you regularly shop on your phone and a donation reminder for your browser which will let you know if you can claim a donation from the website you are shopping with.

Recall of the wireless charging pad supplied with your RNIB Accord Player.

RNIB has discovered an issue with the charging pad for the Accord Talking Book Player.

The player is safe to use by charging it using the USB C port on top of the device but **should NOT** be charged using the pad.

Please contact RNIB on **0303 123 9999** if you have any concerns.



Christmas Raffle



We are thrilled to announce the launch of the 2024 BucksVision Christmas Raffle!

Enclosed within this newsletter, you'll find a book of 10 raffle tickets offering you and your friends a chance to win some incredible prizes, while supporting BucksVision's vital work. Each ticket is £1, or you can purchase the whole book for £10.

If you know others who would like to participate, we're happy to provide additional tickets.

Just let us know by emailing rproudfoot@bucksvision.co.uk or call us on **01296 329691**.

Taking part is easy:

- 1. Buy or sell your tickets.**
- 2. Fill in the details on the left-hand side of each ticket.**
- 3. Tear off the main ticket to give to the buyer.**
- 4. Return the completed ticket stubs to the BucksVision office using the enclosed Freepost envelope.**

By joining the raffle, not only are you in with a chance of winning amazing prizes, but you're also helping BucksVision continue to support local people living with sight loss.

A huge thank you to everyone who generously donated prizes for this year's raffle!

Buckinghamshire Integrated Sensory Service (BISS)

Buckinghamshire Integrated Sensory Service is a free service funded by Buckinghamshire Council to support adults, children and young people with sight, hearing and dual sensory loss.

Who do we support?

We support adults, children and young people with hearing, sight or dual sensory loss in Buckinghamshire.

What support can we offer?

- Sensory Evaluation
- Advice and information
- Equipment provision
- Registration

Vision Impairment

Mobility and cane training. We can help with building confidence and independent travel.

Hearing Impairment

Specialist service for BSL users. Advice and support to profoundly Deaf BSL users by appointment.

Children and young people

Habilitation support

Help at home and at school to support independent living skills and general mobility.

BSL for Deaf children and families

Our partners Young Deaf Activities provide free sessions of BSL tuition for families with Deaf children and offer access to their support groups and activities.

How to get in touch

Call: **01296 479 970**

Text/WhatsApp: **07918 904 664**

biss@bucksvision.co.uk

www.bucksvision.co.uk/biss

Experience Days

Exciting Experience Days and Upcoming Pantomime Trip!

As we step into autumn, it's a great time to reflect on the fantastic events we've shared with our members this year. From wildlife encounters to archery and pizza-making, we've hosted a variety of exciting experience days, providing our members with the opportunity to explore new activities, make friends, and create unforgettable memories. Here's a look back at some of the highlights - and the wonderful feedback we've received!

Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital

Our adventure kicked off in May with a visit to Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital in Haddenham, where 22 attendees, including 10 visually impaired (VI) members, enjoyed a fascinating tour. Members were able to explore tactile objects like a model

hedgehog and a stuffed badger, and the guided tour was both informative and engaging. One member shared:

"I very much enjoyed our visit [to Tiggywinkles] on Friday. The team member giving the talk was brilliant, a lovely blend of education and information. Also great to see the hedgehog, badger, and fox. Many thanks for arranging this."

Archery at Whiteleaf Bowmen

In June, our members returned for a fifth year of archery at Whiteleaf Bowmen in High Wycombe. With 10 members participating, and a couple of volunteers joining in, everyone had a fantastic time learning the art of archery. Members made new friends and had plenty of fun practicing their skills. One member told us:

"Thank you so much for inviting me to the Archery Day, I thoroughly enjoyed it and enjoyed making new friends."

The strong relationship we have with the organisers helped make this day a great success.

Pizza Making

Pizza was the theme for June and July! In Buckingham, eight VI members enjoyed making pizzas at Louis Pizza restaurant, where



one member mastered the art of the dough sling. Another shared:

“Thanks for arranging our delightful pizza party. It was a real treat, and I learned a lot (well,

how a pizza is made, anyway!). It was delicious.”

The fun continued in Milton Keynes, where members at Pizza Express enjoyed tossing dough and crafting their own pizzas. Both events were filled with laughter, creativity, and delicious food!

Rosie’s Chocolate Factory

August took us to Rosie’s Chocolate Factory in Wargrave, where six members and three volunteers spent the day crafting their own chocolate bars and lollipops. The sweet highlight of the trip was dipping fresh strawberries into melted chocolate.

One member humorously remarked: “Great day. Not many strawberries left!”

The day was a delightful mix of creativity and indulgence, and our members had an unforgettable experience.



Recent and Upcoming Events

Monopoly Lifesized and Pantomime Trip

In September, our members enjoyed a fantastic day out at Monopoly Lifesized in London, an immersive and interactive version of the classic board game.

Fourteen members, along with twelve sighted helpers (including four corporate volunteers from Johnson & Johnson) and two staff members, participated in the event, making it a day full of fun, teamwork, and excitement! Two teams even went to jail!

Looking ahead to December, we're thrilled to announce our annual Pantomime Trip to Aylesbury Waterside Theatre to see **The Further Adventures of Peter Pan: The Return of Captain Hook**.

We've secured 50 tickets for this festive outing, and members will enjoy a special touch tour before the show to enhance their experience. It promises to be a magical day filled with laughter and fun.

Call our office to register your interest.

BucksVision's Equipment & Information Days

BucksVision's Equipment and Information Days took place a few weeks ago and we were delighted to be at Princes Risborough Wades Centre, Buckingham Community Centre and St Andrews Church Hall in Stoke Poges, all of whom were kind, helpful and supportive.

It was lovely to catch up with everyone who came along, and to meet those who were previously unaware of us. We were given a warm and wonderful welcome by all.

We had around 130+ visitors who now have so much more information of all the help, support and equipment available

to help them, as well as enabling us to reach those who have been unable to get to our Resource Centre in Aylesbury...and this is why we do it.

A huge thank you to all our loyal partners who are always delighted to come to our events each year.

We are now aiming to open up our events for those with both sight loss **and** hearing loss, especially as we are now working very closely with BISS.

If you are aware of any large and accessible venues that don't cost the earth, please do let us know!



Meet Caroline



Caroline has been a member of BucksVision's Milton Keynes division for the last few years, following the complete loss of sight in one of her eyes and deterioration of sight in the other.

Caroline has lived in Milton Keynes with her husband and children since the 1980s. She has had an eclectic career history, including being a professional arts and entertainment organiser, a finance and buildings manager, and a chartered accountant.

However, in 2020 she was devastated to learn that her eyesight was deteriorating so much that she would no longer be able to do her job. Having worn glasses since early childhood and attended regular check-ups over the last 30 years due to being diabetic, Caroline was no stranger to having her eyes examined. However, at one of these routine check-ups in late 2019, she was referred to the specialist eye clinic for further tests. She was told she had dry eye and sent away with ointment. Sadly, her eyesight continued to deteriorate but she had several urgent referrals rejected until eventually she was seen again and received diagnoses of proliferative retinopathy and neovascular glaucoma.

Caroline told us, "Until I received the correct diagnosis, I had been hopeful that my sight would improve. It was a severe blow when I was told that it wouldn't.

I was very angry and there was an immense fear of the unknown compounded by the fact that the Covid lockdown had just come into effect. I was undergoing treatment and felt isolated and fearful of the future.”

Caroline had 18 months of intense treatment and multiple procedures at Moorfields Hospital in London, as well as having fortnightly appointments at her local eye clinic. It was a challenge to get around because it was during the Covid lockdown but generously her son-in-law gave her lifts to the appointments. Eventually she was given a Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) and the Eye Care Liaison Officer (ECLO) came to see her, providing various pieces of information including details for BucksVision (BV).

“When I first contacted BV, everyone seemed so helpful, friendly and positive which made

a change from my isolation and depression that had built up over the last couple of years. I was always a very active person, not only working full-time and bringing up three daughters but also teaching piano, playing in orchestras, doing a lot of crafts, singing in a choir and doing charity work. BV provided me with the possibility of a future whereby I could meet people in a similar situation and start to enjoy life again.

Being involved with BV has helped me overcome the initial isolation and fear I felt when first diagnosed. I am much more confident and outgoing now and have realised that losing your sight is not the end of being able to do things but the beginning of learning how to do things differently. BV has enabled me to meet many people and get involved with lots of different activities. It has also given me

the confidence to attend non-BucksVision activities such as a ukulele group and bridge club.

I still have goals to achieve following my sight loss. The main ones are getting to grips with my music software to enable me to read music again and continuing with crafting. I found that the more courses and organisations you are involved with helps you to get to grips with your new situation and to live your day-to-day life as best as possible.

I would emphasise [to those living with sight loss] that isolation isn't a solution. Get out there and meet as many people as possible with similar problems and with solutions to a lot of the issues you may be encountering.

I now find that the main limitation I have is not because of my sight loss, but because of a lack of time to do everything I want to do.”



Caroline is now a valued member of the committee at Milton Keynes division. We want to thank her for her dedication to BucksVision and congratulate her on her determination to live life to the fullest!

Bucks Home Library and Library Buddy Services

If you find it difficult to get to the library in person, you can have library items delivered to your home by a volunteer or have a friend or family member borrow and return books on your behalf.

Library Buddy Service

Your Library Buddy can use your card to borrow and return library books and other items and deliver them to your home.

With a Library Buddy card, when you borrow books or audiobooks you get a 31-day loan period and no overdue or reservation charges. On all other items, standard loan periods and charges apply.

Ask your friend or family member to visit the library where we will help them join the Library Buddy Service for you.

Home Library Service

This is a free monthly service, where books and other library items are delivered to your home at a suitable time by volunteers. Volunteers wear identification badges and provide a helpful and courteous service.

You can apply by contacting the Home Library Service by telephone, email or post.

Telephone: **01494 475573**

Email: **homelibraryservice@buckinghamshire.gov.uk**

Address: **Home Library
Service Coordinator
Great Missenden
Community Library
High Street, Great Missenden
HP16 0AL**



**Buckinghamshire
Council**

Celebrating Our Amazing Volunteers

Our volunteers are the driving force behind our success, making a real difference in the lives of those who are blind or partially sighted.



Many of our members face isolation, and for some, our social clubs are their only chance to get out, connect, and enjoy meaningful activities. Volunteers like Robert (photographed), who recently shared a heartwarming moment kissing an alpaca during a visit to our Wolverton Social Club, create unforgettable experiences and bring a sense of community to every gathering!

But we need your help! Our Wolverton Social Club in Milton Keynes is currently seeking a new

coordinator. Without someone to step up, we risk having to close this much-loved group by the end of the year. The role is flexible, can be shared among a few people, and comes with the full support of our dedicated team of volunteers. If you're looking to make a positive impact in just a few hours every other week, we'd love for you to join us!

Volunteer Spotlight: José's Story

Can you tell us a little about yourself and what motivated you to start volunteering?

I moved to the UK over 23 years ago from Spain, and after some time, I saw how vulnerable people can become as they get older. While job hunting in 2018, I decided to dedicate my free time to volunteering. I joined three charities and eventually stayed with BV because of the great support and sense of community. Though I don't have sight issues myself, I sympathise with those who do, and I wanted to give back to the country and community that welcomed me.

What was your first volunteering experience like?

I was nervous, but the training and support from my local coordinator, helped me settle in. Driving members to events like social lunches gave me the chance to meet people, share stories, and create bonds. The sense of responsibility I felt was balanced by the joy of seeing members enjoy themselves.

Can you share a moment when you felt your efforts made a real difference?

There are many moments, but one stands out. I took a member, Chris, to visit the Churchill War Rooms. We had a wonderful day, and I got to know him better. Sadly, Chris passed away last year, but I feel honoured to have shared those experiences with him.

How has volunteering helped you grow personally or professionally?

Volunteering has enriched my life. It has connected me with people I would never have met and given me the opportunity to listen, learn, and grow. Professionally,

volunteering is highly valued, and my employer supports my involvement with BucksVision. Personally, it has strengthened my sense of community and well-being.

Why volunteer?

Volunteering with BV isn't just about helping others - it's also about finding fulfilment, building lifelong friendships, and becoming part of a community that supports one another. As José says, "Volunteering brings gratitude, personal growth, and the chance to make a real difference."

If you'd like to join us and help fight isolation and loneliness in your community, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact **volunteering@bucksvision.co.uk** to get involved today!

Become a Friend of BucksVision: Your Support Makes a Difference



We are reaching out with an important appeal: become a Friend of BucksVision.

Our mission to provide essential services for individuals experiencing sight loss in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes depends on the invaluable role of regular givers.

Why Are Regular Givers Crucial to Us?

Regular givers enable us to plan effectively for the future, ensuring we can deliver the best long-term support possible.

Their consistent contributions provide us with a reliable stream of income, empowering us to sustain and expand our services to those in need.

How Your Regular Gift Can Make a Real Difference:

Just £10 a month

Contributing £10 will help fund our Experience Days. These outings are a lifeline for our members, specifically designed to meet the needs of people living with sight loss. They offer a great opportunity to meet like-minded individuals experiencing similar challenges.

Just £15 a month

Your £15 donation can help fund our resource centre, where individuals receive one-on-one advice on gadgets and aids to assist with everyday tasks that sighted individuals often take for granted.

Just £20 a month

Contributing £20 goes towards our home support service, providing a range of essential services to visually impaired individuals in the comfort of their homes. This includes befriending, reading assistance, and help with shopping.

Your Support Truly Matters

Every regular gift, regardless of size, significantly impacts the lives of blind and partially sighted individuals in our community. Together, we can continue to improve their lives in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Become a Friend of BucksVision Today

To set up a regular donation, please visit our donation page at www.bucksvision.co.uk/support/donate or scan the QR code below.

Thank you for considering becoming a Friend of BucksVision.

If you need any help, please contact Ruth on **01296 329691** or email rproudfoot@bucksvision.co.uk



Navigating London with Visual Impairment

by Ciara Griffiths

In February I began a new chapter in my life. After nearly seven months of applying for roles, I secured a job in the heritage sector in London.



After finishing my dissertation, my job hunt began. I am not going to pretend it was easy, applying for jobs is a job. Which was why, when I finally got one, I was thrilled and relieved. But then it sunk in that I had got a job in London and was going to have to navigate the commute and the Underground with a visual impairment. Not that it stopped me.

The following article details how I navigate the Underground, and London in general, with a visual impairment and will provide, I hope, some guidance.

To get to work I get a train into London Marylebone and then change twice at the Underground. Before I started work, I practiced the route twice: once on a regular afternoon and then again at morning rush hour. This was not only to understand my route, but also to experience the joys of a standing-room only train and rush-hour on the London Underground. It was important I did this, and I am glad I did, but I practised the route for another reason.

I can confidently say that London is an unpredictable city. Staying on your guard and being visually aware is key. This comes with a set of challenges for someone with visual impairment. Knowing and becoming familiar with my

route would not only boost my confidence in unfamiliar areas but it would also make me aware of the obstacles along the way. This was the first step to navigating my commute.

The second thing I did was to figure out colours. For example, brown is the Bakerloo Line, dark blue is the Piccadilly Line, grey is the Jubilee and so on. These were easy visual cues to tell which line was which. One of my worries about travelling on the Underground was that the signs would either be too small or not clear. Thankfully, they are written in a bold font, and everything is clearly labelled, including the 'way out' sign which is always lit up. While the tube maps are small, I have the TFL Go app on my phone which allows me constant access to the map, and I can enlarge it. I would highly recommend it when commuting. Live information on delays or cancellations is a godsend.

When travelling in London alone I use a red and white symbol cane which I bought from the RNIB. These two colours symbolise my duo-impairment: red is for hearing impairment and white is for visual impairment.

I used to refuse to use a symbol cane because I thought it embarrassing to let people know of my disability, that it would somehow hinder the independence I so desired, but I now use it with pride. I understand now that it is extremely useful when navigating a busy city.

The cane is more for everybody else than it is for me. It makes people aware that I need extra time navigating roads and in some cases I may need some space to see where I am going. I have learnt to be aware of crowds and to judge whether the symbol cane is necessary. My commute has taught me to independently make judgements based on my surroundings.

I approached a member of staff and asked if the line was running, which thankfully it was. However, the staff member stopped me from leaving when he noticed my symbol cane. He asked me where I was travelling to, then he offered to get someone to get me through the closed barriers and to help me to the platform.

Another member of staff – Carlos, if you are somehow reading this, thank you! – came and directed me to the platform amidst the sea of people trying to get home. He let me know where steps were. I had never seen the Underground so busy, and it was a little overwhelming. I don't know what would have happened if I did not accept the help.

I will never forget those two TFL staff members. I strive to be independent. I even encourage it in the disabled community, but I know that there are some things I need extra support with. It is important to remember that it is

ok and not embarrassing to both ask for help and accept it when it is offered.

Commuting to and from London has been one of the biggest milestones and challenges in my life. I was apprehensive about it before starting work, but now that I have done it for three months and will continue to rely on it, I have conquered that apprehension. I do know that there is more I will learn – and I look forward to it. Being visually impaired, it would be too easy to accept something as too difficult, but that is not me. These experiences are how I learn.

Audiobooks

for those with

Visual Impairment

Dyslexia

ADD/ADHD

Autism

Other physical and neurological conditions

Bucks Book Groups

If you find reading print difficult but would love to listen to and discuss books, join Calibre Audio and register your interest for either of the following groups:

Aylesbury Library

First Thursday of each
month
2pm - 3.30pm

Great Missenden Library

Last Tuesday of each month
10.30am - 12 pm

Register your interest by giving your contact details
to a member of library staff
or email: lib-ayl@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Talking Newspapers

Local news for the visually impaired across Buckinghamshire, delivered free on a memory stick.

How would you find out what's going on in your area if you were unable to read a newspaper? You would have to rely on relatives, friends and neighbours - unless you were receiving a Talking Newspaper.

South Bucks Talking News

South Bucks Talking News (SBTN) is a service which is completely free to its listeners. We're a charity, founded in 1984, entirely run by volunteers from all walks of life, and dedicated to bringing local news to those in the southern part of Buckinghamshire who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise unable to read the news.

Articles are recorded every week from the Bucks Free Press Group

and other local journals covering southern Buckinghamshire. These articles are supplemented with useful items from RNIB, BucksVision and The Macular Society, and a weekly quiz. We regularly have other interesting features that make it more like a magazine you are listening to. Typically, there are 75 to 100 minutes of recordings each week.

It is recorded on Fridays, the day that the Bucks Free Press is published, copied onto small USB memory sticks and posted on Saturday to recipients, who can then listen at their convenience at home. When they have finished, the listener, or their carer, sends the memory stick back to us in the same plastic envelope; both the stick and the envelope are then re-used time and time again.

We also loan out USB players which are specially designed for easy use by people who are visually impaired. Thanks to the Royal Mail's 'Articles for the Blind'

service there is no charge for postage and the entire service is free. The weekly recordings are also available on our website.

The charity has been in existence for a long time now, sustained by generations of volunteers and the generosity of donors from local public organisations, companies, funding charities and individuals. If you know of any visually impaired individuals in the southern part of Buckinghamshire, the old Wycombe, South Bucks and Chiltern district council areas, who might benefit from this service, please call: **01494 854920** or email **help@southbuckstn.org.uk**

Sound News Milton Keynes

Sound News Milton Keynes is the local talking newspaper for the Milton Keynes area. Sound News is a weekly recording of articles from the MK Citizen newspapers.

Each edition has an hour of news and also contains notices of interest to visually impaired people.

Sound News is available to visually impaired people free of charge on memory stick sent through the post, or can be heard on the British Wireless for the Blind app.

Twice a month there is an additional track containing magazine articles from local publications including Pulse, Phonebox and Miltonkeynsia. Anyone interested in receiving Sound News can get in touch by phone on **0300 311 9988** or email **soundnewsmiltonkeynes@gmail.com**

There are Talking News services covering most areas of Bucks. Visit the website **www.find.mytn.uk** and search your postcode to find your nearest one.

Remembering John Andrews



BucksVision MK are saddened to report the recent loss of a much-valued member, great character and friend of many, John Andrews, who passed away last month. John was a regular attendee of various BV MK activities for many years such as Lunch Bunch, tandem and the social club.

We think that the following tribute from John's friend David, a Milton Keynes Reader

Service volunteer, encapsulates everything that made John so popular amongst all at BucksVision.

I first met John Andrews in 2013 as a Reader Service volunteer. Reading wasn't the priority though, as I was paired up with John to accompany him on trips to the gym on a Friday morning, finishing off with a healthy bacon roll, or fried egg sandwich!

We became good friends, both being Londoners and having a common interest in sport and I would take John on shopping trips, which always ended in a trip to the cafe!

John loved his grub, especially desserts with lashings of custard. John's first question to me whenever we ate out was "Are you having a dessert; what have they got with custard?" I sometimes think that John would have been happy with a three-course meal consisting solely of

fruit crumbles and custard!
We went for canal-side walks, to the theatre and I also took John to the Stadium MK when his team, Wolves, defeated the Dons. The stadium staff helpfully provided John with a hearing loop to listen to the hospital radio commentary, but it was a little behind the live action, so that when Wolves scored, there was a delayed reaction from John... he jumped up belatedly celebrating as the match was restarting, and not realising we were surrounded by Dons supporters!

The thing I will remember most about John was his stoicism and the way that he never complained about the many obstacles and setbacks that he had in life; "You've just got to get on with it, kidder" he'd say. He had a wonderful sense of humour, and everyone was won over by his quick wit and cheeky chatter, especially the ladies!

One of the best ways that reflects

the nature of our friendship is to finish with a couple of stories that we laughed about together, and that show how we were mates first and service user/volunteer second!

I used to help John organise the contents of his fridge and freezer; fish dishes on one side and meat dishes on the other etc. One night he phoned to chastise me as he'd just settled down to eat a shepherd's pie to find out it was cod mornay!

On another occasion I was getting a little confused at one of MK's roundabouts, and he said, "I thought you knew where you were going Dave - now we're lost!". Feigning frustration, I gave the road atlas to John and suggested that he navigate! That is the point, we were equals and never conscious of John's sight impairment. It would rarely be mentioned. RIP John, it was a privilege to have known you.

Shirley Coulson 1949-2024

Shirley was the Secretary and a team editor for Sound News Milton Keynes, the local talking newspaper. Shirley joined Sound News as a volunteer reader thirty years ago.

She soon joined the committee, and took over as Secretary at the 1999 AGM, a role she continued to do until she passed away in August.

Her voice was well known to those who listened to Sound News. She was the backbone of the organisation, and the first point of contact for new listeners, explaining the system to them and organising a memory stick player so they could listen.

Shirley was involved with every aspect of running the talking newspaper locally and also helped with national organisation, The Talking News Federation. During the national lockdown in 2020 Sound News were unable

to make their recordings in the usual way at the Open University (OU). Shirley made a room in her home into a workshop for copying memory sticks and filling the wallets for despatch.

She also photographed every page of the Citizen newspaper each week when it arrived so that she could email the pictures to the readers who could make recordings in their own homes.

She did this for two years until we were finally able to return to our base at the OU in 2022. She devoted many hours to ensure that visually impaired people in MK continued to get the local newspaper on memory stick. Without her efforts, this would simply not have been possible.

Shirley's contribution was immense, she was an excellent volunteer, and a wonderful friend and colleague. She is very much missed by everyone at Sound News.

Thank You

A heartfelt Thank You to Our Trusts and Foundations Supporters

We are incredibly fortunate to have received generous support from many wonderful Trusts and Foundations this year. Their contributions have been invaluable in helping us continue our work, and we want to express our deepest gratitude to the following supporters:

- The Anson Charitable Trust
 - Aylesbury Town Council
 - The B&Q Foundation
- Dentons UK & Middle East LLP Charitable Trust
- The Dixie Rose Findlay Charitable Trust
 - Fairhive Homes Limited
 - The Grocers' Charity
- The Marsh Charitable Trust
- The Mobbs Memorial Trust
- Richer Sounds Foundation
- The Roger Jefcoate Trust
- The Roland Callingham Foundation
 - Rothschild Foundation
 - The Shanley Foundation
 - Screwfix Foundation
 - The Syder Foundation
- William Harding's Charity
- The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers
 - The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

Thank you for your ongoing belief in BucksVision and for helping us make a real difference to the lives of people living with sight loss.

Accessible Washing Machines



Many washers and dryers can prove difficult for blind and partially sighted people to use, as touchscreen control panels are becoming increasingly common. Machines offering tactile buttons can be hard to find. Yet the trend toward integrating appliances with smartphone apps and voice assistants should ultimately offer potential benefits for blind and partially sighted people.

Mainstream products

When searching for accessible washing machines, dryers and washer-dryer combinations, look out for features such as tactile controls or detailed audio feedback.

Bosch offer a free tactile adaptation service for some of their appliances. You can check

if a Bosch appliance qualifies for free tactile adaptation by providing their customer service team with an appliance model number. You can contact the team directly by emailing mks-spares-planning@bshg.com We recommend verifying model compatibility with the Bosch adaptation service before finalising any purchase decision.

Simple devices such as sock-locks can be particularly handy for blind and partially sighted people. They allow you to attach pairs of socks, so that they stay together in the wash.

Using your smartphone

Whirlpool and Bosch have both started manufacturing smart appliances designed to be compatible with voice assistants. Amazon Alexa remains the most commonly supported voice assistant platform, though Google Assistant is likely to become more widely supported by appliance manufacturers over time.

Samsung manufacture a wide range of household appliances, all of which connect with their SmartThings Hub.

Hark Ai, the simplest reading machine

Hark Ai, the simplest reading machine that anyone can use has just got even better. In addition to reading printed text, the new Hark Ai can read handwriting.

Listen to handwritten letters, greetings cards and notes from family and friends with an overview of content including a description of the image. For example

“A geometric pattern with the words Thank you, you are amazing”.

Hark Ai scans barcodes. When you open your kitchen cupboard, tins and packaging can be very similar in shape and size. Hark Ai provides a full description of the contents including nutritional values, ingredients and cooking instructions. Hark Ai scans the barcodes on medicine packaging providing a description of the contents.

Hark Ai also translates other languages to English or your preferred choice.



The versatile Explore 12 Magnifier

The three-in-one portable magnifier with a **FREE** Writing Stand and Carry Bag.

Explore 12 is the exciting and easy to use, full HD image quality magnifier with a 12 inch touch screen for improved near and distance viewing. You can now enjoy watching the TV from the comfort of your favourite armchair. You will be amazed how easy and intuitive writing becomes using the Writing Stand.

Restart your hobbies and enjoy looking at family photographs, magazines and reading once again.



If you would like a FREE no-obligation demonstration or receive further information on any of our products

call FREEPHONE 0800 587 2589 or visit www.humanware.com

Social Clubs and Activities

If you are interested in joining one of our social or activity groups, please contact us on **01296 487556** or reception@bucksvision.co.uk for more information.

| Club | Days | Times |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Aylesbury | | |
| Sunshine Group | Last Monday of each month | 10:30am – 12:30pm |
| Bowls Group | Thursdays | 10:30am – 12:30pm |
| Walking Group | Last Saturday of each month | Afternoon |
| Chalfont | | |
| Social Group | 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Chiltern | | |
| Social Group | Mondays | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Craft Group | Mondays | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Marlow | | |
| Social Group | 4th Wednesday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Craft Group | 2nd Wednesday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| High Wycombe | | |
| Social Group | 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Craft Group | 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| West | | |
| Social Group | 2nd Tuesday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |

| Club | Days | Times |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Northwest | | |
| Social Group | 2nd Tuesday of each month | 2:30pm – 4:00pm |
| Craft Club | 1st & 4th Tuesday of each month | 10:15am – 12:15pm |
| Southeast | | |
| Social Group: Stoke Poges | 2nd Tuesday of each month | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Social Group: Burnham | Last Thursday of each month | 1:30pm – 4:30pm |
| Milton Keynes | | |
| Partridge Social Club | Fortnightly Thursdays | 2:30pm – 4:30pm |
| Wolverton Social Club | Fortnightly Tuesdays | 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Eye for Art | 1st Tuesday of each month | 10:00am – 1:00pm |
| Lunch Bunch | 1st Monday of each month | |
| Reading Group | 2nd Monday of each month | 2:00pm – 3:00pm |
| Tai Chi | Fortnightly Thursdays | 2:30pm – 4:00pm |
| Tandem | Choose regular or occasional | 10:00am |
| Walking Group | Long walks: 3rd Saturday of each month Short walks: 2nd Sunday of each month | 10:30am |

Useful Contacts

NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme – 0808 196 3646

Volunteer support with shopping and hospital transport.

Bucks Integrated Sensory Service – 01296 479 970

Practical support for people with sight loss in Buckinghamshire.

Milton Keynes Sensory Service (formerly SARC) – 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.

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

BucksVision, 143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH

01296 487 556

reception@bucksvision.co.uk

www.bucksvision.co.uk