



**Berkshire
Vision**

Supporting the Visually Impaired
www.berkshirevision.org.uk
Charity number 1146413

INSIGHT

Summer 2022

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And so much more!



Hello from the new chair of Trustees

Hello from your new chair of Trustees – Jane Veys

After a career spanning several decades in all things relating to eye health education, that has taken me around the world from a base in Berkshire, I am super excited to take on this local role to help drive this wonderful charity onwards and upwards.

As an eye care professional, I may physically have sat in a chair opposite you, but as chair of Trustees for Berkshire Vision, I aim to sit side by side with our members and ensure your needs are at the centre of everything we strive to do.

I have had the privilege to meet many of you over the last two years, whilst volunteering for a variety of activities, including walks, golf, children's tennis, telephone befriending and sight loss awareness training.

“Variety’s the very spice of life.
That gives it all its flavour”
William Cowper English Poet 1785

I love variety and I love the outdoors (especially in the summer!) and as we get out and

about more I’m keen to hear more of your views about things that matter to you.



Photo: Jane playing Tennis with a young Berkshire Vision member

Raffle tickets are now on sale for the Big Charity Draw so if you want to be in with a chance of winning **£1000 in John Lewis vouchers** while supporting the running of our services, do speak to a member of staff at an activity or when they are supporting you through our other services about buying some.



Living Well with Sight Loss Course – Next Dates - **Tuesday 4th and Thursday 6th October 2022. 10.30am – 3.30pm.** Call us on 0118 987 2803 to find out more or book your place.



In July we held an **art exhibition** of our members work. We invited local funders, dignitaries and businesses to highlight the work that we do. Thank you to those that allowed us to exhibit their art.



We are delighted to share that we are **The Oracle Shopping Centre's** charity partner for the next year.

If you use our website you might have noticed a **new accessibility tool**, it can increase the size of text, change contrast, colour and more. You can find it on the left hand side of the screen and it will toggle down as you scroll. We'll be making a few other changes to our website over the next few months to help you access information more easily.



We are no longer collecting used stamps or old coins so please do not send them to Midleton House. There are still lots of ways to support our work without spending any money such as shopping through **AmazonSmile** or **Easy Fundraising**.



Photo: Our art exhibitors

Activities Update

What a summer it has been! The activities programme is in full swing and we have seen the return of several seasonal sports including tennis, golf and swimming. It has been wonderful to enjoy the warmer weather with three boat trips that have enabled individuals from different areas of the county to meet one another.



In June we boarded the Rose of Hungerford to cruise along the River Kennet whilst enjoying a cream team provided by the Tutti Pole. We also had boat trips running from Caversham and Runnymede.

The various social groups (**18-35, dual sensory loss, Mid Berkshire, West Berkshire and Aktiveyes**) have been busy exploring new and exciting opportunities including Go Karting, escape rooms, chocolate workshops, learning to use a



pottery wheel and museum tours. Please refer to the monthly calendar to explore the range of activities on offer to meet different needs, ages and areas.



Photo: Our 18-35 group go karting

Our members have been busy planting and gardening in two raised beds at Shaw House. It has been wonderful to witness everyone getting stuck in whether they have green fingers or not. To showcase everyone's hard work,

the raised beds have been entered into the local competition called **Newbury in Bloom**.

Autumn will soon be upon us, which will mean the return of our indoor sports as well as some theatre trips. If you have not joined us for activities before, the team would love to welcome you. Please call us in the office to find out more.



Photo: Tandem Cycling at Windsor Great Park



Photo: The raised beds at Shaw House



Eyes on our Futures

Supporting you to explore new opportunities.

If you are looking to build your confidence, learn new skills or try something new; but are not sure where to start, we can help...

ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

Our Eyes on our Futures project offers you one to one support to help you plan where you are right now, where you want to be, what you want to do, and how to get there. This could be a college course, a volunteering opportunity or a work placement or job.

WORKSHOPS

As well as one to one support, we run workshops on a wide variety of topics including: confidence, planning and organising, new opportunities, volunteering and work placements. We also have guest speakers who share with us their journeys as visually impaired

people into work. You can read about one of our guest speakers, Ethan on page 8 and 9.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

If you are looking to enter training, work placements and employment we can provide support and guidance to you and an employer and help with Access to Work, technology and training.

If you would like to find out more about how we can help you explore new opportunities please get in touch with **Kerrie** on **0118 987 2803** or email **employability@berkshirevision.org.uk**

Ashley's Volunteering Journey

Photo: Ashley, Jennie and
Percy the guide dog



Ashley lost his sight at five years old. He contracted hydrocephalus – a condition where fluid accumulates in the brain and whilst in hospital caught Meningitis. Ashley is totally blind in one eye and has only 1.5% vision in the other and sometimes his sight goes completely – for example he might be able to see a lamppost and then it might disappear. Ashley struggled with his sight loss diagnosis for a long time but realised he had to take control and make changes. His GP referred him to **Berkshire Vision** and started the process of getting Ashley a Guide Dog. Slowly everything started to fall into place as he took hold of his life and accepted his sight loss. Within six months Ashley had moved into his flat with Percy his wonderful golden labrador Guide Dog. He met Charlotte, his wife, and they got married in Summer 2019 with Percy as the ring bearer.

Ashley is supported by Jennie, one of our Sight Loss Support Officers and more recently Ashley has been working with our Employability Officer, as he is keen to get back to work after his health caused him to be signed off in 2008. Ashley started with some volunteering in a charity shop to allow him to build up his confidence. This was working really well for Ashley and he was enjoying having purpose again, but unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the charity shop closed in early 2021. Ashley had however proven himself and was taken on by his old manager in a new charity shop in Newbury. Having built up his confidence and gained valuable skills and experience Ashley is now working with us to seek paid employment.

Meet our Employability mentor – Ethan



Photo:
Ethan

Ethan is 25 years old and comes from the North East Coast of Scotland. Both Ethan and his brother have Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), although they both have very different experiences of it. Being diagnosed at the age of five, Ethan's expression of RP has primarily affected his peripheral vision but in recent years has begun to affect his central vision.

From an early age, Ethan knew that he wanted to be an engineer. He worked hard at school with the help of a scribe and went onto university at age seventeen to study chemical engineering in Edinburgh.

In 2014 Ethan started his five year integrated Masters degree and managed very well for the first couple of years.

The University was very supportive and he was able to use adjustments on his PC to

Ethan is one of our Employability Mentors, working with Kerrie, our Employability Officer, to help and inspire our members to build confidence to explore the options that are available to them. These could be college courses, volunteering opportunities, or looking at ways back into employment.

help his vision as well as extra accommodations for exams. However, in his fourth year Ethan experienced a significant degeneration of his sight and he found that it was necessary for more and more technical adaptations to study effectively. This rapid decline in his vision was quite a shock to Ethan, he felt like a rug had been pulled out from underneath his feet and that everything became more challenging. By the end of his fourth year Ethan had failed several modules.

The University were very supportive and due to the mitigating circumstances he was able to re-sit the year to re-attempt the four modules that he failed. He passed these with excellent grades and graduated in June of 2019, opting to take the Bachelor's degree.

After graduation Ethan started to look for jobs and had several unsuccessful attempts, but these were not due to his vision. He finally found a job in Berkshire and started in September 2020 (albeit remotely due to covid). His employer, a defence contractor, has been very helpful, but Ethan has found that he has had to personally pursue the support arrangements he needs.

Despite a tough few years Ethan has managed to build his confidence up and has built a mental framework for dealing with his sight loss.

“For someone living with sight loss, make peace or some loose acceptance with it. Stop fighting it and you will have removed a barrier that is holding you back”

Ethan wanted to share his experience with other young people living with sight loss as he wished that he had come to this realisation sooner. Last year, Ethan got in touch with Berkshire Vision and has now started working with Kerrie to help mentor other people with sight loss.

If you would like to find out more about how our employability programme can help you, please get in touch with Kerrie on **0118 978 2803** or email **employability@berkshirevision.org.uk**

Children & Young People

Our younger members have enjoyed more fun, craft, sports and socialising over these past few months. We tried **Goalball**, taught by a former **GB Olympian goalball athlete, Adam** and have played tennis. **Ice skating at Bracknell** was a big highlight as well as visits to **Thames Valley Adventure Park, Swings and Smiles in Thatcham, and Camp Mohawk in Wargrave**. Some of us were brave and held snakes and beautiful beasts at the **One World Animals** session.



Photo: Jubilee Craft Session

In May, we celebrated the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** by having a fun day making crowns and bunting, decorating crown shaped biscuits and playing games. We also played tennis and some teens had a **Try a Train event** to help them gain confidence in travelling on trains.

Photo:
Goalball
with Adam

Photo:
Ice Skating: growing
in confidence

Photo:
A ride on
a sledge





Photo: Try a Train event

Tennis by young Berkshire Vision member, August, aged 15

I went to play tennis with Berkshire Vision and thoroughly enjoyed the session though it was cut short by a heavy downpour of rain! The sport was made accessible by using tennis balls with bells in them so they could be heard. Everyone was very understanding of everyone's different needs. Communication was very important in making the sport as accessible as possible for example before serving the ball you would ask whether your opponent was ready or not. The coach with my group was extremely helpful and I learned a lot from him. We especially worked on backhands because that was something I found challenging. He was patient with us and enthusiastic about

the sport that you could tell he was passionate about. We did a couple of games which helped me get used to the format, scoring, and serving. Lots of people took part and I could tell that all of them enjoyed and appreciated the whole experience.

Photo:
August
holding a
python at
One World
Animals
Session



The day we caught the train

By young Berkshire Vision member
Dayzie, aged 13

Photo:
Teens on the
train platform



I'm Dayzie, I'm 13 and I have no sight at all. I travel by train with my mum. I love catching the train because I love listening to all the stops the train has to stop at, it makes me keen to learn about the places. Travelling by train is so much more interesting than someone else driving you to places. The passenger assistance I use is just a ramp because the step is a challenge but luckily the ramp makes that more accessible.

My mum and I find the passenger assist team really helpful and really friendly. I get around the trains and the stations by my mum sight guiding me.

On Thursday in the February half term, Berkshire Vision and Great Western Railway put together an event for teenagers to make them feel like they can get on a train without hesitation.

At the Berkshire Vision office, two people from Great Western Railway gave us a talk about passenger assist and what we can do ourselves to make travelling by train more accessible for us with a visual impairment. Because we were going to the station, it would only make sense to then hold and touch things you could find at stations. My favourite thing to touch was the part of the train track.



Photo: Holding items you find at stations

After we felt some of the things you could find at stations, we then all travelled to the local station. When we got to the station, we then got an audio-described tactile brief tour of the station. After that, we got on our train and travelled to Black Water station. It was really nice to catch the train with some of my friends from Berkshire Vision, everyone really enjoyed it.

PASSENGER ASSIST

To make catching the train accessible, one of the most useful and easiest things you can do is booking passenger assist. Passenger assist is an access arrangement which will help you navigate around stations, platforms and trains. The service offers support such as a ramp, a helping hand, a sight guide along with so much more. To find out more about passenger assist, go onto the **Great Western Railway website** or you could download the **passenger assist app**.

BUT HOW DO YOU BOOK PASSENGER ASSIST?

To book your assistance, phone up **08001971329** or as previously mentioned, download the passenger assistance app for free.



Photo: Using an accessible information board

Understanding deafblindness

An article by DeafBlindUK

Photo:
Looking at an iPad

A lady once came up to our stand at a low vision event. She had sight impairments and was wearing two hearing aids, indicating to us that she was hard of hearing. She saw that we were representing Deafblind UK and said to me “wouldn’t it be awful to be deafblind, those poor people!” What she didn’t realise was that she herself was actually one of nearly 400,000 deafblind people in the UK.

Despite common misconceptions, deafblindness actually means a combined sight and hearing impairment to the point where someone’s communication, mobility and ability to access information are impacted. Deafblindness comes on a huge spectrum ranging from someone struggling to see and hear the TV right through to them not being able to see or hear anything at all. However, many people with deafblindness are able to hear and/or see something.



- Many people with low vision don’t identify themselves as being ‘deafblind’ but might be aware that they “don’t hear as well as they used to”. It is important for us all to recognise the signs of sight and hearing impairments in ourselves and in our friends and family - and to understand that support is available if we need it.
- Dual sensory loss is a completely different condition to a sight loss plus a hearing loss. An easy way to think of this is to imagine hearing impairment as the colour blue and visual impairment as

the colour yellow. When the two sensory impairments, or in this case the colours blue and yellow, come together they become something new – dual sensory impairment or in this analogy – green; a totally new colour with different properties.

Early signs of deafblindness include:

- Asking people to repeat themselves or to speak louder
- Difficulty hearing the TV or radio or music and/or having the volume turned up high
- Not hearing the doorbell or the telephone ringing
- Complaining that people are mumbling or speaking too quickly
- Finding it hard to understand unfamiliar people
- Avoiding using the phone

Realising that you may have a dual sensory impairment can leave you with questions and concerns. At Deafblind UK, we support people with any level of combined sight and hearing loss to carry on as normal and to build their confidence and independence. We offer understanding and advice as well as practical and emotional support.

Our wide range of services are designed to help you continue to live the life you love. **We provide:**

- ✓ A friendly, accessible helpline to answer your questions and offer support
- ✓ Help with technology so you can stay connected
- ✓ Opportunities to socialise and make new friends
- ✓ One-to-one help accessing services and getting you the help you need
- ✓ Seaside holidays where you can relax and unwind
- ✓ Wellbeing and emotional support for difficult times
- ✓ Care and support at home if needed
- ✓ Open Hand magazine
- ✓ Support for carers, friends and family

You can find out more about DeafBlind UK on their website - www.deafblind.org.uk

deafblinduk

Berkshire Vision have a dual sensory loss group that meets once a month. Recent activities have included bowling, baking and a sensory tour of Kew Gardens. If you would like to find out more call us on 0118 987 2803.

Clearview C One.

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Freedom
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SCHWEIZER

Featuring a 21.5-inch widescreen and a High Definition camera, the unique C-shape provides you with more working space for reading a favourite newspaper, enjoying craftwork or writing a cheque without being restricted in movement.

Sale: £1495

RRP: £1885

C-ing without limitations

When we started to develop the ClearView C, we wanted to eliminate all of the difficulties users experienced. After extensive research involving our clients, we came up with a completely new design.



Reading from top to bottom

With a document placed on the movable table, the camera is positioned so that you naturally read from the top of the page. You no longer need to pull the reading table into your stomach to start reading. This design is unique to desktop video magnifiers.

Enjoy greater freedom with more working space

The left-sided C-shaped design provides you with more working space beneath the camera. Enjoy reading from broadsheet newspapers, viewing photograph albums and practical craftwork without being restricted in movement.

**Call 0800 145 6115 for a
FREE home Demonstration**

Getting Involved

Berkshire Vision is a member centred charity and we love to hear from our members and have them get involved in other ways.

Ways you can get involved:

IDEAS

If you have an idea, no matter how big or small please let a member of staff know. We will always consider your ideas but please do understand that it is not always feasible to do everything or straightaway.

ONGOING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Staff are always happy to hear feedback, both positive and where we might be able to improve a service for all of our members.

MEMBER SURVEYS

From time to time we may conduct surveys, this could be a quick questionnaire, or a more formal survey that may be sent on email or completed over the phone. Your feedback from these will be invaluable and will help us to ensure that the charity has the maximum impact. We really do appreciate your time to help us with these.

MEMBERS VOICE

A cohort of our members kindly give up their time to give us more detailed information when we have specific projects or developments. We're always looking for additional members for this, so if you would be interested do get in touch.

VOLUNTEER

We love our members to volunteer with us. We are lucky to have a wide range of visually impaired volunteers. Some members volunteer on virtual activities, as telephone befrienders, as Realeyes befrienders, and as tech buddies. Each one is an important member of our volunteer team, helping us to deliver our services. If you would like to find out more get in touch with Gill or Kerrie in the office.

To get involved, speak to a member of staff, call us in the office on **0118 987 2803** or email **info@berkshirevision.org.uk**

Leaving a Legacy

Berkshire Vision has been operating as a charity since 1910. Its longevity is partly due to money it has received through legacies. This money has enabled us to grow and evolve and offer services such as Tech Buddies that could not have been imagined 100 years ago!

It can be argued that legacies are about life. They can be a reflection of what a person has enjoyed and experienced and would like others to benefit from in the future.

After providing for your loved ones, please consider leaving a share of what is left to

provide services to improve the lives of visually impaired children and adults across Berkshire through Berkshire Vision.

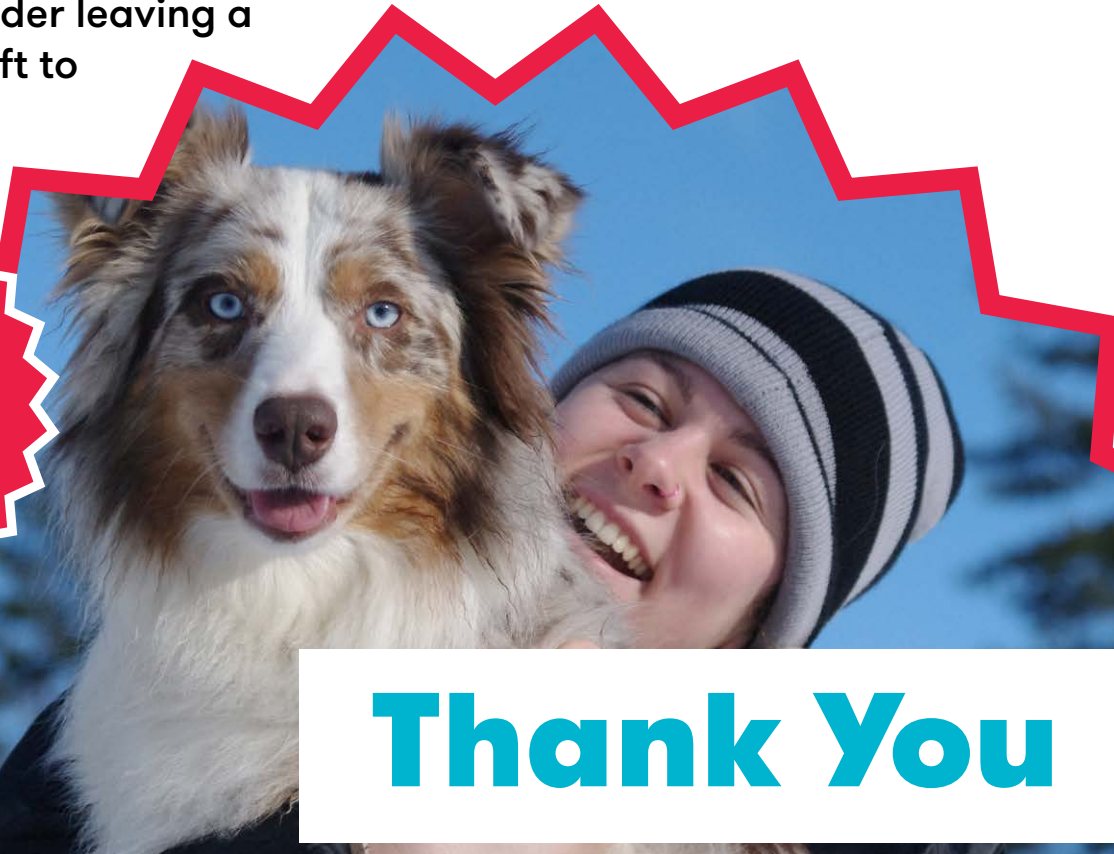
To leave a gift in your will to us you will need our address and our charity number :-

Address:

Berkshire Vision
Midleton House
5 Erleigh Road
Reading RG1 5LR

Registered Charity Number:
1146413

Photo: A girl laughing with her dog



Thank You



HumanWare's' Explore portable magnifiers

Explore 5 - £425, the perfect 'carry in your your pocket' portable magnifier.



From reading TV listings, menus and food packaging to medicine box details, you will find lots of uses for your Explore 5.

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Explore 12 unlocks the power of reading and writing.

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Get in touch

Please get in touch if you have any stories, experiences or recommendations to share these with other members of Berkshire Vision.

Marketing and Communications Officer Clare would love to hear from you, telephone **0118 987 2803** or email **clare.matthews@berkshirevision.org.uk**

If you'd like to receive your Insight magazine in a different format in the future please let us know. Insight is available in large print, on email, or audio (on USB, CD or email).

Contact clare.matthews@berkshirevision.org.uk for more information

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**Berkshire
Vision**

Supporting the Visually Impaired