

BucksVision Spring 2021 Newsletter

Front cover shows an illustration of a mole waving wearing a vest saying 60k Through the Month of May. See page 10 for more information.

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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BucksVision, 143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH

Telephone 01296 487 556

Open 9am - 5pm weekdays

E-mail reception@bucksvision.co.uk

www.bucksvision.co.uk

Charity registered number 1147814

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[Instagram](#)

Welcome

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

The improving weather and vaccination roll-out have provided welcome relief during what has been a difficult 12 months.

I am sure that, like me, you are looking forward to lockdown being eased and to being able to meet easily with people again.

Many parents will be pleased that their children are back at school. I have no doubt that keeping children at home for prolonged periods affects their mental health. Hopefully, they will be able to stay open.

And it's not just children whose mental health has been affected, of course. I am pleased that talking about one's mental health is now much more accepted in our society.

I think this highlights a benefit of our work that is easily underestimated. It is important for people with sight loss to connect with others because it helps how they are feeling.

I am grateful to all of our volunteers and staff who have stayed in touch with our clients with wellbeing calls and other support.

I am, of course, hoping that our face-to-face services will be able to resume again "soon" and you will find further details about that on the next page.

I hope that you find this newsletter useful and interesting. Thank you for your support.

Stay safe and well.

Resuming our Services

On 22 February the Government published their roadmap out of lockdown. Using the roadmap as guidance we have developed our own resumption of services plan.

We realise that many of you have missed attending your local clubs and activities and will be looking forward to returning. Alternatively, you may now be interested in attending our face-to-face activities.

The Government has proposed that, if all goes well with the vaccination rollout, all restrictions may be relaxed from 21 June. However this is subject to review and may be pushed back if previous steps are delayed.

As a result, we are in the process of planning to resume most of our face-to face services by August. However, this is dependent not only on the Government roadmap going to plan, but also on a number of internal factors such as volunteer availability.

Some services may be able to resume sooner than August. For example if step two of the Government's plan goes ahead on the 12 April we will be able to resume booking Resource Room appointments.

We will keep you updated on how our planning process is proceeding.

Message from Chief Executive

Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey, which we sent out in December last year; we received over 250 responses.

The purpose of the survey was to help us prioritise the services that you appreciate and value the most so that we can plan for the next year and beyond.

The survey showed that opportunities to participate in social activities; connect with people face-to-face; access support with technology; and gain confidence with day-to-day tasks are valued highly.

As a result of this we will continue to work on providing technology support, social activities and equipment demonstrations. As shown in our previous article (page 4) our immediate priority is resuming all of our face-to-face services and getting back to some form of normality.

The survey also highlighted some areas we could look to develop, such as activities for younger people (for example, activities in the evening); skills (such as music or cookery) and physical activity classes; and more equipment demonstrations.

Any new service development is dependent on funding, and Covid-19 has impacted funding for all charities (pages 10-13 cover ways you can help us to raise funds). Also we do not know the long term impact Covid-19 will have on our activities.

However, for the time being, we look forward to a return to normality and to continuing to support blind and partially sighted people in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

What a difference a call makes

Although BucksVision has had to stop or cut back most of its services during the past year, Telephone Befriending has grown rapidly. This is where a client receives a weekly/fortnightly call from a volunteer for an informal chat and well-being check.

Today we are featuring two volunteers who decided to become Telephone Befrienders when Covid meant they were unable to carry on with their roles.

Susan joined BucksVision in 2016 as a Driver and Guide for our Milton Keynes walking group. She enjoys both driving and walking with the group members and was disappointed when her role stopped due to Covid. However, she was pleased to have the chance to volunteer in a different capacity with us.

Chantelle became a volunteer Reader in 2018. She visited one of our members to read magazine articles, cards and letters to her. She was able to resume her role for a short period in the summer when some restrictions were relaxed, but the reading had to be done outdoors and “with the British weather that could be a bit of a challenge!”

Chantelle had never done Telephone Befriending before, but Susan was doing something similar with another organisation.

When asked what they each enjoyed most about this role, Chantelle said that it’s just the lovely “chit -chat” and the fact that doing what seems such a small thing to her can make another person feel so happy, whilst Susan has enjoyed getting to know someone she has never met and hearing some of their life history.

Nevertheless, there are things they miss about their previous roles.

Susan: “I miss the exercise and meeting the members of the walking group, seeing their faces and hearing about what is going on in their lives.”

Chantelle: "I miss the person that I read to and learning new things. I read articles I would not normally read and as they were so interesting and informative I would independently research certain topics afterwards."

They have both learned and gained a lot from telephone befriending.

Susan is really glad that she finds Val, her telephone befriender so easy to talk to, "We share the same sense of humour!"

This is backed up by Val, who told me "I look forward to Susan's calls. We have such a laugh."

Betty also looks forward to Chantelle's calls, "She is so understanding about my eye problems and we have so much in common – we talk about food a lot because cooking is my hobby."

BucksVision would like to say thank you to all of our Telephone Befrienders for providing such a valuable service during the past year.

A big thank you also goes out to all of our volunteers who have supported us in so many different ways.

Poetry in Lockdown

BucksVision member, Gillian Hutchinson, decided to use the time in lockdown to collate her poems into a book, 'The Therapy Group and other poems' which was published at the end of 2020.

Gillian has a lifelong interest in poetry, even studying it at the Open University, and has been writing poems for many years.

"I rarely set out to write a poem. The ideas usually come to me when I am thinking about an experience...and the...lines come into my mind."

The Therapy Group poems were written some years ago when Gillian was part of a therapy group. These poems reflect Gillian's thoughts at the time and the personalities involved.

The remaining poems, written over many years up to the present day, have been grouped into four sections, Seasons, In Sombre Mood, Idle Thoughts and Family.

Before losing her sight Gillian was also a keen photographer and she has chosen to use her own photos to illustrate the sections, as well as including some of her favourites.

Gillian hopes her book will be available in bookshops soon, but in the meantime she is selling them privately (RRP £9.99). We have a copy and are enjoying reading Gillian's wonderful poetry. If you are interested in a copy, please get in touch.

01296 487 556

Ian's 1,000 Mile Challenge

We were thrilled to be contacted by Ian Tarvit, a BucksVision member, who inspired by the recent public challenge for people to walk 1,000 miles in a year, is walking 1,000 miles in six months to raise awareness and funds for us.

"Over the course of the last few years, my complicated glaucoma condition has worsened significantly. As a result I have lost most of my sight and as an active person the loss of vision has meant making huge changes in my life. Whilst these changes have been extremely challenging, they have been made so much easier by the incredible help I have received from BucksVision.

They have provided an exceptional level of support, information and resources to enable me to cope with the transition. Therefore, I wanted to do something to say thank you, so I'm taking on the challenge and hope to raise £1,000."

Fantastically Ian has already raised £1,000 so why not help him reach £2,000 by donating to his Just Giving page – www.justgiving.com/Tarv

Thank you for your wonderful support Ian and good luck with your challenge!

Want to take part in your own challenge? Turn over to find out how!

60k Through the Month of May

We are excited to announce the launch of our first virtual fundraising event - 60k Through the Month of May!

Taking inspiration from Captain Sir Tom Moore's achievement in 2020, we are asking our members, supporters and their families if they would be willing to participate in our 60k Through the Month of May Challenge.

It can be completed in whatever way works for you. Whether that is walking, running, cycling, swimming or something else.

You might wish to spread the challenge across the whole month by completing 2km a day walking around your garden or, you may wish to try something a bit more ambitious such as completing 20km three times during May. The choice is yours!

You can sign up to our 60k Through the Month of May Challenge via our [website](#).

Alternatively, call us on 01296 487 556 and we will send you a sponsorship pack in the post.

Once you've joined up you will be invited to join our [60k Challenge Facebook Group](#) for some additional support.

Follow our social media pages ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)) for the latest updates on our activities and don't forget to tag us into your personal posts and use the hashtag #60kChallenge.

We hope our 60k Challenge will raise much needed funds for us as well as awareness of our services.

Physical activity not your thing? There are lots of other ways that you can raise funds for BucksVision.

A-Z of Fundraising

Fundraising doesn't have to be hard or take up a lot of time, you can be creative and enjoy yourself! Find some inspirational ideas below or get in touch on **01296 487 556** or reception@bucksvision.co.uk

- A – Auction, Arts & Craft, Abseil
- B - Bingo, Bring & Buy, Book Sale
- C - Cake Sale, Car Wash, Curry Night
- D - Dog Show, Dress Down Day, Disco
- E - Easter Egg Hunt, Eighties Party, Egg & Spoon Race
- F - Fashion Show, Fancy Dress Party, Film Night
- G - Garden Party, Guess the..., Golf Day
- H - Head Shave, Hook a Duck, Hula Hooping
- I - It's a Knockout, International Evening
- J - Jumble Sale, Jazz Night, Jewellery Making
- K - Keep Fit, Karaoke
- L - Ladies Night, Lottery, Lucky Dip
- M - Murder Mystery Party, Marathon, Music Evening
- N - Nature Trail, Name that Tune, Non Uniform Day
- O - Obstacle Course, Open Garden, Opera Night
- P - Picnic, Pool Competition, Plant Sale
- Q - Quiz, Quad Biking
- R - Race Night, Raffle, Running
- S - Silent Auction, Swear Box, Salsa Evening
- T - Treasure Hunt, Tug of War, Tombola
- U - Unwanted Gift Sale, Uniform Day
- V -Variety Show, Vintage Car Rally, Video Night
- W - Wine Tasting, Weigh the Cake, Word Games
- X - Xbox Tournament, Xmas Fair
- Y - Yogathon, Yodelling Competition
- Z - Zany Clothes Day, Zumba Dancing

www.bucksvision.co.uk/fundraising

Fundraising Fun

There are many ways your company or organisation can help raise funds for us.

Charity of the Year

Many companies nominate a charity they wish to support throughout the year with fundraising activities.

A big thank you to Foresters Friendly Society's Bicester Branch who raised £150 for us last year.

Donation Tins

Could you be the guardian of a BucksVision donation tin? Donation tins are a great way to get rid of loose change.

Raffle Prizes wanted!

We love to receive items that we can use as raffle prizes or auction off to raise funds.

Organise your own event

Next time you have a school disco or office party, why not add a fundraising element and donate the proceeds to BucksVision? Or, you could organise a fundraising event such as a “dress down (or up) day” or bake sale.

Fundraising Pack

We will be putting together a fundraising pack which will be full of ideas to put the Fun into Fundraising! You can have a great time whilst also making a difference. We will include some real-life stories about the difference fundraising makes and how your donations make an impact.

For more information please contact Lynn Hitchcox.

Email: lhitchcox@bucksvision.co.uk

Phone: 01296 487 556

Our Virtual Activities

In February we launched our virtual activities and were overjoyed to welcome members to our sessions.

Over the last two months, we have shared our favourite childhood memories and dream dinner guests; enjoyed virtual touch tours on historic coins and Islamic metalworks; listened to talks from Julian our ECLLO and Subhash from Glaucoma UK; and partook in some interesting technology sessions.

Feedback from our technology sessions included "I learnt tips which made it easier and learned from others' questions" and "It was good to listen to real people."

Enclosed is our April calendar. A highlight from next month is 'Amazing Frauds and Swindles' a talk by Hugh Granger. You can join using your phone (it's like a phone call but with multiple people) or online.

Esme's Friends session

We also ran a support session for Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) in March. Public awareness of CBS was given a boost when it was recently featured on Coronation Street. Awareness of CBS can make a big difference to peoples lives.

"In 2019 I mentioned to a BucksVision staff member that I had been experiencing hallucinations, including a large dog, for several years, but had been too afraid to talk about it with my family. I was then told all about CBS. Finding this out changed my life. I stopped seeing the dog, and although I still experience other hallucinations I now cope with them far better."

If you experience CBS and would like support our next session is on Tuesday 20 April at 11am.

OXSIGHT Smart Glasses

OXSIGHT was founded in Oxford in 2016 to transform the lives of people with visual impairment. Their founding members began their research at the University of Oxford in 2010, investigating how technology could benefit those with low vision.

Their research led to the development of OXSIGHT Crystal™ glasses and most recently OXSIGHT Onyx® glasses, which is due to launch in mid 2021.

OXSIGHT Crystal

OXSIGHT Crystal smart glasses can enhance the remaining sight for individuals with peripheral vision loss. They are fitted with a camera streaming a live feed into two HD video displays, projecting high-contrast and defined images to your usable area of vision. This can potentially increase your field of view to 68 degrees horizontally.

As easy to wear as normal glasses, with a long-life battery and lightweight design, they are dispensed and tailored to your needs by an OXSIGHT specialist.

If you are registered with an optometrist and they have not heard about these smart glasses, please refer them to our team for access to our products. Your specialist will fit them for you in person so you get the full benefits of our vision technology.

So if you are interested in purchasing a pair of Crystal glasses please get in touch. The OXSIGHT team will assess your suitability, before guiding you through the demonstration process.

OXSIGHT Onyx

Easy to pick up and use immediately, OXSIGHT Onyx has a range of intelligent features that enhance your vision in an instant. From face recognition and tracking, text detection, automatic night mode and even a TV mode, you can see better in every moment.

Onyx can tell if you're looking at text, faces or objects, and adjust accordingly to enhance your vision. Onyx needs no professional calibration, featuring a rapid 10-second startup and runs for over 2 hours in continuous use-so you're always ready to go.

Onyx glasses are designed to help people with central vision loss e.g. AMD, Diabetic Retinopathy, Stroke Related Sight Loss, Stargardt Disease, Macular Dystrophy, Inverted Retinitis Pigmentosa and many other conditions.

“I was with my mum when I tested the glasses and I hadn't seen her face properly for the last 5 years.”

Nathan, Central Vision loss

Cost from £1,499. Available from mid 2021.

Contact Details

To register an interest in Onyx glasses or to find out if Crystal glasses could work for you contact OXSIGHT on 01865 580 255 or care@oxsight.co.uk

Information in this article has been taken from the OXSIGHT website www.oxsightglobal.com

Vaccination Accessibility

The RNIB have raised issues with the Government, relating to the accessibility of invitations; access to vaccination centres; and the signage and support available when getting your vaccine.

Under the Accessible Information Standard, disabled people should routinely and automatically be receiving information about their health in their preferred formats.

In early March the Vaccines Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, informed RNIB that he was acting to make sure the vaccine programme is accessible and has asked his team to look at how people can routinely get vaccine appointment booking information in their preferred formats.

In the meantime, RNIB were assured that anyone who doesn't respond to their initial vaccine letter or text message will receive a follow up phone call. It is also worth making sure that your communication preferences and visual impairment are logged with your GP.

As well as campaigning for accessible vaccine letters, the RNIB have also been liaising with Public Health England about the accessibility of information it produces about the COVID-19 vaccine. A large range of alternative formats of the information you receive about having the jab is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and to order from the [Health Publications website](#). We look forward to the new audio versions that they are currently working on.

If you would like information on what to expect when you get your vaccine visit the Guide Dogs website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

Or call their helpline on:
0800 781 1444

Alternative BAME VI Network

By Haseeb Ahmad

A new network has been set up aimed at reaching out to Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) people who are Visually Impaired and living in the UK.

The group is called the Alternative BAME VI Network. Its purpose is to provide a space for BAME VI people to come together virtually and provide each other with support, advice and a voice with which to speak to others responsible for delivering services to visually impaired people across all communities.

It is a highly inclusive group that welcomes friends and families affected by sight loss from BAME communities.

We will be holding regular Zoom chats, learning about the lived experiences of its members and interviewing inspirational visually impaired people from BAME and other ethnic backgrounds with a view to creating a really exciting and positive vibe that will leave people feeling great about themselves and what they can achieve.

So please join us for something different, alternative as the name suggests and together let's create a social movement which maximises accessibility for all communities. For more information email haseeb.ahmad@btinternet.com or follow the group on [Twitter @network_vi](https://twitter.com/network_vi)

Could you be a CBS Buddy?

Retina UK is looking for Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) Buddies to offer one-to-one support to people who both have an inherited retinal dystrophy and Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

When someone with both these conditions calls the Charles Bonnet Syndrome support line, managed by Esme's Umbrella and RNIB, and would like one to one peer support they are referred to Retina UK's Buddy Scheme.

However, since Charles Bonnet Syndrome was featured on Coronation Street there has been an increase in requests for support and Retina UK's small team needs some help!

To become a CBS Buddy for Retina UK you will need to have an inherited retinal dystrophy (examples include Retinitis Pigmentosa, Stargardts, Junior Macular dystrophy, Usher Syndrome), which has led to you experiencing Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

If you are interested in becoming a buddy get in touch with us on 01296 487 556 or reception@bucksvision.co.uk

For Sale – Second Hand Items

Orcam MyEye Version 1.5

This equipment is virtually unused and still like new (purchased November 2018). It comes complete with box, user guide and an additional magnet for the arm of the glasses and headphones.

Price: £750

Cobolt Speechmaster Microwave

Bought in October 2019 but virtually unused so is in perfect condition. The only additions are 2 bump ons stuck to the “start” and “stop” buttons. Price: £150

Collection from Newport Pagnell. Local delivery may be possible.

Wrap around sunglasses

These glasses help cover the full length of the eyes and are in good condition. One pair has grey tint and the other a brown tint. Each pair is available at £175 each.

Useful Contacts

Government Coronavirus Updates

Visit 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