

Summer 2017



Warwickshire Vision

Food for Thought

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Regional General Meeting

- Would you like to learn more about YOUR organisation?
- Do you have ideas that you would like to share?
- **We want you to help us to improve our services**

Please join us at our next Regional General Meeting.

We will make a short presentation on our achievements, challenges and plans and then open the floor to you, our members, to share your thoughts and ideas.

Everyone is welcome, but to save on costs, we will only send out agendas to those living in the Nuneaton and North Warwickshire area. If you do not live locally but wish to attend, please feel free to request an agenda from the WVS office by telephoning Barbara on **01926 411331**

Date: 12th October 2017

Venue: Nuneaton Vision Support Centre
 The Methodist Church, Abbey Street, Nuneaton CV11 5BX

Time: 10.30 am to 12.30 pm



Rosemary Went, Editor



Rosalie Visick, Co-editor

Editorial

We hope you enjoy reading this Summer edition of Warwickshire Vision – perhaps it will supply food for thought.

The warm weather seemed to arrive quite suddenly this summer, broken fairly quickly by heavy rain. Will this pattern continue?

Prince Philip is to 'retire'. He has made and fulfilled the role of consort to our Queen Elizabeth for 70 years. He relinquished a rising naval career to be the 'strength and stay' of the Queen. At the age of 96 the Duke of Edinburgh feels that it is now time to withdraw from the public limelight, where he has provided constant support. We are sure he will continue to provide support for our monarch, although not in a public role. We wish him well for the future.

In the Health section of this magazine there is an article on the apparently

inexorable rise of diabetes, together with information on healthy living. Diabetes UK gives some dietary advice; however, it is of equal relevance to most of us who do not have this condition. We also feature exercise opportunities.

There is a report on the progress of our Strategy review - the future direction for WVS. The holiday that was 'the opportunity of a lifetime' is described and one of our Volunteers writes of her experiences working for WVS (don't forget that new Volunteers are always welcome).

We thank Paul Hinksman, who has continued to provide editorial assistance.

It would be helpful if articles for a Christmas issue of Warwickshire Vision could reach us by mid-September. We appreciate hearing from our readers.

WVS People

Christine Gill

I joined Warwickshire Vision Support recently as a Community Worker. My previous job was working with a Community Interest Company in North Solihull who improve the lives of local people through neighbourhood projects and outdoor education. Much of the work I did was to support people of many ages with physical disability and poor mental health enabling them to develop life skills, reduce isolation and improve their overall physical and mental wellbeing.

One of my favourite projects was working on a programme called 'Wellies2Bellies' where we worked with children from local schools showing them how to grow vegetables, eat healthily and engage with nature and the local environment. It was great fun building earth ovens and bug hotels, and particularly showing the pupils the wormery – there were many cries of 'urgh' and 'gross' when they found out that worms enjoy dining out on hair, clipped nails, eggshells and teabags and that their urine is a wonderful fertilizer!

My home is in Warwickshire and I enjoy walking in the local countryside. I am a member of a local gym where I swim three times a week and enjoy taking part in classes such as step, Zumba and t'ai chi. My



family is a mix of many nationalities and I enjoy meeting people from different cultures, learning about their lives and traditions. I particularly enjoy travelling to the Far East and have lived in both Australia and Borneo. We relocated to Borneo with my husband's job and it was exciting going into the jungle and visiting the Iban community who lived in longhouses.

The position with WVS appealed to me as I have family members who have diabetic retinopathy, AMD and other eye conditions and I feel this enables me to understand some of the difficult challenges people face. I enjoy visiting the Vision Support Centres and Clubs, particularly hearing about people's life stories and shared memories. This coming month I'm looking forward to increasing my knowledge further through training and learning on the job.

Peter Joslin

We have received news that Peter Joslin has resigned. He served as

President of our Association since 1992, following his retirement as Chief Constable of Warwickshire. Peter was well known as one of the UK's longest serving police officers. He was mainly seen presenting trophies at our Annual Show before membership support for the event declined.

Al Fellowes

Al served as Honorary Treasurer to the Association in the 1990's, which included difficult times. When things were more settled he retired from the post and was awarded a Vice Presidency. We have heard that Al has left this area.

A Year in Review

Hollie Hammond, Volunteer

I distinctly remember the week a year ago when I became a volunteer for Warwickshire Vision Support. I was considering volunteering as my own working life had felt like a chapter was closing, following a previous job role at a local eye unit. I was looking to maintain a bit of balance to my weekly routine, but had little idea of the nurture that is the focus and support provided by WVS to people in the 'Warwickshire community' of VIPs.

Having had experience working within ophthalmology I felt that this would be a worthwhile option for me whilst learning to drive, so arranged to meet WVS's Administrator, Barbara

Main. I introduced myself to her and Joanne, Assistant Administrator, discussed the available time I had, and was told briefly about the charity.

Fast forward to my first day - when I was shown to a desk and introduced to the other team workers present. I began to take note of the calm atmosphere (compared to a busy, lit up hospital) and of a conscientious group of people who managed great heaps of paper, and still managed to stay cool, calm and collected. On notice boards dotted around the room there were three laminated pages, reminding readers to smile and bring happiness.

Of course, I was struck by the high morale that was displayed here and slowly, as time went on, I began to

Recipe For Happiness

Ingredients:

1 Bag of smiles

2 Cups of sharing

2lbs of positivity

½ Cup of good humour

1 Cup of self esteem

2 Spoonfuls of simplicity

1 Dash of goodwill

4 Drops of easy going

and 1 Packet of life loving!



appreciate the quieter energy field. Soon I had a DBS form to my name and was given a desk space to call my own.

After all of my worry beforehand, I had found somewhere that remained as supportive as a hospital but without the added stress of waiting rooms, rooms full of patient notes and the open discomfort of hospital corridors. The staff were as welcoming as a family. This encouraged me to remain here, to a certain extent, but I did feel that more could be accomplished. This chapter was getting more interesting as time went on!

Luckily for me, as soon as I had my DBS form I was more than happy to find myself freely able to spend more time working with the office team but also helping at the VIP clubs in Leamington Spa and Kenilworth. I can honestly report that before experiencing these I hadn't any knowledge of the remarkable characters that I would meet, who were strong and showed courage in the face of adversity.

The people I met in the local community had such positive attitudes as they lived with their visual impairments, yet still mostly managed to remain positive, polite and the sense of spirit made my days a joyful experience! I still cannot believe how fast time has gone by since I was sitting amongst 28 of you at Leamington Club's Christmas Meal

at Season's. I got to experience the work that this involves behind the scenes, working with Sue Morris and the other Community Workers.

During the meal and at club gatherings last year, it was an absolute pleasure to talk to you about how you live, how you pass the time, your pasts and your families. Health concerns do arise and yet you carry on, your personalities that are made more remarkable and commendable as you overcome your fear of them.

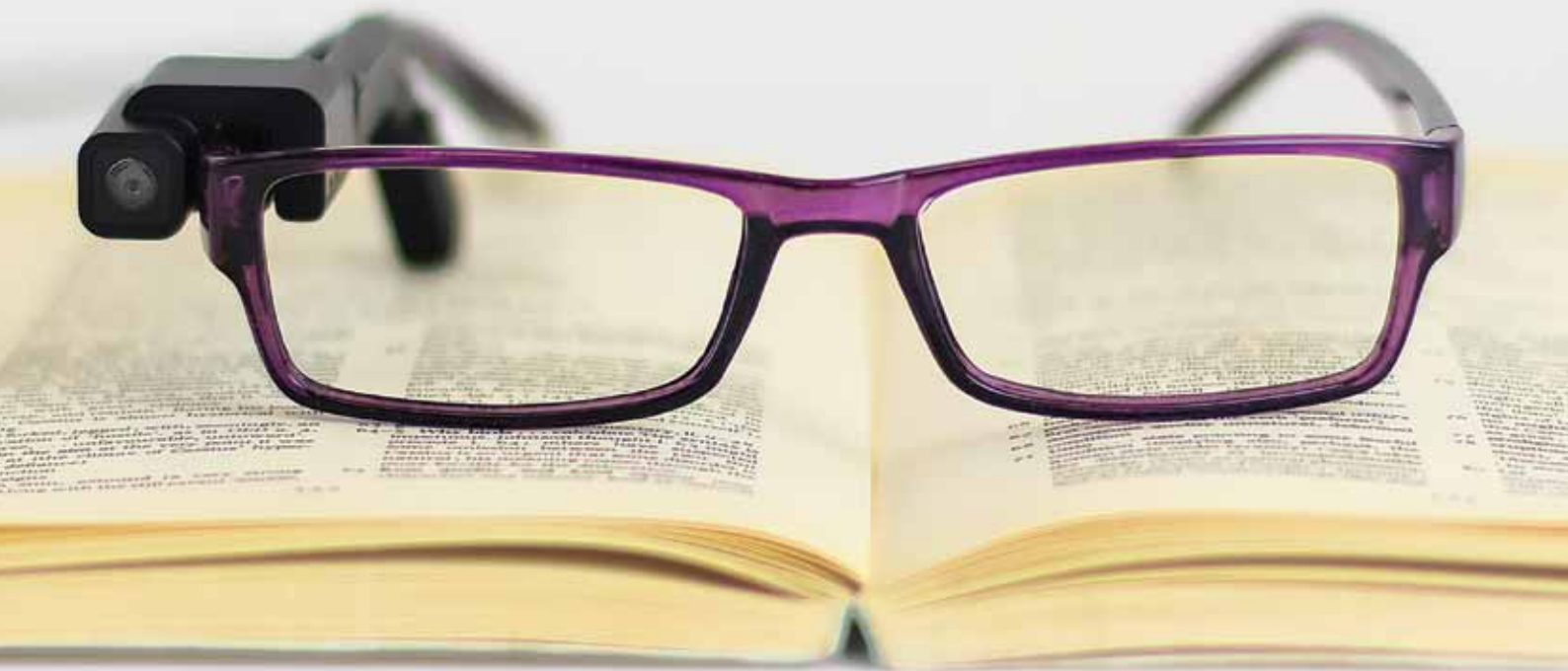
The day I began to volunteer for Warwickshire Vision Support was just the beginning of another chapter, and whilst I still struggle with my driving and therefore progressing my working life, I have gained experience that has made more of my own life. I wanted to write in your magazine after a year had gone by, then I could simply send out my message of thanks. Thank you for being yourselves, for teaching me that life does continue after a major loss of a sense, that there is more to life than what is physical and that for every terrible diagnosis, there will always be a team to support!

P.S. Since writing this article I have passed my driving test (and I'm continuing my volunteering work).

Editor: WVS carries out DBS (Data Barring Service) checks for everyone who works directly with Warwickshire's VIPs. This is to protect everyone.

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WVS Activities and News

***Warwickshire Vision Support - Where Next?* Richard Orme, Trustee**

Your county organisation for people with sight loss has a long history - over a century. As the years pass, change happens to the places we live, to our needs and expectations. Like any organisation, Warwickshire Vision Support should from time to time step back and assess how it can better serve the people it exists to help. This process now has the fancy term 'strategy review', but is something that has been done over the decades, to set ourselves new challenges and consider how to make the best use of our funds.

At the end of 2016 the Board of Trustees set out to develop our next strategy. We were lucky to secure some expert help for this. Rob Legge is Warwickshire based, and considered a national expert on sight loss organisations. He has run a large local blindness charity, worked for several national voluntary organisations, and has family members who live with sight loss. From January to May Rob supported a working group of trustees and staff, helping us to develop important ideas for the next strategy for Warwickshire Vision Support.

Rob is a great listener. His approach has been to hear the opinions, challenges, and ideas from a wide range of people who can help us understand where to go next. What

are we doing right? What more do people want their local organisation to do? How else can people help us with volunteering or fundraising?

Rob spoke with attendees and volunteers at our Vision Support Centres, and telephoned people across Warwickshire to hear their thoughts. He held group discussions with our staff team and the Board of Trustees. As themes emerged, he then found other local charities around the UK that were trying these approaches, and spoke with them to understand how these ideas are working in practice.

The Trustees met in May to receive the report, which organised all this input into options for consideration. It was super to know that we were discussing ideas that had been put forward by people from all over Warwickshire, and beyond. If you spoke with Rob in person or on the telephone, attended a group discussion or otherwise fed ideas into this initiative, thank you for helping your local organisation.

We don't have the resources to deliver all these great ideas immediately, but we know they are important. We are now setting up a group to take responsibility for pushing ahead with the ideas that we can afford, and looking for extra funds so that we can do more.

Furthermore, we know that there is scope for blind and partially sighted people to be more involved in decision making. So, in addition to welcoming more Trustees with sight loss, we would love to hear from anyone who would like to help us in a different way, in a small working group to turn a long list of great ideas into reality.

Over the summer we will be putting ideas into action, and you will be able to read about this in the next edition of Warwickshire Vision.

If you are interested in joining the Strategy Group please call Barbara in the office on **01926 411331**

Community Update

Is it really time for another update already?! My, the time is flying! Then again, we've been busy and don't they say 'time flies when you're having fun'? We have yet another staff change to share with you; you've probably already read her bio before reaching this article so you'll know her name's Christine Gill and a little bit about her background. It's great to have Christine on-board and she's taken to the role really well.

Out of County

The area of Warwickshire is more than big enough to keep us busy but occasionally we have to go out of county to network with other sight loss charities. One of the regular trips we make is to Birmingham for the Midlands ECLO Forum. ECLOs

are 'Eye Clinic Liaison Officers' and, although our roles are a bit different, they are generous enough to invite us along. It's an opportunity to share best practice, compare services and generate ideas. This quarter's venue was Birmingham Vision's offices in central Birmingham and (after getting lost a fair number of times) Felicity represented WVS on this occasion. Representatives of Blind Veterans UK were there to provide an update now they have restructured their community services, and an employee of Henshaws, which operates in major northern cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, shared information about their Pathway Plan. This plan provides a structured approach to supporting service users, thus ensuring everyone receives comprehensive support. After the formal meeting, there's a chance to network within the group and share advice, which Felicity has always found very helpful.

Atherstone

They won't brag about it so we'll do it for them! Our volunteers do a great job at Atherstone Social Club and this



has been boosted by a £100 prize money donation from the recent winners of a local darts competition, Maid of the Mill. A photograph of some of the volunteers receiving the cheque from the players featured in Nuneaton News in April. Well done to the players but also to the volunteers for raising the profile of Warwickshire Vision Support!

Leamington Spa

We're used to welcoming a host of different speakers and guests to our Clubs and Support Centres so it will come as no surprise that we welcomed a trainee community nurse to our Leamington Vision Support Centre earlier this year. Lucy, who is a qualified nurse but is undergoing additional training to become a community nurse, chose WVS for one of her few 'optional' placements, which says a lot because there are so many services to choose from!

She was able to chat with service users and learn more about visual impairments. In particular, she heard from Harold Smart about Charles Bonnet Syndrome, which many of you will have read about when he wrote an article about it for this magazine. She is keen to come back in the future and she now knows about WVS, should she come across any VI patients that may benefit from our support.

General Meeting

Let me introduce myself. My name is Janet Hurrell and I live locally in Dunchurch. Having recently retired from a 37 year career in industry I am a potential new Trustee/Director for Warwickshire Vision Support. As part of my introduction to the charity I attended the General Meeting at Rugby Baptist Church on 26th April 2017. I was not at all sure what to expect.



The welcome I received was so open and friendly. In the church hall there was a good mix of service users, community workers, rehabilitation workers, the Manager, trustees and other volunteers.

There were more than 30 attendees with representation from across the county that included Rugby, Nuneaton, Warwick, Atherstone and Coleshill.

The coffee clearly worked to lubricate vocal chords as there was a lot of conversation and chat between all attendees. Many friends and others seeking support with varying levels of visual impairment came together to understand what is going on within the charity.

Following a welcome from Jeff Perry (Acting Chairman) Jeff and John Davis (Manager) provided reviews on progress within the charity. There was an update regarding the strategic review and there was an eagerness for all users to understand the plans that will evolve from the report. New employees and representatives from the board of trustees were introduced to the attendees. The status of the contract with Warwickshire County Council was discussed with one comment being 'You are doing a brilliant job with the in-house service' which must be really gratifying for all those that work so hard to support our users.

From my experience in the commercial world, when the formal

part of a meeting is concluded and it moves on to Any Questions there is a vacuum with everyone suddenly struck dumb. This was certainly not the case as an energetic audience asked many positive and thought provoking questions. I found it so humbling to find out what sort of day to day difficulties the VIP population can experience - inconsiderate people parking on pavements, poor public transport, street furniture on pavements, getting to polling stations and residents who allow hedges to grow over fences to list but a few. After the meeting, I walked down Henry Street towards the car park and was suddenly aware of the difficulties VIPs experience with plant pots, A-boards, poor parking and advertising materials. I will certainly be parking more considerately in future.

Atherstone Club's

Unusual Guest

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

The Atherstone Ball Game is an annual event that has been held on Shrove Tuesday for over eight hundred years. Teams of competitors play a huge game of football along the town's main street, using a giant ball that is specially made for the occasion by sportswear manufacturer Webb Ellis. It has few rules, and tends to be a bit of a free-for-all where things can get quite rough, but what is certain is that whoever has

possession of the ball at the end of the game is declared the winner.

In the weeks leading up to the game the ball makes a series of visits to clubs and businesses in the Atherstone area, and the Atherstone VIP club was among those to receive the unusual guest one Wednesday shortly before the event was due to take place. It was accompanied by Graham Beale, a member of the committee that organises the game.

Everybody had a chance to hold the ball, and have their picture taken with it, as well as adding their signatures to the many people who had already signed their names on its surface. I was among those who signed it, and in addition to having an official photograph, I asked Graham if he could also use my

phone to take a picture of me with it, which he did.

As somebody who lived in Atherstone for a number of years, but who watched the game from a safe distance and only got fleeting glimpses of the ball, it was nice to finally see it up close. I felt like I was holding a piece of history, and one of the things that struck me most was its size. It was much larger than I'd imagined, and much lighter too.

The 2017 game took place on 28th February, and was the 818th to be held. Each year a celebrity is invited to start proceedings by throwing the ball into Long Street from the window of Barclays Bank. This year's guest was the actress Annette Badland, familiar to many from her recent role as the East Enders character Babe Smith.

Sadly the ball was burst during the rough and tumble of the second half, so a reserve ball was used to complete the match. This year's winner was Atherstone resident Danny Murray, who claimed the title for the first time.

The game honours a football match that took place between Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1199, and which was won by Warwickshire. At one time similar events were held in many towns throughout England, but Atherstone's is now one of only two such games that are played each year at Shrovetide.





Help us to help you!

Over the last few years, it has become increasingly difficult to raise funds for our charitable activities. Government cuts to local services means that more charities are competing for fewer funds to meet ever-increasing demand.

In the last financial year, it cost us £285,000 to run our Vision Support Centres, Advice Desks, Clubs, Home Visitors and produce this magazine whilst our charitable income was just £162,000. We had to make up this difference through reserves and this is clearly not sustainable. If we are to continue to provide these services we must redouble our efforts to raise funds.

Unfortunately, our regular giving campaign has not raised the sort of income that we would have hoped. Although we have covered what

was previously raised through the subscribing member fee, we need to be raising a great deal more.

I would like to make a few suggestions about how you might be able to help us to help you. You might think that your contribution is too small to be of significance, but if just 10 per cent of the 2,400 people who read this magazine were to take up our challenge, then our funding problems could be a thing of the past.

Here are some ideas. Please think whether you would be able to help:

Social Contacts

- Many companies make charitable donations to local charities. Perhaps you have a son or daughter who could recommend that the company they work for chooses Warwickshire Vision Support as its Charity of the Year?
- Pension companies, insurance companies and many other service providers also have charitable foundations that give grants to charities chosen by their members. Could you nominate Warwickshire Vision Support?
- Do you know any Lions, Rotary, Soroptimists, Round Table or Freemason members? These groups give donations to local charities. Why not recommend us?
- Are your children or grandchildren at a local school or college?

Perhaps they can adopt us as their Charity of the Year.

- Do you know anyone who enjoys running? Why not persuade them to run for Warwickshire Vision Support at the next fun run or marathon?

Activities

- Do you enjoy baking? Perhaps you could invite your friends for a coffee morning in aid of Warwickshire Vision Support? This would help to spread the word about what we do and help recruit new volunteers.
- Do you have a favourite pub, restaurant or local shop? Could you ask them to take a collection tin? This helps to raise our profile and raises funds.
- Why not hold a collection in your local town or supermarket? If you are interested, we can make all the necessary arrangements for you and provide you with a banner, buckets and tabards.
- If you have a particular passion or skill why not see if it can generate money for Warwickshire Vision Support? You can sell your products, or get people to sponsor you.
- If you enjoy public speaking, perhaps you could make presentations on our behalf to local clubs and groups. This can raise our profile and increase the level of support we receive.

Donations

- For those that are able and willing, please consider making a donation. This can be a one-off donation or you can set up a standing order.
- Perhaps you can leave a legacy gift in your will – we have sent everyone a legacy pack over the last 12 months. Please consider it.
- We are asking you to help us to help you.

Warwickshire Vision Support has been supporting visually impaired people in Warwickshire for 106 years. We want to continue to do so – but this is only possible with your help.

If you, your family or friends can help with any of the above ideas, or you have better suggestions yourself, please contact **Phil Arkell** on **01926 411331** and we will do everything we can to help.

Thank you



Many thanks to Sarah Vernon who raised £800 doing the Wolf Run

Financial Matters

Identification

There seem to be an increasing number of occasions in everyday life when we are asked to provide personal identification. These days this usually includes a request for photographic identification - most commonly a current passport or driving licence.

Some of the occasions when we need to identify ourselves are applying for travel passes, carrying out some bank transactions, applying for a passport, applying for a driving licence, dealing with legal matters, benefit claims, applying for a job, applying to do voluntary work, joining a library, enrolling on educational courses, fishing, and many others.

You cannot use one form of identification for both your name and address. If you provide a current, signed passport for proof of name you will need another document for proof of address – such as a utility bill issued in the last 3 months.

Having to carry personal identification more frequently raises the risk of loss and theft, which can in turn increase the risk of identity theft, property theft and the threat to personal safety as well as inconvenience. It is therefore vital to ensure that we carry our documents as safely as possible and to report any loss to both whoever issued them and to the police. It is also important

to check if they have expiry dates to avoid further difficulties.

Proof of Identity

Rosalie Visick

I do not have either a driving licence or current passport to prove my identity. Utility bills are in my husband's name, so I do not have these either. Acceptable forms of personal identification that I have used are a bank statement, a government pension payment notification and a benefits payment notification. On the telephone I find I am always asked for my mother's maiden name.

I was recently asked by a new cashier at my bank to show proof of identity. Unfortunately, the debit card I produced was out of date (I don't use it very often); no replacement had been sent.

Out of Date

One of our Members boarded a bus recently and showed his bus pass. The driver refused it - the pass was out of date. He contacted the Council and was told that it 'tries to send out letters' to people whose pass is due to expire. He had not received this letter, and as it takes up to 10 days to process a renewal, he had to pay to travel for that period.

Today, many services and facilities are available on line or reminder messages are sent electronically

to mobile phones; some of these services are exclusively electronic.

To avoid being caught out, check renewal dates regularly or make sure that they are diarised (or whatever reminder system works for you).

P.S. Don't forget that WVS has its own Information Technology Officer. If you are interested in finding out about IT contact the WVS office or drop in to your local Warwickshire Vision Support Centre.

Chip and Signature Cards

Rosalie Visick

On 14th February 2006 both Chip and Signature and Chip and PIN cards were introduced to the British public. It is a surprising fact that a lot of people seem to be unaware that the Chip and Signature cards were created especially for anyone experiencing difficulties with Chip and PIN, which needs a Personal Identification Number to be entered on a PIN pad each time the card is used. Some of the reasons given were for people who would have difficulties such as - dexterity issues, visual impairment, inability to remember a PIN or a problem with mobility, making it hard to reach a PIN pad.

I had sight problems and immediately requested a Chip and Signature card, which I received and have used continuously since then. I also have Chip and Signature cards that I have requested from several

high street shops including Marks and Spencer and House of Fraser.

When the value of the purchase is entered into the till, a message appears informing the cashier that it is a Chip and Signature card and the receipt needs to be signed by the cardholder.

If you wish to change from a Chip and PIN card to a Chip and Signature card, all you need to do is contact your bank, explain your reasons for changing and you should receive your new Chip and Signature card within a few days. The same procedure applies to high street stores.

Editor

An alternative to signing while at a till is to use a rubber stamp of your own signature. It would be important to ensure that the stamp was always secure.

A third party mandate grants your authority to an approved person to verify your payments.

Contact your bank to discuss the options available to you.

I'm Jim, and I live in North Warwickshire

I have been losing my eyesight for over 30 years. I had detached retinas in both eyes and have had extensive eye surgery and laser treatments over the years. I was registered partially sighted in 2008 and by May 2014 I was registered blind.

Next year I shall reach state retirement age, so I asked my wife to look through my pension policies, as the government have recently given greater flexibility on what we can do with our pension pots. I am in the process of seeking professional help to navigate my options.

My wife noticed that one of the pension policies had a grant award scheme. The OneFamily Foundation provides personal grants to its customers of up to £500 each month via a computerised draw, so eligible applications are selected at random.

So on 7th March I requested a grant application form. On receipt I got my wife to read the eligibility criteria carefully and then I telephoned the Foundation to check that I met the criteria before my wife completed the application form, as the grant application notes specifically stated that they do not pay for luxury items such as iPhones or iPads.

I do not consider an iPad to be a luxury item for someone who is registered blind, but a useful tool, given the number of new apps you can now download that have been developed specifically for the blind, and the OneFamily Foundation agreed with me.

The grant application was completed and returned on 16th March and on 25th March I received a letter from OneFamily Foundation stating that my application had been approved

to be entered in the next three computerised draws.

The letter got my heart racing, as they used the word 'approved', but then I realised it was only to go into the draws!! On 11th April I received a letter stating that I had been successful on my first attempt. I'm now the proud owner of an iPad Pro ISO10 128GB WiFi.

Please, Please Check

So please check if you have a pension, it may also provide a grant fund to its customers.

I then decided to telephone the other pension provider to see if they had such a scheme. They don't, however when I explained that I was registered blind and had a number of health problems I was told that they can pay up to as much as 50 per cent more for people with health and lifestyle issues.

I have been advised that next year when I am invited to access my pension, I should tell them about all my health issues, including my sight loss.

Ironically, for once in my life having poor health will pay a dividend!

OneFamily Foundation also provides grants for community projects up to £25,000. I have asked Warwickshire Vision Support to submit an application, so fingers crossed that they will be successful.

You can help as well: Do you belong to a society or maybe a trade union?

Many of them provide charitable grants - either a personal grant or for a community project. If so, can you let Warwickshire Vision Support know so they can look at the possible potential of applying for funding for projects that benefit all of us.

Remember: If you are a member of the Co-operative Society, each region or area may have its own grant awarding policy or funds, so why not give WVS your society membership number and the exact name of the Co-operative Society so they can apply for a grant.

Attendance Allowance

You may be eligible for Attendance Allowance if you

- are aged 65 or over
- have a long-term physical or mental illness or disability. This can include sight and hearing difficulties
- have needed help with personal care or regular supervision from someone else for at least 6 months. You can claim whether or not you actually receive this help or supervision. Personal care tasks could include things like washing and bathing, dressing and undressing, getting in or out of bed and taking medication.

This benefit is not means-tested, so you can claim it whatever your income or savings.

Attendance Allowance (AA) is paid at two different rates, depending on the level of care you need.

Lower rate - £55.65 per week
If you need care or supervision during the day or night

Higher rate - £83.10 per week
If you need care or supervision during the day and night

If you are awarded AA this will not reduce any other benefits you may receive such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support. Sometimes it can entitle you to higher rates of these other benefits because of your extra needs.

To apply for Attendance Allowance download a claim form from Gov.uk or call the Department of Work and Pensions helpline on **0345 605 6055** to ask for an application pack.

Sight Village 2017

This free annual exhibition will be held at New Bingley Hall, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5BE. National and international exhibitors show products and equipment for Visually Impaired People to visitors who are VIPs, as well as professionals, business people and family members. Doors open at 9.30 am on Tuesday 18th and Wednesday 19th July, and close at 5 pm and 3.30 pm respectively.

Good Health

The Cost of Living

The price we pay for food, as a proportion of household expenditure, is far lower than it has been in the past - despite food price rises. Food is readily available, in an increasing range of varieties, often regardless of its seasonality. It is also available to buy at most times of the day.

Ready-to-eat or take-away food is generally considered to be 'unhealthy' as it often contains high levels of fat, salt and sugar which can exceed 'recommended daily intake levels'. Food portions have been getting larger, and this has been demonstrated by the increasing size of ready meals. The labels on some fizzy drinks show high levels of sugar. Grazing – snacking between meals – adds to the problem of overeating and obesity.

When we eat food our bodies change it into glucose, a type of sugar. The glucose goes into our blood and is converted into energy by a hormone called insulin that is produced by our pancreas. Diabetics have too much glucose in their blood so it is excreted in their urine.

There are two types of diabetes. People with Type 1 normally develop it before the age of 30 and the cause is not known. Their bodies are unable to produce insulin. Ninety five per cent of diabetics have Type

2, which they usually develop after the age of 40, although they can be oblivious of it for years. 'I was drinking quite a lot of liquid, and I was going to the loo rather too often.'

It's a story that's been heard before and can often be a symptom of diabetes. Extreme hunger and obesity can also be symptoms of the disease. However, diabetes can also cause loss of weight.

Diabetics' bodies are unable to use glucose properly. Blood sugar levels should be below 8.5 mmol/l (millimoles of glucose per litre of blood).

Most diabetics are diagnosed over the age of 40, but people of South Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin are at risk of developing it from the age of 25. Occasionally pregnant women can develop Type 2 diabetes.

In the American state of Mississippi 13 per cent of the adults are diabetic with a further 8 per cent 'at risk'. And that is only the second highest prevalence rate in the USA.

In a remote part of the world, on an atoll in the South Pacific called Tokelau, situated between Hawaii and New Zealand, there is a frightening example of the increase of diabetes. Up to the 1970's the population's diet was local produce, based on fish and coconuts; for feasts they would have chicken and pork. At that time the population had

'low rates of coronary heart disease, obesity and diabetes' - just 7 per cent of the women and 2 per cent of men were diabetic. Then freezers were supplied and food imports began.

In 1961 sugar imports had been the equivalent of 7lb per head; by 1980 the quantity had risen to 69lbs. This increase has continued, except for 5 months in 1979, when cyclone damage prevented the island's supply ship from calling, so the islanders returned to their original diets, resulting in some of them losing weight and feeling healthier.

Today 90 per cent of the island's population is overweight and two-thirds is obese. Life expectancy has decreased, with few people aged over 65. Tokelau is the world's diabetes capital.

Many trends have come to the UK from the USA and diabetes is one of them. Nearly one person in 25 in the UK has diabetes. Since 1980 the global number of diabetics has quadrupled to 422 million. Today diabetes is Britain's fastest growing epidemic.

The International Diabetes Federation estimates that it claimed 5 million lives in 2015 - more than the combined death toll for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. By 2040 one person in every ten will have diabetes.

Diabetes, if not treated, can lead to other related health conditions. The

complications suffered by 200,000 Britons each year are heart attacks, strokes and amputations. In addition the eyes can be affected.

The most common eye conditions caused are cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. High sugar levels in the fluid of the lens around the eye increases the likelihood of a cataract at an earlier age than for someone without diabetes. Higher pressure in the eye can cause glaucoma. Diabetic retinopathy is caused when the network of blood vessels that supply the retina at the back of the eye become blocked, to leak or to grow incorrectly.

Diabetes can cause infection in the foot, so annual health checks, including foot checks, are advised. Foot ulcers can develop; if there is sepsis in the foot it can lead to the choice of 'your life or your leg'. Every day 20 people in England have an amputation necessitated by diabetes - more than 7,000 amputations each year. Eight out of every 10 diabetics die within 5 years of having an amputation.

Treating diabetes costs £674bn every year and it is becoming a global health problem. However, diabetes is a condition that can be managed if individuals follow a healthy lifestyle. In the UK one person in 25 has diabetes. Some of the people in the public eye who live with it are Theresa May, Steve Redgrave and Mick Fleetwood also Tom Hanks and

Halle Berry. Diabetes does not have to shorten peoples' lives.

Every one of us is responsible for noting changes in our own health and taking the necessary action. Can we afford the price of not living healthily?

Eating Healthily to Manage Diabetes

There has been a large increase in the number of people in the UK diagnosed with diabetes over the last few years. This not only has significant implications for those individuals but is also placing a great strain on NHS resources. Although it is vital to seek medical advice and treatment, there are things which can be done to help prevent the illness or to cope with it. Eating healthily can play an important part in doing so. As well as helping to manage diabetes, the following list offers positive advice to anyone who wishes to maintain a healthy diet.

Tips for managing diabetes and healthy living

- Eat regular meals, spaced evenly throughout the day. This will help control appetite and blood glucose levels. Portion sizes should be kept under control if weight watching is a priority. This can be done by using smaller plates, dishing up vegetables first for main meals so that they occupy more space on the plate, not piling foods on top of each other, avoiding second helpings and having a drink of water first. Breakfast is an important meal.
- Carbohydrates in moderation should be part of each day's food but they affect blood glucose levels so choose ones which are slowly absorbed such as pasta, basmati or easy-cook rice, granary or rye bread, new or sweet potatoes and oat-based cereals like porridge or natural muesli. Other healthy sources of carbohydrates include wholegrain starchy foods, fruit and vegetables, pulses and some dairy foods.
- Eat less fat. Try unsaturated fats and oils like extra virgin olive oil and rapeseed oil, as these are better for the heart. Use semi-skimmed milk and other low-fat dairy products. Grilling, steaming or baking foods is healthier than frying. Limit overall intake if you are aiming to lose weight.
- Five-a-day: Aim to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day to give the body the vitamins it needs. One portion could be a piece of fruit, say a banana or apple, a small glass of fruit juice or three heaped tablespoons of vegetables.
- Eat plenty of beans. Beans, lentils and pulses are high in fibre and do not have a big impact on blood glucose. Kidney beans, chickpeas, green lentils and even baked beans can be used in a variety of

meals including casseroles, soups and salads.

- Eat more fish. Oily fish such as mackerel, sardines, salmon and trout are particularly good because they are rich in omega-3, which helps protect against heart disease, a higher risk for people with diabetes.
- Cut back on sugar. It is all right to include some sugar as part of a healthy, balanced diet but aim to have less of it by using other sweeteners or choosing sugar-free drinks. However, sugary drinks are good for hypoglycaemia – low blood glucose level.
- Reduce consumption of salt. Too much salt increases high blood pressure, which in turn increases the risk of heart disease. Cutting back on processed foods will also decrease salt intake.
- Drink sensibly. The recommended alcohol limit for men and women is no more than 14 units per week. One unit is a single measure of spirits (25ml), half a pint of normal strength lager, beer or cider or a 125ml glass of wine. It is not a good idea to drink on an empty stomach, especially if you take insulin or medicines that put you at risk of hypos – low blood glucose levels. Drink 8-10 glasses of fluid each day. Water is best but milk, tea and coffee, herbal teas and some foods, particularly fruit

and vegetables, can contribute to the total.

- Don't bother with so-called diabetic foods. They offer no benefit to people with diabetes and may still affect blood glucose levels. They can contain as much fat and calories as ordinary versions, can have a laxative effect and are often expensive.
- Whilst taking all of these tips into account, it is important to remember that food is also for enjoyment and that there is no harm in treating ourselves if not done to excess.

Further information and ideas for healthy meals can be obtained by visiting Diabetes UK on their website www.diabetes.org.uk or by phoning **0345 123 2399**.

A Good Night's Sleep

Advice from Age UK

It's common to have trouble sleeping as we get older because our sleep patterns naturally change. The struggle to get to sleep or stay asleep leaves many of us tired and perhaps grumpy the next day. It's a myth that we need less sleep as we get older but we are less able to stay asleep as we age.

When sleeplessness becomes a regular occurrence this condition is defined as insomnia, which is more common in women than men. It can be triggered by a stressful event, health problems and medication

including beta-blockers and HRT. Insomnia can have a huge impact on daily life. For example, it can affect your mood and your appetite. It can also increase the risk of accidents and injuries. Studies show that people with insomnia are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, heart failure and diabetes.

Experts agree that the following good habits can contribute to a good night's sleep.

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day
- Establish a bedtime routine
- Make sure that your bed and bedding are comfortable
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the evening
- Don't eat a heavy meal late at night
- Avoid exercise in the evening
- Cut out daytime naps
- Keep your bedroom cool and dark
- Ban TV and computers from the bedroom

For further help you could try asking your pharmacist for advice but if your sleeping problems last for more than a month it's a good idea to see your GP.

On a Bicycle Made for Two

If you are looking for a different way of exercising, getting out more in the fresh air and making new friends, VISTA (Coventry Visually Impaired and Sighted Tandem Association) may be just the opportunity for you.

VISTA is based in Earlsdon, Coventry but uses locations in the Warwickshire countryside for its organised rides. Using tandems, sighted adults act as 'pilots' riding at the front while visually impaired members ride at the rear.

The aims of VISTA are to enable the visually impaired to discover and enjoy the pleasures of cycling and to create a 'fun' atmosphere whereby visually impaired and sighted people can relax and enjoy each other's company, make friends and enjoy healthy exercise. VISTA encourages family participation in all of their activities.

There is a Rides Calendar, which provides details of events that take place on Tuesday evenings during the summer. In addition, members are allowed to use the bikes for ad hoc and weekend rides if permission is obtained. Safety is paramount in all activities; riders are trained and expected to be reasonably fit.

This year's calendar includes destinations throughout the county



such as The Hatton Arms in Hatton, The Royal Oak in Brandon and The Queen and Castle in Kenilworth. Rides are £2 per session or £20 for the season.

In addition to rides, VISTA also offers a varied social programme, particularly during the winter months, which includes quiz nights, guest speakers, beer and skittle matches and theatre visits.

VISTA always welcomes new members, visually impaired or sighted. If you are interested in joining please contact Clive Rayner on **07767 156 056**. You can also visit their website at www.vista.org.uk

Act FAST Campaign

The symptoms of a stroke are easy to recognize, but do you know what they are and what to do? Public Health England has just been running its annual campaign to remind people what to look out for. It uses a simple acronym to act as a reminder - **F-A-S-T**.

The letters **F-A-S-T** are the initials of the Face, Arm and Speech Test, and it should be the response to any one of the symptoms.

Facial weakness

Can the person smile?

Has their mouth or eye dropped?

Arm weakness

Can the person raise both arms?

Speech Problems

Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

Time

to call **999**



In more detail the symptoms of stroke are

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg on one side of the body
- Sudden loss or blurring of vision, in one or both eyes
- Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding spoken language
- Sudden confusion
- Sudden or severe headache with no apparent cause
- Dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other signs

Why act FAST?

Stroke is a medical emergency. By calling **999**, you can help someone reach hospital quickly and receive the

early treatment they need. Prompt action can prevent further damage to the brain and help someone make a full recovery. Delay can result in death or major long-term disabilities, such as paralysis, severe memory loss and communication problems. Ambulance crews use FAST and with hospital staff can act fast to identify and diagnose a stroke quickly.

If you suspect a stroke, act **FAST** and call **999**

My Sudden Loss of Sight

Harold Smart, Kenilworth

I woke up on 26th August 2016 and was aware of a slight mist in my left eye. As the day progressed the mist became thicker and by the next day I could no longer see shapes, only light or dark. Unfortunately, this was the better of my two eyes, the right one having severe macular degeneration, so my clear seeing range is now limited to some 2 metres. I now had to stop a bus to ask the driver its number!

I immediately reported my difficulty to the Machen Eye Unit at Warwick Hospital, where I had been under treatment for the last 14 years, and was seen the same day. The gentleman I saw was unhelpful – responding to my many questions with the phrase ‘We’ll see’. This left me in a state of considerable depression. Luckily I contacted Warwickshire Vision Support through one of its Vision Support Centres.

Warwickshire Vision Support provides rehabilitation services on behalf of Warwickshire County Council. It also runs Vision Support Centres all over the county where nearly-blind and blind people drop in and discuss any problem they may have with managing their daily lives. It also runs an excellent IT department, helping people with problems particular to sight loss.

WVS’s intervention resulted in me having an appointment with Mr Chris Baddon, the Vitreo Retinal Consultant, explained in detail what had occurred in my eye. I had had a bleed through my retina, which whilst unusual was not rare. It had spread over the retina, blanking out any light reaching it from the lens. He further pointed out that it was customary to leave matters for two months to see if the eye would self-repair but after this time a surgical procedure may be considered.

Early in November I was asked to attend for an examination by Mr Baddon. He gave my eye a thorough examination and pronounced that he would operate the following Monday.

It was at 13.00 hours on 14th November I attended the Machen Unit operating suite and was prepared for the procedure. My left eye was heavily anaesthetised and other tests carried out. After a time I was wheeled into the operating theatre where I became aware of a pair of very expensive binoculars for

the surgeon's use mounted above my head.

An incision was made at the lower right corner of my right eye to gain access to the eye cavity. I was told afterwards that Mr Baddon then carefully evacuated all debris that had accumulated. He also had to carry out a similar operation to the rear of my lens. The next act was to insert an air bubble into the cavity, presumably to compensate for the release of pressure when the insertion was made. Finally, two stitches were used to re-seal the cavity.

I was then allowed to sit up and discovered a label had been attached to my right-hand wrist stating that 'On no account was I to attempt altitude or flying in aircraft'. I was told later that this would be for about a month, but I would be notified. I also discovered that I now had sight in my left eye, albeit blurry. This quickly disappeared as it was dressed and then covered with a shell to protect it from damage overnight.

The day after I had an appointment with Mr Baddon, who removed the cover and inspected my eye. He pronounced it OK and asked how I could see. I was able to report that I could see better than I had for a year or so.

I thanked him sincerely for his help and assistance.

Autumn

Schplat, a hefty thwack
Creates vibrations,
He swings helplessly,
Spins make him dizzy.

Something steadies him,
His innards settle,
Composure returns,
A steely resolve.

His glossy, brown skin
Remains unbroken.
He's come a long way
Since his exposure.

He was protected,
Cushioned when falling,
By spiky armour,
Which was cut away.

Mortally wounded?
No, he's still intact,
Thanks to the heating
And acetic bath.

He gains momentum
And returns that blow,
Noting the result
With satisfaction.

A shoe lace shivers,
Dangles before him.
He's undisputed
Champion conker!

Sheila Venville, Warwick

Leisure

Fun in the Sun

Maggie Bowes, Warwick

Everyone needs a holiday - I had the opportunity of a lifetime!

My partner's daughter was getting married and chose to have her wedding in Thailand so we travelled there to share that special occasion and decided to take the opportunity to have a holiday afterwards. We are both totally blind so we wondered how it would work out travelling on our own.

We had a long flight from London to Bangkok and then a local flight to the island of Koh Samui where we stayed a couple of nights before a very thrilling journey by speed boat across the sea to Koh Pha Ngan (The Island of Love) where we had to disembark



into knee deep water to wade ashore where the wedding was to take place on the beach.

After several days of tropical luxury we returned by speed boat to Koh Samui and then flew to Chiang Mai where we started our bespoke tour on our own, which had been arranged by my partner's son-in-law who works for a travel company.

Early next morning we were met by our two tour guides and a driver and car, which were at our disposal for the tour. We were taken to buy offerings of food to give as alms to the Buddhist monks who parade barefoot through the streets. Next, we had a ride on a rickshaw taking in the sounds and smells of the local streets and market, weaving through the horn blasting traffic.

We then visited a Buddhist temple complex high up on a mountainside and were able to feel statues of lions, Buddhas and several other figures. We were introduced to a monk who blessed us by tying a bracelet of string round our wrists.

The following day we were driven to Patara Elephant Farm, en route stopping to be shown how rice grows in a paddy field.

The elephant farm has a breeding programme and teaches visitors how to care for the animals, including bathing them in a stream, brushing them with a branch, checking their

eyes, ears and feet, and I even had to inspect their dung, but since I am a guide dog owner this wasn't a problem for me!

We each then were able to clamber on to the bare back of our own elephant by placing a foot on its knee, flinging one arm over its back and hauling ourselves aboard. The Mahout then asked us to inch our way forwards till we were sitting astride the elephant's neck with our knees just behind its huge ears, which flapped gently as we rode.

It was quite scary as you are about 10 feet off the ground with nothing

to hold on to other than the top of the elephant's head. After about a 20 minute ride we were photographed by the park staff holding hands with each other from one elephant's back to the other whilst the elephants entwined their trunks.

The next day we drove several miles from Chiang Mai into the foothills to a tribal village. En route we stopped off at a silk factory and were shown the process of silk making from the worm to the end product. In the inevitable gift shop there were some lovely things such as silk headscarves, pyjamas, nightdresses, etc. – but all sadly very expensive!

After arriving at the tribal village we met a local lady who fed us in her home. We walked up to a waterfall where we were told the view of the mountains was fantastic. For us the sound of the water falling several hundred feet below sounded like music and was very relaxing.

In the village we were shown coffee beans growing and we felt lots of exotic fruits such as jackfruit and durian, which famously smells like vomit but is supposed to taste wonderful.

After another night in our hotel we flew back to Bangkok where we met two new tour guides who expertly introduced us to many Buddhist temples in the city and to the Grand Palace. In each of these venues we were allowed to feel many statues



of Buddhas and various animals and birds.

We visited a floating market, which entailed travelling along a network of canals in long tail boats whilst vendors in their boats come alongside to sell their goods including grilled bananas, ice cream, mango and sticky rice pudding.

I enjoyed going round a coconut farm feeling all the products made from various parts of the coconut such as soap, bowls and utensils - and drinking the milk.

Sadly this fantastic holiday came to an end and it was time to get back to reality. However, one final experience was to be served champagne during the long flight back to the UK because the flight attendants were so impressed with what we'd achieved.

Shakespeare's Plays

At the Royal Shakespeare Company's three theatres in Stratford, Audio Description is usually available for two performances of every production during each season. In addition there is a range of facilities for VIPs.



Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

This Trust runs the properties with which Shakespeare had a connection in Stratford on Avon. It has recently been awarded funds to improve access to its collection through audio and tactile images. The audio will increase access and be available on line. Local Visually Impaired People are being asked what would enhance their experience at the Birthplace Trust properties.

Why not take up Golf?

Visual impairment is no barrier to playing golf. At present there are 60 VIPs playing golf in this country. One of them is the Chairman of England & Wales Blind Golf - the organisation that is there to help.

If your sight disability qualifies you to become a member you are eligible to have six free lessons with no obligation. The Association also pays for the training programme that is run three or four times each year. You will of course need a sighted guide.

To find out more about England & Wales Blind Golf visit blindgolf.co.uk or call the New Members Secretary, Steve Beevers on **0151 632 3863**

For information on a range of sporting opportunities visit britishblindsport.org.uk or call **01926 424247**



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Sailing with EAST

Harold Smart, Kenilworth

The East Anglian Sailing Trust (EAST) is a charity providing sailing facilities for disabled people, especially those who are visually impaired. Members of the Trust use their own yachts to run cruises for VIPs.

I have enjoyed cruises in members' yachts over the last two years including a weekend sail in June and have booked a one-week cruise for September.

Yachts are equipped with an audio compass, which blips high notes when you drift to port and low notes when you move to starboard. This enables the VIP sailor to keep an accurate course without being able to see the compass. Sighted members of the crew keep watch so that other craft can be avoided.

East Anglian Sailing Trust

EAST is a registered charity that was established at the end of 1996 and is run entirely by volunteers. It is based at Suffolk Yacht Harbour at Levington, near Ipswich, on the River Orwell. It provides disabled people and their friends and helpers the opportunity to enjoy regular sailing in a safe environment, using specialist equipment where necessary. EAST has no paid staff and relies totally on its volunteers. In addition, there is continuing support from local sailing organisations and their members, as well as funding from a number of sources, both local and national.

There is now a fleet of 12 keelboats and two support boats. Disabled sailing evenings are run at least twice weekly and most weekends throughout the summer. An annual taster day is held to attract new participants to sailing.

EAST has hosted the UK National Blind Sailing Championships four times since 2009. In the Waterside Centre there are dedicated accessible changing rooms as well as a training room and boat maintenance facilities.

To find out more about cruising for visual impaired people with EAST e-mail cruisingsec@e-a-s-t.org.uk



Warwickshire Vision is distributed FREE to all members of Warwickshire Vision Support
This publication is also available in digital audio, Braille and by email

For more information, please contact us

 **01926 411331**

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

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Views expressed in Warwickshire Vision are not necessarily those of the management of Warwickshire Vision Support.

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For more information:

Call **01604 798070** or
Email info@sightandsound.co.uk



Your Local Vision Support Centre is there to help you with all your sight needs



Atherstone	St Mary's Church Church Street Atherstone CV9 1HH	Alternate Wednesdays 10 am - 11.30 am
Coventry	Quakers Meeting House Hill Street Coventry CV1 4AN	Every Friday 10 am - 12 noon
Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton	The Methodist Church Abbey Street Nuneaton CV11 5BX	Every Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church Regent Place Rugby CV21 2AG	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon
Stratford-upon-Avon	The Christadelphian Church Rother Street Stratford CV37 6LU	Every Tuesday 10 am - 12 noon

Warwickshire Vision Support
5 Charles Court, Budbrooke Road
Warwick CV34 5LZ



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