

WARWICKSHIRE
VISION
MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2023

**THE TWILIGHT
ZONE**

*How to handle the darker
autumn evenings*

**LET'S GET
SOCIAL**

*Take a tour of
our amazing
social clubs*

**WHERE IN
WARWICKSHIRE?**

*All roads lead to Coleshill
this month*

WELCOME



I hope you have enjoyed a lovely summer, in what was a mixed bag of weather!

It started with some very hot and dry weeks before fizzling out to perhaps more traditional cooler and wetter days.

Thankfully, we avoided the extreme temperatures, wildfires and floods experienced elsewhere in Europe.

The end of the summer and start of the autumn is an important and very exciting time in my household.

It is the time when I harvest apples from my orchard (of two trees) and turn them into cider with friends and family waiting patiently to sample the produce from my garden and labours.

It is a small concern and will never threaten the profits of the breweries of Warwickshire, but I dream of one day seeing what I produce in bottles on the shelves at my local pub!

It is this time of year when I'm not in my cider factory (or shed as it might otherwise be described), I most enjoy walks around the Warwickshire countryside.

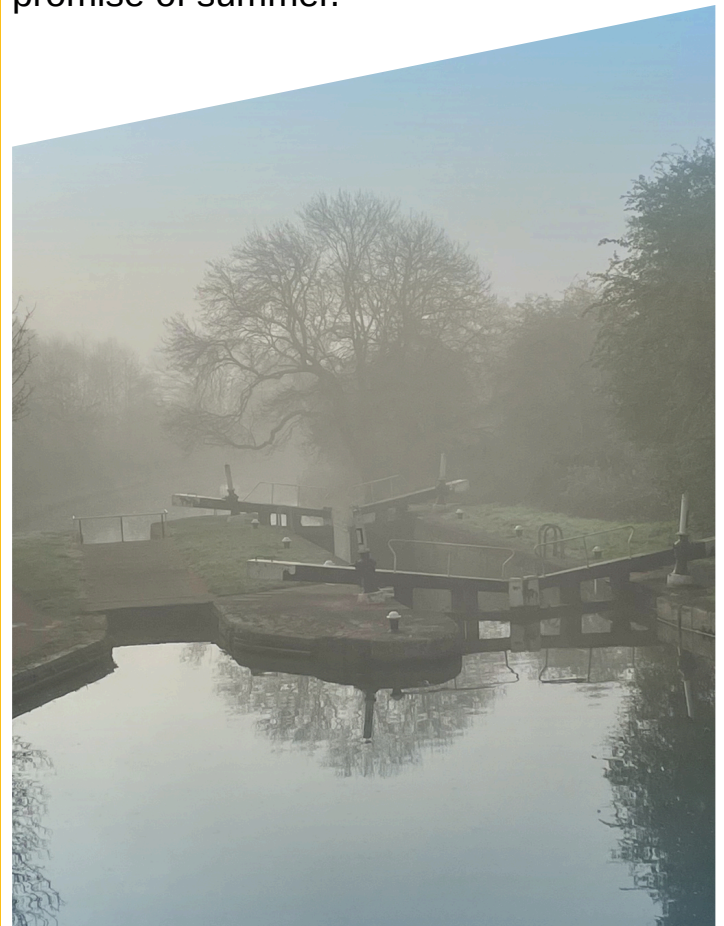
It has to be the most colourful of seasons, with trees preparing for the winter and shutting down their production of chlorophyll, the chemical that makes leaves green, treating us to an abundance of ambers, reds and yellows.

I'm very fortunate because my commute to the Warwickshire Vision Support office includes a 30 minute walk along the Grand Union canal, with the towpaths bedecked with trees and bushes of changing colour.

It can be a little slippery underfoot at this time of year but I have certainly had more challenging commutes!

I especially like the early morning starts, with a mist hovering above the water and drifting into neighbouring fields and pastures.

Keats (1795-1821) described this time of year as "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness", when nature has fulfilled the promise of summer.



"It has to be the most colourful of seasons, with trees preparing for the winter"



On a very personal level I hope I can do the season justice and produce a cider in 2023 that is the envy of local breweries, or perhaps more modestly, something that can simply inspire me to redouble my efforts next year!

With my best wishes for the autumn season,

Keith

Keith Eales
Chief Executive Officer



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

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Gathering in your personal Autumn harvest

by Marian Shalloe,
Support Centre Volunteer.

As we move into the season of autumn, we may become aware that summer cannot be without the winter and light cannot be without the dark.

Autumn is a reminder that change is part of life especially when the leaves begin to fall from the trees.

During this time, you may feel the urge to prepare for the challenges of the winter months ahead by completing any unfinished tasks, clearing away clutter, letting go of what you no longer need and making sure that you are physically and emotionally prepared for the winter months ahead.

Autumn is the season of the harvest when all that was planted earlier in the year has fully grown and is ready to be gathered in.

On a spiritual level, it can be the perfect time to contemplate, take stock and gather in our own personal autumn harvest, recognising our achievements.

When gathering in our personal harvest we could celebrate, all we have found, realised, learned, changed, conquered, let go of in the year so far and accept those things we still need to work on.

Perhaps take some time to pause and contemplate with gratitude where you have travelled from so far in this year, to recognise and accept the shift in the season, to consider what personal harvest you are gathering to support you in the months ahead and to remember that we are all part of this incredible ever-changing World and Universe.



LET'S GET SOCIAL

Time for a whistle-stop tour of our Social Clubs.

Stratford-upon-Avon

We meet every other Thursday between 2-4pm. Each meeting we have a speaker or music plus tea, cakes and a raffle - and 4 times a year we have a group lunch.

Atherstone

We meet every other Wednesday 10.30-1.30pm. We welcome all our friendly members to enjoy teas, coffees and snacks - plus a raffle and a few games of bingo!



Leamington Spa

Runs every 1st and 3rd Wednesday from 10am-12pm. We have many speakers from poetry to wildlife to music. The sessions are informal and fun and there's always endless teas, coffee and biscuits available! It's a great chance to meet new friends and learn new things.

Kenilworth

We meet each 2nd and 4th Tuesday from 2-4pm. We were recently visited by Sarah-Jane Perry, a local squash player and medal winner at the Commonwealth Games so there's always something interesting!

Rugby Hillmorton

Each 3rd Monday from 7-9pm we meet and are regularly entertained by local singers or quizzes - PLUS a good natter and some lovely cake and sandwiches!

Southam

On the 3rd Wednesday between 2-4pm we meet for a chat and entertainment like musical events, quizzes, historians, and of course plenty of coffee and cakes!

Rugby Visually Impaired Persons (VIP)

A vibrant club on the 2nd Wednesday from 2-4pm. We offer a friendly & welcoming environment with a varied programme, from indoor bowls to quizzes, bell ringers to jazz bands (and chats, tea and cake).

Coleshill

On the 1st Wednesday from 2-4pm we meet for a relaxing and fun afternoon making new friends over a cuppa and a slice of cake. Come along!



Full details of each club are on Page 15

PONY EXPRESS!

By Maria Tongue,
Volunteer Coordinator.

We ask our members what their interests are, then try and arrange fun activities for all.

Clubs are relaxed and it's a great place to meet new people over a tea or coffee.

We're always looking for new volunteers so if you're interested in helping contact Maria Tongue on 01926 411 331

Nuneaton

We meet each 2nd Tuesday from 2-4 pm and provide a friendly place to make new friends and chat in a relaxed, informal setting.



By Kim Byford, Vision Support Officer.

We recently had some very special visitors to our Nuneaton Social Club when we welcomed the Miniature Shetland Therapy Ponies.

Jessica and Faith brought two ponies (one black and one grey) complete with sequined shoe protectors and sparkly headbands.

We were also treated to a therapy rabbit and guinea pig and all the animals were exceptionally well behaved.



Club members all participated in stroking and brushing the horses' beautiful manes and tails.

One of our male members was cautious about

holding the rabbit at first, but once he did, he didn't want to put it down!

The ponies really did bring a sense of calm to the club as stroking them or brushing them is great therapy especially for anxiety or depression.

We all had a great day and can't wait for them to visit again!



MEET A TRUSTEE

By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer.

This edition, we caught up with **Sue Ayres, one of our fabulous trustees who bring a wealth of knowledge to Warwickshire Vision Support.**

Hi Sue, firstly, can you share a little of your background and what brings you to Warwickshire Vision Support?

I am retired now but had a very rewarding career in education.

I spent thirty years teaching in a number of different state secondary schools in three different West Midlands authorities then I worked for seven years leading a multi-agency team to raise the attainment of children in the care system e.g those in foster care and in residential children's homes.

This was in Birmingham, the largest local authority in the country, with over 2,000 children in the care system.

Following that, I worked for Capita Strategic children's services as a senior regional advisor for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

This involved providing advice and guidance to the local authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside.

After this work I became particularly interested in visual impairment and blindness and became a Trustee Governor of New College Worcester, a non-maintained residential school.

I was Chair of the Residential and Safeguarding committee for eight years.

Throughout my career I have always done voluntary work and been a trustee of various charities so when I saw the



advertisement for Warwickshire Vision Support, I thought it provided an opportunity to get involved with a charity supporting people living with sight loss.

I applied and was appointed in May 2021.

What have you achieved as a Trustee with Warwickshire Vision Support?

I volunteered to join the HR committee of the board because, although I have no formal HR qualification, having been a senior manager of large teams of people I have had a fair bit of experience dealing with staffing issues.

I have enjoyed being part of the board and learning what the organisation does.

With my background in safeguarding, I've worked with the team to ensure correct policies and procedures are in place.

Are there any particular moments that stand out for you?

I think that the garden party held around the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which WVS was given was a super event and it was a nice opportunity to meet the staff, some clients and some volunteers.

I was very impressed that the work of WVS was being recognised in this way.

How has your time with Warwickshire Vision Support been so far?

I have enjoyed my time so far and have met such a good mix of hardworking, dedicated staff and volunteers who want to make a difference to people with sight loss.

The board has a good balance of trustees from different professional backgrounds

“It is important to get younger people involved with volunteering as it is a very rewarding and fulfilling role”

and with different areas of experience and expertise which is important.

The next few years will be an exciting time with the building development to ensure it's fit for purpose and accessible for all.

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

Having seen what WVS has been doing for many years I would hope that the close links with the local authority can be maintained and further developed.

I'd want us to continue to recruit volunteers and hope that we can have a clear succession plan.

It is important to get younger people involved with volunteering as it is a very rewarding and fulfilling role.

How would you describe your time as a Trustee?

I'm enjoying the role, particularly now that there are more opportunities to meet in person as originally my initial interview and first few meetings were on Zoom which has its limitations.

I have had a very positive experience of board meetings and am looking forward to helping the CEO and staff move the organisation forward in the future.

Could YOU be a trustee? We're recruiting!

Does one of these apply to you:

Are you visually impaired? Do you have HR or legal expertise?



If so, visit the Reach site at: <https://bit.ly/3SeABT6> - or scan this QR code

WHERE IN WARWICKSHIRE?

By Kim Byford, Vision Support Officer.

This time we're looking at **Coleshill** and had a chat with one of our regular service users, **Paul Bowler**.



How long have you lived in Coleshill?

I have lived in Coleshill for 18 years. It's a nice small market town. It's been a bit more difficult lately whilst the HS2 is being built as there is more traffic on the road.

I have a flat in a nice quiet part of Coleshill which is 10 minutes from the town centre.

How easy do you find travelling in and around the town?

The bus service is a bit hit and miss. We have one that goes to Birmingham which is the X13 - this runs every half hour.

The other is the 76 which goes to Sutton Coldfield and Tamworth, but it only runs about twice a day so there can be problems with it.

The trains are pretty good though - and quite often I can use Birmingham International station when I go to London, since it is only ten minutes away.

As someone with sight loss, what groups are available to you in Coleshill?

I am involved with a few clubs in the town. I am in a poetry club and a book group where I get audio books and we meet up once a month.

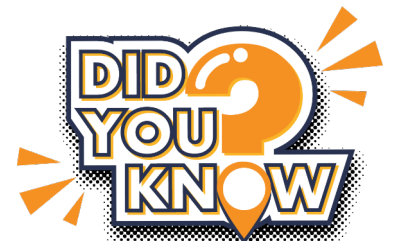
I also go to the gym once a week.

There is lots to do in Coleshill with nice cafes and pubs - I really enjoy living here.

And you attend a few of our sessions?

Yes, I am quite active with Warwickshire Vision and have been for some time.

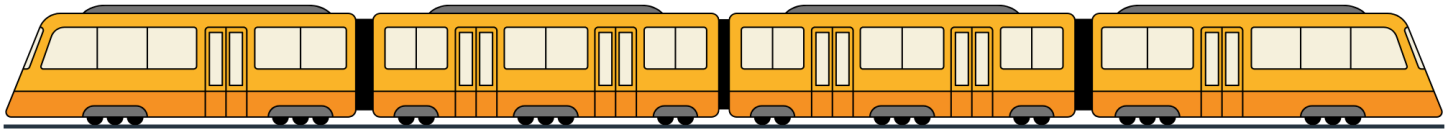
I attend the Nuneaton and Coleshill Support Centres - and I also attend the social clubs in Coleshill, Atherstone and Nuneaton.



Coleshill takes its name from the River Cole, on which it stands

The town has a population of under 7,000 according to the 2021 Census

Coleshill can trace its origins right back to the Iron Age



MY RAILWAY “JOURNEY”

Paul Bowler shares how booking passenger assistance improved his experience of travelling by train.

It’s been almost ten years since I first went to the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre and I’ve been a regular attendee there ever since.

For many years it was the nearest Vision Support Centre to Coleshill, but was still some distance away and had no bus link, only a train.

My first visit came about thanks to a friend from Coleshill, who drove me over to Nuneaton one Thursday morning.

I enjoyed the visit because everyone there was friendly and welcoming, and because it got me out and about.

I wanted to start going as often as I could, which would mean travelling by train, something I did rarely at the time.

I’d recently taken a trip to London with my step mum to visit my brother, and we’d discovered it was possible to book travel assistance for the train journey.

She helped me test it out one weekend, travelling with me but separately so we could see how successfully it would work.

I was helped on to the train at Marston Green by a member of station staff, and met by another railway employee at Euston, where I was escorted to a taxi.

My first experience of travel assistance at Coleshill was a bit less complicated.

I was helped on to the train, then met by staff at Nuneaton, who even saw I safely

“Being able to book passenger assistance soon opened up a whole new world to me.”

crossed the main road between the station and the Vision Support Centre.

Being able to book passenger assistance soon opened up a whole new world to me and I started to attend other events

held by Warwickshire Vision, as well as a braille class in Coventry.

I have family in London and it’s allowed me to visit them without needing to wait for other family to travel too.

I’ve also been to stay with friends and had the occasional holiday.

I was concerned to learn recently of plans to close ticket offices in train stations throughout England, including at my local station, Coleshill Parkway.

As well as providing passenger assistance, the ticket office staff are a huge help with train and ticket information.

I fear closing them would prevent me from being able to travel as independently as I have in recent years, and wonder if whatever system is put in its place will be as good.

Did you see our article about the rail ticket office closures on our website?

Read it now by scanning this QR code with your phone camera!



COST-OF-LIVING SUPPORT: UPDATE

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager.

More cost-of-living payments are being made this year, including for pensioners and those on low incomes.

In 2023/24, there are three different cost-of-living payments available.

Depending on your own circumstances, you could be eligible for one, two, or all three – meaning some will get £1,350.

On disability benefits?

If you claim any of the disability benefits listed below, you should have been paid your £150 on or by 4 July this year:

- Armed forces independence payment.
- Attendance allowance.
- Constant attendance allowance.
- Disability living allowance.
- Personal independence payment.
- War pension mobility supplement.

You can potentially get this topped up as described below if you are eligible.

On low-income benefits?

If you're one of the eight million households that get means-tested benefits, including universal credit and child and working tax credits, you could get up to £900 in cost-of-living payments paid in three instalments:

- £301 – between 25 April - 17 May 2023
- £300 – during autumn 2023
- £299 – during spring 2024



Above state pension age?

If you're above state pension age, you'll get £300 – paid in winter 2023/24.

If you're entitled to a winter fuel payment and are above state pension age (aged 66 and over), you'll get a top-up of £300 in winter 2023/24.

How will the payments arrive?

If you're eligible, you'll be sent a letter in October or November 2023 telling you how much your total winter fuel payment will be.

If you qualify for cost of living payments, you should be paid automatically in the same way you usually get your benefits.

Watch out for scam texts or emails inviting you to claim or apply for the payment. The DWP will never ask you for personal details or banking info over text or email.



HOT WATER ON TAP

By Rebecca Bourton,
Community Services Manager.

This item was so popular at our Vision Centre equipment sessions that we just had to share!

The **Breville Hot Cup** hot water dispenser is perfect for boiling water quickly, safely and economically.

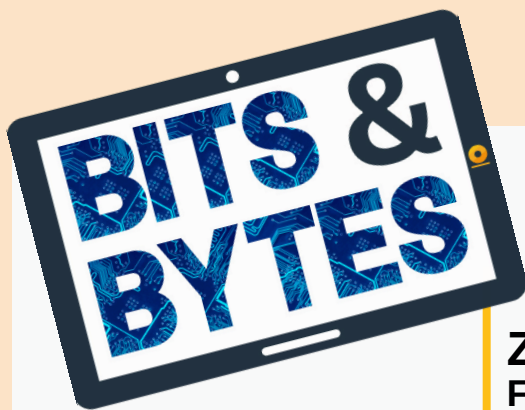
It has a cylindrical jug that is filled with cold water and attached to the back.

A dial on the top allows 9 different cup sizes to be selected (Many of our members said they use a raised 'bump sticker' by their preferred cup size).

Boiling water is delivered in under 60 seconds.

No wasted energy, and no need to carry a hot kettle.

It comes in various sizes and is widely available in stores and online.



By Ruth Okey,
Technology Officer.



Zuzanka
Free trial, then subscription for monthly, yearly or lifetime access. (iOS/Android)

Described as the world's first expiry date scanner.

Swivel the food product in front of your devices camera and once the expiration date is found it beeps and reads it out to you.

I found it fairly responsive but not totally accurate, depending on the format of the date.

Embossed medicine dates were not readable.

Note: *These apps are using Artificial Intelligence, so be mindful that they might not be 100% accurate.*

They are online apps so will use your mobile data when you are out and about.

Two of the latest new apps for you to try!...

VoiceVista
Free (iOS)



The **Soundscape** app was a popular app that through a pair of headphones created an audio representation of your environment by playing tones and making announcements relative to your current position, key points of interest and saved locations were called when close by.

This app was discontinued at the beginning of 2023 and all installed versions will have stopped working on 30th August 2023.

The open source code for this app was released by Microsoft so other organisations can use it to develop similar apps.

VoiceVista is one such new app, using the open source code and licensed under the MIT license.

It's been described as 'Soundscape Reborn'!

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

ENTERING THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Autumn brings shorter days and earlier evenings that can be challenging for people with visual impairments.

Some people with low vision or blindness are often hesitant to go out at night because of the challenges they may experience, which means they may miss out on evening events and activities.

The twilight zone of autumn's low light afternoons and dark evenings can be challenging, either due to night blindness or anxiety and lack of confidence in your surroundings.

Sounds become heavier and lighting conditions are different at night from the day. This affects pedestrian interactions and driver reactions.

Navigating a town in the daytime when it's busy with everyday life is different than at night when it's filled with dark spaces, bright vehicle lights and fewer people to help.

Andrew Baker says, "When teaching low light and nighttime travel I encourage clients to listen to sounds around them to recognise their environment and focus on non-visual skills.

One area of importance is developing kinaesthetic sense (muscle memory). This gives people better understanding of body movements. Kinaesthetic sense can help in many ways such as making accurate estimations of distance in familiar environments for example, finding a bathroom door while walking along the hall or finding a bus stop or shop door.



Mobility training for Veronica with Andrew

Other concepts taught include;

- Developing greater awareness of different tactile surfaces by better use of the cane.
- Exploring straight line walking and understanding what causes veering, and using strategies to walk in a straight line.
- Building listening skills and using traffic flow to help with orientation.

These skills provide confidence, giving choice and control on whether to go out in the evening.

ON THE DOORSTEP

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager.

By Andrew Baker, Rehabilitation Services Manager.

Being seen is also very important for safety.

Many serious accidents happen because drivers do not see pedestrians until it is too late.

To make ourselves more visible, we need something reflective so we can be seen when car headlights are shining towards us.

Your white cane is reflective but you can stand out more to drivers and other road / pavement users by carrying or wearing good LED lights.

They're inexpensive, widely available and used by cyclist, runners, school children, pedestrians.

If you have a long or guide cane then light your way in the dark with the Pharos cane light from Ambutech.

This rechargeable light can be fitted to illuminate your path and let other walkers see you more easily (not suitable for symbol canes).

It can be purchased through your local vision support centre.

We were recently joined at several of our Support Centres by Ian King (a Designing Out Crime Officer for Warwickshire Police).

Ian shared lots of useful information on staying safe and protecting yourself from unwanted doorstep callers. Here are some of his top tips:

- Door stickers stating “We do not buy from doorstep sellers, please don’t knock or ring” are worthwhile.
- Always keep both your front and back doors locked, but keep keys in the same place so you know where they are and can escape quickly should you need to.
- Think: are you expecting someone?
- Use a door chain but only put the chain on when answering the door. Leave it off at all other times.
- If you are able to, check the identity of the caller.
- Agree a password with utility companies and insist the caller can provide it before allowing them access.
- Ask the caller to verify their identity with a trusted friend / relative or neighbour before you let them in. Genuine callers won’t mind waiting whilst you do this.



Remember: If anyone claims to be from the Water Board or the Gas Board or the Electricity Board, call 999 - utility “boards” no longer exist.

You can report suspected rogue traders to Trading Standards on 01926 414040.

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

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

If in doubt, keep them out!

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY

By Martyn Parker, Community Engagement Officer.

Martyn Parker explains the importance of legacy gifts and how they support the work we do.

Warwickshire Vision Support has different channels of fundraising to help pay for our countywide services including grants, donations and legacy gifts.

Legacies are an important source of funding for many charities, where individuals leave money, assets or property in their will to benefit their chosen cause.

You are probably aware of recent television and radio adverts asking you to remember large, national charities when you write your will.

Warwickshire Vision Support is a small, local charity but still relies on legacy income to help sustain our work.

You may not know that our purchase of 14 Market Place in Warwick town centre was made possible by a large legacy gift left to us by a grateful service user.

Over 50% of adults in England and Wales have not written a valid will.



A will is the only way to make sure your savings, property, possessions and investments go to the people and causes you care about.

A gift in your will to a good cause does not have to be large to make a meaningful difference.

Even a small amount could make a real difference to people living with sight loss in Warwickshire so please do consider naming us in your will:

- £500 would pay for ten of the latest talking watches.
- £1,000 would fund a whole year of befriending support for 10 isolated people.
- £3,000 would enable 10 people to receive 1:1 IT training.
- £10,000 would provide a year's funding for one of our 'Vision Support Centres' that meet weekly across Warwickshire.

If you would like to discuss how you can leave a legacy gift to Warwickshire Vision, please get in touch with Martyn Parker, our Community Engagement Officer, on 01926 411331 or by email: martyn.parker@warwickshire.vision

More details, including a step-by-step guide, are on our website: www.warwickshire.vision/support-us/legacy-gifts (or scan this QR code with your phone camera)



WHEN AND WHERE

Come and join us at one of our Support Centres!

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

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

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

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

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

New location!

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

Except December

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



Your business could advertise here!

For more information on how to advertise in this publication, get in touch with the advertising team using the details below!

Tel: 01926 411 331

enquiries@warwickshire.vision

www.warwickshire.vision

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