

Warwickshire Vision

Spring 2020



- Sailing the Med
- Focus on Vision 2020
- Accessible Stratford

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Front Cover Image: courtesy Karina Gregory. Image (Page 7) Copyright Tommy Trechard/Sightsavers. Image Page 26 courtesy mudstacle.com

Don't Bin it – Recycle it

When you have finished with your copy of Warwickshire Vision, why not pass it on to someone else to read? You could drop it off at your local library, doctors surgery or opticians or you can pass it on to a friend or neighbour who may be interested.

Do your bit for the environment and spread the message of WVS.

Editorial

by Phil Arkell - CEO

Many of you will have heard about VISION 2020 UK but may not really know what benefits it has brought and how it has impacted on your life over the last 20 years. In this edition, we are going to explore the targets set by Vision 2020 UK and look at how Warwickshire Vision Support has developed its services over the last two decades to meet these needs.

Established in 2002, VISION 2020 UK was set up as part of a global initiative by the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness to reduce preventable blindness. It is an umbrella organisation which facilitates greater collaboration and co-operation between organisations which focus on vision in the UK.

The Vision 2020 UK objectives are:

- To prevent avoidable blindness
- To improve the quality of services to vision impaired people
- To improve the training to professionals providing advice and services
- To improve communication between organisations within the VI sector



- To improve the availability of information to vision impaired people
- To ensure that the voices of the vision impaired are heard
- To raise public awareness of the issues and problems relating to sight loss.

I think we would all agree that we have seen many improvements. However, years of austerity have also presented challenges to the VI community. We now face a reduction in public transport provision (particularly in rural areas), cuts to local authority spending, longer hospital waiting lists and the challenges presented by the digital revolution – all at a time when the number of people acquiring sight loss is increasing at an incredibly fast rate.

We are making progress but still have some distance to travel

News Round-Up

Thank you and Farewell

by Phil Arkell

Judy Murdoch, our Vice President, is set to leave Warwickshire and retire from her activities supporting Warwickshire Vision Support. Having joined us in 1986, Judy has undertaken many duties and held many positions over the last 34 years.

Judy was instrumental in setting up the Henley VIP Club (the precursor to the Henley Lunch Club) and also acted as a stop-gap leader of the Warwick Club for 6 months before it merged with the Leamington Club.

Judy joined the Board of Trustees in 2002 for 6 years, 3 years as Chair. Speaking of that time, Judy told us:

"In 2005, being chair was somewhat of a poisoned chalice, with income and confidence at an all time low. We were asset rich and cash poor! With the help of the then Manager, John Davis, I sold the building in Warwick and leased an industrial unit in Sydenham so that the cash could be used to build up the financial stability of the charity. Somehow it worked!"

In 2008, Judy was made Vice President in recognition of her long-standing contribution to people living with sight loss in Warwickshire.



She continues to support our activities, volunteering for the Leamington Home Visitor Service and delivering fascinating talks on her globe-trotting activities to practically every club across the county.

In recognition of her contribution to her local community, Judy was recognised in the Leamington Spa Mayor's Annual Awards in 2017 and received our own volunteer award last year.

On behalf of the Trustees, staff, volunteers and service users of Warwickshire Vision Support, I would like to thank Judy for all that she has done and wish her a very long, happy and well deserved retirement.

Making a Difference

Warwickshire Vision is proud to announce that Sue and Jim from Nuneaton were part of the team that contributed to the **Sight loss: What we needed to know** booklet which is now routinely given to all patients when receiving a CVI (certificate of visual impairment) from their consultant ophthalmologist.

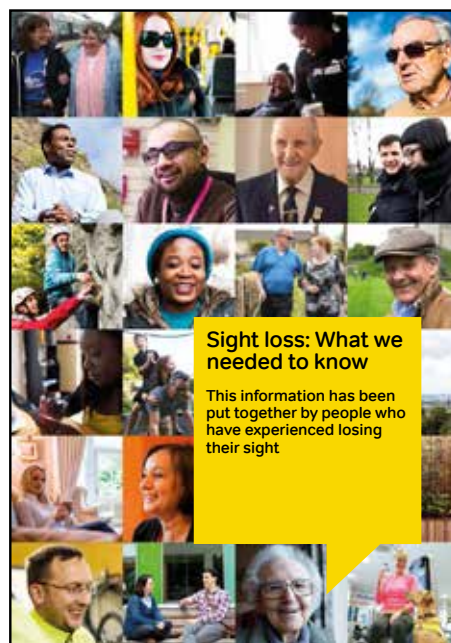
The booklet can be downloaded at warwickshire.vision/news/sight-loss-what-you-need-know.

This important document was shortlisted for the Team of the Year award at the Vision Pioneer Awards 2019 held in London.

The information included is written for people diagnosed with sight loss and their family and friends. It gives information on:

1. The emotional impact of sight loss
2. What sort of help is available

3. Explaining the CVI
4. What it means for work, education and training
5. The benefits to which you might be entitled
6. Our top 10 tips
7. Your rights under the Equality Act
8. Where you can go to get more help and support



Legacy Gift Update

We announced the notification of a substantial legacy gift in the last edition of this magazine.

We hope to receive confirmation of the full amount by late spring or early summer. The Board is actively developing a process and plan to ensure that we include service users, staff, volunteers and the trustees in this planning. We want to be sure that our charity derives the maximum benefit from this unexpected gift.

We expect to kick off the process in late Spring. As more information becomes available to us, we look forward to sharing the good news.

You Said ... We Did ...

It is now six months since we had our AGM and we thought it would be a good time to share with you how we have responded to some of your recommendations:

Suggestion: Change the layout of tables at Support Centres to encourage people to mix

Action: We tried this at the Support Centres with mixed reception. Layouts have now been agreed at each venue

Suggestion: We should provide IT study notes after each session to aid learning

Action: These are available upon request

Suggestion: People also need help with 'non' smart phones

Action: We are looking at purchasing some demonstration models

Suggestion: There are training gaps for Volunteers

Action: We have developed our own internal training programme to provide an Introduction to WVS,

Living with Sight Loss; Sighted Guiding and Safeguarding

Suggestion: Volunteer role descriptions should be accessible to all volunteers so they can undertake more activities if they choose

Action: Role descriptions are available on our website and at our new training sessions

Suggestion: Volunteers would like to receive more information about activities local to them so they can contribute

Action: We have improved our communication with volunteers to keep everyone fully informed

Suggestion: Club/Social activities for younger people

Action: We will undertake research to see what is currently available and what people would like. This will feed into our strategy going forward

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to make the AGM such a success.





Events Round-Up

Warwickshire Vision takes on the Wolf Run

A team from Warwickshire Vision Support will be taking on the Leamington Wolf Run on the weekend of 5th and 6th September to raise money and awareness of sight loss in Warwickshire.

The team comprising Del Hobden, Louise Jelley, Andrew Baker, Vicky Lewis, Ebony Rushforth and Phil Arkell will take on the famous 10km run over (and under) obstacles and of course through rivers of mud.

The members of the team plan to stay together and support each other for the duration of the run. "Our objectives are to firstly survive the Wolf Run, secondly for all of us to complete it and thirdly to raise some funds for WVS" Del told us.

If you wish to sponsor the Wolf Run team, then please either:

- Complete a sponsor form at your local Support Centre or Club
- Send a cheque to the office stating 'Wolf Run' on the back
- Make a donation at <https://localgiving.org/wvs-wolf-run-2020>

Staff changes

Since our last edition we have welcomed Barbara Hines to the team. Barbara is an Assistant Vision Support Officer who will be based at the Leamington and Stratford Support Centres.

Pop up Events

Thanks to the support of the National Lottery and Warwickshire County Council, we have developed a pop-up service for people who are geographically isolated and have difficulty accessing our mainstream services. To date, we have hosted 24 Pop-Up Support Centres from Polesworth in the north to Shipston in the south.

Usually based in local libraries or resource hubs, they provide access to information, advice and guidance as well as a wide range of portable demonstration equipment.

The take up has been considerable. Of the 24 sessions held so far, we

have talked with 114 people and generated 111 referrals. These referrals can be for Rehabilitation Support, to join a club, receive IT training, apply for a blue badge or simply to learn more about a particular sight condition and the services available locally.

Late news: Unfortunately, the ongoing Coronavirus crisis has impacted on our current pop-up schedule - these events have now been suspended.

We will keep you informed about up coming dates when the situation becomes clearer.

Christmas cards

We are pleased to report that just under 700 packs of cards were sold which equates to nearly 7000 cards in circulation promoting WVS.

We would like to thank Hilary Roberts for donating her lovely local designs which included the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and The Oken Tea Rooms, Warwick.

Planning is already underway for Christmas 2020!

Sight Village

Sight Village 2020 will be held on 14th and 15th July at Cranmore Park Conference Centre, Cranmore Avenue, Shirley, Solihull B90 4LF.

Doors are open from 9.30 am to 3.00 pm.

For details about seminars, workshops, exhibitors and visitor information, please go to qac.ac.uk/exhibitions or telephone 0121 428 5050



The Technology Revolution

by Karina Gregory

Twenty years ago technology for people living with sight loss was very much behind the times and almost completely separate from mainstream devices. For example, if you needed a mobile phone to read out screen text you had to send your mobile away to have it installed, sometimes at a cost of £150!

I had my first desktop magnifier in the early to mid 90s and it came in separate components: a reading table that had a camera over it, a lamp to the left to illuminate the text so that the camera could create a reasonably clear image and a screen not dissimilar to an

old fashioned portable television screen. In those days, the clarity of picture was variable and I had to adjust the screen each time it drifted off channel.

What a revelation it was when an all-in-one desktop CCTV (closed circuit television) came onto the scene in the late 1990s. Admittedly, you needed a spare room to house it and a fork lift truck to move it but it was a major step forward.

Fast forward to today, and we have light weight, semi portable CCTVs that provide high definition colour imagery and the ability to read the text.

Similarly, for those of us that read Braille, refreshable Braille displays were enormous - with a big area to store the battery they took up most of the room on your desk - today, they can fit into your pocket.

Over the last decade, technology has progressed so much that mainstream companies now fully embrace accessibility and incorporate it into all of their products.

I remember the first time I turned my Samsung phone on, it told me that if I needed to use speech to help me set it up, I should draw a triangle on the screen - low and behold it worked!

Apple has led the way with text-to-speech software but it is now commonplace on almost every mobile phone. To be able to point the camera at a document and have it read the content is amazingly empowering. Meanwhile, the phone's camera also acts as a magnifier meaning that I don't have to carry lots of pieces of equipment with me when I go out.

Nowadays mobile phones and tablets can substitute so much of the specialist equipment we once needed - and it doesn't have to cost a fortune. A second hand smart phone can cost as little as £30 - although most of us have children and grandchildren who have drawers full of redundant devices. In most cases these can provide exactly what you need at practically no cost.

This digital revolution means that we can access the information in whichever format is best: speech, Braille or large print using a variety of contrast settings. This has given back to me my privacy and my independence. I no longer have to rely on others to read my personal correspondence.

Of course the digital divide is a gulf that for many is too intimidating to cross. This can lead to greater marginalisation and frustration. That is where WVS is here to help.

I have recently joined the IT training team as a volunteer. I want to share my knowledge and experience because I know just how empowering technology can be.

I hope that I have inspired you to take up the digital challenge. Warwickshire Vision Support is here to help. There is an exciting world out there full of entertainment, convenience, connections and savings.

For more IT information

If you want to find out more, or perhaps see a demonstration, then why not visit one of the Warwickshire Vision Support Centres or call Ruth Okey on **01926 411331** to make an appointment.



Digital clouds don't always have a silver lining by Jemma Davoudian

You will often hear us eulogising about the benefits of digital technology and its potential to empower people living with sight loss.

Indeed, technology has had a remarkable impact on the way we operate as a society. It affects how we manage our money, organise our appointments, do our shopping, communicate with friends and family and much, much more.

However, the technological revolution is not accessible to all.

People with sight take the ease and convenience of their online activity for granted. High streets are being devastated by online retailers who can almost always beat the traditional retailer in

terms of range, stock and of course price. To compete, the larger stores are moving out of town - often to locations that are increasingly inaccessible to visually impaired people dependent upon public transport.

This is further exacerbated by the impact on local convenience stores that cannot compete with the likes of the budget supermarkets or the 'Big Four'.

Across Warwickshire, our villages are losing their community facilities such as corner shops and pubs at an alarming rate.

The impact of the digital revolution does not stop there. As more people use internet banking over visiting their branch, sending emails rather

than posting letters, the demand for Post Office services has dropped, resulting in their demise.

It is not uncommon to find villages with almost no local facilities for the residents. This may not be a problem for those with cars - but is a major challenge for the rest of us.

For the working age population, the digital revolution becomes especially challenging when navigating the employment market.

Gone are the days when you could hand in a paper CV. Job adverts are now almost exclusively posted online, and despite government policies being in place to tackle employment discrimination, many industries are failing to fairly recruit people with a disability. In a recent survey, 72% of disabled workers at a software company did not believe their employer had the right adaptations in place to support them.

For those who cannot find employment, the challenges continue. Many benefits, pensions and concessions can only be applied for online and a lack of access could seriously affect your income.

Of course, there are organisations like the DWP and Citizens Advice who can help with applications but availability is often limited and appointments can be postponed if you are unable to locate all the

relevant documentation. This can be a major problem faced by those living with sight loss.

Increasingly we see front line services replaced by internet portals and telephone systems using artificial intelligence. Operators are often replaced to reduce the costs of these services. This is all done in the name of efficiency. However, this it is yet another barrier to VIPs who want to ask a person for help and advice.

Overall, the tech revolution has been a huge stride forward. However, it's failure to carry along the elderly and less technologically minded has created a two tier system that has major consequences for those left out in the cold.

The lack of inclusivity of the internet age seems to hang over society like a dark cloud. However, we cannot turn back time, the future is digital and it is here to stay.

If you want some help to overcome the digital divide, then why not pop in to one of our support centres and talk with Ruth about IT training sessions, or call 01926 411331.



Fighting for our Rights

Louise Jelley interviews Elizabeth Dixon

Elizabeth Dixon is a Disability Advisor in Stratford-upon-Avon

Elizabeth joined West Midlands Police in 1969 and enjoyed a varied career which included becoming the first female police dog handler in the country. After her police dog, Czar, retired she was posted to the Digbeth area of Birmingham. While on duty on 1st March 1986, she was in a road traffic collision which left her a wheelchair user.

Today, Elizabeth is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to Disability Rights.



Elizabeth, your accident left you with life changing injuries, how did you cope in the years that followed?

It took me 3 years of recovery, to 'get my voice back' and feel confident again. Being in my 30's I still wanted to dress trendily, which was not easy using a manual wheelchair. I refused to allow the accident to define me

and clung onto my own personal identity for as long as I could. The West Midlands Police and Police Care have always supported me.

Elizabeth, what brought you to Stratford-upon-Avon?

In the aftermath of the accident I needed care and support and my parents lived in Stow-on-the-Wold so I lived independently in a village outside Stratford. I drove until 6 years ago with my favourite place being Achiltibuie in The Highlands but with aging knew I needed to live somewhere where I was not reliant on a motor vehicle and was easy for a wheelchair user, so 20 years ago moved into Stratford town, which was a good move.

Elizabeth, what was Stratford like 30 years ago for accessibility?

I can still remember going to banks to withdraw money but they were inaccessible as they all had steps. To make the transaction a staff member would come outside, collect my card and pin number and do it for me. I raised this with the bank and also the council - that is when I started to challenge all sorts of issues on behalf of myself and disabled people.

Whilst it is very different today, change did not happen overnight



and the banks were just the tip of the iceberg when it came to accessibility on the high street. Entrance doors were a particular problem, especially revolving ones, as they were either too small for a wheelchair or too fast to negotiate.

As a passionate advocate for disability needs and inclusion I have advised multiple agencies, businesses and organisations on how to ensure their personal and structural processes and environments meet the needs of all users.

Elizabeth, tell me about some of your achievements?

I still work closely with local organisations and businesses to make improvements for accessibility;

most have access and hearing loops, some have large print literature, others will look after assistance dogs during theatre performances. But there is still lots to do! I am currently supporting the council in making Stratford a Dementia Friendly Town, which is part of inclusion.

Elizabeth, what else needs to be done?

I would like to see a society that has fully embraced inclusion without the need for activism - some people get offended when suggestions are made, even when they are a legal requirement. I believe that regulations should be made statutory.

Compliance is currently Civil Law and therefore the onus is on the disabled person to challenge if the adaptations do not meet their needs. More compliance would equal more inclusion and it happens in other countries, so why not here?



You can find out more about Elizabeth's activities by visiting accessiblestratforduponavon.co.uk

The right help at the right time

by Del Hobden

Being diagnosed with sight loss can be devastating, leading to social withdrawal, isolation and depression. Newly diagnosed people often feel frightened and vulnerable and do not know where they can turn for support.

Our hospital advice desks offer critical and timely support and information to the patient, also their family and carers about the nature and practical impact of their eye condition; what to expect in the future and what services are available to help. This early support increases the likelihood of a person acquiring sight loss leading a full and independent life.

We work closely with staff in the eye clinics to help bridge the gap between healthcare and community services. With the strong link between our hospital advice desks, rehabilitation service and our charitable services we are able to give you access to a wide range of services:

- To learn about your eye condition so you can better plan and manage your sight loss
- Through early access to rehabilitation, be less prone to falls and accidents at home

- To have better access to local services that support you
- To have the chance to share experiences with mentors and peers and hopefully replace anxiety and uncertainty with knowledge and confidence
- To build confidence so you feel able to participate more fully in your local community, thereby improving both your physical and mental well-being
- To reduce social isolation by helping you to create a network that is capable of supporting you at difficult times.

We know that the right practical help and social support at the right time can transform a person's life. To that end, Warwickshire Vision Support has worked hard to establish a presence at each hospital eye clinic across the county.

In early 2010, we established our first advice desk at the Machel Eye Clinic at Warwick Hospital. The impact of the advice desk was soon appreciated by the eye clinic team. By 2013, we had secured funding to expand the service into Stratford Hospital.

However, the major step-change came in 2016 when we secured



Del and Maria at Warwick Hospital Advice Desk

3-year National Lottery Funding for our My Sight Project. This service, based initially at George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton and more latterly at Camp Hill Medical Centre, combined advice desk information and guidance with social and emotional support, delivered at our Nuneaton vision support centre.

It was on the back of this project that we were able to secure grants from the Dunhill Medical Trust, the Sobell Foundation, Garfield Weston and others to establish a more permanent presence across the county.

At this point, we started our weekly advice desk in Rugby to complement the work of the RNIB ECLO (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer) Sue Gruecock.

The service Warwickshire Vision Support provides at the hospitals has now evolved and become more formalised. We want to ensure that you get the best service available and are pleased to say that two team members, Vicky Lewis and myself are fully qualified ECLOs.

Unfortunately, funding does not permit us to be at the clinics full time. But if you need information, advice and guidance and we are not there, then please either talk to the nursing staff who can pass on your details or call us on **01926 411331**





Who Says Blind People Can't Drive?

by Karina Gregory

In early 2019, I felt I needed a challenge and decided to pursue a personal dream of sailing - an unusual goal given that Warwickshire is so landlocked.

Having consulted Google, I learned about the Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST) who provide opportunities to sail on tall ships. I had a good look through their voyages and initially chose a short one from Portsmouth to Poole which lasted for 3 days.

When you arrive on board you are assigned a buddy who is there to offer any support or assistance you may need, like finding your

way around the ship. It was great because I had the opportunity to do everything that everyone else was doing - although I did get out of mess duty on my first voyage but I wasn't going to complain too loudly about that!

Whilst on watch in the afternoon, it dawned on me just how relaxed I felt - I had left my worries on-shore and it was just me and the sea. I followed this trip with a longer London to Edinburgh voyage.

At about the same time, I heard about VISA GB (the Visually Impaired Sailing Association). I was invited

to join them on a short sail from Lymington to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight.

VISA GB do not have their own boats, so I was told simply to make my way to Brockenhurst train station with my sleeping bag. I was duly met at the station and my adventure began. What a great experience, meeting lots of VIP sailors, sharing experiences and generally having a wonderful time.

This all prepared me for the big trip. On 12th October 2019, seven visually impaired crew members, a sighted Skipper and a sighted Mate set out to Majorca to begin our VISA GB sailing holiday.

The VIP crew departed from different airports with the expectation that we would meet up at Majorca airport. The Skipper and his Mate would arrive later. Despite language problems we were able to find each other and our luggage - thanks largely to our mobile phones.

Being a guide dog user it always comes as a bit of a shock to the system to have to revert to using a cane. I had prepared myself, as I knew my mobility skills would need to be in tip-top shape for negotiating narrow pontoons and their presenting obstacles (namely ropes, wires and lights).

After being shown around the boat by a rep from the boat hire company



we made ourselves at home and unpacked our things. Once the Skipper and Mate had arrived, a shopping party was assembled for the first shopping mission of the week. Meanwhile, the rest of us stayed on board getting to know each other and waiting for the shopping party to return.

One good thing about sailing is that there is a place for everything - and due to the limited space available there are few opportunities for people not to put things back where they had come from. This really makes life easier for VIPs who spend a lifetime tripping over other people's paraphernalia.

The following day after a very leisurely breakfast and the safety briefing, which included being shown how to put on our life jackets, we set off for our first day of sailing.



Karina and shipmates

We spent the next seven days exploring the Majorca coastline. We all had numerous opportunities to try out the tasks on-board, including dropping and lifting the anchor, helming (steering), managing the sails, mooring the boat, casting off, and even refuelling at the end of the week!

It was a great opportunity to develop new friendships and learn new skills with people who understood the real meaning of the word “empowerment”. The week culminated in a get together with another crew who were following in our wake.

I hope that my story inspires you to explore the world and fulfil your dreams. We should not be defined by our sight loss, we may have to adapt our approach and it may take a little bit longer, but what

does that matter? It is that sense of achievement that is the most special and fantastic feeling in the world.

Travel Tips

1. Plan ahead - break tasks down into simple steps that are easier to manage
2. Exercise patience - getting flustered only makes things worse
3. If you can use a smart phone, then Google translate can help with communication whilst navigation can help with finding places
4. Take a photo of your luggage, you can then ask someone to help you collect it off the conveyor belt
5. Remember to enjoy yourself - adventures can be great but try to build in some ‘me’ time

Focus on Health

by Jemma Davoudian

The Sight Test Revolution on the High Street

The last few decades have seen rapid changes in the way UK patients access eye tests. Just 20-30 years ago, the typical visit to a high street optician would include a basic test and, if you were experiencing specific issues with your vision, the optician may have used an ophthalmoscope to examine the back of your eye. In essence, you would not visit an optician unless you were experiencing problems with your sight.

Fortunately, high street sight tests have now been completely revolutionised through technological advances. During a standard visit today, you will first complete pre-testing with an optical assistant. This may include a tonometer test, where gentle puffs of air are used to measure the internal pressure of your eyes (vital in the early detection of glaucoma). Multifunctional machines now conduct multiple tests – such as auto-refraction (for long/short-sightedness) whilst digital retinal photography takes an image of the back of your eye.

Your optometrist uses the results gathered during pre-testing, plus any symptoms you declare, to assess your overall eye health.

Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) is a hospital-grade eye

scan which is now being introduced to consumers by some high street opticians, at a cost. OCT uses light waves to create a 3D image of your eye, allowing distinct layers of the retina to be viewed separately, thus allowing opticians to detect signs of eye health deterioration up to 4 years earlier than traditional methods.

Remember, even though you may be losing your vision, always visit your optician to maximise your usable sight.



Opticians can also detect other medical conditions:

- **Diabetes:** early signs of haemorrhaging
- **High Blood Pressure:** damaged blood vessels
- **Cancer:** abnormal eye structure
- **Tumours:** abnormal shape of pupils
- **Arthritis:** inflammation of sclera (white of the eye)
- **Dementia:** thinner retinas or deterioration in the retinal cells
- **Thyroid disease:** bulging eyes
- and much more ...

Vision 2020 - A Global Perspective

Impaired vision can have an impact on all facets of life – from employment to quality of life and beyond. Globally, at least 2 billion people have a vision impairment, of whom at least 1 billion have a preventable condition, or one which has not yet been addressed.

Accurate estimates are near impossible to obtain because population-based surveys will not typically report on those who wear glasses or contact lenses.

In the World Health Organisation (WHO) 2019 World Report on Vision, it was estimated that 196 million people across the world suffer with age-related macular degeneration, 146 million have diabetic retinopathy, 2.6 billion have myopia and 76 million have glaucoma. Moreover, it is thought that at least 65.2 million people worldwide have unaddressed/untreated cataracts. This is a sobering realisation, as millions of people are living with a vision impairment that could have been prevented.

Successful solutions

One of the clearest successes of Vision 2020's investment in research is the number of effective prevention methods now available in the sight loss sector.

Prevention can be successful by targeting eye conditions

which are secondary to other health issues, such as Vitamin A deficiency, measles or rubella. For instance, through Vitamin A supplements and immunisation, the risk of corneal opacities can be significantly reduced.

Equally, changes to legislation, like the compulsory use of a seat belt in vehicles, has also resulted in a large reduction in ocular injuries.

Treatments aim to cure eye conditions, or at least address their symptoms and progression. Cataracts are a leading cause of vision impairment which can be treated through surgical intervention. Cataract surgery is cost-effective, can be performed by mobile clinics in developing countries and has a major impact on the quality of life of patients and the local economy.



Eye care now reaches some of the most remote communities



Sightsavers is one of the many international organisations fighting sight loss

Similarly, the development of anti-VEGF injections for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration has transformed the prognosis of these conditions. Since their inception, high-income countries have seen a reduction in the incidence of blindness caused by AMD. Whilst promising, this does not mean that Vision 2020 has finished its job – the availability of treatments like anti-VEGF therapy is scarce in many low and middle-income countries due to high associated costs. Vision 2020 is a global initiative, and therefore changes and improvements need to be seen for the entire population, not just specific sub-groups.

Looking ahead

Technological advances funded and endorsed by Vision 2020 have also had a positive impact within the field of preventative eye health. Artificial intelligence can now detect a wide range of eye conditions, including diabetic retinopathy and trials of

mobile phone-based software that can conduct vision assessments are showing promise. These measures could revolutionise the diagnosis of eye conditions, and enable interventions to begin at a much earlier stage.

The portability of these diagnostic tools also enables their use in more isolated or rural regions, and could help to alleviate the shortage of eye care professionals.

As we plan ahead, the global population of people aged 60 years and above is estimated to increase by 54% from 2017–2050, largely due to a steady increase in life expectancy and population growth, it becomes clear that the work of Vision 2020 is far from over. Progress has been made for all major objectives and core strategies of this initiative, but now we must build upon these findings and successes – 2020 itself is just the beginning.



Spotlight on Equipment

Talking glucose monitors by Jane Thorn

You might be surprised to learn that glucose testing is nearly 100 years old! Back then, glucose monitoring required a sample of urine and a laboratory at the very least.

Fast forward 60 years or so and blood glucose monitoring could finally be undertaken in your own home. But this was a complicated affair with multiple steps and often inaccurate results. Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) was a great step forward but it still required some useful vision to check the reading.

Living with sight loss can be challenging and exasperating. Living with sight loss and diabetes that needs constant monitoring just adds another complication.

Talking glucose monitors have been around since the 1990s. There are now many different models available on the market to buy.

Speaking to your diabetic nurse or GP should always be the first point of call for help, advice and assistance. Similarly, if you are struggling with monitoring your levels because of vision loss then talk to them about a talking glucose monitor.

You might find that your surgery will prescribe you a free talking glucose monitor. However, in our experience each surgery has a different policy about providing them free of charge.

I decided to call two health care suppliers direct - one in Leicester and

one in Surrey. Both suppliers were friendly and helpful and they will supply VIPs direct and free of charge. Below are contact details:

- **Spirit Health Care** Call direct on **0116 286 5000** to request a CareSens N Voice monitor. Their address is Spirit House, Saffron Way, Leicester LE2 6UP
- **Glucorx** will supply a GLUCORX NEXUS VOICE METER. Call direct on **01483 755133**. They are at Unit 1C Henley Business Park, Pirbright Road, Guildford, Surrey GU3 2DX

Monitors often come with a starter kit which usually includes test strips and lancets. You should then request

a prescription from your GP for your further needs.

At Warwickshire Vision Support we encourage all VIPs to use their remaining vision whenever possible. So if you prefer to use your vision rather than a talking monitor here are some useful tips:

- Use extra lighting such as a desk lamp
- Use a hands-free magnifier
- Label medication with bump-ons or other markers that you recognise
- Use a tray or box with good colour contrast for your monitoring and testing equipment.

Wendy's Challenge - Ben Nevis

On Monday 22nd June 2020 our intrepid explorer Wendy Pope will take on the challenging and unforgiving Ben Nevis in Scotland. Ben Nevis is the highest mountain in the British Isles, standing at 1,345 metres. Wendy who attends our Nuneaton Vision Support Centre has decided to embrace the climb and will be accompanied by a guide.

Diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa when she was just 7 years old, today Wendy's eyesight is significantly impaired - she relies on gorgeous Lily her guide dog for support. Wendy plans to raise money for Warwickshire Vision Support and sponsorship forms will be available at all our support centres and also online at localgiving.org/fundraising/wendy-beats-ben-nevis/

Please show your support for Wendy by sponsoring her to complete this climb.



Advice and Guidance

U.V. Shields by Christine Huber

For many years we have been advised to wear sun cream to protect us from harmful sun rays. Unfortunately, the message to protect our eyes has not been promoted as well.

Why is it important to shield our eyes from sunlight?

Sunlight contains UVA and UVB rays that can be harmful to our eyes. It is recommended that we wear sunglasses and a sun hat with a brim to protect them.

A problem with sunglasses for those with low vision is that darker glasses can reduce our functional vision creating a win : lose situation - they reduce the glare but also our contrast sensitivity.

The answer might be to try a tinted pair of glasses. These are available in styles that sit alone or ones that can be worn over our prescription glasses. They are often referred to as anti-glare shields or sun safe filters.

Finding the right tint is based on your individual needs and your eye condition. For example, some eye conditions cause a sensitivity to light even when there is no sunshine.

Manufacturers often recommend certain tints for certain eye

conditions. People with cataracts, for example, might benefit from a yellow or yellow/orange filter. These tints allow light to enter the eye to help enhance contrast but

filter out the potentially harmful rays. Some, who are sensitive to glare, find the yellow tint too bright and find the amber option more suitable. Meanwhile, people suffering with photo-phobia (sensitivity to light) could be better served by amber, plum or grey green.

As with most things, what works for one may not suit another. Some tints may help with glare but have little UV protection. Warwickshire Vision Support has a selection of tints for people to try at our support centres. If you would like more information on the glasses/tints available then come to your local support centre, give us a call on **01926 411331** or speak to your optician.





IT Bits and Bytes

Talking Apps by Ruth Okey

WayAround



This is a free app that allows you to electronically label items in your home.

You simply buy the WayTags from www.comproom.co.uk, attach them to your clothes, tins or files and add a label through your smart phone.

Once tagged, the item can be scanned and the information stored is read back to you. WayTags come as stickers, magnets, buttons and clips and they can be re-used and the information edited.

Requires an Apple or Android phone with NFC (Near-field communication) technology.

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Lazarillo



This is a free GPS app to explore the world around you. Voice messages give

information about your current location and nearby services, for example bus stops, cafés, banks and ATM's, restaurants and road junctions. You can search for different destinations and get directions for walking, driving or taking the bus and your favourite locations can be saved.

Requires an Apple or Android mobile phone with a mobile internet connection and GPS systems.

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Both Apps are available for iPhone and Android



Recipe Page

Eve's Pudding by Andrew Baker

The classic Eve's Pudding is simply slices of apples underneath a sponge mixture. The name Eve's Pudding originated from the story of Adam and Eve when Eve is said to have tempted Adam with an apple.

Make the sponge mixture first and slice up the apples second, so they have less time in the open. The sponge topping is simply a basic Victoria sponge recipe.

Ingredients

- 125g / 4oz soft margarine
- 125g / 4oz sugar
- 2 eggs
- 125g / 4oz self-raising flour
- 500g / 1lb apples
- Tablespoon sugar and teaspoon cinnamon (optional)

Cooking instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 5
2. In a large bowl, cream the margarine and sugar until light and fluffy
3. Add the eggs then the flour, mixing together thoroughly
4. Grease a baking dish with a little margarine
5. Core and slice the apples
6. Arrange the apples in the bottom of the baking dish



7. Sprinkle with an extra tablespoon of sugar and a teaspoon of cinnamon if wanted
8. Spoon the sponge mixture over the top of the apples
9. Bake in the oven for 40 minutes or until the sponge is set and golden brown on top
10. As with all sponge puddings, serve with custard, cream or ice cream.

TIPS

- To save peeling/chopping apples try tinned or frozen apple slices.
- Use a packet sponge mix to avoid the need to weigh ingredients.
- Set the height of the oven shelf before turning on the oven.
- Use long sleeved oven gauntlets when taking the pudding out.



Volunteer Awards

If you want to nominate a volunteer for our Annual Awards, time is fast running out. This year, there will be five Awards, one for each geographical area: South Warwickshire, Mid-Warwickshire, Rugby, Nuneaton & Bedworth and North Warwickshire.

Anyone can make a nomination but because all volunteers are amazing people, make sure you tell us what makes your particular nominee stand out.

To submit your nomination

- Call us on 01926 411331 to make your nomination or
- Email volunteers@warwickshire.vision giving full details of the name of the volunteer and the reason you are nominating - what makes them special.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 8th May 2020.

Super Saving

by Kate Perkins

My role as Supersaver covers many areas. Just before Christmas Christine Huber, our Senior Rehabilitation Officer, made a referral to me for a family that were struggling due to a couple of key household appliances having broken down. This family needed an urgent replacement of their washing machine and cooker and it was recommended for safety reasons that the new cooker should be electric rather than gas.

Unfortunately, both Christine Weston and her son Dale are both visually impaired which meant that with the washing machine out of action the washing itself had started to accumulate causing a potential trip hazard within the home for both of them.

This was my first 'personal' grant application but fortunately luck was on my side. I contacted Bedworth Lions Club who didn't disappoint. With Christmas approaching, they 'fast tracked' my request for a grant and in addition to the award of a full grant they also paid for both delivery and installation of a washing machine from a local electrical store.

Christine took delivery of her new washing machine the week before Christmas. In the past week I have



secured a second separate grant to cover the cost of a new electric cooker and the installation to be changed from gas to electric. This grant was provided by Victoria Convalescent Trust.

Christine is now enjoying the convenience of a brand-new washing machine, although is not looking forward to dealing with the back-log of washing!

Both of these grants were made available following a means-based assessment and we know that there are many more visually impaired people who could benefit from equipment to aid independent living. We are happy to assist in pursuing a grant application.

Please call **01926 4113311** and ask for Kate Perkins, Supersaver.

TV Licence changes for over 75's

Free TV licences, funded by the Government, for all over 75s will come to an end in June 2020. This means that most TV licence holders over 75 will have to pay the full licence fee. Under the new scheme, free TV licences will only be available to people over 75 who are also receiving Pension Credit.

If you are over 75, you may have already had a letter or you will receive one soon explaining how you can pay for your next licence. You

don't need to take any action in the meantime.

If you are Registered Severely Sight Impaired (Blind) you will still be entitled to a 50% reduced-fee TV licence. If you need assistance to apply online or through a paper application, you can visit tvlicencing.co.uk or book an appointment by calling Kate Perkins on **01926 411331** or visit one of our four Support Centres. We expect high demand so we will operate on a first come first served basis.

New £20 note

The new polymer £20 note was released on 20th February, with the withdrawal date for the old paper note still to be announced. You will be able to exchange old notes in your local bank or Post Office.

The new £20 note features the artist, JMW Turner's 1799 self-portrait, with his 'Fighting Temeraire' painting as the background.

The new polymer notes have a tactile feature which can help to distinguish between them. The new £20 note will have three clusters of raised dots in the top left-hand corner. This differentiates it from the £10 note, which has two clusters of raised dots in the left-hand corner, and the £5 note, which has no raised dots.



Volunteer Focus

Bill Hannis

I first became involved with Warwickshire Vision Support (WAB as it was then) some 19 years ago.

I was a volunteer driver in Shipston-on-Stour and was asked to pick up people and take them to the Stour Valley VIP Club on alternate Mondays. I got to know the clients and the volunteers who ran the club. After a year or so the Club Secretary, Shirley Pilkington, asked me to take on the role of Chairman. I asked her reason and she said "I think you will liven them up". I could see no reason to refuse and so began my long involvement with Warwickshire Vision Support.

In addition to leading my own club I was a member of the South Warwickshire Committee, which provided a forum for discussion between clubs, sharing information, ideas and speakers. It also organises an annual lunch for the participating clubs.

Through this committee I was asked to speak at different clubs on my experiences as a police officer and I eventually spoke to nearly every club in the county. These visits gave me an insight into how the other clubs ran. I became well known and was asked to join the Board. At the



time, I felt the Board was a little lost, focusing on policies and procedures rather than those we support. I am pleased to see that once again our service users and the volunteers who support them are at the centre of all that WVS does.

I resigned from the Board due to ill-health but continued with my other roles until the end of 2019.

Over the last 20 years I have seen many positive changes. In the beginning I felt that we were 'paddling our own canoe' but today we are on board a ship where every assistance is offered and every request answered.

I am now enjoying my retirement.

Forty Five Years' Service

by Vicky Lewis

After 45 years as lead volunteer at the Atherstone Social Club, Daphne "Dink" Bartlam has decided to retire.

Atherstone social club started over 60 years ago in a little wooden hut known as the Rowan Centre. The club later moved to a room above the Co-Op on Long Street then to the Memorial Centre before finally moving to St Mary's Church where they remain today.

Dink started attending the club as a guide and carer for her older sister Alice, who had lost her sight early in childhood. Dink would leave work to escort her sister to the club and collect her later. After some time, the other volunteers invited Dink to become a fully fledged volunteer.

In the early days, the club would meet up for a biscuit, hot drink and a chat with an occasional day-trip to Stratford-upon-Avon or Bourton-on-the-Water. Each year, the members and volunteers would go on an annual holiday to the Howard Hotel in Wales - sadly something that was curtailed as the group got older.

The club now meet fortnightly for lunches, days out, raffles and bingo. Interestingly the tactile large print bingo boards still used today, were made by prisoners at Redditch prison at no cost.

Dink still attends the club but now she attends as a member rather than a volunteer.

"I thoroughly enjoyed being a volunteer and sometimes I miss not being involved in the planning of activities. I think that the club is a wonderful place for VIPs - we are like a family," Dink told me.

When Dink retired the club showed their love for her by presenting her with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

The team at Warwickshire Vision Support thanks Dink for her dedication and commitment to the Atherstone Club.



Spring Word Search

N O I T A N R A C W I C X M P
A S W E E T P E A K R D X U O
M J R U X A D L W C S L K S R
D S Y S T U L I P O R O I C D
A X A H R F B U A T L I E A W
I O L I L Y R N N S V F P R O
S V O O R P S E A A T P N I N
Y U W S C L R L E O P E Z U S
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F Y N O E P P R G C R O C U S

ASTER

LILY

CAMPANULA

MUSCARI

CARNATION

ORCHID

CORNFLOWER

PEONY

CROCUS

POPPY

DAFFODIL

ROSE

DAISY

SNOWDROP

DANDELION

STOCK

FREESIA

SUNFLOWER

GLADIOLUS

SWEETPEA

IRIS

TULIP

LILAC

WALLFLOWER



Dolphin

GuideConnect

Recommended
by UK Sight
Loss Charities

Sight loss
stopping you
do everyday
things?



Regain your independence with simple talking technology you CAN use:

Try GuideConnect for:

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Making a difference

Serving people living with sight loss in Warwickshire



Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton	Newtown Community Centre Newtown Road Nuneaton CV11 4HG	Every Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church Regent Place Rugby CV21 2PJ	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon
Stratford-upon-Avon	The Christadelphian Church Rother Street Stratford CV37 6LU	Every Tuesday 10 am - 12 noon
North Warwickshire and smaller county towns and villages	'Pop-Up' events at multiple locations. See Page 9	Call 01926 411331 for more details

Warwickshire Vision is available free to people living with sight loss in Warwickshire. This publication is also available in digital audio and by email. For more information, please contact:

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

☎ 01926 411331

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision



@warksvissupport