

WARWICKSHIRE
VISION
MAGAZINE

SPRING 2024

**SPRING CLEAN
YOUR FINANCES**

*Understanding the
support available*

**HEALTH
HARDWARE**

*Devices to help you
look after yourself*

**A GOOD
CONNECTION**

*The two sides of
our telephone
befriender
service*

WELCOME



It's at this time every year when I look out at my garden with a sense of anticipation as it starts to wake from the winter.

The spring season seems to start earlier and earlier and whilst it is pleasing to see the first daffodils, I despair at the lawn which goes from neatly kept to a wild meadow overnight whilst I sleep!

I look specifically for signs of life from a rose tree that I transplanted from my childhood home more than 5 years ago.

It is not a prize winning rose, in fact it is far from it, and based on professional advice I took at the time, it should not have survived being moved from the soil where it had been planted more than 30 years before.

But year after year it comes back and surprises me with its resilience and a very distinctive fragrance that can take me back to a long gone era in a heartbeat.



It is a rose which my father planted when his sight was failing and was to become symbolic of his later gardening endeavours when he was blind.

The fragrance of the rose would dominate the surrounding flower bed and occasionally carry on a breeze into the back of the house.

Its aromatic scent would inspire him to continue feeding and nurturing it over many years.

I may have inherited my father's rose tree and enthusiasm for gardening but regrettably I did not inherit his 'green fingers'.

Fortunately we live in times when technology can provide an answer. I have an app on my smartphone called **Picture This** which from a photo, can tell me the name of a plant or shrub, its general health, when to prune and what it needs to thrive.

If only there was an app which could remove the weeds for me!

I have an area of my garden that is set aside for vegetables. I am not as enthusiastic as Tom Good (from the 1970s sitcom *The Good Life*) but I'm not sure there can be too many things more rewarding than eating vegetables that have come from your own garden and hard work.

I'm not sure from year to year how my efforts will be rewarded or if the only beneficiaries will be the resident bugs and



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

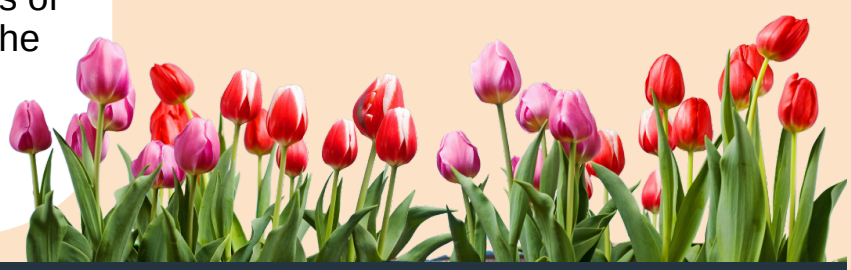
local wildlife, but I find that is all part of the fun.

One of the most pleasurable aspects of my garden and this time of year, is the anticipation it provides.

With my best wishes for the season,

Keith

Keith Eales
Chief Executive Officer



Becoming Spring by Marian Shalloe, Support Centre Volunteer

Spring becomes, at first it seems, so slow
The beginning, feels crisp and new
Almost like a gentle whisper in the air
A quiet but definite awakening
It tiptoes in from the cold damp earth
Emerging from winter's hibernation
It feels that everything is about to be reborn
Stirred by the season, murmurings of renewal
Bulbs, buds, shoots, branches, becoming alive
Bird song welcoming in the dawn
Steps may seem to falter with frosty mornings
Or when wind and rain get in the way
Spring marches through regardless
The days when it feels within us and around
Carpets of spring flowers here and there
Petals unfurling gently from beautiful blossoms
Daffodils in full glory dancing in the breeze
The joy of light, warmth, colour, and renewal
Lifting our spirits, energy, and expectations
Bringing hope of warm summer days ahead
The rebirth and poetic dance of becoming spring
And its promise to us of better days to come

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MEET A TRUSTEE

By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer

We spent some time with **David Adams**, one of our longest serving trustees.

David, can you tell us a little about your career background?

Most of my career was in the motor industry.

At Ford Motor Company I trained and qualified as a management accountant before moving to Chrysler Europe in Paris, France.

It was some time later when Peugeot were buying out Chrysler that I met the American engineer, John DeLorean.

I became the 57th employee and financial controller of the DeLorean Motor Company.

In those days it would take most car production companies five years or more to design and build a car but with innovative design and engineering, we produced one in half that time at DeLorean.

Unfortunately the company could not produce and sell enough cars to the Californian market to keep the company going.

The DeLorean story is well documented in books, films and TV and it inspired the Back to the Future films.

I would have been happy to stay with John DeLorean but I was offered a role as European finance director with Milton Bradley Games and moved to London.

It was here where I met Judith who was to become my wife.

It was also at this time I started losing my sight.

This change in my personal circumstances in 1985 became the inspiration for setting up my own company, the same year as Judith and I married.



David is pictured with his wife Judith and his guide dog, Jimbo after presenting a petition to the Office of the Prime Minister in February 2024.

When did you become involved with Warwickshire Vision Support?

My first involvement was as a client in the early 1990s as my sight loss increased.

I had moved back to Priors Marston in Warwickshire and Ron Webster from the charity visited me and provided moral support and technical aids.

I was grateful for the support, which was there for me when I most needed it.

What made you decide to join the charity as a trustee?

Judith and I had been campaigning and fundraising to keep our village school open - I ran the London Marathon and cycled across Cuba as part of the fundraising, helping us reach our £2 million target.

But this project ended with our school becoming the first government-funded Free School in the country and I had more time on my hands and offered my experience of finance and fundraising to the organisation that had helped me.

I believe you are still very active with your spare time other than with Warwickshire Vision.

That's correct, I am president of the European Guide Dog Federation.

We have 50 member organisations in 25 European countries; we share best practice amongst guide dog schools and work to improve access for guide dog users .

“We must connect with people who might not be aware of the support they can receive from us.”

I still campaign on other causes that are close to my heart.

Recently I joined with the National Federation of the Blind to present a petition to the Office of the Prime Minister, objecting to floating bus stops.

This is where people must cross a cycle lane to board or leave a bus, hazardous enough for someone who has normal sight, but perilous for people like me with a guide dog.

As one of the longest serving trustees, what do you think are the main challenges for the next few years?

We have been extremely fortunate that several people have left legacy gifts to us recently and think the challenge is to make sure we use this money wisely to improve our service at every level.

We must connect with people who might not be aware of the support they can receive from us.

As digital communication and artificial intelligence continue to develop, we should also support our clients or beneficiaries in making the most of these opportunities.

Thereafter, the underlying challenge will be fundraising and remaining financially sustainable.

WHERE IN WARWICKSHIRE?

By Alison Jones, Volunteer Coordinator

We're in **Leamington** this time, starting with a chat with **Alan Cutler**, one of our amazing volunteers.

Alan grew up in the Lake District and, after moving to Warwickshire, always wished to retire to Leamington Spa, with its large open spaces, stunning properties, and many amenities, including coffee shops.

He is on a mission to find the perfect coffee and is trying out all the coffee shops in the area.

He's spent his life working in hospitality: as a squadron leader catering officer in the RAF; head of hospitality services in Aston University; chef-proprietor of a restaurant; and a leadership trainer for hospitality managers.

Alan recognises that he has had a good life, with a loving family and good health, and, as a Samaritans volunteer, is aware of the challenges that many other, less fortunate, people face.

He supports Warwickshire Vision because several family members are visually impaired due to an inherited mitochondrial eye condition.

He recognises that volunteering not only benefits the receiver, as those who give

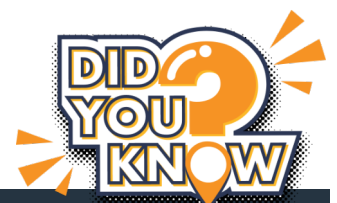
their time and effort also benefit psychologically – it is a two-way street.

His hobbies include the recreation of past Victorian murders trials for local groups and as a cruise speaker, **acting as the judge, with the audience playing the part of the jury!**

Alan also plays bridge, and his wife volunteers at the food bank in Leamington.

Everyone who attends Leamington Vision Support Centre receives a warm welcome from Alan who takes the register and donations on entry.

We are incredibly grateful to him for his time and dedication to Warwickshire Vision.



Midland Oak in Leamington was reputed to mark the centre of England (later Meriden was confirmed as centre)

Leamington was granted its 'Royal' prefix in 1838 by Queen Victoria

AMAZING ENTERTAINMENT

By Helen Jones,
Vision Support Officer



The popular local folk band 'Away with the Fairies' returned to Leamington Social Club in February.

The exceptionally talented group, who all sing and play at least one instrument, treated us to variety of catchy songs.

The band were as engaging as ever and their singing, playing and funny stories kept everyone entertained (often at the expense of fellow band mates!).

The session ended to shouts of "more!" and fortunately, the band will return in May 2024 when they will again delight club members and volunteers alike.

We are truly fortunate in Leamington to have an array of interesting speakers.

We've recently been joined by a local beekeeper, a bat expert, bell ringers, pony therapy and a squash champion, and we have numerous games and quiz masters waiting in the wings!

This summer we are planning our first summer party which will be held at Bishops Tachbrook Sports and Social Club, where we will play games and enjoy a buffet lunch.

Why not join us?

TIME TO RELAX AND UNWIND

By Katherine Woodley,
Vision Support Officer

In January, Leamington Spa V.S.C. were treated to a mindfulness, well-being and meditation session from Louise at Heathcote Holistics.

Based in Whitnash, Heathcote Holistics offer Emotionally Focused Therapy, Reiki, Reflexology, Aromatherapy, and Indian Head Massage.

These therapies promote relaxation, perhaps the most important key to your health and well-being because when you are completely relaxed your own natural healing mechanism becomes more active.

In our January session, Louise demonstrated sounds and vibrations to the group using a range of chimes and instruments.

The group found the experience thoroughly enjoyable and were delighted to each receive a small gift to take home.

A big thank you to Louise for visiting and reminding us to spend some precious time practicing self-care.



SPRING CLEAN YO

Spring is the perfect time to take a fresh look at your finances. **Rebecca Bourton** takes a look at two benefits you may be entitled to.



Blind Person's Allowance

If you are of working age, it is useful to be aware of the Blind Person's Allowance.

This is an extra amount of tax-free allowance and is added to your tax-free Personal Allowance.

This effectively means you can earn more before you start paying income tax.

The Blind Person's Allowance for the tax year 2024-25 is £3,070, regardless of your age or income (It was £2,870 for tax year 2023/24).

In England, you can claim Blind Person's Allowance if you are registered with your local council as blind or severely sight impaired and you have a certificate that

says you are blind or severely sight impaired (or a similar document from your doctor).

How do I claim Blind Person's Allowance?

It's important to realise that you must claim the Blind Person's Allowance – it will not be given to you automatically.

Claims can be backdated by up to four years, so if you were registered blind or severely sight impaired in or before the 2020-21 tax year you could benefit.

Blind person's allowance is more flexible than the personal allowance as it can be transferred to a spouse or civil partner if the allowance exceeds the blind person's income.

You can do this:

- if you are married or in a civil partnership
- if you are living with your spouse or civil partner
- whether or not your spouse or civil partner is blind

To start your claim, contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) by calling: 0300 200 3301, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm (except bank holidays) - or contact WVS for additional guidance.

OUR FINANCES

By Rebecca Bourton,
Community Services Manager



Attendance Allowance

You may qualify for Attendance Allowance if you have reached state pension age and need help to do things, like choosing clothes, reading, and replying to mail, walking around safely, and taking part in social activities.

However, if you already receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment you cannot get Attendance Allowance as well.

Attendance Allowance is not taxable nor is it a means-tested benefit, so it does not matter how much other income or savings you have.

You can get Attendance Allowance even if you live alone and do not have anyone looking after you; it is your need for help that is important.

You can spend any Attendance Allowance you receive however you like. It can be paid on top of other benefits and may

You can request a claim form by calling the Department for Work and Pensions' Attendance Allowance Helpline on 0800 731 0122, Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm - or contact WVS for additional guidance.

even increase the number of other benefits you get.

Do I have to be registered blind or partially sighted to receive Attendance Allowance?

No, you do not have to be registered as blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired) to claim Attendance Allowance.

Whilst registration can provide evidence of how serious your sight problem is, it is how your sight affects your daily living that counts.

A letter from your consultant or GP about how your sight affects your life can be counted as evidence.

How much is Attendance Allowance worth?

If your claim for Attendance Allowance is successful, you will receive one of two weekly rates (for the tax year 2024-25), depending on how much care you need:

- A low rate of £72.65 for those who need help during the day or the night
- A high rate of £108.55 for those needing help during both day and night

REMEMBER:

You can ask a friend, relative or carer if you would prefer that they help you with the claim form. We would always recommend your local branch of Citizens Advice for their expert help in this area.

FAB FUNDRAISING

By Martyn Parker, Community Engagement Officer

We caught up with our amazing volunteer, **Pauline Parker** to discover more about her fundraising efforts.

Last year, Pauline decided to celebrate her 80th birthday by walking 800 miles in 8 months, with a target of raising £800 for us. In the end, she completed a huge 1,553 miles, raising around £1500!

It was just one of Pauline's fundraising achievements so we had to ask her about her association with us.

I began volunteering for Warwickshire Vision when I retired in 2004.

I visited people in their homes helping them read letters and supporting them as needed.

I did this until COVID hit in 2020, and I have been a telephone befriender ever since.

I have been involved in fundraising for a number of years, doing collections, running stalls, donating items for raffles and promoting the charity to friends and family, encouraging them to support too.

I wanted to do a significant fundraiser to mark my 80th birthday, and the 800 mile challenge seem appropriate.

I have always enjoyed walking and going out at 6am each morning, in all weathers, gave me a real sense of achievement.

I really surprised myself, managing to complete almost twice the distance, and raise almost twice the amount of money.

My son is visually impaired and has received a great deal of help and support from Warwickshire Vision Support over more than 35 years, so I really want to put something back and support this fabulous cause.

Fundraising never stops

Last year we had some amazing events, supported by wonderful people and businesses around the county, and we have more planned for this year.

The thing about fundraising for a charity is that it is an ongoing process; you organise an event, the event happens, and you move on to the next one.

One of the challenges is that we need helpers and at times, finding the right number of volunteers can be challenging.

This is why we are putting together a group of people to take part in, or organise, fundraising events.

If you have been inspired by Pauline and have decided to challenge yourself as a fundraiser for us, or would like to be part of our fundraising group, please email me at martyn.parker@warwickshire.vision or call me on 01926 411331.

I'd love to hear from you!



A GOOD CONNECTION

A glimpse of the impact our telephone befriending service has - on both sides.

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

Carol (the call maker)

Why did you decide to become a telephone befriender?

I am a service user and a while back I had a home visit for a second white stick.

During the visit, I learned that the charity needed volunteers to call people and my sister pointed out how much I love being on the phone, so I put my name down!

It was not long before I was matched with Kath and began to call her.

What impact has it had on your life?

Its lovely. I really love talking to her on a Friday and look forward to our chats.

We have a sort of mother and daughter relationship. I love her sense of humour!

What would you tell someone thinking about being a telephone befriender?

I would say, "definitely do it!" - It makes such a nice impact on both sides.

The person you call may not have much contact, so to take up to an hour or so each week, makes a real difference.

Anything else you would like to tell us?

We have such a laugh - we talk about our families and learn about each other, but it is so important to keep everything we talk about confidential.

Kath is a lovely lady who I would not have met if I had not taken on this volunteering role. I am so pleased I did!

Kath (the call receiver)

When did you first receive calls?

It was about 18 months ago when Carol started to call but I felt so comfortable, it felt like I have always known her.

I will soon be 95 so I am not sure about exact dates, but I'm so pleased she did start calling me.

How does it work for you?

Carol calls me once a week on a Friday and it is an incredibly special chat that I look forward to each week - I love it!

What sort of things do you talk about?

Well, we always laugh so much. She tells me about her cat, and we laugh about her and things she gets up to.

What difference does it make to you?

Carol is lovely - when I put the phone down on a Friday, I feel like a completely different person. It has made Fridays a special day for me.

Would you recommend someone else having a telephone befriender?

If they're anything like Carol, then yes! They'd be so lucky to have 'my Carol' like I have. She is so genuine and kind.

Anything else you would like to tell us?

I love my Fridays now. Carol is simply the happiest and most thoughtful person I have ever met. She is brave, kind and just the funniest person. I feel lucky.

If you feel you'd benefit from a telephone befriender calling you, or if you'd like to volunteer – please call 01926 411331 or email enquiries@warwickshire.vision

HEALTH HARDWARE

Five pieces of equipment to support your well-being, all of which are **available at our Vision Support Centres.**

1 Nexus voice blood glucose monitoring system.

This device is designed to read aloud the results of your blood glucose level and works on a similar principle to the 'finger prick' models you may be familiar with.

The monitor has the facility to store the readings in order for comparisons to be made of the glucose level over a number of days.

It all comes in a handy case.

2 Easy to use eye drop dispensers.

We carry an array of easy-to-use eye drop dispensers, two of which are pictured.

They enable the exact dose to be given and come in a range of sizes depending on the size of your bottle.

We can help you decide which is best for your needs - simply bring your eyedrops to the Vision Support Centre and we will find the one most suitable for you.

3 7 day jumbo pill box with braille.

If you need a pill box that's larger and easier to see then this will fit the bill.

The compartments are large enough for a number of pills and have the day of the week in bold green letters and also in braille.

4 Talking ear and forehead thermometers

This thermometer takes your temperature and reads it back aloud to you, either by measuring on your forehead or in your ear.

It has an easy to read display as well and is very simple to use by pressing the oval shaped measurement button on the back of the device.

When the measurement is completed you will hear two beeps and then the result will be announced via the speaker and it will be shown on the display.

5 Beurer talking wrist blood pressure monitor

This is a fully automatic blood pressure and pulse monitor that is used on the wrist.

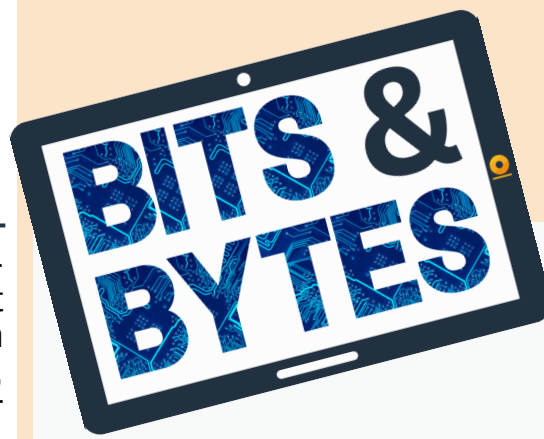
It is easy to read and announces the results clearly.

The voice has adjustable volume (four levels, including mute) and the unit announces aloud the systolic pressure, diastolic pressure, date, time, and pulse.

It notifies you if you use it incorrectly. And has a memory to store your readings.

The readings taken should be for information only and if there are any concerns then medical advice must be sought.

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



By Ruth Okey, Technology Officer



Two more of the latest apps for you to try out!

Seeing AI Free (iOS/Android)



This well-known IOS app is now available on Android!

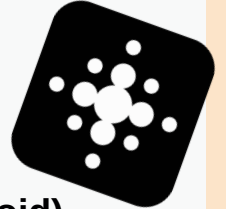
Its main purpose is to read text to you in both a live or document mode.

Other useful features include bank note and product identification as well as the ability to describe products based on their barcode.

The app is constantly being updated based on user feedback

Remember: If you want help with installing apps or using your smart device, just contact us and request an IT appointment at one of the weekly support centres on 01926 411 331. We'll be happy to help you.

Envision Free (iOS/Android)



This app was made free to users in 2022 and is used to read text and documents as well as describe your surroundings.

A recent update enables users to interrogate scanned text.

I used the app to scan a visitor information brochure and instead of getting it to simply read the information to me, I asked it some questions about the size of the park, number of hiking trails and where the toilets were located.

The answers to my questions were located within the text and spoken back to me.

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.

BRILLIANT BRAILLE

Despite technological advances, Braille is still widely used around the world by over 40 million people.

By Marian Shalloe, Support Centre Volunteer

Louis Braille was born in 1809 in France. As a result of an accident at his father's workshop he was completely blind by the age of five.

He was sent to the Royal Institution for Blind Youth in Paris and was introduced to a military code system called **night writing**, used by soldiers to send and receive messages without making sound.

At 15, he began developing and inventing his own system that would allow blind people to read and write quickly, and Braille was created and published in 1829.

After his death, Braille became the official communications system for blind people in France, and soon spread worldwide.

Braille remains valuable and relevant.

In the workplace it's used for making meeting notes or reviewing documents.

Braille music notation is essential for visually impaired musicians.

It is widely used to make everyday tasks accessible: labels, signs, playing games... the list goes on - even Lego Braille bricks have been created for children!

We think technology will enhance Braille use, not replace it - it's here to stay.



Dotty About Braille

by Christine Ramble, a long-time friend of Warwickshire Vision Support

Beneath my fingertips the small dots stand proud on the page,
It still amazes me
that this basic cell of six raised spots can be arranged and rearranged to form letters of the alphabet, words, numerals, musical notation,
If I believed in destiny I'd call the awl that slipped in Louis's childish hand,
Fate's instrument: had it not closed his eyes
he'd not have prised the door to blind perception,
Translating inaccessible flat print into a tactile code that he could read, as I do now,
Two hundred years ago,
an inventive teenage boy's desperate need
to learn and read unaided sparked the creation,
This short-lived genius brought to near perfection,
Even now it's scarcely changed,
And so beneath my fingertips the proud dots stand,
in praise of one who, though he died too young,
remains in touch, his life's work still goes on

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

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 with new technologies, entry is free, our friendly staff is ready to greet you with a warm welcome.

Wednesday 8th May – 10.00 am to 2:00 pm

**United Reformed Church, 11 Rother Street, Stratford upon Avon,
CV37 6LU**

R N I B

See differently

Macular Society
Beating Macular Disease

VisitingAngels 
QUALITY AT HOME CARE

 **synapptic**

WARWICKSHIRE
VISION



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