

WARWICKSHIRE
VISION
MAGAZINE

WINTER 2023-4

**MEET A
TRUSTEE**

*Getting to know
Thuy Pham*

**FAB
FUNDRAISERS**

*We catch up with
a fundraising duo*

**A DAY AT A VISION
SUPPORT CENTRE**

*A glimpse behind the
scenes in Nuneaton*

**AUDIO
VERSION
NOW ON
YOUR
SMART
SPEAKER!**



WELCOME



Hello and welcome to our Winter magazine.

I can recall the first computers coming into my place of work and thinking they would never catch on!

Nearly 40 years later and I would now struggle to find some aspect of my life where technology doesn't play a part.

That includes at home where I was recently gifted an Alexa smart device.

It's been a little challenging but also great fun learning how to turn lights on and off as well as check the weather and play my favourite music just by voice commands (if only my dog was as obedient!).

My gas and electricity meters were also changed recently to smart meters and I no longer have to scramble at the back of cupboards to take a reading every month or so.

It seems that every time there is technological progress in an area, it becomes old news very quickly.

Whole industries are devoted to the development of newer and better technologies so that we can live healthier, happier and longer lives.

There was very little technology available to my father when he lost his sight.

He kept in touch with the news on a small radio and he had my mother and me for everything else!

I occasionally wonder how he would have coped with some of the latest technologies that are designed to make our lives easier, and for someone like my father, help remain independent.



He would definitely have needed the support of one of the IT trainers here at Warwickshire Vision.

The very best technologies are of no use unless they can be understood and used.

I recognise this is a challenge for some people, especially when having to adjust to sight loss.

But as I have found out over the last few weeks, it really is worth the effort when the reward is improved convenience and ease of staying connected.

Best wishes.

Keith

Keith Eales
Chief Executive Officer

"The very best technologies are of no use unless they can be understood and used."

My Light Machine

by Marian Shalloe,
Support Centre Volunteer

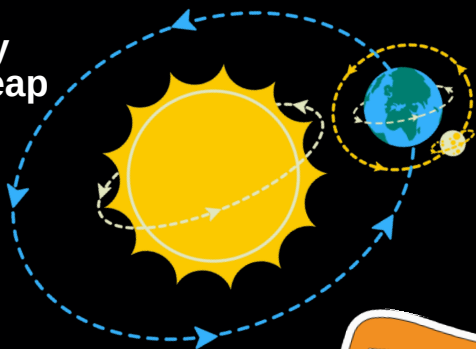
I did not know I wanted this...
But since the purchase I feel such bliss
On the high street, just last week
I acquired something very neat
I bought myself a LIGHT MACHINE
If you wonder, why I was keen
Aha! Winter illumination is my theme
It has twin rotating disco balls
They light up the ceiling and the walls
You may ask what I will do with it
Will I use it to keep fit?
For dancing in my home at night
Alone so no one has a fright
Rainbow colours when there is no sun
When the children come, we will have
fun
I could just relax and watch the show
Beautiful colours as they glow.
As I ponder its purpose, I feel such
glee
So many ideas are coming to me

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes it takes the Earth 365 and a quarter days to rotate around the Sun.

The extra day on 29th of February added every four years is needed to keep our solar year and seasons in line.

That's why we have leap years like 2024!



THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and energy into the writing, editing, compilation and printing of the Warwickshire Vision Magazine!

TRY THIS!



You can now listen to the audio versions of our magazines, wherever you get your podcasts, or on your smart speaker.

Simply ask your smart speaker to "Play the Warwickshire Vision Support podcast"

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MEET A TRUSTEE

By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer

Time to catch up with one of our more recent additions, **Thuy Pham, who joined the Board of trustees in 2023.**

Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

I was born in Vietnam and went to England for my A-level studies at the age of 17.

I then undertook a degree in Orthoptics with the University of Liverpool and have been a practicing orthoptist since 2007.

As an orthoptist, I specialise in the diagnosis and management of eye movement conditions, lazy eye, vision problems (amblyopia) for patients of all ages.

I have had amazing opportunities working at many large Eye Departments in Birmingham and I am currently the Head Orthoptist at Sandwell and Birmingham NHS Trust. I am also the line manager of Eye Care Liaison Officers at Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre.

Besides Orthoptics, I have a keen interest in social enterprises and innovation.

I have had experience with consulting and managing social enterprise and health care innovation projects.

I am privileged to be a Fellow of NHS England Clinical Entrepreneurs and a Fellow of School for Social Entrepreneurs.

Why did you want to join the Board of Warwickshire Vision?

I feel that I am at the stage of my career where I am more confident with my transferable skills and expertise to give back to a meaningful cause and organisation.

With my background as a clinician and eye health manager, I have chosen to join the board at Warwick Vision Support to help support the charity with their objectives and missions.

Also, the charity's vision, mission and values are very close to my heart.

You have only joined the Board in the last few months, what have been your first impressions?

I received a warm welcome from all of the board members.



There is a good diversity of trustees from different ethnicity, professional backgrounds and service users.

This is my first trustee position and it has been a very welcoming and positive experience.

I am really enjoying the role and I am looking forward to helping the organisation moving forward in the future.

You have only been on the Board a short time, but have you formed a view of what will be the main challenges for the charity over the next couple of years?

Numbers of people seeking support are forecast to increase in 2024 and over the coming years.

“There is a good diversity of trustees from different ethnicity, professional backgrounds and service users”

Warwickshire Vision will have to adapt and be able to keep pace with demand, developing its services to meet the changing needs of the people we support.

How services are developed and how funds are raised to cover the costs of these services will be key challenges and I look forward to playing my part in shaping how we respond and face up to the future.

What are you hoping to contribute to the charity?

As an experienced clinician, I hope to bring my clinical knowledge and expertise to the board, especially with pathways and services development, taking account of service users' conditions and challenges and their changing needs.

I also hope to contribute my experience to ensure the building development is fit for purpose, meets the users' needs and is accessible for all.

Would you recommend others who might be interested in the work of the Board to get involved?

Absolutely! I have had a positive experience with WVS so far with many productive discussions with the board members.

I feel listened to and my opinions are valued by everyone.

I would definitely recommend others to become a trustee.

Not only will you get to meet new people, you will also get to

learn new skills to support your personal development.

Also, being a trustee is an excellent opportunity to support a cause you are passionate about.

In return, it can make life feel more meaningful with a powerful sense of purpose, knowing that you are making a difference to the society in which we live.

Could YOU be a trustee?

If you have HR experience and are interested in becoming a trustee, we'd love to talk to you.



Just scan this QR code to learn more!

WHERE IN WARWICKSHIRE?

By Jenny Lewington, Vision Support Officer

We're focusing on **Nuneaton** this time and caught up with **Jayne Pearce**, a life-long resident of the town.

Jayne has lived in Nuneaton since her birth in 1969 and this is her story:

I was born a "blue baby" (a condition where there is not enough oxygen in the blood) at George Eliot Hospital which caused my hearing and sight impairments.

My childhood education from 5 to 16 took place at Red Deeps Special School. I still have a friend from school and we see each other often - I introduced her to the Nuneaton VSC too!

I then went to Exhall Grange Special School until I was 18.

It was at that time that I got my first cane – it was a short Symbol Cane to alert people to the fact that I had a sight problem.

I then went to Queen Alexandra College in Birmingham and completed a Foundation Course.

I got married at 22 and at 25 we had our son, who is now 28. Sadly the marriage didn't last and we divorced in 2017. I am now enjoying single life.

I live in a lovely community in Nuneaton and am able to live independently.

I spend my time going out and about, and consequently I regularly need new cane tips!

I live close enough to be able to get into town easily.

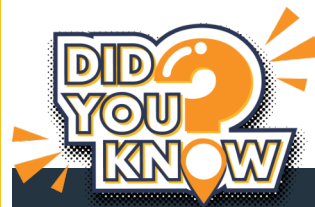
The town centre has changed dramatically over the years and continues to do so with a new Hilton Hotel being built right in the centre where the Co-op used to be. Sadly there are a lot of empty shops as in lots of towns these days.

I volunteer at my church after the Sunday Service, making drinks for the congregation who stay on to chat.

I have also just started helping at Nuneaton VSC, doing the register and welcoming people to the Centre.

My hobby is supporting Nuneaton Borough Football Club, my local team.

Come on the Boro!



Nuneaton is the largest town in the county of Warwickshire

The town was home to the novelist, George Eliot in the 19th century

It is twinned with Roanne in France, Guadalajara in Spain and Cottbus in Germany

CHARITY BEGINS AT NUNEATON

By Graham Buckingham-Underhill, Vision Support Officer and Eye Clinic Liaison Officer



Having a Visual Impairment does not stop Nuneaton Vision Support Centre attendee, Kate Fensome, from raising money for charity.

Cancer Research UK organised a walk in the **Malvern Hills** in October, which was open to anyone fit enough.

Kate is a keen walker and knew the area well, so she and her friend intrepidly set out for the 8-mile walk.

Kate's willingness to raise money for worthy causes shows that her disability does not deter her or diminish her determination.

Indeed, it perhaps makes her even keener as she understands how raising money helps all charities, including Warwickshire Vision Support.

There must be something in the water in Nuneaton, as not only Kate, but other attendees have raised money for charity, including parachute jumps!

A VOLUNTEER'S THOUGHTS

By Jean Harris, Volunteer at Nuneaton Vision Support Centre

I started volunteering for the charity after Covid when the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre was able to reopen.

My husband, Andrew has volunteered for the charity for several years providing IT support at Nuneaton and suggested I might help with the refreshments.

I decided this was something I'd be happy to do, and so I now make teas and coffees, give out biscuits and, when it's someone's birthday, make sure we have cakes!

(Of course, I can't forget the washing and tidying up at the end of the morning).

Meeting and chatting with people who come to the Vision Support Centre is something I have found rewarding and I enjoy sharing our stories and life experiences with them.

I also help the group with things like the reading of letters and cards, looking up information on the internet, or writing shopping lists.

I listen to any concerns within the group and liaise with the WVS staff for further help if needed.

Volunteering at WVS in Nuneaton, with Cindy and June, who also give their time, has added something positive to my week.

Having contact with people of all ages and from different walks of life is an enriching experience for both volunteers and service users.

A TYPICAL DAY AT

Ever wondered what a day in the life of one of our **Vision Support Centres** is like? We caught up with **Graham** to find out.

An early start

Jenny and I usually get there around 08.45 to help set up the room.

We're lucky to have an amazing group of volunteers who set the tables out as we get there.

Jenny brings the fresh milk, and we prepare the biscuits and refreshments.

Today we have two birthday celebrations so cakes and chocolates are added!

Our attendees usually turn up at around 09.30 and today we're having a talk about advocacy from the charity Voiceability.

Practical help

Before we begin, we have an early caller who needed help fitting their white cane with a new roller ball they've received from Warwickshire Vision in the post - we are happy to fit that for them.

Our IT volunteer, Andrew, has a couple of appointments to assist people with their electronic devices in a separate room.

Today he's also training up a new IT volunteer, Luke, so it looks like a busy morning all round!

Whilst waiting for our speakers to arrive, we are able to help one of our service users set up a new watch they have purchased.

A couple of people are also interested in obtaining aids for using eye drops.

So, whilst looking out for new arrivals on the door, Jenny and I advise and assist everyone with queries.

There's nothing like being able to help people in person.

Meanwhile, our new volunteer from within the group, Jayne, ticks everyone off on the register and she copes admirably!



NUNEATON VSC

By Graham Buckingham-Underhill, Vision Support Officer and Eye Clinic Liaison Officer

Here we go!

At 10 o'clock the speakers arrive and after sharing various group announcements, we enjoy an interesting, interactive half-hour talk from them.

We make sure we get their details in case of queries raised in future weeks so we can easily contact them.

It is then time to sing Happy Birthday and distribute the cakes and chocolate.

We are fortunate to accommodate two guide dogs, so we have to be especially careful that they are not given any!

Learning new skills

We also have a Braille machine and Sandra gives support to those learning every other week.

She sets up the machines on a separate table and this week it's Jayne's turn.

It's intriguing to watch and we must say that Jayne is becoming really quite adept!

Is it that time already?

Before you know it at 11.30 taxis arrive, friends come to collect, and we say goodbye.

We reassure everyone that staff can be reached by calling the head office number between sessions.

Then it is time to clear away the tables and return the room to how it was.

A musical finish

After our meeting, our talented IT volunteer, Andrew, then takes an Irish flute music lesson for an hour and is joined by many of our members.

Some of you may remember the group from our entertainment for last year's Christmas party - we can't wait for this year's show!

Until next time

I do not know where the 2 hours go, but this, or something similar, is replicated at all our weekly and monthly vision support centres.

All the relevant times and addresses are given at the back of this magazine, so we look forward to welcoming some fresh faces in the future!



SOMETHING NEW IS COOKING!

By Katherine Woodley, Vision Support Officer

IN THE KITCHEN...

Our Leamington and Stratford Vision Support Centres have been making microwave chocolate mug cakes!

Staff and volunteers have been delivering kitchen equipment demonstrations and as part of this, we have used Warwickshire Vision's own **RNIB Talking Microwave**.



Three of the buttons are all of similar size...

The top button has one tactile dot on it and this is to set the minutes

The middle button has two tactile dots and sets the seconds

The third button, which is smooth, is to select the different cooking settings.



They really are very simple to use with only 4 buttons to the right hand side of the appliance:

Beneath those buttons is a larger button / dial which can be pressed to switch it on and off but can also be rotated to adjust the volume.

It's a great device and we hope to have further demonstrations at our other support centres in the future.

The microwaves are available to buy from the RNIB shop priced at £258 (£215 excl. VAT).

AND AT OUR HOME...

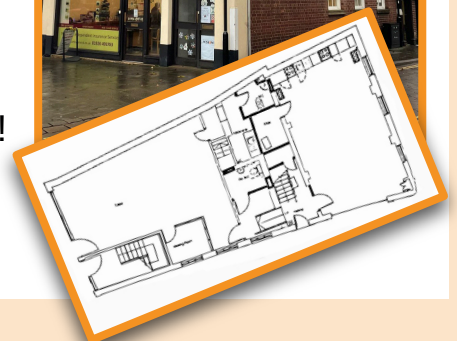
By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer

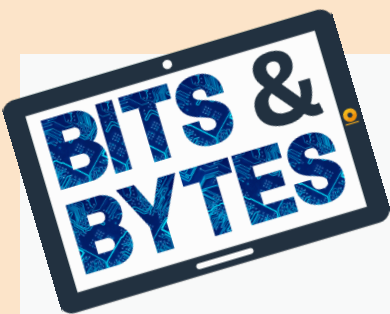
The planned renovation of our offices at 14 Market Place in Warwick has finally been given the go ahead and work gets underway in the first few weeks of January 2024.

We announced that work was due to start earlier in 2023 but decided to make some changes to our planned use of the building, which meant going back to the authorities for approval.

Our revised plans have been approved and we're ready to go!

We'll provide updates over the coming months as the work progresses and our vision of a modern, multipurpose space starts to come to life.





By Ruth Okey,
Technology Officer



Soundscape Free (iOS)

The original app was discontinued by Microsoft, but The Scottish Tech Army, funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust, have now released their new version of the app under it's original name.

It uses 3D audio technology and through a set of headphones, creates a virtual audio representation of your environment with tones and announcements relative to your current position. Nearby points of interest and saved locations are called out, improving confidence and independence.

One user told me it is just like the original, but better!

Be My Eyes Free (iOS/Android)



This app has been available for some time, connecting visually impaired people with volunteers to get video support at a moment's notice.

A new feature, "Be My AI" enables you to take a photo, the app then uses artificial intelligence to describe the picture in lots of detail. (This is on iOS but still being fully tested on Android).

You can chat to get more information and then be transferred to a volunteer if further assistance is required.

Note: *These apps are using Artificial Intelligence, so be mindful that they might not be 100% accurate. They are online apps so will use your mobile data when you are out and about.*

If you want help installing apps or using your smart device, just contact us and request an IT appointment at one of the weekly support centres (01926 411 331)



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FAB FUNDRAISERS

I caught up with one of our amazing fundraisers, **Carol Ainsworth** to ask about her experiences supporting us.

Carol Ainsworth and her husband, Ron, who is one of our service users, regularly attend Leamington Spa Vision Support Centre and Social Club and they organised two great fundraisers during 2023.

I caught up with them at the Leamington Social Club to have a chat.

Carol, how did you become involved with Warwickshire Vision Support?

Over 4 years ago, my husband Ron had an aneurysm and was admitted to hospital. Whilst there, he also had a stroke which took away his peripheral vision.

The hospital put us in touch with Warwickshire Vision Support and we found out about the Vision Support Centres and the Clubs and really enjoyed attending.

What made you decide to become a fundraiser for us?

I wanted to give something back to Warwickshire Vision Support, an organisation that has helped us so much over the years.

Also, I have always been involved in helping raise funds for different causes,



for example Dogs for Good and Guide Dogs.

You organised two amazing fundraising events in 2023 for us, the first being the Coronation Garden party event in May which raised £420, and the second, the Race Night in October which raised a total of £860.

Can you tell me about those events?

We live on the Heathcote Park Estate, where there is a good sense of community.

We have a marquee and for the coronation I said 'let's have a party and tombola' to raise funds.

Neighbours, friends and family came along. It was a beautiful day, and everyone had fun.

That afternoon the idea of a Race Night was born, and we discussed it as the next idea for a future possible event.

In August 2023 we met again to ensure everything was in place to plan for the Race Night in October at our local Bishops Tachbrook Sports & Social Club.

Adrian, the host for the event, is a friend of ours - and the Club Steward - and he took on some of the organising tasks.

It was a fantastic, fun night that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

BE HOME-SECURE

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

By Martyn Parker, Community Engagement Officer

Did you feel supported by friends and family? Who helped you?

Virtually all of my family and friends were at the Race Night.

How was your experience of working with WVS? Did you feel supported?

Yes, we felt very supported throughout.

Would you fund-raise for us again?

Yes, in 2024, we are already planning a Summer Event at Heathcote Park, along with another Race Night next Autumn.

There are also plans for a Quiz at Bishops Tachbrook Sports & Social Club later in the year.

I attended both events and it was amazing to see so many people having a good time and raising money to help us continue supporting blind and partially sighted people across Warwickshire.

If you have fundraising ideas or would like to get involved, please call me on 01926 411 331.

Martyn

Warwickshire Police have visited many of our Support Centres recently and shared these useful tips on how to improve your home security:

- Chain locks on your front door are advised, but only when you open the door.
- Never leave a window open when you're out.
- Use strong padlocks on sheds and garages - your own ladders or tools can help a burglar break in.
- Access to the rear of the house must be secure, with gates bolted and padlocked where possible.
- Fencing should not have any climbing aids.
- Hedges, shrubs and trees should be kept to a height where intruders cannot hide.
- Good security lighting that activates through heat sensitivity or movement will act as a deterrent.
- If you go on holiday, try to make your home look occupied - avoid milk on the doorstep, post in the hall and consider timer switches to activate lights.
- Don't leave window lock keys in the window.
- When you are home and need a window open, try to use a top opener rather than one someone could easily climb through.
- Always have a phone in your bedroom at night.



If you wish to report anything suspicious, call 101 and ask for Warwickshire Police.

If a crime is happening or you see something suspicious that needs immediate attention, call 999 and ask for Warwickshire Police.

COMPANION BUS PASSES - UPDATE

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

A companion pass is an enhancement to a concessionary bus pass which allows a passholder to take a carer or companion with them free of charge.

It is indicated by a **+1** or **C+** symbol at the top right of the bus pass and are also known as “**+1 passes**” or “**carer passes**”.



Can I get a companion pass?

Applications are now being accepted for existing bus pass holders.

The pass will be available to holders of both disabled person's

passes and older person's passes, provided you meet the following **criteria**:

You must be over the age of 11, qualify for an ENCTS (English National Concessionary Travel Scheme) bus pass under the current scheme **AND ONE** of the following applies to you;

- You are registered blind (severely sight impaired) or entitled to be registered as such;
- you need to be accompanied or supervised at all times due to your disability e.g. challenging behaviours, an unstable or unpredictable medical condition, or severe cognitive or mental impairment;

- you are physically unable to get on or off the bus without the assistance of another person.

Are passes available now?

Yes! Those registered SSI / blind and already in possession of a bus pass can now call 01926 359 180 and quote their Warwickshire Vision registration number to apply.

What is a companion?

Someone of bus fare paying age, who can travel with and assist a Disabled Person's Pass holder on public transport. It need not be the same person on each journey.

How will they work?

The passholder scans their pass on the bus, then the bus driver logs on the ticket machine whether the passholder is with a companion who needs free travel. The carer or companion does not need a separate pass.

The companion can only travel free when the journey starts in Warwickshire, and the companion and the pass holder must get on and off the bus at the same point.

We anticipate you will be able to apply within Warwickshire libraries and that documents which can be accepted as evidence you meet the criteria for the Companion enhancement will include **CVI, BD8 or registration with Warwickshire Vision Support.**

WHEN AND WHERE

Come and join us at one of our Support Centres!

We have guest speakers, equipment demos and they're a great social setting to build friendships and peer support.

We only charge £1 a session and provide tea, coffee and biscuits!

Our Clubs are a great way to socialise and make friendships too!

Please contact Rebecca Bourton on 01926 411 331 for more details on any of the Support Centre or Clubs we provide.

	Area	Location	Date	Time
Weekly Centres	Leamington Spa	Chandos Court, Chandos St, CV32 4YU	Every Monday	9:30 to 11:30am
	Stratford-on-Avon	Samaritans Community Hub, Tyler House, CV37 6TY	Every Tuesday	9:30 to 11:30am
	Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church, Regent Place, CV21 2PJ	Every Wednesday	9:30 to 11:30am
	Nuneaton	Newtown Community Centre, Newtown Rd, CV11 4HG	Every Thursday	9:30 to 11:30am

New time!

	Area	Location	Date	Time
Monthly Centres	Southam	Graham Adams Centre, St James Rd, CV47 0LY	1 st Tuesday of month	2:00 to 4:00pm
	Bedworth	Johnson Memorial Pavilion, Miners Welfare Park CV12 8JH	1 st Friday of month	9:30 to 11:30am
	Coleshill	Coleshill Community Centre, Temple Way, B46 1HH	2 nd Thursday of month	1:30 to 3:30pm
	Kenilworth	Kenilworth Snr Citizens Club, Abbey End, CV8 1QJ	2 nd Friday of month	9:30 to 11:30am
	Alcester	Malt Mill Lane Community Centre, B49 5QR	3 rd Tuesday of month	1:30 to 3:30pm
	Atherstone	St Mary's Church Hall, Sheepy Road, CV9 1EX	3 rd Friday of month	9:30 to 11:30am
	Shipston-on-Stour	Stour Court, Old Road, CV36 4HE	4 th Tuesday of month	2:00 to 4:00pm

	Area	Date	Time
Our Clubs	Atherstone	Every other Wednesday	10:30am - 1:30pm
	Kenilworth	2 nd & 4 th Tuesday of month	2pm - 4pm
	Leamington Spa	1 st & 3 rd Wednesday of month	10am - 12pm
	Nuneaton	2 nd Tuesday of month	2pm - 4pm
	Rugby Hillmorton	3 rd Monday of month	7pm - 9pm
	Rugby (VIP)	2 nd Wednesday of month	2pm - 4pm
	Southam	3 rd Wednesday of month	2pm - 4pm
	Stratford-on-Avon	Every other Thursday	2pm - 4pm
	Coleshill	4 th Thursday of month	1:30pm - 3:30pm

VisionZone 2024

Solutions for Low Vision



Would you like to find out more about assistive technology, Support, Services, Groups and much more!

Our Vision Zone events bring together a variety of excellent services and charities covering your local area.

No matter what your sight loss condition we are here for you. Whether it's just to gain knowledge or hands on experience of new technologies, entry is free to our events, and our friendly staff will greet you with a warm welcome.

Friday 22nd March – 10am to 2pm

Coventry Council House, Lower Ground Floor

Committee Road 2, Earl Street, Coventry, CV1 5RR



Coventry Resource Centre for the Blind



R N I B

See differently

0800 1456115

www.lowvisionshop.co.uk

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