

Warwickshire

Vision

Summer 2022



WARWICKSHIRE
VISION

Warwickshire Vision Support Celebrates Queen's Award

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Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are expressed to Vicky Sartain, Warwickshire Council and all contributors to the magazine. We also thank Kenilworth Talking News Association for producing the digital audio version of Warwickshire Vision.

CEO Opening

It's summertime and it's looking like it will be one of the hottest in a while. With Warwickshire Vision Support changing and looking to the future, sometimes it's easy to forget the past. Perhaps like me, you are old enough to remember the heatwave and drought of 1976. I was in my early teens but can vividly recall images of dry reservoirs, water rationing and being sent by my parents to fill water buckets from a standpipe in our street.

That was a very rare event, but the recent spell of hot weather and the increasing frequency of record-breaking temperatures in this country are a clear sign that we have to respect the changes to our planet and give more consideration to our use of natural resources.

Our use of water has certainly changed over the years. It is estimated that most households use an average of 150 litres of water each day which compares with just 18 litres that our grandparents would have used.

We know that we benefit from drinking 6-8 glasses of water every day but only 3% of treated water entering households is used for drinking purposes with more than 30% used to flush toilets. I suspect

that if average temperatures continue to rise in this country, there will be more and more consideration given to how we capture and use free rainwater inside the home. This will be alongside how we harness solar energy which is becoming an increasingly common feature on the top of many houses.

We are doing what we can at Warwickshire Vision Support to be more careful with our use of natural resources. The architect who is progressing the renovation plans for our offices at Market Place is making the building as energy efficient as possible. He is working with the local conservation officer to identify how we can improve levels of insulation whilst harnessing solar and air source heating systems to power and heat the building.

News of the renovation will come later in the year once planning permission and listed building consent has been obtained. In the meantime, I hope you all have a fantastic summer.

Keith Eales,
CEO



Keith Eales

News Round Up

Queen's Award Celebration

In 2020, Warwickshire Vision Support were proud to announce that our volunteers had been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

Today the charity and its volunteers run a variety of social clubs offering activities and social support; host a series of vision support centres across the county and manage eye clinic advice desks providing information, advice and guidance to people coming to terms with sight loss; operate a home visiting service helping to address issues of social isolation; as well as delivering IT training and advocacy support to enable people to maintain their independence and exercise their rights.



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

**The Queen's Award for
Voluntary Service Logo**

With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, our volunteers have demonstrated their remarkable dedication to those they support. In a little over 2 months, the charity and its volunteers have contacted over 3,000 visually impaired people in Warwickshire, to make sure that they have practical and emotional support to help them weather the crisis. Many have also signed up to a telephone befriending service to help alleviate isolation, something which has been exacerbated by the lockdown.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the celebration which was due to be held at the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace was postponed for fear of the safety of guests. A year later in 2021 as restrictions began to



**Representatives Martyn and Stacey
en-route to Buckingham Palace**



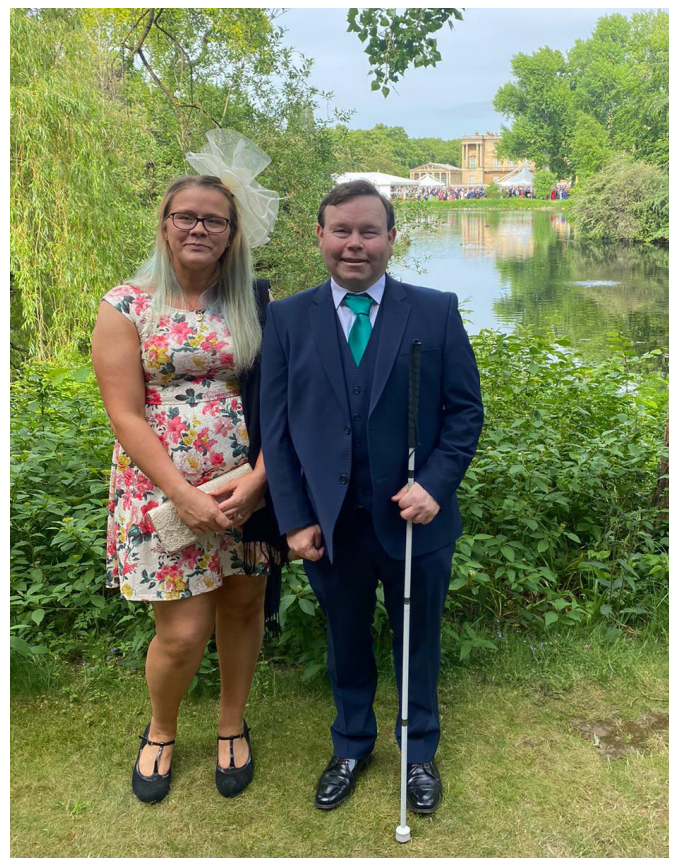
WVS Chair Liz Thiebe presenting the award at the 2021 celebration at Warwick Boat Club

ease, we hosted our own presentation at the Warwick Boat Club in celebration of our Queen's Award-winning volunteers, which was presented to us by Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire Timothy Cox, who serves as the queen's representative and other high-ranking members of the local community.

However, earlier this year, we received confirmation that the initial celebration that was to be held at Buckingham Palace was to resume, and we could select two representatives to attend the prestigious Royal Garden Party and accept the award on behalf of Warwickshire Vision Support and our volunteers.

Volunteers Martyn Parker and Stacey Fennel were chosen to represent WVS at the event and they travelled together to Buckingham Palace on 18th May 2022.

Upon arrival, Stacey and Martyn had to initially queue to get into the gates but as soon as they entered, they were allowed to wander almost wherever they pleased. They took a trip down the side of Buckingham Palace into the gardens, where they found two tents playing live music. The two tents of musicians would take turns in playing songs which contributed to the overall lovely atmosphere of the afternoon.



Martyn and Stacey in the Buckingham Palace gardens

After exploring the gardens, Martyn and Stacey headed back to the main crowd which was at the back of Buckingham Palace. A variety of food and drinks were offered and they were then given the opportunity to



Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge attending the Royal Garden Party

mingle with some of the other Royal Garden Party Attendees. After some time of relaxing with other attendees, Martyn and Stacey and the other attendees were greeted by Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Edward, the Earl of Sussex, and Sophie, the Countess of Wessex.

Reflecting on the event, Stacey wrote: "The event was great! Honestly, the whole thing was amazing. It was very well organised and everyone was friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed myself and I feel so privileged and honoured

to be given the opportunity to attend. The amazing, hard-working and dedicated volunteers makes Warwickshire Vision Support the amazing charity it is and it's such an honour for us to be able to represent them at the garden party, and I for one am very grateful for the opportunity."



Martyn and Stacey posing with a 6'7" Royal Guard

Thanks again to our amazing volunteers whose hard work and determination during the COVID-19 pandemic made all of this possible. Well done!

Volunteers' Week Celebrations

Volunteers' Week is always a special occasion at Warwickshire Vision Support.

Every year in the first week of June, the nation comes together to celebrate and thank volunteers for their hard work, their achievements, and their commitment to helping others.

Warwickshire Vision Support is no exception. It is very important to us to celebrate our volunteers, as we understand that we wouldn't be able to deliver our Vision Support Centres, social clubs, home visiting and befriending services without our volunteers, as well as all their help supporting our fundraising,

marketing, and admin teams.

To celebrate Volunteers Week, on Tuesday June 7th, all of our volunteers were invited to attend the celebration which was held in Rugby Baptist Church, celebrating the contribution they make to our charity and service users.

Once everybody arrived and was given an opportunity to mingle, the celebration was kicked off by an opening speech by Warwickshire Vision Support Chair Liz Thiebe. She shared her own stories of volunteering and then highlighted the wonderful contributions made by our volunteers over the past year.



A group photo of our volunteers at the volunteer celebration in Rugby



Volunteers mingling and catching up with one another at the event

After the speech, our guests were invited to tuck in to a vast array of drinks, cakes and other treats while our volunteers were given the chance to talk to each other openly and catch up on their achievements throughout the year.

As the celebration progressed and the conversation flowed, guests were then separated off into teams where they competed against each other in a summer-themed quiz which was arranged by Volunteer Coordinator Lauren.



Guests taking part in the summer-themed quiz



Volunteers enjoying some drinks and cakes together

Overall, the celebration was a success. It was fantastic to have our volunteers in one place and to be given the opportunity to meet each other and thank them individually for their hard work.

To all our volunteers - thank you so much for everything that you do. Our volunteers are vital to everything we do at Warwickshire Vision Support and we can't thank you enough.

**If you would like to help make a genuine difference to people living with sight loss, become a volunteer by emailing:
enquiries@warwickshire.vision**

Vision Support Centres and Clubs - Timetable

Listed below are the timetables for our weekly and monthly Vision Support Centres and our social clubs.

Please drop in and visit one of our Vision Support Centres on one of the following days for face-to-face advice and information, equipment demonstrations, WVS service requests and IT training (IT training available through appointment) – we'd be delighted for you to join us.

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure our centres and clubs are COVID safe, please note that your attendance will be at your own risk.

Please note: All our centres and clubs will follow this timetable indefinitely, excluding for any bank holidays and the Christmas period.

Weekly Centres

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

Monthly Centres

Area	Location	Date	Time
Alcester	Malt Mill Lane Community Centre, Malt Mill Lane, B49 5QR	Every 3 rd Tuesday of the Month	1:30 - 3:30pm
Atherstone	St Mary's Church Hall, The Market Place, Sheepy Road, CV9 1EX	Every 3 rd Friday of the Month	9:30 - 11:30am
Bedworth	Bedworth Ex-Servicemans Social Club, Rye Piece Ringway, CV12 8JH.	Every 1 st Friday of the Month	9:30 - 11:30am
Coleshill	Coleshill Community Centre, Temple Way, B46 1HH	Every 2 nd Thursday of the Month (Closed in August)	2:30 - 4:30pm
Kenilworth	Kenilworth Senior Citizens Club, Abbey End, CV8 1QJ	Every 2 nd Friday of the Month	9:30 - 11:30am
Shipston-on-Stour	Stour Court, Old Road, CV36, 4HE	Every 4 th Tuesday of the Month	2:30 - 4:30pm
Southam	Graham Adams Centre, St James Road, CV47 0LY	Every 1 st Tuesday of the Month	2:00 - 4:00pm

Clubs

If you're feeling social, we also offer an extensive network of Clubs and Groups for people living with sight loss in Warwickshire.

Transport to and from the club is provided at a subsidised rate. If you would like to join one of our clubs, please call us on 01926 411331.

Area	Time	Date
Atherstone	10:30am – 1:30pm	Every other Wednesday
Kenilworth	2pm – 4pm	2 nd and 4 th Tuesday of the month (Closed until September)
Leamington Spa	10am – 12pm	1 st and 3 rd Wednesday of the month
Rugby Hillmorton	7.00pm – 9pm	3 rd Monday of the month
Rugby (VIP)	2pm – 4pm	2 nd Wednesday of the month
Southam	2pm – 4pm	2 nd Wednesday of the month
Stratford	2pm – 4pm	Every other Thursday

Vision Support Centres

- Upcoming Agendas

Our Vision Support Centres were established to meet your need for local access to equipment and information in your community.

Our Vision Support Centres provide the following:

- Advice & Information.
- A chance to view and try equipment for daily living including specialist equipment for the home.
- Magnifier Sessions to help you identify the most appropriate magnifier for your condition.
- Requests for our services for Warwickshire residents and advice about what other services are available
- Regular presentations of services in your area as well as exhibitions of

new products for visually impaired people.

- IT Training (appointment required)

In addition, we also have regularly updated agendas for our weekly Vision Support Centres to help provide you with useful information.

Listed below is the most recent agenda covering the topics for our sessions in August and September.

The weekly Vision Support Centres agenda is regularly updated, be sure to check our website for the latest copy at:
www.warwickshire.vision/how-we-can-help/vision-support-centres/physical-support-centres/

Nuneaton: Open every Thursday from 9:30-11:30am

Vision Support Centre Agenda	Date
Break Through / Citizens Advice Session	4 th August
Demonstration of Equipment	11 th August
Vision Aid Technology Ltd Session	18 th August
Social Session	25 th August
Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Session	1 st September
Nuneaton Talking News Session	8 th September
Healthwatch Warwickshire Session	15 th September
Sensory Activity Session	22 nd September
Oxsight Ltd Session	29 th September

Stratford-upon-Avon: Open every Tuesday from 9:30-11:30am

Vision Support Centre Agenda	Date
Social Session	2 nd August
Vision Aid Technology Ltd Session	9 th August
Silver Time Legal Session	16 th August
Sensory activity Session	23 rd August
Demonstration of Equipment Session	30 th August
Social Session	6 th September
Hearing Assistance Session	13 th September
Oxsight Ltd Session	20 th September
Demonstration of Equipment	27 th September

Royal Leamington Spa: Open every Monday from 9:30-11:30am

Vision Support Centre Agenda	Date
Vision Aid Technology Ltd Session	1 st August
Demonstration of Equipment	8 th August
Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Session	15 th August
Sensory Activity Session	22 nd August
Closed (Bank Holiday)	29 th August
Oxsight Ltd Session	5 th September
Citizens Advice Session	12 th September
Silver Time Legal Session	19 th September
Social Session	26 th September

Rugby: Open every Wednesday from 9:30-11:30am

Vision Support Centre Agenda	Date
Vision Aid Technology Ltd Session	3 rd August
Carers Trust Services	10 th August
Talk about the Polar Bear	17 th August
Music Session	24 th August
Sensory Activity Session	31 st August
Demonstration of Equipment	7 th September
Oxsight Ltd Session	14 th September
Hearing Assistance Session	21 st September
Associated Optical Session	28 th September

Warwickshire Vision Support's New Logo

We are proud to announce the launch of our new logo as part of the ongoing evolution of Warwickshire Vision Support.

We made this decision to change the logo with the purpose of modernising and increasing awareness of the charity, signalling a new and exciting time for Warwickshire Vision Support that is reflected in a modern and bold logo image.

After creating a shortlist of logo options, we asked our staff, volunteers and trustees to vote for their favourite option that will reflect Warwickshire Vision Support for the future.

We first created several different and contrasting logo options that were put on display at the Volunteers Celebration in Rugby during National Volunteers Week earlier in June. Feedback from volunteers at the event was overwhelmingly in favour of just one of the logo options. The popular logo was developed into two new variants which incorporated all of the feedback we received. The three logos that were then shortlisted to a vote, where there was a clear winner.



WARWICKSHIRE
VISION

The new logo

Our logo has two words. Warwickshire is written in plain and fine text above the word Vision which is written using a larger font size, bold and stretched so the two words start and end at the same point, presenting a rectangular shape. All text is in upper case. The letter O in the word Vision is in shades of a vibrant orange and has been changed to narrow the central hole so it represents a stylised impression of the iris from an eye. All other text is in black on a white background. There is a straight orange line underneath the letter O which symbolises support to the iris.

It is worth noting that the logo references "Warwickshire Vision" and not "Warwickshire Vision Support", " or "Warwickshire Association for the Blind", the original title of the charity. We are not making a formal change to the name of the charity. Warwickshire Vision which arguably sounds a little more modern and is already used widely in conversation. The change is in the logo only.

Thank You Christine

We would like to thank and say goodbye to Christine Huber, our Senior Rehabilitation Officer and team leader who has been with Warwickshire Vision Support since January 2017.



Christine has done a tremendous job for Warwickshire Vision Support and is highly respected and valued by her colleagues, Warwickshire County Council commissioners and perhaps

most importantly, by many of the people Christine has helped over the last 5 years.

On leaving and her plans for the future, Christine said "I enjoyed my time here working as part of a great team and meeting some lovely people. I am always impressed how much work we do for a relatively small charity. I am also really excited about the new office proposals. For now, I am taking some time out to think about my next steps. I already have an allotment and two Airedale terriers so that's not a bad start as both will keep me quite busy."

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Retail price £1,499 (excluding VAT).

Features

Our Spaces Stratford:

We Shadows

Stratford residents and visitors were both intrigued and delighted around the arrival of a new art piece in the town this month at the natural play area, Swans Nest, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 7LS.

'We Shadows' is a curvaceous, brightly coloured structure, with metal 'tree like' branches that support a pink acrylic canopy which has strange symbols and writing within it. The mysterious writing in the canopy tells a series of modern-day spells for hopes and dreams written by young people local to the town: although, these are hopes and dreams for everyone.

Ruby Road, a Warwickshire based artistic collective of story tellers and place makers have brought together young people to write the spell series and collaborated with local artist, Clare Pentlow created the artwork for the canopy. Importantly, these spells have also been written in braille on an accompanying plaque so that visually impaired people, who use braille, can enjoy the spells as well as the tactile shapes of the structure.

There is also an audio description of the project at:



<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/spaces/ruby-road-productions-stratford-upon-avon/1>

The project has been inspired by 'A Midsummer Night Dream' – drawing together a series of modern-day spells which also captured the interest of The Royal Shakespeare Company and Escape Arts who have supported the dreaming. It was very important to the young people on the programme that these spells were inclusive and accessible.

'We Shadows' is part of the Our Spaces programme for Warwickshire.





This is a county wide programme which has enabled commissioned art projects to generate interest in towns following the pandemic. The project aspires to activate and connect our urban and green spaces as well as get people back into towns post covid.

Geraldine Collinge, Director of Creative Placemaking and Public Programmes at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and chair of the Stratford Town Centre Strategic Partnership, said “We are delighted to support this project which ties the art piece on the recreation ground to the town and vice versa.”

“We are keen to support active placemaking at the RSC and recognise the potential for our organisation to support projects both at a local and regional level that

can have a great impact on people’s lives.”

Karen Williams, Chief Executive Officer for Escape Arts, who hosted the workshops in their creative space at their Youth & Community hub in Bell Court said: “Escape Arts and Lifespace Trust run a thriving creative youth service in the town we were delighted that young people were asked to be involved in co-creating the sculpture. Art in our places is such a powerful way to connect people with their surroundings and innovative projects like this really bring that home.”

Artists were selected by place curators ‘Creative Giants’ based on concept designs and then worked closely with specialist fabricators Factory Settings to develop and realise their pieces. Using the technical expertise of Factory Settings meant creatives could be brought into the programme to develop new working practices and experiment with different processes.

The Our Spaces project is funded with £194,000 from the Government’s Getting Building Fund through the CWLEP and £150,000 from the County Council’s Place Shaping Fund. To find out more about the Our Spaces installations and project partners, visit <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/partners>

IBSA World Games 2023

Our readers who are sporting fans will be delighted to hear that Birmingham has been selected as the host of the 2023 IBSA World Games, which is the multi-sport event for blind and partially sighted athletes.

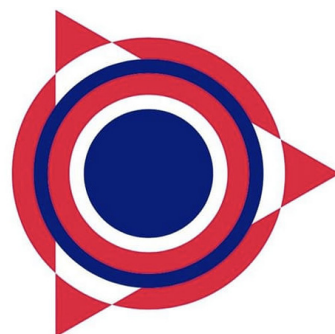
The decision by the International Blind Sport Federation (IBSA) for the world games to be held in Birmingham, follows a successful combined bid between British Blind Sport, UK Sport, Birmingham City Council, the University of Birmingham and Sport Birmingham.

The IBSA World Games, which are due to take place from 18-27 August 2023, will be held at the University of Birmingham, across the Edgbaston area and wider region. The IBSA World Games are the largest high-level international event for athletes with visual impairments, with more than 1000 competitors from more than 70 nations from across the globe.

Staged every four years the World Games are the pinnacle of the international calendar outside of the Paralympic Games. With three Paralympic and eight non-Paralympic sports, for some athletes it is the highest level they can compete at.

Powerlifting, judo, goalball, football, chess, tenpin bowling, shooting and showdown, as well as cricket, archery

IBSA
World Games
Birmingham
2023



Lead sponsor **R N I B**

IBSA World Games 2023 Logo

and tennis, form the programme. The men's and women's IBSA Blind Football World Championships and the partially sighted World Championships will take place as part of the event.

There are over two million people in the UK living with sight loss, with over 28,000 people from the community resident in Birmingham.

Warwickshire Vision Support are delighted with the outcome to hold the world games in Birmingham. With Birmingham being relatively close to Warwickshire, having an international event that will raise the profile of sport for people living with sight loss, as well as the aspirations on participating athletes in the local communities.

A huge 'well done' is owed to British Blind Sport, UK Sport, Birmingham City Council, Sport Birmingham and the University of Birmingham for their successful bid which will hopefully drive more awareness of

sports for people living with visual impairments across the country.

Alaina MacGregor, Chief Executive Officer of British Blind Sport commented "As the IBSA affiliated organisation representing Great Britain, we are delighted to have been selected to host the 2023 IBSA World Games. This is really an immense opportunity for us and all stakeholders to showcase an amazing sporting event for visually impaired people from across the globe. Our choice of Birmingham as the host city put us in great position,



People playing goalball at the last IBSA games in Seoul, Korea (Picture courtesy of Wikipedia)

showcasing to the host selection committee a city that is vibrant, inclusive and welcoming."

Bowls for Britain

In other successful sporting news, Margaret Cusker, a regular at one of our Vision Support Centres is a keen fan of playing Lawn Bowls.

At the beginning of May earlier this year, Margaret went down to Weston-Super-Mare for an open Bowls tournament for the visually impaired, there were 48 bowlers, those with a bit of sight and those who are totally blind. After four days of beautiful sunshine and lovely greens to play on, Margaret was the only lady to win a medal bringing home the bronze in the total section only losing to two gentlemen who are both international players.

Following her success from the first tournament, Margaret went on to enter the English national bowls



Margaret holding her medals

tournament for the visually impaired, in which she won a silver medal in the B.1. totally blind pairs and a gold medal in the B.1. ladies, she has now qualified to take part in the world bowls being held in Australia next year.

Congratulations Margaret!

Meet The Trustees: Kamal

As a charity, Warwickshire Vision Support is guided and governed through our diverse and experienced board of trustees.

In this series, we talk to WVS trustees to learn more about their background and what they plan to achieve with WVS.

Originally from Nigeria, 26 year old Kamal Dairo is Warwickshire Vision Support's youngest Trustee. He talks with Warwickshire Vision on his unique journey so far.

Hi Kamal, could you tell us a bit about your background and what brings you to WVS today?

Well, I grew up in Nigeria but I then moved to the UK in 2013 for university where I studied economics for my undergraduate degree and then went on to do Public Policy. I worked in retail banking for a while and before that I volunteered with RNIB and Marie Curie cancer care. After registering with the charity, I heard about the recruitment for new trustees and decided to apply and that's what brings me here today.

You have a visual impairment yourself, would you mind sharing your sight loss journey?

I was born with optic nerve hyperplasia from birth, but I was about 15 when I actually got



diagnosed. My condition was somewhat obscure, and most people couldn't tell there was an issue. And obviously, growing up in Nigeria, there are big economic problems meant that visual impairments were not the biggest priority. So my childhood was very strange in the sense that I never really got the sort of support needed.

It was only when I moved to the UK I started to get support and have my visual impairment recognised and treated like a disability. It was quite interesting, because I knew what life was like, when you had a condition with no acknowledgement at all, and then what life is when you finally get that acknowledgement and get the support needed. It was great to finally get the support I needed, but as great as the UK is in terms of the

support provided for visually impaired people, the longer I have lived here, I have realised that it could be much better, which is one of the reasons I decided to get involved as a Trustee.

You said you weren't initially diagnosed with your condition until you were 15. How shocking was the realisation?

It was very shocking. People have this perception with visual impairment, that is you're either blind, or your sighted, which is not the case, it's more of a spectrum.

How was growing up in Nigeria with a visual impairment?

I appreciate my country, Nigeria, a lot but growing up in Nigeria in the education system - I got no support at all. If anything, there was a tremendous level of discrimination, abuse and mistreatment. I give them the benefit of benefit of the doubt in the sense, the education wasn't there and it's a rare condition so most people didn't understand it. I still get the same thing in the UK but less so than Nigeria.

So that brings me here today with the charity, and that's my vision for the charity, to try and educate the public as much as I can. I'm 26 now, and I would like to think I can live the rest of my life without getting that judgement or having to explain myself all the time to people, because I get it all the time. So that's

my vision for the future. And my vision for not only for Warwickshire Vision Support but for sight loss all around the world. I think much more could be done. Employers could do a lot more to support people with visual impairments, because in terms of my education and the work life, I would say that they were pretty much the hardest points in my life. Overall I think living with sight loss has made me a stronger and a more resilient and determined person.

Would you say social perception of is one of the more pressing issues for visually impaired people?

Definitely. Social perception is a big thing. I think people could be doing a lot more for visually impaired people. I was never able to read books or the newspaper. I go to KFC or McDonald's and can't read the menu. I had to ask members of staff to literally pick my order for me. You get to a point where you just want to do it the quickest way and the most efficient way without having to explain yourself to anyone. You have to become very comfortable talking to people. When travelling it was very hard to take the train as it is difficult to read the tiny screens. I remember thinking "Can anyone even read that?" So visually impaired people are often excluded from almost every part of society. So yeah, I think a lot more needs to be done in terms of awareness and social perception.

Do you use any assistive technology at all?

The first assistive technology I had, I was about the age of 15 and was just a normal standard magnifier. That was all that was available at the time. Eventually, I got prescribed a digital one which I pretty much used that for as long as I could. The biggest challenge was at university and school. When you're starting the class and you can't see the board, and then you tell the teacher, they say: sit in front of the class, which I did. And when you still can't see the board, they say wear a pair of glasses, and after that when you still can't see the board can they pretty much think you're crazy. That was the reaction. I got a lot, especially back in my own country. By the time I moved here, the technology was available in the sense, and a lot of companies were starting to create digital glasses. I used one for a bit but stopped because they are quite bulky being in a lecture hall meant it felt like everyone was looking at it. I've always struggled with the stigma. It can feel like a war because I sometimes try to pretend or blend in as someone who is one not visually impaired, which shouldn't be the case. And it's something I'm working on at the moment. And maybe the reason I feel that way is because of how people can perceive visually impaired people.

How long have you been with Warwickshire Vision Support and how are you finding it so far?

I've been involved with Warwickshire Vision Support for just over a year now. It's an exciting time to be with the charity. We've got this amazing new building right in the centre of Warwick Market Square. Once it's refurbished people will be able to walk past and see all the different technology and just be able to come into the building and educate themselves. For me, it's all about education. So it's a very exciting time to be with the charity because we can finally educate the general public directly and raise awareness.

What's your vision for the future of supporting people with sight loss?

My vision for supporting people with sight loss goes beyond Warwick, I want to change the world we live in for the better. If we can live in a world where no child has to go through what I went through, I will be happy. I especially want to help people living in third world countries because you get no support whatsoever. If anything, you get abused. It's very sad in the education system, you get no support. I'm honestly not sure how I made it through school. So raising awareness and expanding public knowledge globally will always be my number one goal.

Jubilee Celebrations with One-Stop

With the help and support from One-Stop, our weekly Vision Support Centres were able to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in style.

As the nation joined together to celebrate 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II's reign, our jubilee parties at our weekly Vision Support Centres were kindly funded by One-Stop to help give our attendees a fun celebration to remember.

The centres were filled to the brim with the Union Jack's red, white and blue. Songs were sung, and memories were made.

Thank you One Stop!

Pictured: Vision Support Centre attendees celebrating the Jubilee.



Allotment Club

By Vicky Sartain

At the Beechwood Allotment site in Earlsdon, Coventry, sight-impaired volunteers are busy weeding, pruning, sowing, planting, and harvesting as summer gets into full swing. Assisted by teams of volunteers, gardening is as hands-on as it can be for people with little or no vision. The fruitful rewards of growing food remain the same as ever – not just nourishment for the body, but for the soul too.

This thriving horticultural project is one of the many activities offered by Coventry Resource Centre for the Blind (CRCB). A band of gardening enthusiasts – all volunteers for the charity – lead allotment teams once a week, growing nutritious ingredients for their own consumption and, when there is an abundance, the Centre as well.

Facilitator, Jenny Wyn Roberts, said: “The idea for an allotment came about in autumn 2014 and soon after we invited a volunteer group from Jaguar Land Rover to help us blitz our overgrown site. They created raised beds for us, a lean-to, and shed – it was completely transformed.

“We have a core group of seven gardeners and are joined by two more ladies in the spring and summer, and we also have a core group of volunteers,” Jenny



A member of the allotment club with his plants

continued. “Everyone has different needs, so we’ve adapted things to try and cater for all requirements. We also have some gardeners with mental health issues who find that the allotment provides a safe space for them to relax and feel less anxious. That’s why we keep the group small so as not to overwhelm anyone.

Gardening sessions are three hours long in all seasons, and even in the wintry conditions, all seven members of the core team get stuck in – and look forward to it.

The gardeners have their own individual beds, as well as communal areas, and grow what they like. It’s their garden, and everyone mucks in with whatever jobs need doing, whether that’s painting, potting on, cleaning, sowing or harvesting.

To maximise the benefits of the plot for its workers, the planting is sensory – rich scents waft on the air as you brush past the lavender, the tinkling of wind chimes blends with birdsong, and the brightest colours of painted raised beds showcase equally brilliant floral displays. It's a flourishing plot of land, and barely a weed in sight. No space is wasted – spuds are grown in pots around the borders and flowers fill spaces between the crops.

Frances, one of the gardeners, says she loves everything about the site – the friendship, learning about plants and being outdoors, and Jenny attests to her 'amazing' brussel sprouts as when there's a surplus, produce goes to anyone who wants it.

"I've always loved gardening, and I love learning about how things grow," said Nasim, who has no vision whatsoever. "In my plot this year I've got a row of just about everything – cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, green beans – and that way I get to know what grows well, and what gets devoured by slugs! Last year, my courgettes did so well that we ended up giving them away to family and friends. It's nice to be part of something, and to be out in the fresh air, learning about plants. The social side is great too – we bounce ideas off each other. We also go on trips in the summer, three years ago we went to the Eden Project in Cornwall for a few days."

Pete, one of the longest serving gardeners at the site, said: "Most of my life I've only had vision in one eye. I started work when I was 15 and managed to work until I was 58, when I started getting blurred vision. I was diagnosed with advanced glaucoma and now struggle to see anything. Coming here was a learning curve – I used to enjoy gardening with my dad as a boy, and I've proved to myself that I can still do so much. I'm not one to let anything defeat me. Last year I won the sunflower competition!"

Plans for an undeveloped part of the plot include a pond, more raised beds and fruit cages, and by next summer, the transformation will be complete. It's all hands on deck as anticipation builds for yet another rich harvest.

General Manager of CRCB, Hugh Sorrill, said: "The creation of the allotment site was a huge effort for the charity, and we were so pleased to have the support of so many to get it up and running. But since then, Jenny, the other volunteers and of course the group members have turned it into an extraordinary space where not only plants, but people grow. It is a wonderful achievement that we are very proud of."

Find out more about Coventry Resource Centre for the Blind at www.coventryblind.org.uk

Advice & Guidance

Warwickshire Libraries

by Phil Jarvis & Halina Wells

Some of you may have met members of the Warwickshire Libraries team who have been visiting various groups of Warwickshire Vision to talk about some of our services that may be of interest to many of you.

The first thing is, you must be a library member to use the service, it is free to join and you don't even need to leave your armchair as you can join online.

You can join the library online following this link:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/libraries-2/join-library>

Once you are a member there are lots of **FREE** services that you can access. If you look on the library website there is a lot of information. All of the apps can be downloaded for free.

You can access the eLibrary, which contain eBooks, eAudio books, eMagazines, eNewspapers and eMusic through this web address:
<https://library.warwickshire.gov.uk/iguana/www.main.cls?surl=eBooks>

Borrowbox

Borrowbox is an eBook and eAudio book loaning service, and this can be used on lots of devices such as



A picture of a collection of library books

smart phone, tablets and computers. On our website there are some help videos to get you started.

Pressreader

Pressreader is our eNewspaper offer with papers from all over the world as well as the UK. There is a text to speech facility as well as being able to change the text size. This site also has lots of magazines.

Libby

Libby is our magazine site. Here you can read literally thousands of magazines including many popular UK magazines. Again, the text size can be enlarged to make it easier to read.

Naxos

Naxos is our Music streaming service, mostly classical but lots of choice.

Again, log in with your library card and choose from 2,691,122 tracks as of June 2022.

If you need more help, drop an email to the library enquiry team who have a link on the webpage, and someone will get back to you. If you include a contact number one of the team will telephone you and will be happy to talk you through setting up any of the above apps.

You can email us at:
libraryenquiryteam@warwickshire.gov.uk.

Warwickshire Libraries also provide physical copies of Large Print, Spoken Word and Braille resources. The Spoken Word collection includes the Playaway devices, over a thousand fiction and non-fiction titles you can loan. The Playaway device requires a AAA battery and your own headset, which are both not supplied with the Playaway device. There are also audiobooks on CD. The library website has links to the collections.

Large Print, Spoken Word and Braille collections

If you have a visual impairment you are entitled to a free concessionary library card. Ask a member of library staff at your next library visit and they will be happy to help. A concessionary library card enables you to loan 20 books, and 10 Spoken Word/talking books titles for 6 weeks.



You can also reserve resources on the Warwickshire Libraries catalogue for free, so you can collect resources from your nearest Warwickshire public library.

If you are unable to visit a Warwickshire public library and if no one can make a visit to a Warwickshire public library on your behalf, there is also a Home Library Service that can supply library resources to your home address. To apply to use this service please contact the home library and mobile library service:

Tel: 01926 851031

Email: mobilelibraryservice@warwickshire.gov.uk

We look forward to welcoming you on your next Warwickshire library visit.

Halina Wells - Library Information Learning Officer

Phil Jarvis – Senior Librarian (Priority Groups)

Support For Your Cost of Living

Earlier at the end of May this year, the Chancellor announced a targeted government support package of £15 billion to help support people with the rising cost of living.

This package could have incredible implications for blind and partially sighted people living across the UK.

Some of the key changes that will be of particular interest to visually impaired people include:

- All households will get £400 of support with their energy bills through an expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Instead of the planned £200 off bills which had to be repaid through higher bills over five years, this will now be a £400 payment will now be made as a grant. Energy suppliers will deliver this support to households with a domestic electricity meter over six months starting from October. Direct debit and credit customers will have the money credited to their account, while customers with pre-payment meters will have the money applied to their meter or paid via a voucher.
- More than 8 million households on means tested benefits will receive a payment of £650 this year, made in two instalments. This includes all



households receiving the following benefits: Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Pension Credit. DWP will make the payment in two lump sums – the first from July, the second in the autumn. Payments from HMRC for those on tax credits only will follow shortly after each to avoid duplicate payments. Claimants will need to be in receipt of one of these benefits, or have begun a claim which is later successful, as of 25th May 2022 to be eligible for the first of the two instalments.

- Pensioner households will receive an extra £300 this year to help them cover the rising cost of energy this winter. This additional one-off payment will go to the over 8 million pensioner households across the UK who receive the Winter Fuel Payment and will be paid on top of any other

one-off support a pensioner household is entitled to, for example where they are on pension credit or receive disability benefits. All pensioner households will get the one-off Pensioner Cost of Living Payment as a top-up to their annual Winter Fuel Payment in November/December. For most pensioner households, this will be paid by direct debit.

- Around six million people across the UK who receive the following disability benefits will receive a one-off payment of £150 in September: Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Scottish Disability Benefits, Armed Forces Independence Payment, Constant Attendance Allowance, War Pension Mobility Supplement. For the many disability benefit recipients who receive means tested benefits, this £150 will come on top of any other payments they may be eligible for listed above.

All these payments will be tax free and exempt from the benefits cap.

Earlier in the year, the government also announced a £150 Council Tax rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A-D. This is handled by local councils and millions of households have already received this payment.

In addition, the government has provided funding to local councils to

deliver a Household Support Fund. This is administered by local councils in England and further information is available directly from your local council on any hardship support that may be available.

Pension Credit

It is also worth noting to our readers, that if anyone is eligible and not currently receiving pension credit, it is worthwhile them checking and claiming immediately as pension credit is not an automatic provision, it must be claimed, and it can be backdated for up to 3 months.

Pension Credit is a top up worth average £65 per week for people aged 66 or over with a weekly income of below £200.

In addition to extra income, it often leads to council tax reduction (c£1000 p.a.), warm home discount (c£140 p.a.) as well as cold weather payments (£25 p.w.), housing benefit for some renters (£1000s p.a.) the lump sum payment to assist with energy bill prices, free dental care, and more!

To check if you are eligible visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility> Or call the Government Pension Service helpline (you can also claim using this number)
Telephone: 0800 99 1234

Please note: these may be subject to change

IT Bits & Bytes

by Ruth Okey

The power of your voice:

Dictation

You can dictate your text on most modern devices (smart phones, tablets laptops and PC's) by just tapping the microphone key on the keyboard; speaking the text and punctuation and tapping the microphone key or keyboard icon to finish. On a Windows device press the Windows key and H key to open the dictation toolbar. The dictated text should be displayed in your email, document, or text message. To add more text just tap the microphone key and speak some more.

Example:

Say : "Hi Fred comma new line what time is the meeting tonight question mark"

Becomes: "Hi Fred, What time is the meeting tonight?"

Smart Assistants

Siri, Google Assistant and Alexa can be used to dictate text messages and emails without having to open the application and find the microphone key. eg "Hey Siri, send a text message to Fred Smith" You will then be prompted for the message and whether you wish to send it.



Google Voice Typing (Chrome browser only)

Google Docs and Slides can be edited using the voice typing tool which enables you to dictate, edit and format the text as a conversation with your computer. A set of commands are available to delete words, characters, move around the page, bold, upper case etc. Other voice editing software is available but at a cost, Google voice typing is free.

Notes:

1. Depending on the device and software versions it may need to be connected to the Internet.
2. Dictation may need to be enabled.
3. Alexa may need additional skills added eg mailbox.
4. Contacts need to be in your address book or contacts app with full names for best results.
5. Some apps have microphone buttons to recorded voice messages which can then be sent.
6. An external microphone is required if not built into the device.
7. For best results speak clearly in a quiet room.

If you want help installing apps or using your smart device why not contact us and request an IT appointment at one of the weekly support centres. 01926 411 331

Volunteering Focus Farewell and Thank You!

by Lauren Hall

I am sorry to say that I am unfortunately be leaving Warwickshire Vision Support. I have been with Warwickshire Vision Support for just over a year, and I have loved my time working with you all, so I am very sorry to say goodbye. Thank you to all of you for your time, dedication, and support to this incredible charity.

For now, please direct your concerns to our main office number 01926 411331 or email our Admin team at maria.tongue@warwickshire.vision where you will be directed to the relevant member of staff.

Wishing you all the very best for the future,

Very best wishes,

Lauren Hall
Volunteer Coordinator



Drivers Wanted

Are you able to recommend any sensible, good drivers?

As a charity, we rely heavily on the support of our volunteers. and we need more volunteer drivers to allow us to bring more people into our clubs and support centres.

Please spread the word throughout your circle of friends and family, it really could make a difference

If you can help us, please call us on 01926 411331 or email us at enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Fundraising Update

Catching Up With Martyn

As you may have seen in our last edition, or perhaps even on the radio, Warwickshire Vision Support trustee Martyn Parker has set himself the enduring challenge of walking a total of 5 million steps in 2022. to raise money for Warwickshire Vision Support

Martyn, who is visually impaired, has to walk an impressive average of 13,698 steps every single day without fail to complete his goal.

Martyn has been involved with Warwickshire Vision Support for over 30 years and would like your support to help him raise money.

Now past the halfway mark, Martyn catches up with WVS on his progress so far.

Hi Martyn, thanks for taking a break to catch up with us. Your challenge has gained a bit of traction amongst the local community lately, is that fair to say?

Absolutely, the support has been incredible. I've been invited on to the BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio three times so far over the course of this challenge, and I'm still in contact with one of the producers to give him updates. On top of that, the support I have received on social media has



Martyn smiling during one of his walks across Warwick racecourse

been fantastic. When I go on my walks across the Warwick racecourse

to get my steps in, I'm always wearing my Warwickshire Vision Support high-visibility jacket and people often stop me for conversations to learn more. I've even had people pull out their wallets and hand me money when they learn about the challenge! Still more needs to be done to reach our £1850 target but so far the support has been overwhelming.

What was it that inspired you to take on this 5 million step challenge for WVS?

Honestly, the whole thing just made sense to me. WVS have a 111 year history of supporting people in Warwickshire with sight loss and I

have been personally involved with Warwickshire Vision Support for over 30 years now, and they have helped and supported me tremendously as a visually impaired person. I am also currently a Trustee of the charity and wanted to do a fundraiser to help support the work that they do. Then on top of that, I have always enjoyed walking. Walking is also something I can do on my own, so a walking challenge just seemed like the logical thing to do. Just to improve my overall fitness, over the last two autumns, I completed a 1 million step challenge, I decided that why not challenge myself a bit further and go for 5 million steps in a year. And so far it's been going great!

Now that it is summer, how are you fairing with the summer heat?

It's very tough! It's hot, so I've had to alter my walking pattern walking to accommodate the heat. Lately I've been going out very early or very late when it is cool. But over the course of this challenge, I've been out in all sorts of weather - including a hailstorm! At least when it's hot I'm easy to see, you can spot my high-vis and pasty white legs a mile off!

What's been the hardest part of this challenge so far?

I think for me it's been trying to keep the average steps up. I went away for a little while and only did 1000 on some of the days when my average is meant to be over 13,000! Some days I do much over though, so for example



Martyn and WVS Chair Liz Thiebe achieving their personal best at Park Run

on Sunday I managed 28,000, so I have faith that I will be done in time. One other thing that has been quite challenging, is earlier this year I unfortunately lost my beloved guide dog and dear friend Wheeler. We began this journey together and it's been hard adjusting to life without him. Fortunately the 5 million steps has given me something to focus on.

Now you're past the halfway mark, are you feeling physically fitter than when you began?

Absolutely! Walking is a great activity to do, it's not too strenuous and it makes you feel good! I've lost about half a stone so far. I've also been completing a lot of my walking

challenge with Park Run who have been a great support. I even managed to beat my personal best with them recently.

Has there been any part of this challenge so far that has surprised you?

It's hard to say really. I didn't come into the challenge with any preconceived ideas, I just knew that I wanted to do it! One thing that surprised me was the amount of support I have been given from family and friends. I get a lot of positive comments and messages on social media which is always lovely to see. However, I think the most surprising thing is the fact that I'm somehow still enjoying it, but then again I've always enjoyed walking.

Once you've finished off your five million steps, do you think we have a chance of seeing you do six million next year?

[Laughs] Who knows! I'm already starting to think about what I could be doing next year. Although I'd quite like to start working again so we'll see.

is there anything you'd like to add at all?

Yes, I'd like to give a big thank you to everybody who has donated so far! Your support has truly meant a lot and I can't thank you enough.

If you would like to help support Martyn in his 5 million step challenge, please visit:

<https://localgiving.org/fundraising/Martyn-5Million-Step>

Are you a Fundraiser?

- Are you a runner – could you OR are you taking part in a local run? Maybe you could choose us to raise sponsorship for? We could provide you with a T-shirt and a runner's pack and lots of support and encouragement!
- Organise your own event – maybe you could organise a Coffee Morning or a quiz night. Any event you do arrange, you will receive full support from the Fundraising Officer.
- Collecting Tins – would you be able to place a collecting tin in your local area, get in touch.
- Business - is there a local business that may support us? Does the company you work for want a Charity of the Year. If yes, please point them in our direction.
- Are you part of a "group", maybe a Rotary, Lions, Masons, Golf Club – would any of these consider supporting Warwickshire Vision Support?

If you can help support our charity, please get in touch by emailing enquiries@warwickshire.vision or by calling 01926 411331.

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appointed as Warwickshire Vision
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Email: **info@hboltd.co.uk**

Visit: **www.hboltd.co.uk**

**HB
&O**

Supporting people living with sight loss since 1911

Warwickshire Vision is available free to people living with sight loss in Warwickshire. This publication is available in digital, print and audio formats.

For more information, please contact:

Warwickshire Vision Support

 01926 411331

E-mail: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

   @warksvissupport