



# The Hertfordshire Society for the Blind

"Supporting and empowering people in Hertfordshire with a visual impairment"



Winter 2011  
Issue 130

## Sight News



### **Networking morning at HSB offices Waltham Cross, from left to right**

*Back row:* Cheryl Moy (First Contact), Lorraine Page (First Contact),  
Judith Hyde (HHAS), Zsuzsanna Hybel (Action for Blind People),  
Fay Turner (BEH CVS), John Hood (HSB),  
Hayley Hurst (Sensory Services).

*Front row:* Sue Hoare (First Contact), Sue Warren (Age UK InTouch),  
Helen Kibbler (British Red Cross) Linda Cudmore (HAD)

**News from  
Chief Executive Officer  
Maria Surgenor**

Where has this year gone? Time seems to be whizzing past!

I would, first of all, like to thank the people who took the time to give us feedback on the newsletter as we are trying to provide you with information you will find useful. Your comments are valuable and we hope you will see that we continue to make improvements.

I would like to give you an update on what has been happening here at The Hertfordshire Society for the Blind (HSB). Due to all of the changes that are happening at the hospitals and within Social Services we have had lots of meetings to talk about how we can work together and improve services delivered to blind and partially sighted people and those at risk of losing their sight. We often hear that people do not know about services. They are hard to find and not all of them are offered consistently within the county. Also, due to the reduction in local authority spending, there are concerns that this will result in a reduction of services previously offered by statutory services.

As a result, we are looking at holding a stakeholder event where we can get together with representatives to talk about the eye health care services and eye health pathway for blind and partially sighted people in Hertfordshire and start to shape the way services are developed in the future. If you would like to get involved please call the office on 01707 324680 and we can add your name to the list of interested stakeholders.

We held our Annual General Meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October at the Hemel Social Centre for the Blind in Boxmoor. At the meeting Richard Hill and Phillip Linnegar resigned as Trustees of HSB. Philip has been a Trustee for more years than he cares to remember! His dedication and commitment to ensure HSB is fit for purpose and delivering services to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people has been tireless. We would like to thank Philip for his time, support and hard work and wish him well. Richard has been a Trustee for a year and has decided to stand down due to other commitments. We would like to thank Richard for his time and dedication.

We have a new student social worker on placement with us until June 2012. Alexis Miller is a second year student at Hertfordshire University and she will be working with Dawn in the Hemel area three days per week. Alexis will be engaged with all areas of HSB work and hopefully will get to meet you at the Hemel Social Centre events she is planning to hold in the coming months.

Other things to look out for in this issue!

- New office at Waltham Cross
- Change in Ophthalmology Services at Lister and QE11 hospitals
- Hemel Social Centre events
- HSB Christmas closure
- 'Seeing it my way' consultation
- Digital switchover

*Maria*

#### HSB contact information

The Hertfordshire Society for the Blind (RCN: 1047148)  
The Woodside Centre  
The Commons  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL7 4SE

Sight-Line 01707 324680  
[office@hertsblind.com](mailto:office@hertsblind.com)  
[www.hertsblind.com](http://www.hertsblind.com)

## Fundraising Working Group – can you help?

As funds gets tighter we are looking at different ways we can raise additional income. This includes:

- A text donation service
- Payroll giving service
- Online donation services
- Local community 'tin shakes'
- Social Networks
- Legacies
- Sponsorship

We have also submitted an application to Cranfield Trust for a volunteer who will be looking with us at our Marketing and PR strategy. This will be a long-term project as we see at how we communicate with people to let them know about our services, what we do, how we can support blind and partially sighted people and professionals and organisations with an interest in sight loss services. We are looking at our name, our constitution, our services and will want to talk to you about how you would like to see this develop in the future.

We are considering setting up a Fundraising Working Group. If you are interested in helping please contact HSB on 01707 324680.

## News and views from the Office John Hood Office Manager

Focus on the HSB Newsletter. Ever wondered how the newsletter gets to you? You may not realise it but we send out over 2,500 newsletters in large print, audio, e-mail and Braille formats three times a year. That means that there is quite an operation to get it prepared and make sure it goes out to you on time. After all the items to be included are put together and checked by the editorial team the task of making sure it is sent out in all the formats mentioned above begins. We are helped enormously by teams of volunteers in getting the newsletters sent out.

Once the large print version of the newsletter is received from the printers, volunteers put address labels on envelopes and then collate and place the newsletter, plus any other inserts, into the envelopes - and with over 2,000 of the large print version to post out this is a big task.

The audio version of the newsletter has to be first recorded in voice format onto masters.

Until now this was onto audio cassette but will, in future, be on CD owing to difficulties in continuing to send out the audio newsletters on cassette. Volunteers then run off around 330 copies and put them in mailing pouches ready for posting out.

The audio and large print newsletters are then sorted by postcode ready for collection and distribution by Royal Mail. The e-mail and Braille versions are prepared and sent out by office staff. So there is a lot of work to get the newsletter to you. We hope you enjoy each copy and the effort is worthwhile!

A new way to donate to HSB. You may have heard the recent advertisements on TV and radio about a new way to donate to charities. It is called JustTextGiving by Vodafone.

HSB have joined the scheme and this allows anyone to make a quick and easy donation to us by text from their mobile; simply text HSFB15 followed by your donation amount (for example HSFB15 £5) to 70070. It is as easy as that! Donations can also be Gift Aided. You receive a "thank you" text so you know it has been safely received.

This is a safe and reliable service and every penny of the donation goes to HSB! Your text donations are free, you simply pay the cost of your donation – it will be deducted from your mobile phone credit or added to your mobile phone bill. Do give it a try!

John

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### **The Resource Centre, Welwyn Garden City**

We are now able to open the Resource Centre in Welwyn Garden City three days per week from 10am to 3pm.

Tuesday	Lindsey
Wednesday	Vicky
Thursday	Vanessa

Please book an appointment to talk one to one with them about your needs.

**Tel 01707 324680**

We have lots of new aids and equipment for you to try out as well as lots of information about other support and services. We also have a range of ex-demo aids and equipment for sale at reduced prices and donations so visit the Resource Centre and snap up a bargain!

### **UK Vision Strategy**

UK Vision Strategy has launched a consultation for all blind and partially sighted people and people with an interest in sight loss services. ‘Seeing it my way’ has been launched to get feedback from blind and partially sighted people and to use this feedback to influence how services are delivered. ‘Seeing it my way’ is an initiative which will set out a range of outcomes that blind and partially sighted people say are most important to them. The UK Vision Strategy needs to hear from you to make ‘Seeing it my way’ a reality. They need to make sure they have the right outcomes you would like to have in your life.

The outcomes included in the consultation are:

- That I have someone to talk to
- That I understand my eye condition and the registration process
- That I can access information
- That I have help to move around the house and to travel outside
- That I can look after myself, my health, my home, and my family

- That I can make best use of the sight I have
- That I am able to communicate and to develop skills for reading and writing
- That I have equal access to education and life-long learning
- That I can work and volunteer
- That I can access and receive support when I need it.

If you would like to participate and give your feedback about 'Seeing it my way' outcomes you can contact Stephanie Village on 01278 764 771 but the closing date for this is Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> December. It is a short consultation process so it is important to respond quickly!

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## Ability Gateway

Ability Gateway is a new business recently launched by Danny Miles, who is blind, which is looking to help both those who may be experiencing frustration, anger, low self-esteem or loneliness as a result of living with abuse, addiction or a disability or businesses, charities, community groups, public institutions or official bodies.

They include equality and accessibility at the heart of their service or activity programme. This objective is met through the provision of numerous tailored training, coaching and consultancy services.

Danny is tutoring several courses that North Hertfordshire College will be running in Hitchin at the start of next year. Anyone interested should contact NHC on 01462 424242 to register. Alternatively, contact Danny for further information.

Courses last 10 weeks each. They are

### **Braille**

9<sup>th</sup> January, 9.30-11.00am

### **Creative Writing**

9th January, 11.30am-13.00pm

### **Sports Skills for the Visually Impaired**

10th January, 10.00-1130am

To find out more about Ability Gateway visit their website [www.abilitygateway.yolasite.com](http://www.abilitygateway.yolasite.com) telephone 0845 625065 (local call rate) or email [Danny@abilitygateway.co.uk](mailto:Danny@abilitygateway.co.uk)

**News from West Herts  
by Dawn Bunting  
Outreach Support Worker**

Hello, I would like to start by giving a very warm welcome to our new student social worker Alexis Miller. She is on placement with HSB for the next five months and I hope she enjoys her time with us.

I held my Hemel Social Centre Open Day last month and it was very successful. It was a celebration of what can be achieved for a person with sight loss. I would like to thank everyone for their support.

The Wednesday Blind Club have asked me to promote the club as new members are always welcome. They meet alternate Wednesdays 1.30 till 4pm for a light lunch, entertainment and most of all a good chat. For more information please call Sally on 01442 257 781.

As always, I am looking for Home Visiting Volunteers for the Watford and Hemel area so if you know of a friend / family member with an hour or two to spare please pass our details on.

Best wishes, Dawn

**News from the North  
by Lindsey Wheeler  
Outreach Support Worker**

Hello everyone, just a short update from me.

The Macular Disease Support Group that meets in Letchworth has changed the day they meet to the 3rd WEDNESDAY of the month. This is because our Sight Information Point was on the same day (2nd Wed) so they kindly moved it so that we did not clash. The meetings start at 1.30pm at the Mrs. Howard Hall. For more information please ring me on 07825 005951.

On the 1st November myself, Gill and Glenis (Sight Information Point volunteers) went to Kensington to the Sight Village. To anyone who has not been before I would highly recommend this fair for visually impaired people. A vast area is covered with stands displaying all the latest equipment as well as stands of organisations that run holidays for V.I.Ps. It is a great place to meet people and share experiences.

As some of you may be aware the eye clinics at the Lister and some from the QE2 have moved over to the new Clinicenta building near the main entrance at the Lister.

They are not yet up and running due to teething problems but we will continue to have a presence in the waiting area so look out for myself and our wonderful volunteers who are always available to give you support advice and any information you require to help you with sight loss.

Bye for now, Lindsey

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### **South East Herts Area Update by Vanessa Macdonald Outreach Support Worker**

It has been a good HSB summer for me. My volunteers and I have attended a number of activities promoting HSB.

Over the Bank Holiday weekend in August Michelle and Radley (Michelle's guide dog), Alan, Pauline and I had two HSB charity collections, one at Tesco Brookfield Centre and one at Van Hage, Great Amwell. They were well-worth doing – we raised a grand total of £600 which will go towards raising the profile of HSB.

In September we attended the 'Celebrating our Community' festival in Cedars Park, near Waltham Cross. This was a well attended event and we gave the public information regarding the services of HSB.

We had a very effective Open Day at Wolsey Hall, Cheshunt on 27<sup>th</sup> September with 10 other organisations. A great deal of helpful information was shared with the public.

Numbers at my Sight Information Points at Cheshunt and Ware Road have been dropping off recently. With the winter round the corner I wondered if you would like me to visit you at home with your friends and family. I would be delighted to come to a club, residential housing (perhaps you could arrange a coffee morning) or to your home, with a selection of aids and equipment that might help you in daily life. Please phone me on the number shown below and I'll arrange a mutually convenient date to visit you.

I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2012.

Vanessa



07825 992950 or 01707 324680

**News from Central Herts  
by Vicky Palumbo  
Outreach Support Worker**

Hello

We are in the process of learning about the new set-up with the eye clinics and what services are being offered at each hospital. Hopefully, things will settle down soon but if you are having any issues give me a call.

I have been trying to raise our charity's profile. I am hoping to be able to enlist more volunteers, drum up more financial support, inform service users we are here to help with any issues they may have as a result of their sight loss.

HSB is taking part in the Dragons Apprentice with St George's School, Harpenden where I believe they are planning on holding an auction to raise money for us.

Following a presentation I gave at the University of Hertfordshire we have been selected as one of their charities of the year.

If you are having any difficulties with anything regarding your sight loss give me a call.

Vicky 07825 330649.

**Take part in 'Seeing it my way'**

Help us make sure every blind and partially sighted person has access to the same range of information, advice and practical support by encouraging them to take part in 'Seeing it my way'.

'Seeing it my way' is a new initiative developed so that every person with sight loss across the UK gets the support they need. It sets out a range of outcomes that people have told us are important to them, such as the need for emotional support, mobility and independence. Developed by the sight loss sector, 'Seeing it my way' is endorsed by the UK Vision Strategy.

So that 'Seeing it my way' can really make a difference in changing sight loss services we need feedback from blind and partially sighted people to make sure we have the right outcomes.

To take part, blind and partially sighted people should read 'Seeing it my way', which can be downloaded, and then complete the [online survey](#).

Alternatively call Stephanie Village at the National Blind Children's Society on 01278 764 771 for a copy of the document or to give feedback by phone.

## **It's all about working in partnership ...**

We have been working with Action for Blind People by holding events where people can find out more about Assisted Technology to help blind and partially sighted people find out about and use technology and products designed to make living with sight loss easier and to help people retain or regain their independence. Also we are working closely with their Welfare Rights Officer and Housing Co-ordinators to make sure we are able to offer benefit and housing support and information services.

In addition, we have a partnership agreement with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). They can arrange a home visit for one of their advisors to come to talk to you about your benefits and give money advice. For more information contact the office on 01707 324680.

Furthermore, we are developing relationships and plan to work in partnership with RNIB Technical Support Volunteers to offer home visits to enable blind and partially sighted volunteers make the most of the technology they have and offer support and training with new equipment.

We are also working in partnership with Guide Dogs by holding joint events in the county to raise awareness. We now have an agreement in place with Guide Dogs and HSB as part of the My Guide project whereby Guide Dogs deliver sighted guide training to HSB staff and volunteers to enable HSB to match sighted guide trained volunteers to blind and partially sighted people to enable them to get out and about and regain their independence.

We have been holding sight awareness training sessions at GP surgeries by working closely with the Practice Management Network to raise awareness of issues blind and partially sighted people face accessing GP services. We hope to continue to hold these training sessions and raise awareness. One thing you can do. All GP surgeries will have, or will be looking at setting up, a Patient Participation Group (PPG). If you want to raise awareness of the issues you face accessing your surgery contact your GP and ask about their PPG.

## SuperCheck2

We have been testing a new blood glucose monitoring system called the SuperCheck2. This testing kit has an audio function which reads out the blood sugar result. It is easy to use and appears to be an ideal choice for people with a visual impairment with type1 diabetes who also need to test their blood sugar frequently. The SuperCheck2 starter kit can be bought direct from the suppliers at £25.99. Your GP or diabetes nurse should be able to get you the starter kit FREE of charge if they contact the suppliers direct.

For more information contact the HSB office on 01707 324680.

### **NEW OFFICE NOW OPEN**

The Herts. Society for the Blind  
60-61 Bartholomew Court  
High Street  
Waltham Cross EN8 7JU

To arrange a visit to view specialist equipment to assist with daily living and get practical help and advice, phone Vanessa on 07825 992950 or 01707 324680 or email [Vanessa.macdonald@hertsblind.com](mailto:Vanessa.macdonald@hertsblind.com)

## New Method of Benefit Payment DWP consult on implementation

While most people now receive welfare benefit payments through their bank account the DWP retained a cheque service for a number of vulnerable clients who did not have accounts. However, payment by cheque will be phased out during 2012. This will be replaced by a 'Simple Payment Card' which can be taken to a PayPoint outlet to access payments when they are due.

The DWP is consulting with organisations about the implementation of these proposals and the Money Advice Unit have been getting feedback from service users who currently receive cheques about the information they propose to send out.

We will keep you informed of how this progresses when we have more information from the DWP and Money Advice Unit.

# SAMARITANS

Samaritans offer confidential non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Volunteers offer support by responding to phone calls, e-mails and letters. Alternatively, people can visit our branches to see a volunteer in person.

The service is offered by trained volunteers and is entirely dependent on voluntary support. Local branches of Samaritans are located in Hitchin, Luton, Ware and Watford.

You can contact us on 08457 90 90 90 for the price of a local call. You can also e-mail Samaritans at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or write to Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling FK8 2SA.

## A few facts

- It is estimated that across England and Wales there are 140,000 attempted suicides every year; that's one attempt every four minutes.

- In the UK for people aged 15-24 suicide is the second biggest cause of death after road accidents
- Every six seconds someone makes contact with Samaritans
- Nationally Samaritans receive over five million contacts per year.

## We work in the local community visiting and building relationships with:

### Festivals

Our Festival team attend events and are available 24/7 to listen to Festival goers who need support and need to talk about their feelings.

### Prisons

Samaritans offers a number of ways for prisoners to get the support they need from our volunteers visiting prisons to the Listener scheme which trains prisoners to offer confidential emotional support to their fellow inmates.

### Railways

We are also working in partnership with Network Rail to reduce the numbers of suicides on the railway.

## **Schools and Colleges**

We are reaching out to young people, advising them that we are available to listen at anytime.

## **Local Support Organisations**

We visit local charities and support groups to talk about our services and to find out more about their projects and how we can work together.

When we started, nearly 60 years ago, we were the first telephone help-line. There are now many specialist help-lines but we are still here for anyone experiencing feelings of distress and despair whoever they are and whatever they are going through.

Samaritan Volunteer

## **HSB Christmas Opening Hours**

Office Closes

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011

Office Opens

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012

## **Audio Sight News**

We have had to look at how we produce our newsletter in audio. We are unable to source audio cassettes and the recording and duplicating equipment we use to produce our audio cassette is continually breaking down and in dire need of repair and service. The estimate for this means it is not cost effective to repair and service. As a result we have had to make the decision to start to produce our newsletter in audio CD format. We have been developing this over the summer and there have been a few successful trials. However we have now developed partnership arrangements with Welwyn and Hatfield Talking Newspaper which is going to read our newsletter and help with the copy and duplication process.

If you want to receive the newsletter in CD format please contact the office on 01707 324680.

If you do not have access to a CD player but would like to receive it in this format contact the office as British Wireless for the Blind Fund may be able to offer you a set by means of a FREE long-term loan.

**Cliffden Hotel, Teignmouth,  
South Devon,  
by Terry Knight  
HSB Volunteer**



Earlier this year my wife, Esther, and I were discussing where we might go on holiday as, because of personal circumstances, we had not been away for six years. She suggested that we have a week's break at the Cliffden Hotel in Teignmouth, South Devon, one of four hotels run by Action for Blind People. I had already been to The Russell Hotel in Bognor Regis and Windermere Manor in the Lake District when I worked as a volunteer for Action and knew about the fourth, the Lauriston at Weston-Super-Mare. After talking it over we agreed to book at the Cliffden for the second week in October.

The hotel is a former Victorian country house, suitably converted, set in seven acres of well-cared for grounds. Nothing was too much for the dedicated staff who have been trained in visual awareness and the chefs in the restaurant offered first class meals which included both traditional and modern dishes. A range of bar snacks and cream teas were also available.

The Cliffden boasts a total of 48 bedrooms, all of them spacious and attractively decorated and providing en suite facilities. Some of them have spectacular views – our's looked towards the sea. Every bedroom contains a full range of other facilities, including a radio cassette player, a remote controlled television, a talking alarm clock and an easy to use telephone.

For those people who prefer to do self-catering the hotel also possesses a comfortable Coach House containing four well appointment bedrooms, living room, dining room and fully equipped kitchen with central heating throughout.

The grounds are particularly appealing and include a spend area for guide dogs. There were a number of these highly trained animals staying with their owners during our time at the hotel. One family had three, two working and one retired.

The Clifden also possesses a luxurious indoor swimming pool measuring 25m x 7.5m. I had not been in the water since attending the Royal National College for the Blind in the early 1990s and soon found I was out of practice!

Although we planned our days out the hotel arranged a number of outings which we believe were much enjoyed by those guests who went on them. A range of entertainment, including a musician, a bingo session and a quiz were laid on in the evenings as well as a raffle on our last day and I was fortunate enough to win a bottle of my favourite red wine.

Naturally enough, the hotel caters for blind and partially sighted people but those who are not visually impaired are also welcome. So if you are thinking of planning a holiday next year why not give the Clifden a try. You will certainly not be disappointed.

Phone 01626 770052 or go to their website

[www.visionhotels.co.uk](http://www.visionhotels.co.uk)

For more details of nystagmus contact the group's information development manager, John Sanders, on 0845 634 2630 or 029 2045 4242 or E-mail: [john.sanders@nystagmusnet.org](mailto:john.sanders@nystagmusnet.org)

## **Feedback from Terry Knight regarding Nystagmus Network**

Members of Nystagmus Network, a group for people who have involuntary eye movements, held their Open Day in Harrow on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

The event started with the annual meeting and a networking session was laid on for professionals, including teachers, hospital staff, rehabilitation workers and charity employees. This was followed by a talk entitled "Congenital Nystagmus is a developmental disorder" by Professor Chris Harris, a neuroscientist and Nystagmus Network's scientific adviser. People with Congenital Nystagmus will have had it from birth or infancy whereas those with Acquired Nystagmus find that the world is moving around most or all of the time.

Following lunch an interactive session on education was staged. A number of people gave their personal experiences of nystagmus. A short break followed before a feedback session and questions and answers with a panel of experts. The day ended with closing comments by the group's chairman, Richard Wilson.

## Roger Cole is a HSB Volunteer who regularly assists at the monthly Sight Information Point at Wolsey Hall

### ROGER'S STORY

My number one passion is music. Even when I was at school I got involved with the school Discos and carried on doing mobile DJ-ing through my twenties and into my early thirties.



It was around that time that I found out that I had Retinitis Pigmentosa, a degenerative eye condition that I was told would eventually leave me blind. So with this news in mind I decided to concentrate on my day job as an acrylic fabricator and leave my DJ-ing interests on the shelf, that is until a few years ago when I decided to join a local hospital radio station based in Welwyn Garden City. I enjoyed helping with the live shows and found the training invaluable.

The experience rekindled my passion for music and presenting so I approached RNIB's Insight Radio with a view to doing more radio training and improving my presenting skills. They agreed to give me some one to one tuition.

After five months in their studios I was asked to create a show based solely around Eighties music and for me that is the decade I remember most vividly. It was a time of school discos, 'A' levels and starting my first job so I jumped at the chance and said YES.

Since then I have been co-producing my show PURE EIGHTIES and getting it ready for its debut at the end of October 2011 on RNIB's Insight Radio. The show focuses on the cool bands and the great music that was around in the 1980's. I hope if you love your eighties music you will enjoy this trip back in time.

“One thing I have learned over the last few years is never give up on yourself, there's always a way to reach your goals no matter what life throws at you!!”

PURE EIGHTIES is on every Monday night at 7pm at : [www.insightradio.co.uk](http://www.insightradio.co.uk) on SKY channel 0188 and on FREESAT channel 777

Roger

P.S. Don't miss the Christmas Day and New Year's Day shows both on at 3pm.

## **2012 London Olympics – A volunteer’s story (our own George Hatchman)**

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005 I was really pleased when London were awarded the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. I wanted to be part of the Games, too late for me to be a competitor but I could put myself forward as a Volunteer. The chance to be a part of the Olympics in the city where I was born was an opportunity I didn’t want to miss.

I kept my eye on the London Olympic website and found there were two volunteering opportunities open to me. The one I really wanted was as an Olympic Games Volunteer, who would be known as a Games Maker. However, the London Assembly were also looking for volunteers, called London Ambassadors, to staff numerous stands around the Capital during both the Olympic and Paralympic Games to provide information and directions to the many visitors expected.

Over 250,000 people applied for the 70,000 posts as Games Makers. A total of 100,000 would be interviewed. Over 45,000 applied for the 7,000 London Ambassadors roles, they would

be interviewing 10,000 people. I was fortunate enough to be selected for both interviews, which were carried out in June and July this year.

My London Ambassador interview was held in a hall at the Edmonton Green Shopping Centre. There were twenty-three other applicants going through the process at the same time as myself. We had to provide our passports and driving licences as proof of who we were and after an introductory briefing by the Team Leader were then split into teams of four. Each team were then allocated three assessors.

The assessors informed us what we were to do at each stage, marked us on our performance and carried out a 15 minute interview with each of us in turn. The whole process took about 60 minutes.

A couple of weeks later I attended my Games Maker interview at the Excel Centre in Docklands.

The 90 minute session included a film by Sebastian Coe and talks by past British Gold Medal winners, Sir Steve Redgrave and Dame Kelly Holmes among others, highlighting the importance of volunteers to the

success of the Games. We also found out about the Olympic Venues and the Olympic Village, and how and where the Games Makers would be used. Our final task was a 30 minute, in depth, interview with one of the recruitment experts at the session. In both cases we were informed we would be told if we had been selected towards the end of 2011.

With the two interviews over there was nothing to do now but wait. Hopefully I will have some positive news for the spring 2012 issue of Sight News.

Happy Christmas and have a great Olympic New Year

George



ULTRACANE™

ALWAYS ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS GIVING YOU THE ABILITY TO STEP AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE.

Ever wondered how the study of bats, brains and electronics combine to produce an award winning electronic mobility aid for blind and vision impaired people? Well, we invite you to find out how.

Sound Foresight Technology Ltd is proud to be re-launching the new UltraCane™ an advanced mobility aid incorporating ultrasound technology.

It utilises a standard long cane, but works by detecting obstacles in the users path by emitting ultrasound from two sensors on the handle. One sensor detects obstacles in the users path, whilst the second sensor detects obstacles at head height, then feeds back the information to the user via two tactile buttons on the handle, allowing them to walk safely around the obstacle.

We also offer a training programme to rehabilitation workers and mobility instructors. Please contact us for your free copy or to learn more about the UltraCane.



Order online at: [www.ultracane.com](http://www.ultracane.com) or call: 01423 359711 or email us at: [info@ultracane.com](mailto:info@ultracane.com)



## Independence is the aim for well-established charity

What does a well-established charity of more than 50 years standing do when it loses all its funding?

Hertfordshire Action on Disability (HAD) specialists keep calm and remain positive by planning for an independent future.

HAD, whose key services include supplying disability equipment, accessible transport and driving assessments and tuition, has taken big steps in securing that future since learning earlier this year that local government cuts will end all funding by 2014.

We have already increased revenue significantly at our equipment centre where a huge range of disability products are sold by our team of Occupational Therapists and their Advisors.

Stock has recently been reviewed to create a range that not only aids independent living but also ensures customer comfort and safety. Items such as wheelchairs, mobility scooters and riser recline

chairs are popular sellers and smaller items are now available via HAD's brand new online shop.

"We launched our new website and online shop at Naidex in October", HAD's Business Development Manager Linda Cudmore explains.

"As a charity our mission is to promote independence, mobility and freedom of choice for disabled and older people. Our online shop ensures this is made possible.

"Our Occupational Therapists have written extensive guides on self assessment and selection of suitable equipment that will enhance daily living, comfort and safety. We don't want people to waste money on products that are unsuitable or unsafe to use."

The charity has already reached people in Yorkshire, Essex, Bucks, Notts, Avon and, recently, the Shetlands! Meanwhile, the local community is finding the convenience of buying on-line, equally helpful.

"Contenance and mobility products are proving to be popular and our 24 hour delivery service is a real bonus," Linda continued. "We are proud to be helping change lives in a positive way for disabled and older people."

The organisation is also working hard to increase its membership. Fundraising is also being stepped up.

Tel: 01707 324581

Email: [info@hadnet.org.uk](mailto:info@hadnet.org.uk)

Web: [www.hadnet.org.uk](http://www.hadnet.org.uk)

## Merlin LCD

The **Merlin LCD** has helped thousands of people with macular degeneration and low vision regain the ability to view photos, crosswords, puzzles, newspapers, magazines, confidential documents and food packaging.

**Merlin LCD** is simple to use with just three controls and magnifies over 70 times. **Merlin LCD** has a moveable platform which enables navigation around the page very simple. **Merlin LCD** is a full colour unit and comes with a choice of 28 colour select combinations.

**enhanced**  
**vision**



Best value  
in **sight!**

For a FREE home demonstration and no obligation trial  
call 0115 9442317

## **What is the digital TV switchover?**

TV across the UK is going digital. The existing analogue TV signal will be switched off and replaced with a new, stronger digital TV signal.

## **Why is switchover happening?**

Switchover is happening so that Freeview services (digital TV through an aerial) can be extended to people who cannot currently get them, including those who receive their signal from a relay transmitter. It also allows new services, such as High Definition channels, to become more widely available.

## **What do I need to do next?**

### **If you have Freeview, BT Vision, or Top Up TV**

Re-tune at each stage of switchover to avoid losing channels.

### **Sky TV, Freesat from Sky, Freesat or Virgin Media**

If you have one of these services on **all** your TVs you won't need to do anything.

### **Analogue TV (i.e. five channels or fewer)**

Convert your TV to digital or you will lose channels.

## **If you're 75 and over, or eligible disabled**

Call the Switchover Help Scheme, they can provide everything you need to keep watching your TV.

## **When do I switch?**

The Crystal Palace transmitter group, made up of the main transmitter and its local relays, serves Greater London and parts of the Home Counties. The transmitter switches in two stages on 4<sup>th</sup> April and 18<sup>th</sup> April to give people the chance to check their equipment.

**It is important your TV is converted by stage one.** If you have Freeview, then you will need to re-tune on both Switchover dates.

### **Magnilink X Reader**

A Magnilink X Reader is available in return for a donation.

For further information please contact Vanessa on 07825 992950

## What is a **FREE** Home Fire Safety Check?

A Home Fire Safety Check is a completely **FREE** service provided by **Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service** with the aim of reducing fires in Hertfordshire.

- It is a risk assessment to identify any fire risks or hazards in your home
- It is advice on how to eliminate or reduce identified fire risks or hazards in your home
- It provides personally tailored fire safety advice on making an escape plan and having a bedtime routine
- We will also check that any existing smoke detectors are correctly sited and working and where appropriate replace or fit a new one free of charge.

To arrange your **FREE** Home Fire Safety Check simply call **0300 123 4046** or you can visit **[www.hertsdirect.org/fire](http://www.hertsdirect.org/fire)** where you will find a link to the online referral form.



**Please complete this with as much information as you can.**

Working to protect. Acting to save.  
[www.hertsdirect.org/fire](http://www.hertsdirect.org/fire)

### **Hello from Alexis Miller HSB Student Social Worker**

Hi, I am in my second year at Hertfordshire University studying social work. I am fortunate to be working on my practice placement with HSB, based primarily at the Social Centre for the Blind in Boxmoor. Meeting people who use the centre has been an interesting experience and very helpful to my learning.

The hard work that Dawn puts into making the centre a welcoming place and the help she and her volunteers offer is obvious and I am looking forward to continuing my placement there and the opportunities it offers me.

Alexis

## Blind Person's Tax Allowance

What is this allowance? It allows the claimant an additional £1960 income free of tax in addition to the normal personal allowances (worth about £7.60 per week to a basic rate taxpayer.)

### Do I qualify?

If you are on the local authority's register of blind people you can claim but in fact only one third of people who are entitled to claim are actually claiming!

### What if I don't pay tax?

If you are married or in a civil partnership you can transfer any unused allowance to your spouse or partner so they can benefit.

### How do I claim?

You can contact HMRC direct on 0845 366 7887 or if you are 60 or over, on a modest income, Tax Help for Older People (an independent charity) offer a free advice and help service. Simply call 0845 601 3321 and discuss it with a trained advisor who will, if necessary, arrange for a tax professional volunteer to meet to formulate your claim or visit [www.taxvol.org.uk](http://www.taxvol.org.uk). You can claim for back years dependent on your circumstances.

John Whiting, Regional  
Co-ordinator

## Vision in Hertfordshire

An exciting new club is opening at HSB's offices in Waltham Cross at 60 – 61 Bartholomew Court, High Street, EN8 7JU

- The Club plans to meet on Wednesdays from 10.30am to 12.30pm.
- We hope it will give you a chance to exchange ideas and discuss issues with other visually impaired people.
- We aim to provide opportunities to bring in various speakers, arrange trips out and much more!

For further information please contact:

Fiona on 07564 910651 or email [fiona.musgrove@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fiona.musgrove@yahoo.co.uk) or Vanessa at HSB 07825 992950

Watford Central Library have recently launched a book group for the visually impaired and anyone who enjoys listening to books on tape/CD or through their MP3 players.

For further information please contact

Carrie Wright  
Library Assistant  
01923 338496

# Monthly Sight Information Points

<b>Cheshunt</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday</b> Wolsey Hall, Windmill Lane, Cheshunt, EN8 9AA	<b>10.30 – 12.30</b>
<b>Hemel Hempstead</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday</b> Social Centre for the Blind, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1QU	<b>10.00 – 12.00</b>
<b>Letchworth</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday</b> The Multiple Sclerosis Centre, Unit 30, Campus 5, Letchworth, SG6 2JF (Nr. Sainsburys)	<b>10.30 – 12.30</b>
<b>Royston</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday</b> Royston Library, Market Hill, Royston, SG8 9JN	<b>10.00 – 12.00</b>
<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday</b> St Albans Library, Upper Level, Maltings Shopping Centre, St Albans.	<b>10.30 – 12.30</b>
<b>Stevenage</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday</b> Stevenage Resource Centre, Chells Way, Stevenage, SG2 0LT (Glebe Shopping Centre)	<b>10.00 – 12.00</b>
<b>Ware Road</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday</b> Ware Road Day Service, Ware Road, Hertford, SG13 7TG	<b>10.00 – 12.00</b>
<b>Watford</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Friday</b> Stanborough Centre, 609 St. Albans Road, Garston, Watford, WD25 9JL	<b>10.00 – 12.00</b>

**Hertfordshire Society for the Blind**

**E-mail: [office@hertsblind.com](mailto:office@hertsblind.com)**

**Tel: 01707 324680**

**Website: [www.hertsblind.com](http://www.hertsblind.com)**

