



## **Issue 123    The Hertfordshire Society for the Blind Newsletter Summer 2009**

### **1) CEO's Patch**

Hello again to you all. I hope you enjoyed the recent short update that I sent to you all to let you know what has been happening in the last few months.

Just a final update from me. We held an Away Day on the 14th July at The Social Centre for the Blind in Hemel Hempstead. It was attended by nearly 30 stakeholders and this gave us the time to really look at The Society; where we have come from; where we are now and how we hope to develop over the next 3-5 years. In 2015 we will be celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday so the day was really to look at how we think the Society will look when we celebrate our centenary.

As part of the day we discussed the UK Vision Strategy and what impact this is having locally, if any. I am not sure if you are aware of this so I will give you a very brief overview of what this is all about. The UK Vision Strategy seeks a major

transformation in the UK's eye health, eye care and sight loss services.

The UK Vision Strategy is the response of the UK to the World Health Organisation's Vision 2020 resolution to:

- Eliminate avoidable sight loss by the year 2020
- Improve services for people with sight loss

### **Why the need to take action?**

- Poor understanding of the impact of lifestyles and health conditions on sight
- Too many people are living with sight loss that could be avoided
- Inequality in the provision of, and access to, eye health and sight loss services
- Lack of “joined up” service delivery

### **What action is required?**

- We need to raise awareness of the importance of good eye health care to everyone
- We need to make sure that no-one loses their sight when this can be prevented
- We need to make sure that people with sight loss can access the right services

The UK Vision Strategy focuses on three key outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Improving the eye health of the people in the UK

- Around 50% of sight loss in the UK is avoidable
- Both smoking and obesity can double the probability of sight loss
- The early stages of many eye disease show no symptoms
- **Outcome 2:** Eliminating avoidable sight loss and delivering excellent support for people with sight loss
- Many blind and partially sighted people do not receive the equipment they need to help them with mobility, communication and other everyday tasks
- There is a significant shortfall in the number of qualified staff supporting blind and partially sighted people and the numbers being trained in this field are going down
- **Outcome 3:** Inclusion, participation and independence for people with sight loss
- Three out of four blind or partially sighted older people live in poverty
- Only 34% of blind or partially sighted people are in employment
- Less than 5% of books are available in accessible formats
- Many public buildings remain inaccessible to blind or partially sighted people

Arrangements are now being put in place to turn the UK Vision Strategy into local action. A UK Forum and county-specific bodies will provide leadership and momentum to this specific work. The

Strategic Advisory Group that led the development of the UK Vision Strategy will continue to chart progress

All local action plans should ultimately support the delivery of the UK Vision Strategy. This will require:

- Regular user involvement and feedback
- Close liaison with other sectors with an interest in eye health and sight loss issues
- Partnership working will improve understanding and co-operation on issues of common concern

The UK Vision Strategy offers one of the most exciting opportunities ever to transform eye health, eye care and sight loss services across the UK. Success will ultimately depend on how effectively local resources can be mobilised to achieve the outcomes of the Strategy. This is the challenge we face how we can work together, Health, Social Care and the voluntary sector to make this transformation happen.

If you would like to find out more about the UK Vision Strategy you can log onto the website

<http://www.vision2020uk.org.uk/ukvisionstrategy/>

Finally just to confirm that our new offices will be at The Woodside Centre, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 4SE our new phone number will be 01707 324680 or you can email us at [office@hertsblind.com](mailto:office@hertsblind.com).

Unfortunately as a result of the move we have decided that we will not be producing the HSB diaries and calendars this year. With the move there is so much to arrange and we do not have the spare resources to be able to do this properly at this moment in time. However, the Macular Disease Society and RNIB do produce really good diaries and calendars. But we do hope to be able to start our own again in 2011.

If you want to find out more about any of our support and services we offer you can call the office 01992 588145, email us at [office@hertsblind.com](mailto:office@hertsblind.com) or write to us, we can get post at either locations, it can be forwarded on to Woodside if any post comes after the move and we can pick up post that goes to Woodside before we totally move in so we will be able to get any correspondence from you.

Also I have included in this newsletter a 'Molehole'. This is the chance for you to put any small pocket change in, then when it is full you can bank the money and send us a cheque; take the 'Molehole' to the nearest Sight Information Point or bring it into the office. All of these small donations help us to continue to operate. Also please fill in a Gift Aid form if appropriate as this helps us to claim an additional 28p for every £1 donated to us.

Finally a big thank you to the suppliers of low vision aids and equipment, Enhanced Vision, Sight and Sound, Cobalt, Optalec and Professional Vision Services as well as many others for the continued support of The Society. The

financial support they offer has resulted in us being able to continue to send out the newsletter. However if you would like to contribute further to the production of the newsletter and have not previously subscribed you still can. All you need to do is send a cheque or postal order for £5 to cover administration and contribute towards the costs, with details of what format you'd like to receive the newsletter, Braille, Large Print, audio or email and post this to Hertfordshire Society for the Blind and we will make sure you get the newsletter three times per year in the appropriate format for you.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, and if there is anything you want included, removing, to share, please write to us, one suggestion we had was a top ten hints and tips for people with sight loss by people with sight loss. For example, when you are putting your bedding away after washing it, put the spare pillowcases and duvet cover inside one of the pillow cases. This helps to keep all the matching bedding together and helps you to find what you need easily

Let me know what you think

Best Wishes

Maria

## **2) Employment and Support Allowance**

The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a new way of helping people with an illness or disability to move into work, if they are able.

It replaces Incapacity Benefit and Income Support, paid because of an illness or disability. ESA offers you personalised support and financial help, so that you can engage in appropriate work.

To claim ESA phone 0800 055 6688. A text phone service is available if you have a speech or hearing impairment – 0800 023 4888.

Or

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/esa>

### **3) The Carers and Learning project at Carers in Hertfordshire**

Carers in Herts have developed courses and learning events in partnership with a number of organisations in the county. These are being developed to suit different needs, interests and abilities in such things as basic computing class, personal development and also reading groups. The courses are delivered in local venues throughout North Hertfordshire. A full listing can be found on the calendar of the Carers and Learning page at [www.carersinherts.org.uk](http://www.carersinherts.org.uk) Or contact Suzy Smith on 01462 456660 to find a course relevant to you.

### **4) Items for Sale**

We have a few items for sale to let you know about.

A Bierley Monomouse is being offered for sale by Mrs Betts

in the Radlett area. Phone 01923 857419

A Video Loop Plus is being sold by Mr. and Mrs. Dutton who are in the Tring area. Their contact number is 01442 825950

Mrs. McAllister has a D500 cctv unit for sale. She'd like £350 for the unit. If anyone is interested or would like further information please call her on 01937 588129

### **5) Blind Gardeners of the Year Competition 2009**

The competition is a celebration of the skills of gardeners who have sight loss and is open to anyone who has sight loss, wherever you garden, whether you've just started or have years of experience! You enter by describing how you achieve what you do in your garden, the obstacles you have overcome and how gardening helps you.

The theme this year is "Grow and eat". There are 3 categories: Blind Gardener of the Year (over 18); Young Blind Gardener of the Year (under 18) and Blind Gardening Club or Group of the Year.

The competition is run in partnership between RNIB and Thrive.

More information about the competition and to register, contact Thrive on 0118 988 5688 or email

[bgoty@thrive.org.uk](mailto:bgoty@thrive.org.uk)

You'll have to be quick though, closing date for entries is July 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **6) Living Painting's free library for sight loss adults and children**

If you are looking for feely books for blind children, or educational packs for those with a visual impairment, or albums for blind and partially sighted adults, Living Paintings is an award winning national charity that has the answers. By providing pictures that can be "felt" in a completely free library of albums and books, with audio commentary, Living Pictures enables people who cannot see to enjoy a wide range of visual treats, be they popular children's books, science, history, famous works of art, the natural world, city tours, gardens, topical themes or great buildings. Membership is free – every item in the library is loaned and posted for free.

If anyone would like to join Living Paintings all they have to do is ring 01635 299771 and you will be welcomed as members or you can join online at [www.livingpaintings.org](http://www.livingpaintings.org)

## **7) Audio Book – "Historic Buildings of Stevenage"**

CD versions (including a pdf version on CD for anyone with a computer) and two copies of this audio book have been made available to Cassettes for Blind People located in the library service in Welwyn Garden City. Anyone interested should contact Colin Killick on 01438 358679 or email [colin-killick@12freeukisp.co.uk](mailto:colin-killick@12freeukisp.co.uk)

## **8) A couple of holidays/breaks to mention**

a) The Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind (NNAB) are planning a residential learning holiday at the Virginia Court Hotel, Cromer from October 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>.

The mini-break will include sessions addressing issues surrounding daily living skills, the emotional impact of sight loss, sports and leisure activities and making the most of residual vision.

Applications are invited from visually impaired people (and their partners) who wish to learn more about life as a VIP.

The total cost (inclusive) will be £190 per person.

If you're interested contact Dorothy Bowen on 01603 629558 or email [dorothybowen@nnab.co.uk](mailto:dorothybowen@nnab.co.uk)

b) Following the success of last year's holiday to the Bradbury Hotel near Worthing, the Hemel Social Centre for the Blind are booking again for 2009. The cost will be £365 for the hotel – which is a reduced rate for an early booking. The bus transport to the hotel and return to Hemel Railway Station will be £50. Insurance around £15. There are several outings arranged as well as evening entertainment.

If you are interested please contact Audrey quickly on 01442 217918 or email [secretary@dtnhemel.org.co](mailto:secretary@dtnhemel.org.co)

## **9) Chorleywood College Prospectus**

We have uncovered an old prospectus for the Chorleywood

College for “girls with little or no sight”.

It’s difficult to tell when it dates from but the fees were “£90 per annum” and the girls were given 6d pocket money each week.

If anyone attended the college and would like the prospectus as a souvenir then please get in touch with HSB.

#### **10) RNIB and audio description for tv programmes**

The RNIB is campaigning for an increase in the number of tv programmes which have audio description (AD) from the current 10% to 20%. The narration service describes on-screen action, body language and facial expressions between the programme dialogue. The campaign is being supported by Fawcety Towers actor Andrew Sachs.

#### **11) Focus on Fundraising.**

##### **Charity Collections**

Over £1200 was collected from our “tinshakes” just before Christmas this was significantly down on the previous years. Perhaps an indicator of the ‘credit crunch’ hitting everyone

##### **Fundraising Events**

A couple of recent quiz nights at “The Fox” Public House in Aspenden have raised a total of £369.

##### **Donations**

A number of supporters have sent in money they raised from recent events. For example The Sawbridgeworth and District

Rotary Club donated £1006 raised from a carols evening at Christmas. Widford Handbell Ringers raised £225 from their annual bell ringing event.

As always, a huge thank you to these and all other supports who have donated money to us during this period.

### **Waitrose**

Do any of you shop in Waitrose or have a Waitrose near you? If so, you may be able to help raise money for HSB. Waitrose run a scheme whereby each local branch donates money each month to 3 local good causes. The scheme is quite simple: at the checkout customers receive a token and place it in a box for one of 3 good causes they would most like to support. The more tokens the cause gets the more money it receives.

To stand a chance of being nominated as one of the 3 good causes, the store needs to receive a completed “Community Matters” nomination form (available in each store) for the good cause. Then each month the store’s staff choose which 3 causes will have a box displayed in the store. Even if the good cause doesn’t get chosen straight away, it gets other chances in later months.

With all donations to the Society, please remember to Gift Aid it if you can. And the Society will benefit even further. Please contact us if you need any more information about supporting the Society

### **12) Client Experience**

We would like to pass on David Heath’s experience of using the Assisted Travel Service on a recent train journey.

David travelled from Stevenage to Norwich. He was met at Stevenage train station by a guard who made himself known to David. And then escorted to his seat on the train. The guard contacted Cambridge station (where he had to make a connection) with the time of his arrival and he was met by another guard who took him to his connecting train for Norwich. On arrival in Norwich he was again met by a guard and taken to meet up with his friend who was waiting for him. David says “my journey was very easy and pleasant. I would thoroughly recommend this service to anybody.”

**13) Hertfordshire Police non-emergency calls.**

For all non-emergency calls to Herts police force then the number to call is 0845 33 00 222. This is the number to use to let police know about neighbourhood problems, ask about crime prevention, report a crime (that has already happened) and anything else that is police related but NOT an emergency.

Only call 999 if a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger.

**14) Veterans World**

Veterans World is a publication produced every quarter to raise awareness of the range of help and advice available to veterans, their spouses, partners and dependants.

It contains news on issues affecting veterans as well as information on initiatives, schemes and organizations that offer help to veterans.

To start receiving a copy of the publication contact VeteransWORLD, Room 6303, Service Personnel and

Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool. FY5 3WP. Or email your details to [veterans.world@spva.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:veterans.world@spva.gsi.gov.uk)

Similarly we'd like to make everyone aware of The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help. This is a national charity helping and supporting those who served in the Armed Forces and their dependants. They provide emotional, practical and financial welfare support. If you think you may need their help then contact their Hertfordshire Branch Secretary on 01923 222410

**15) Leonard Cheshire Disability Direct Payment Support Scheme**

This is a free service providing advice and support to individuals in receipt of Direct Payments in Hertfordshire. They can be contacted on 01462 439000 or by email [direct.payment@lcdisability.org](mailto:direct.payment@lcdisability.org)

**16) Change of address**

Sensory services have moved. Their new address and contact information is as follows:

Sensory Services, 18 Upper Ground Floor, Apsley Two, Brindley Way, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP3 9BF. Telephone number through the call centre on 01438 737400

**17) Culture Department Site now accessible by phone**

Thanks to technology developer PhoneAnything, vision-impaired users can now access the entire website of the government Department of Culture, Media and Sport ([www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)) using a touch tone phone. The service

is accessed at local call rates by calling 0845 333 0850 and following the spoken instructions. Navigation is by using the 12 keys of a standard phone layout.

**18) Talking Newspapers**

We've received a copy of the latest publications catalogue of National Talking Newspapers. It includes over 200 national newspaper and magazine titles produced in a variety of accessible audio and full-text formats for print disabled people. The range covers national and Sunday newspaper digests, magazines on family and home; consumer magazines; magazines for women, for men; magazines on gardening; health and welfare etc etc. Something for everyone! As an example, subscribers can take a monthly magazine for just £9 pa on cassette or £15 on CD. If you'd like more information and exactly which titles they have available please call their customer services team on 01435 866102; write to them at National Recording Centre, Browning Road, heathfield, East Sussex or visit their website [www.tnauk.org.uk](http://www.tnauk.org.uk)

**19) Local Talking Newspapers**

Your contact at local Talking Newspaper in Hertfordshire

Bishop Stortford is Richard Barnet 01279 651270

Dacorum is Audrey Mackie 01442 217918

Hertford and District is Joan Flack 01992 304040

Radlett Elstree Boreham and Shenley is Mrs J Scott 01923 8576935

St Albans is Linda Randall 01582 832275

Stevenage and North Herts is Mrs Wilkins 01438 313303

Watford is Mr Andrews 01923 672974

Welwyn and Hatfield is Mrs Blackburn 01438 717806

**20) Patchwork**

The star letter in the March edition of “Popular Patchwork” magazine was contributed by a member of the Tuesday Blind Club in Stevenage, Edith Drake. The letter (including a photograph of her work) told how Edith took up her new hobby of patchwork and quilting despite having vision difficulties. Well done Edith and we hope you’re continuing to enjoy your new hobby.

**21) Sail On Project**

RNIB/Action for Blind People have a few vacancies on their ‘Sail On’ Project, run in association with the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Sailability Programme, during August. These are one-day events being held at RYA centres in London and the south east on various days from August 19<sup>th</sup> to August 27<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Dominic Everett at [dominic.everett@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:dominic.everett@actionforblindpeople.org.uk) for booking forms or further information.

**22) Free Passports for over 78’s**

If you were born on or before 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1929 then you are entitled to a free full 10 year passport. To apply simply send in your application as usual. There’s no need to send any money as your D.O.B. will be recognized and your application will be processed appropriately.

### **23) Hertfordshire Resilience**

This agency is made up of the Police, fire and ambulance services as well as the health service, county and district councils and the Environment Agency. It's purpose is to provide help and information to people in the county in the case of incidents beyond normal expectation such as very severe weather or widespread power failure. Where to get information in a crisis can be key and they provide a list of handy telephone numbers and web addresses which provide essential information in a number of critical issues including school and road closures, bus route changes, health and safety measures and details of reception centres if residents have to leave their homes.

Weather updates and advice –

[www.environmentagency.gov.uk](http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk)

Flood line warning service – 0845 988 118

Hertfordshire Resilience – [www.hertsdirect.org/emergency](http://www.hertsdirect.org/emergency)  
or 01438 737555

For police info – [www.herts.police.uk](http://www.herts.police.uk)

NHS Direct – 0845 46 47

BBC's "Connecting in a Crisis" service –

[www.bbc.co.uk/connectinginacrisis](http://www.bbc.co.uk/connectinginacrisis)

### **24) Free NHS Eye Tests in your home**

The Outside Clinic is the largest and longest established national provider of home eye testing in the United Kingdom. Using the latest portable diagnostic equipment they are able to bring the modern consulting room to the comfort of your own home.

They provide a number of services including Free NHS eye examinations (for those who are eligible), a complete

dispensing service and supply of special lighting and magnifiers. Spectacles are personally delivered and fitted, with any adjustments being made at the time of delivery and there is a totally free aftercare service available throughout the year.

You are entitled to a free NHS eye test at home if you meet all the usual free NHS eye test criteria AND are unable to leave the home unaccompanied or require a home visit on account of a physical or mental disability.

To find out more call The Outside Clinic on 0800 85 44 77 or email them at [info@outsideclinic.com](mailto:info@outsideclinic.com)

## **25) Recognising the symptoms of a stroke**

Although only a hospital test can confirm a stroke for sure, the Face-Arms-Speech-Time (FAST) test is recommended to help you recognise the symptoms of a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA). The FAST test was developed by leading stroke doctors and is used by the emergency services to see if someone has had a stroke or mini-stroke.

Recognising strokes FAST:

**Face:** Has their face drooped or look fallen on one side? Can they smile?

**Arms:** Can the person raise both arms?

**Speech:** Can the person speak clearly and understand what other people are saying?

**Time:** Time to call 999 if you see one or more of these signs.

If the person has failed any of these tests, dial 999 straight away so they can get to hospital for urgent treatment.

Paramedics and other ambulance staff are trained to assess patients with suspected stroke and get them to a hospital quickly.

You can find out more about how to spot the symptoms of a stroke and read about how other people have coped with a stroke by visiting the new dedicated website [www.spotastroke.nhs.uk](http://www.spotastroke.nhs.uk) or by calling the information line on 01234 792032

## **26) Disability Living Allowance**

Thanks to the RNIB's DLA Campaign, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 people with severe visual impairment will be able to claim the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance. The vast majority of people with sight loss experience varying levels of mobility difficulties. Currently the higher rate mobility component of DLA is targeted at those with severe physical, mental health and learning difficulties. When the Government extends the higher rate to people with sight loss, it will be focused on those with the most severe visual impairment. People likely to be included are the following: People with no light perception; People with only light perception; People who can only see hand movement in front of their face; People who have 3/60 visual acuity and who also have a highly restricted field of vision.

People with severe visual impairment currently in receipt of the lower rate and wishing to claim the higher rate would need to complete self-assessment questions and provide evidence of their visual acuity and field of vision. At the time of writing, the details of exactly how to claim are still being worked out by the Department of Works and Pensions.

**27) The Torch Trust**

The Torch Trust provides Christian literature, fellowship and personal support to visually impaired people. The Trust provides Bibles, books, magazines, hymnbooks, daily reading notes in Braille, giant print and audio cassette media. Contact details are

Torch Trust for the Blind

Torch House

Hallaton

Market Harborough

Leicestershire LE16 8UJ

Tel 0870 7700272

Email [infor@torchtrust.org](mailto:infor@torchtrust.org)

**28) National Blind Childrens Society**

Their mission is to enable children who are blind and partially sighted to achieve their educational and recreational goals. Some of the services they provide include; Family Support and Information (providing emotional support, practical advice and timely, quality up-to-date information); Educational Advocacy (independent education advice and specialist support helping children with visual impairment to access appropriate education); ICT & Sensory Equipment; Recreational Activities and CustomEye Books (large print books for leisure and study custom-made to a child's individual needs) If you'd like to contact the Society for more information on what they can offer, their contact details are: National Blind Children's Society, Bradbury House, Market Street, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 3BW Tel no. 01278 764 764. Email is [enquiries@nbcs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nbcs.org.uk)

**29) Age Concern Hertfordshire**

Contact details for Age Concern in Herts are as follows:

Tel 0845 601 3446  
Email [info@acherts.org.uk](mailto:info@acherts.org.uk)  
Website [www.acherts.org.uk](http://www.acherts.org.uk)  
Head Office 01707 323272

There's also an Age Concern Dacorum and their contact details are:

Half Moon Yard  
High Street  
Hemel Hempstead  
HP1 3AE  
Tel 01442 259049  
Website [www.acdacorum.org.uk](http://www.acdacorum.org.uk)  
email [admin@ageconcerndacorum.org.uk](mailto:admin@ageconcerndacorum.org.uk)

**30) Macular Disease Society**

The Macular Disease Society is a self-help society for those diagnosed with any of the eye conditions encompassed by the overall name of Macular Disease. The Society is dedicated to providing information and practical support so that those with the condition may make the most of their remaining vision.

They have a website for lots more information on the services they provide:

[www.maculardisease.org](http://www.maculardisease.org)

Their contact address is: The Macular Disease Society, PO Box 1870, Andover, SP10 9AD and contact telephone no. is 01264 350551.

**31) The Pension Service in Hertfordshire**

Have you considered applying for:

- Winter Fuel Payments

- Attendance Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Social Fund
- Age Related Payments
- Disability Living Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Bereavement Benefit
- Support for dental treatment, prescription charges, eyesight tests and other NHS costs

Do you need assistance in completing an application form, or information on the above benefits?

You can contact Anne Woolstenholmes Local Pension Service Job Centre 38-44 The Forum Stevenage SG1 1EZ and arrange a home visit to help you with these forms and applications. The telephone number is **01438 206560**

Finally.....Once you've finished with this newsletter – please don't throw it in the bin. Think about who else might benefit from reading it. For example, take it along to your optician's, doctor's , dentist's or hospital waiting room.

