

Summer 2019 Newsletter

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

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. Yes, it really is summer, even if the weather cannot decide what season it is.

We recently celebrated Volunteers' Week. This is a permanent fixture in the calendars of most charities and gives them the opportunity to celebrate the work of their volunteers.

All the staff of BucksVision love Volunteers Week' as it gives us the chance to say "thank you" to all of our fantastic volunteers. If you do volunteer for us, I hope that you enjoyed the week and want to thank you again for all of your support.

I'm delighted that this edition of our newsletter includes details of our recent Customer Survey. This provided many useful insights and has clarified some areas of our work that we were lacking feedback on.

I am particularly appreciative as I know that the survey was a long one and required patience to work through. So, if you completed the survey, please accept my sincere thanks. It proved to be very informative and helpful.

Things usually quieten down a bit over the summer, when we all enjoy well-earned holidays and in some cases a (not so restful) break looking after children or grandchildren during the school summer holidays.

However, we are always very keen to promote our work and will be attending several events in the months ahead, including the Bucks County Show on 29 August. If you do attend, please come and say "hello" to us on our stand!

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

Customer Survey outcomes

In April we randomly selected members to take part in our Customer Survey. We were delighted to receive 122 responses and would like to thank all of you who participated.

We have now had a chance to review the survey and are delighted to reveal the results. We broke the survey down into sections to cover all of our services.

Calling for advice

78% of our respondents had sought advice from us and the significant majority of people were positive about the advice they received. For example, 77% agreed that they understood their situation better after speaking with us.

In response to our question regarding what we could have improved, we received some interesting feedback around keeping in more regular contact and following up on calls, which is something we plan to look into.

Resource Centres

63% of our respondents had visited one of our resource centres or an equipment day. And 76% agreed that the information they gained meant they could make an informed choice about their equipment needs.

87% of respondents felt that being able to view equipment before purchase was important or very important, indicating that this is a service we could look to develop.

Social Activities

Just over half of the respondents had interacted with our social or sporting activities and the majority indicated that one off social activities and regular social groups were activities they most wanted to be engaged in.

This shows that continuing our social clubs and Experience Days is important to our members.

We asked respondents what stopped them from attending our activities. There were several responses that mentioned lack of transport, which shows the importance of our volunteer drivers. There were also suggestions about broadening the range of activities, in particular regarding younger age groups and diversity.

Arts & Crafts

There was some interest in arts and crafts, with people being particularly interested in pottery, woodworking and weaving. We know that these activities are offered in some areas of county but there may be potential to investigate running more specialised workshops.

Home Support Services

These services are delivered to a smaller cohort of people due to their nature, but of those who responded 72% agreed they could manage their affairs more easily.

Newsletter

The majority of respondents received and read our quarterly newsletter. Some respondents mentioned they would like to receive the newsletter in an audio format, either CD or USB which made us aware that we need to be more proactive in letting our members know that we already produce the newsletter in these formats.

In terms of what people find interesting in the newsletter the most popular responses were BucksVision Services, equipment information, local news and sight loss conditions.

New Services

Only 56% of respondents thought that we could offer new or additional services.

We offered a range of suggestions and the most popular were more equipment and gadget demonstrations, different social activities including outings and trips to local pubs/restaurants.

Members Forum

We asked members if they would be interested in joining a members forum to feedback their ideas to us and the wider community (e.g. County Council etc). A few members were interested and we are looking into what kind of forum we could set up and how it would run. If this is of interest to you please let us know.

In summary

Overall, we were very pleased with the responses. When asked whether BucksVision had made an improvement to their lives, 78% of respondents stated that we had greatly or somewhat improved their life.

We are working through the constructive criticism we received which was very useful.

Your feedback

We appreciate all your feedback, so whether you completed our survey or not, please don't hesitate to contact us at any time by phone, email or via social media.

Tel: 01296 847 556

Email: reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Your Voice - Talkback

As a user of their services Buckinghamshire County Council would like to hear your opinions:

What works well?

What doesn't?

What could be better?

Have your say and tell Talkback what you think. They can talk to you on the phone or face to face (it'll only take about 30 minutes of your time).

They will report what you tell them, anonymously, to the Council and other providers of services in the county.

If you are interested in taking part please call Caroline Morris on 07419 989 006 or email caroline.morris@talkback-uk.com.

Talkback is a registered charity which supports people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

For more information: www.talkback-nclude.com

Come and meet us!

Don't forget we will be at the following events this summer:

Play in the Park

Vale Park, Aylesbury

Wednesday 7 August

11am – 3pm

Bucks County Show

Near Weedon

Thursday 29 August

8am - 6pm

We will have a lucky dip on the day where you can win an instant prize and be entered into our Grand Prize Draw for your chance to win a vacuum cleaner, a family ticket to Stowe, a £50 meal voucher and much more!

If you use Facebook, Twitter or Instagram don't forget to follow us to make sure you don't miss out on our events and activities!

Volunteers Week - Time to Celebrate

Between the 1-7 June we took part in the UK's biggest celebration of volunteering, recognising the generous contribution of all our volunteers.

Highlights of the week included meeting with over 80 of our volunteers, reading and sharing volunteers' stories, and eating our three celebratory cakes! Postcards, social media, videos, emails and newspaper adverts are just some of the ways we shared our message of thanks this year.

However, our appreciation is not limited to 1-7 June. We are grateful each day for our wonderful volunteer team, as we simply could not do it without them.

In our members survey we asked "If volunteer support was not available to you what impact would this have on you?"

Your responses show how pivotal volunteers are to BucksVision:

"Attending the volunteer-run club is a very important part of my life."

"It would be devastating! Volunteers provide so many essential service in so many areas."

We have also received some lovely feedback from our volunteers including the following story, which illustrates how much enjoyment and other benefits can be gained through volunteering.

My Volunteer Story - Val Robbins

I retired from work in 2002 and wanted to take on some voluntary work, I saw an advert in my local supermarket for volunteer drivers for Chalfont social club and through this sounded interesting.

I got in touch with the Chairman and asked if I could attend a club meeting to see if this was the sort of charity work that would suit me. I was immediately hooked, as the volunteers and members were so friendly, so I contacted the Head Office and volunteered as a Driver.

After a few years I became the Secretary for Chalfont Division which I have found very rewarding. Over the years I have met so many interesting people. Our members are definitely from the older generation and I have found the bravery with which they cope with their sight problems quite humbling and inspiring.

The only downside is that many of the members I have known over the last 16 years have now left this world, but the happy memories I have of them and the stories they have told me, I will remember always.

Tragically my husband died 8 years ago. I could not have coped without the friendship of the Volunteers and Members at Chalfont Division, their support I will never forget.

You can volunteer for just a few hours a week or give as much time as you want; it's up to you. It is well worth the effort as the rewards outweigh the time you give.

Photography Competition Winners

Thank you to all who entered our competition. We were very impressed with the quality of photos and choosing twelve photos for the calendar and the four winners was very difficult.

We would like to thank Derek Pelling, of Derek Pelling Photography, and Andrea, from Mela Creative, for judging the competition.

Winners

We are delighted to announce the winners of our prizes:

1st Place - Victoria Timms

2nd Place - Rosalinde Nicholls

3rd Place - Karen Butler

4th Place - Amanda Hawes

Well done to our winners and all those whose photos were selected for the 2020 calendar.

How to purchase the calendar

The A3 calendar is now on sale and cost £8 + P&P.

To order a copy please call us on 01296 487556 or [email us](#).

2021 Calendar Competition

The competition will run again next year, so get your camera ready!

Creative Writing Competition 2019

It's being two years since our last Creative Writing Competition and we are delighted to announce its return.

As before we have various categories:

Age 18 and over

Short Story

700-1,000 words

Theme: Discovery

Poem

No more than 40 verse lines

Theme: Hope

Young Person 12-17 years old

500 – 700 Word Story

Theme: Adventure

Children 5-11 years old

100 - 500 Word Story

Theme: Adventure

Volunteers & General Public

Short Story

700-1,000 words

Theme: Discovery

Prizes

To be confirmed.

How to enter

Please request an entry form from the office:

Tel: 01296 847556

Email: reception@bucksvision.co.uk

Closing date

11 October 2019

Milton Keynes Technology Group

The first meeting of our Technology Group took place on Wednesday 5 June. The group has been set up by BucksVision and RNIB volunteer Padma Cheriyan and aims to help people with sight loss gain confidence in using technology.

We were joined by 40 people, a mixture of members wishing to gain knowledge and people who would like to give their time to help them. The first meeting started with a very informative talk by Dr Chetz Colwell of the Open University, who outlined what Assistive Technology is, before the Technology Team from John Lewis demonstrated devices such as Amazon Echo. A big thank you to them for their support and time.

The group will meet on first Wednesday of month from 2pm – 4pm. If you would like to join please call BucksVision.

RNIB Living with Sight Loss Course

On 10 and 17 May we ran a Living with Sight Loss course in High Wycombe.

Living with Sight Loss courses cover various aspects of sight loss, including technology, emotional support and mobility. It is also an opportunity for people to meet others with sight loss and for their friends and family to learn more about what is available. The course was extremely well attended, and all attendees found the information they receive very useful. We hope to organise more sessions this year. If you would be interested in attending please give us a call.

Phone Groups

If you do not wish to attend a course in person the RNIB also run Phone Groups, which mirror the face to face courses as much as possible. They involve six sessions lasting 60 to 90 minutes and can include people from all over the country.

Please call RNIB on 0303 123 9999 for more information.

Travel Tips

Summer is approaching and some of you may be heading off on holiday. Here are some travel tips to help:

Tips for flyers

Altogether Travel, the UK's leading Supported Holiday Company, have produced a guide which includes advice and information on what to expect when flying as a visually impaired person.

If you would like a copy of this guide please give us a call or for more information about Altogether Travel contact them on: 0141 406 1821

info@altogethertravel.co.uk

Other Travel companies for VI people

Traveleyes – provides guides for travellers with sight loss.
0113 834 6094

Seable – accessible holidays for people with sight loss
203 375 6947

Travelling with eye drops

Keeping your eye drops at the correct temperature can be tricky when on holiday or travelling so the International Glaucoma Association (IGA) have developed their IGA Cool Wallet.

The wallet contains Gel Crystals which only require soaking in cold water – no pre-chilling or refrigeration is necessary. They come in two sizes and are easy to carry in handbag or pocket. Price ranges from £9.50 to £13.50

To buy contact IGA on 01233 648 164

Sun Shades

Don't forget your anti-glare shades this summer. We have a range to try at our Resource Centres or we can advise on different styles and tints available to buy.

Dolphin GuideConnect

GuideConnect is Computing without the complications!

Dolphin have released a brand new edition of Guide called GuideConnect. Described as “simple talking technology for anyone with sight loss” GuideConnect enables anyone to easily send emails, listen to books and newspapers or play their favourite radio station.

Just like Guide, GuideConnect is perfect for anyone that’s not confident with technology. If the idea of using a computer makes you feel apprehensive and using your TV remote is your technology limit, then GuideConnect might just be the solution you’re looking for.

Whether you add GuideConnect to your computer, or choose the TV or tablet solution, using GuideConnect is always intuitive and super easy.

Simple step-by-step talking menus, large high contrast buttons and the human sounding voices make sure that you never get lost or confused. If you’re not a natural typist, you can dictate your emails and documents to GuideConnect.

And moving around GuideConnect’s menus couldn’t be simpler with the handy remote control or with your fingers on the touch screen. Plus there are no complicated touchscreen gestures like you might have experienced with an ipad.

So what can you do with GuideConnect?

The answer is lots. Browse the web, scan and read your post, write and print documents, send and receive email, listen to audio books and newspapers, tune into your favourite radio station and plan your diary. And if you’ve got a question, you can ask GuideConnect who will search the web at your instruction.

We particularly like how easy it is to browse and read audio books from the RNIB Library. And the instant access to local and National newspapers is just as good. Everyone that chooses GuideConnect gets 2 hours of telephone training, and Dolphin’s support team are available via phone when you need them.

If you fancy giving GuideConnect a try you can find our more or download a free 30 day trial of GuideConnect from the Dolphin website at www.YourDolphin.com/GuideConnect

Mrs Burt's Birthday Bike Ride

On Monday 6 May, BucksVision member, Catherine Burt, celebrated her 80th birthday with the help of bikes, balloons and BucksVision volunteers!

Catherine, who has ocular albinism, has been sight impaired all her life and had to cope with a childhood plagued with alleged illegitimacy and physical and emotional abuse.

However, this never stopped her living her life to the full! She trained as a teacher (meeting her husband at Exeter university) and taught in Glasgow, London and Hong Kong. She later became an Ofsted inspector and a school leadership consultant.

Two children of her own also added to her busy life and while she was at home looking after them she took a Masters Degrees in Education and Coaching at London and Bristol universities respectively.

Catherine has had to cope with quite a lot of ill health during the past year, including knee surgery but that didn't prevent her celebrating her big "8-0" with a family party on 4 May. There were more than 120 guests, with ages ranging from 0 to 95, and people came from as far away as Canada. Her party was followed by a tandem ride round Caldecotte Lake on 6 May.

Catherine, who had never ridden a bike before, contacted BucksVision at the end of March and asked if there was any way we could fulfil her dream of a cycle on a tandem to celebrate this wonderful occasion; as our Milton Keynes division has a tandem group it was not difficult to put the wheels in motion, so to speak.

Volunteers Ian, Marcel and John took her out on practice rides but, because Catherine's knees were still giving her pain, modifications to the pedal cranks were made by James of Cycle Saviours. This meant less pressure and flexibility were needed.

"Ian was a wonderful pilot," said Catherine, "Not once did he, or Marcel, say that I wouldn't be able to do it."

Sure enough, on 6 May, balloons were tied to the bike and some of the Burt family were able to come and cheer the intrepid cyclists along and Catherine enjoyed an impressive 25 minute ride.

When asked how it felt, Catherine replied: "Totally exhilarating! It was amazing! I loved feeling the fresh air on my face. It was like drinking Champagne, only better."

Well, drink Champagne they did – after the bike ride we hasten to add – and also shared birthday cake.

Catherine would like to thank BucksVision, Cycle Saviours and The Mighty 100 Gym for all their support. If you would like to find out more about our Milton Keynes Tandem Group please call the office.

100th! Birthday

On Thursday 18 April, Aylesbury Visually Impaired Club celebrated the centenary of one of their members, Margaret Ridgway by having a lovely party which was attended by the Mayor of Aylesbury.

Margaret was born in Park Street, Aylesbury, in 1919. In 1934 she secured a position as Scullery Maid with Lord and Lady Anstruther in London.

In 1939 she married Arthur Ridgway. When her eyesight deteriorated she started attending the local club for people with sight loss and has been going ever since.

Congratulations on your centenary, Margaret!

Braille Transcription Services

Accessible information enables people with disabilities to take part in everyday life. As someone who was born with sight loss, Isobel Calladine is passionate about making sure that information is available in different formats. She is working to help others get the information they need in Braille.

After receiving training Isobel has started her own accessible information transcription service.

Isobel says: "I have made it my responsibility to do more for individuals like me so we have the independence to read freely and without support.

Having produced materials in Braille for Waddesdon Manor, I am pleased that my personalised service was received well by the National Trust. I believe that if people with sight loss have access to things like Braille menus, they will be more likely to get out and buy products more readily.

Now is the time to get in touch and make use of my Braille transcription service so that I can help businesses bridge a gap to reach new customers."

The fees for Isobel's service cover the resources, time and impeccable personalised commitment.

Isobel says: "I have been fortunate enough to receive support and training courtesy of SeeAbility, a charity that helps with people of different learning needs and sight loss to see their ability."

Thanks to support from The Rothschild Foundation, SeeAbility was able to provide a Braille embosser for Isobel and train her to use this specialist equipment.

“Not” For Sale

Optelec Clearview Magnifier

In good condition and has instructions. Collection from Milton Keynes

FREE

Optelec Clearview Magnifier

Collection from Amersham

Over 5 years old

FREE

Optima Go LED 8x Magnifier

FREE

Call BucksVision if interested in any of these items.

Equipment Bestsellers 2018

Talking keyring clock

Bumpons

RNIB Z light

Berol Pens

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