

WARWICKSHIRE VISION MAGAZINE

Warwickshire Vision Support

WINTER 2024-5

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SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH SIGHT LOSS SINCE 1911
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WELCOME TO OUR NEW HOME!

*A community hub in the heart
of Warwickshire*

14
MARKET PLACE

WELCOME

OPENING TIMES
MONDAY - FRIDAY
9.00AM - 5.00PM

**We Have
Moved**
We've just moved
the corner (opposite
the old library)

WELCOME

The start of a new year is always a time for reflection and renewal. It's a chance to look back on our achievements and set our sights on the future with hope and determination.

Over the past year, we have made good progress in enhancing the lives of those with visual impairments in our community.

We have new staff team members, new volunteers and most significantly, newly refurbished premises – more on this later in the magazine.

This progress would not have been possible without the dedication and support of our incredible staff team, our volunteers, and most importantly, you - our service beneficiaries.

As we progress into 2025, we are more committed than ever to supporting you in every way we can.

Our mission remains steadfast: to empower and support you to lead fulfilling and independent lives.

We understand the challenges that come with visual impairments, and we are here to provide the resources, services, and community you need to thrive.

This year, we have exciting plans to reach even more individuals, increasing our presence and work in areas of the county in most need.



Our goal is to create a more inclusive and supportive community where everyone can flourish.

As we embark on this journey together, I am reminded of a quote by Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." This sentiment perfectly encapsulates the spirit of our organisation.

Here's to a year filled with new beginnings and endless possibilities.

Warm regards,

Keith

Keith Eales
Chief Executive Officer



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BACK TO NATURE

By Katherine Woodley, Vision Support Officer

ARC joined us at our Support Centres to explain how they support people with their mental and physical health by helping them to engage with nature.

Leamington and Kenilworth VSC's recently had an interesting wellbeing session from ARC.

Lucy (pictured) gave a talk and passed around some of the flowers, herbs and garlic that they have been growing in the garden or woods so the group could smell them and get a feel for the environment.

She described some of the activities on offer such as gardening, sowing seeds, planting, and gave some examples of the crafting projects like pebble painting, natural brooches, flower pressing and felting.

We then had a guided meditation session which incorporated actual bird song from the woods - very relaxing!

ARC have 5 ways to improve wellbeing

Connect to other people:
Listen, share.

Keep learning:
Share information, poetry, events.

Be active:
Gentle exercise, pruning trees, weeding

Give:
Listen to others, volunteer time, advise.

Take notice:
Slow down, listen to the birds, people, ourselves, the world around us.



ARC run weekly sessions to improve mental health and wellbeing through spending time in nature.

They have two centres in Leamington and Warwick.

Packmores Community Garden,
Warwick CV34 5EP (Thursdays – 10-12 or 12.30-2.30)

Foundry Wood, Leamington Spa CV32 6AF (Tuesdays – 10-12 or 12.30-2.30)

Sessions are free and refreshments provided.

If you're interested, contact: 07814 605245 or email info@arccic.co.uk

Find out more at www.arccic.co.uk



COMMUNITY CENTRED

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager and
Graham Buckingham-Underhill, Vision Support Officer

An update from our Vision Support Centres and Social Clubs in Atherstone and Bedworth.

Atherstone VSC

The Atherstone Vision Support Centre is located at St Mary's Church, Atherstone.

You'll find us in the Youth Headquarters, an accessible hall at the rear of the church.

This centre opens its doors on the third Friday of the month (except December) and provides a very welcoming and accessible environment.

As with all of our support centres, it offers a range of services designed to empower and support visually impaired individuals.

That includes advice, support, equipment demonstrations, social opportunities and informative guest speakers.

In 2024 we welcomed Medical Detection Dogs, Newmedica (who run a macular clinic in Camp Hill), Guide Dogs, local councillor Martin Short, RNIB and LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership) as well as a memorable Tai Chi Qi Gong session.

Staff members Jenny and Graham can demonstrate equipment and answer your questions regarding further support.

Atherstone Social Club

This Social Club is a long-standing club held in the same location as the VSC and run by a group of caring, dedicated and

hard-working volunteers – led by Mary (who stars in our Volunteer Spotlight elsewhere in this magazine).

Their main aim is to ensure that all club members have social time and enjoy themselves.

The club runs every other Wednesday and club members pay £5, bring a raffle prize and can enjoy a raffle, some lunch, tea, coffee and Bingo.

Lunch can be a variety of delicious options including bread rolls with chips (from the local fish and chip shop), a sandwich buffet with cakes, or jacket potatoes with different fillings... yum!

Bingo is popular, using specially designed wooden number boards - when a number is called, the numbers can be covered over with a wooden section - very inclusive and great fun!

Sadly, there is no transport to this club, but if you are interested in joining, contact Rebecca on 01926 411 331 and she can explain the process for joining and the information required.

We look forward to welcoming you!

Bedworth VSC (and Club!)

A couple of months ago we realised that the Bedworth Vision Support Centre (VSC) was becoming very popular, so

VSC OR CLUB?

VSCs offer equipment demos, IT help, magnifier sessions, and sight impairment advice. They also feature guest speakers, raffles, quizzes, and festive Christmas parties.

Clubs, meanwhile, focus on social activities and entertainment, but with staff still on hand to provide advice similar to VSCs.

much so that we wondered whether we could meet more regularly.

We decided that we would try a Social Club once a month as well.

And so, Bedworth now has both a Club **and** a VSC!

This follows the same pattern as Coleshill VSC which also has a Club running alongside.

We held our first meeting towards the end of last year, but the 'grand' opening was on the 21st of November, when we had a combined Christmas party.

We were entertained by the 'Bedworth, Nuneaton and Bulkington Ukelele Band'.

We heard some old favourites, a sprinkling of festive treats and were even visited by our very own Father Christmas!

I think we can safely say the Bedworth VSC and Club have been successfully launched!

If you would like to join us, both are held at Bedworth Cricket Club.

We can't wait to meet you!



From top:

Atherstone Club volunteers; Bedworth welcomes Santa Graham; Tai Chi Qi Gong session; Bedworth Christmas party; Atherstone's Newmedica session.

For full details of our clubs, including dates, times and locations, please see the "When and Where" section later in the magazine.

CASH IN HAND

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

Identifying coins and notes can be tricky for people with a visual impairment but our recent Support Centre sessions shared these great tips you can use.

Coins

Place the flat of the coin between your thumb and index finger to feel its shape and size.

Use the index finger of your other hand to trace the edge and check for grooves.

With practice, you'll be able to do this with one hand.

Start by pairing the coins:

- £2 and £1 are thicker and heavier
- 50p and 20p have 'pointy bits'
- 10p and 5p have grooved edges
- 2p and 1p are thin and smooth.

Hints:

The larger coin in each pair is worth more, so the £2 is bigger than £1, the 50p is bigger than 20p, the 10p is bigger than 5p, and the 2p is bigger than 1p.

If the coin has corners, it could be a 20p, 50p, or £1 - check the size and weight to identify it.

If the coin is round, use your fingernail to feel if the edge is milled or smooth.

This helps narrow it down, and you can then check the size and thickness to determine the coin.

Banknotes

Polymer banknotes have the same features as paper notes - they increase in

size with their value, have bold numerals, and similar colour palettes.

The £10 and £20 notes also have tactile features with raised dots:

- £5 is the smallest with no raised dots
- £10 has two sets of four raised dots in the top left-hand corner.
- £20 has three sets of four raised dots in the top left-hand corner and two clear windows (one on the left and one on the bottom left corner).

Hints:

Fold different notes in different ways - perhaps fold the £5 in half width-ways, the £10 length-ways, leaving the £20 unfolded.

You can also use the Seeing AI app to help identify banknotes.

If you would like support whilst you practise, pop along to any of our support centres in Leamington, Rugby, Stratford upon Avon, or Nuneaton.





HEAR ALL ABOUT IT!

by Sue Pendleton of N&BTN and Laura Henderson, Administration Officer

Do you know about the Nuneaton & Bedworth Talking Newspaper? It's been delivering news from the local area since 1978.

This is a completely **free service** which delivers the local news weekly in audio format to people who are visually impaired and therefore find it difficult to read the printed word.

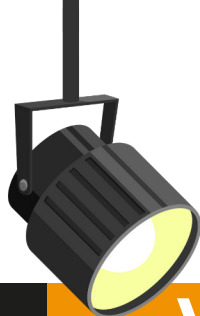
There are four teams of volunteers who take it in turn each week to record 60 minutes of local news and a 30 minute topical magazine onto a USB stick.

This is then posted out to listeners by the N&BTN dispatch teams.

As part of our service, they can also provide you with a USB player which is supplied on free long term loan.



If this service would be of interest to you or you require more information please contact **Sue Pendleton** on 07843276397 or email suependleton1102@gmail.com



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

By Kim Byford, Volunteer Co-ordinator and ECLO

Our wonderful Atherstone Vision Social Club leader Mary Wilkins was kind enough to share a few thoughts on why she enjoys running Atherstone club.

Mary told us:

I used to be a Guide Dog puppy walker and I started helping at the social club back in 1991 so over 33 years now!

I have always enjoyed chatting and listening to people of all ages and with different sight problems.

One of the best things about the club for me that I've been able to meet so many interesting people, all from local areas over a number of years.

Our members seem to enjoy routine and I am pleased our club provides this for them.

My favourite part of running the club is seeing the members chatting with one another whilst we provide their drinks and snacks.

It's a lovely, welcoming atmosphere!



IT'S THE PLACE TO BE!

By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer

14 MARKET PLACE has been transformed from a historic, but somewhat tired building, into what we hope will become a thriving community hub to be proud of.

If you've visited Warwick Town Centre in the last twelve months, you will have likely become aware of the re-development of our Head Office, in the northernmost corner of Market Place, when our entire building was enveloped in scaffolding and netting.

The renovation is now complete and new facilities are coming into use, a significant milestone in the long history of Warwickshire Vision Support.



Just a few years ago we were based in rented premises on an industrial estate on the outskirts of Warwick, in spacious offices over two floors, but impractical and inaccessible for many of the people we support.

A very generous legacy gift enabled our charity to purchase, restore and re-develop the historic 14 Market Place, a grade II listed building.

We needed a new, accessible, higher-profile base in an area with a high footfall so that we could become known to more people.

We also needed somewhere close to public transport so visitors were not dependent on driving or walking long distances to our office.

Market Place offered the ideal location, near the administrative centre of Warwickshire.

We needed less space for office administration and more for services we wanted to offer, not just our own, but also the services of our partners in the local health and welfare sector.

Most of our community work with over 2,000 visually impaired people a year is outreach, across the county, but the re-developed building presents an exciting opportunity to develop more projects with more partners to engage more people.

The new interior spaces have been designed after consultation with our service users, staff, volunteers and trustees.

We have new partners who will also benefit from the development, for example, Safeline, another local charity, will inhabit the upper offices.

BE SAFE AND WELL

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue offer a **FREE** community service known as **Safe and Well Checks**.



During a Safe and Well Check, firefighters visit homes to provide personalised fire safety advice, checking smoke alarms and installing new ones if necessary.

If you wear hearing aids during the day but may be unable to hear alarms when you remove them at night, they may be able to provide vibrating pads for under your pillow to alert you to any emergency.

The service is free and aims to reduce the risk of fire in homes by educating residents on fire prevention, reducing the risk of fire and the need for social and health care services.

In addition to fire safety, these visits cover a range of other important topics like advice on preventing slips, trips, and falls, which are common hazards in the home.

They also provide guidance on home security, winter warmth, hydration, healthy eating, and smoking cessation.

This holistic approach ensures that residents receive comprehensive support to improve their overall safety and health.

The service is particularly focused on helping the most vulnerable members of the community, such as the elderly, those with disabilities, and individuals living alone.

Residents can apply for a Safe and Well Check through the Warwickshire County Council's website or by calling 01926 466 282.

There are flexible spaces and multi-use rooms for meetings and activities, and the ground floor hosts a **brand new training kitchen** with the latest assistive equipment, as part of a Resource Centre.

This offers people with sight loss a chance to 'try before they buy', learning how to use the latest and best equipment and appliances that will keep them safe, confident and independent when cooking food and preparing hot drinks at home.

The date of the official inauguration of the new facility is still to be confirmed.

There is a chance we may have a very important person to 'cut the ribbon', but we are still awaiting confirmation of our formal request.

We look forward to seeing you at 14 Market Place soon!



COUNCIL TAX TIME

By Ed Hobson, Citizens Advice

With Council Tax bills about to be sent out, we got some great advice from **Ed Hobson from Citizens Advice.**

Council Tax bills will be dropping through letter boxes soon so here are some key points to remember to make sure you are not paying more than you should be.

Liability

Firstly, not every residence counts as a 'dwelling' for Council Tax purposes - some dwellings are exempt.

It's not just the dwelling - not everyone living in a property is liable for Council Tax - some people are not counted ("disregarded") when assessing liability.

Finally, not every person who is liable has to pay full Council Tax - in fact, in exceptional circumstances, the entire liability can be 'written off'.

Schemes to help

There is help available in the form of Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRs), which are sometimes called Council Tax Support (CTS).

These schemes provide means-tested support for those on low incomes. They are not linked to Universal Credit so it's important to contact your local council to ask about their scheme.



Arrears

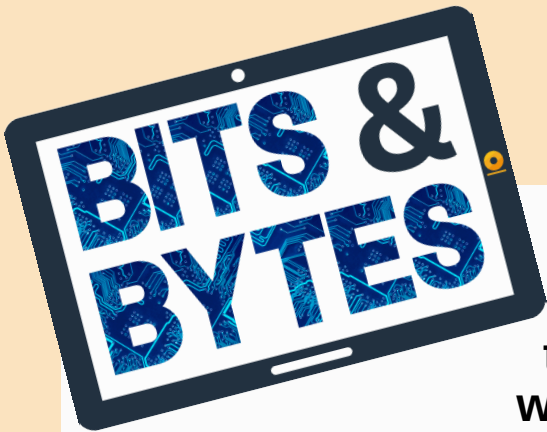
It is not unusual for those on low incomes to generate arrears and local authorities need to hear from these people as soon as possible so they can work with them to check their entitlement to help and, if necessary, to arrange affordable monthly repayments.

Need advice?

There is some great information on the Citizens Advice website (see below) and if you have questions on Council Tax arrears, call the Citizens Advice team on 0808 250 5715.



For more in-depth advice, visit <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/council-tax/> or scan this QR code



By Ruth Okey, Technology Officer

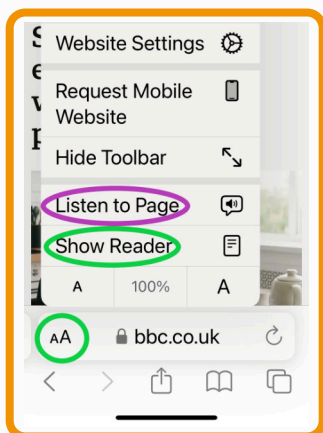
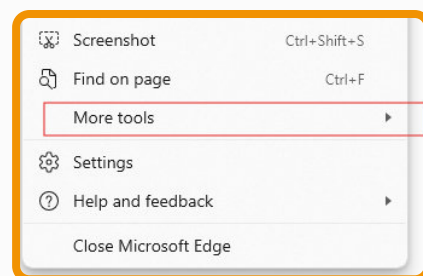
Did you know that there are several types of **Reading Mode** that can help you with reading text on websites and emails?

Reading Mode strips out ads and pictures to display the article being viewed in a reading pane for you to focus on reading the most important content with the text and background colours configured to your needs.

Web Browsers

PC (Google Chrome / Microsoft Edge Browser)

Click on the 3 dots [...] in the top right corner and select **"More Tools"**. On **Chrome**, **"Reading Mode"** shows a simplified reading panel while in **Edge**, **"Read Aloud"** will read out the page content.



Apple (Safari Browser)

Click on the **aa** icon or icon for **IOS 18** (left of the URL bar), then select **"Show Reader"** to reformat the page, or **"Listen to Page"** to have it read aloud.

At **IOS 18**, Reader needs to be **enabled in settings** (Apps -> Safari) but once enabled, when a page is loaded a temporary message appears saying **"Reader Available"** - click the left hand icon to open the reader.

Android devices

Download the Reading Mode App for use in apps and web pages.

Once installed, a shortcut (like a finger swipe) can be enabled to bring up a reading pane showing text being viewed in a simplified form (web page, email, or some apps).

Settings, Play and Text Size buttons are located at the bottom of the screen and the play button reads the text aloud. **(Requires Android 9 or above).**



Note: If you want an IT appointment for help with the above or help with your mobile, tablet or laptop, please call the WVS office on 01926 411 331.

IT appointments take place at Vision Support Centres and some Clubs.

A TRUSTEE'S TRAVELS

Liz Thiebe, Chair of the Board of Trustees shares her experiences walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

This past October, with a group of friends, I walked part of The Way of Saint James, a pilgrimage route that follows old Roman trade paths from France to Santiago de Compostela. There, in the town cathedral, the bones of the Saint are enshrined.

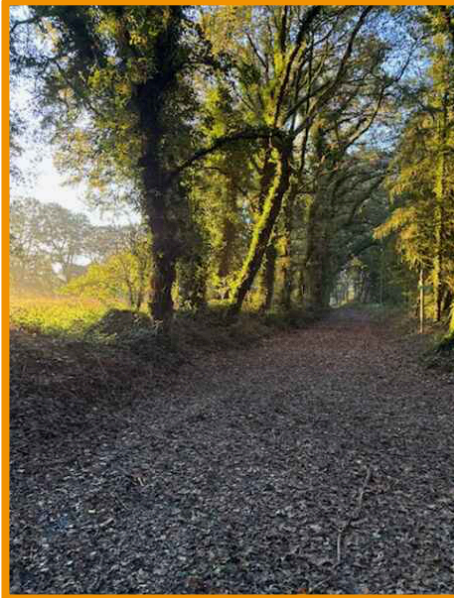
The route is beautiful: well-worn, smooth and easy to follow.

In truth, it's not a single path but a half dozen or more, all used over the centuries to approach, winding toward that one sacrosanct objective.

The path our little group followed has been used since the 10th century and everywhere we stepped, everywhere we looked, we sensed the scope of Western history.

The walkers, pilgrims and hikers have used this path for a variety of reasons over the years.

Some are on a spiritual pilgrimage, others are using it as a retreat from the stresses of everyday life, some are hikers and interested in the fitness challenges and



many are walking to explore relationships with oneself, friends or the natural world.

Our small group took the Camino Frances path (The French Way), walking 120km from

Sarria to Santiago and covering about 22km each day.

Our journey took us through farms, villages and forests using the same path created hundreds of years ago.

We carried a pilgrim passport, obtaining stamps from places along the way.

The stamps were all unique and offered to us at churches, cafes, small family hotels, trinket vendors and by musicians along the trail.

We collected these stamps in our pilgrim passports, presenting them at the end of the journey in Santiago, where we were given a certificate of accomplishment called the Compostela.

We paid a lot of attention to our feet and hydration - keeping blisters and muscle aches from developing was so important - and we certainly developed a stronger



appreciation for the feet that carry us around every day.

The experience of a quiet, calm natural world during our week long trek was profound.

Our days were filled with new experiences as we were surrounded by an unfamiliar culture with different food, art, music etc.

For me, the effects of this experience were unexpected.

Re-entry to the busy life that I lead has flagged up the contrast from the Camino calmness I experienced and I feel a renewed level of energy - a bit like a recharge of a battery cell!

I have a much better appreciation of spending meaningful time with friends and exploring the natural world together in this way.

This was our first walking adventure together and we are now planning for another next year.

I am glad to have the chance to share my experience with the readers of this magazine as it has helped me articulate my version of the Camino.

Thank you Keith for the suggestion!

CLOSER TO HOME

My Warwickshire Vision

by Paul Bowler, a member of Atherstone, Coleshill and Nuneaton clubs and support centres

In the bear and ragged staff county there's a small, and dynamic, charity by the name of Warwickshire Vision. It has a steadfast, dedicated mission

to improve and enhance the lives of those who have limited sight by providing practical assistance that gives independence and confidence

From dealing with everyday things such as catching the bus in the morning travelling safely from A to B reading the post, or watching TV

their knowledgeable team can help. You don't have to struggle by yourself. They can give you the tools to succeed. Even get your IT skills up to speed.

With centres like a home from home and clubs too, you're never alone. They're staffed by an army of volunteers who are always happy to lend an ear.

Everyone's welcoming and friendly. It's almost like an extended family. So if you haven't, why not pop in. You'll find a wealth of support within.

FUNDRAISING FOCUS

By Martyn Parker, Community Engagement Officer

As we look forward to 2025, we reflect on a busy year for our community fundraising efforts.

We have many people to thank for their generosity and support, including Stratford United Reformed Church; Mary Fishleigh and Stratford Oaks Golf Club; Carol, Ron and Vikki Ainsworth and Bishop's Tachbrook Sports and Social Club; Arbury Inner Wheel, Leamington and Warwick Round Table; Kenilworth, Rugby and Warwick Rotary Clubs; The Old Post Office, Warwick; and a number of individuals.

Their contribution to our work cannot be calculated in money alone and we thank them all.

Our own Graham dressed up as Father Christmas and was sponsored to attend all the Vision Support Centre Christmas parties (I'm sure the opportunity to dress up and all those mince pies added to his motivation as much as the fundraising did!)

Looking to 2025, we already have one exciting fundraiser planned.

Alex Barke from Zeiss Vision + Eyecare in Stratford will be running a 30km run on 11th May in aid of WVS.

I visited him at the shop in October and asked him why he has decided to support us. He told me:

"As a family-run optical practice in Stratford, we've had the privilege of caring for generations of patients over the past 30 years, much like Warwickshire Vision has served its community for decades. Our shared dedication to supporting those with visual impairments makes this cause especially close to our hearts."

You can support Alex's efforts using his local giving page:

<https://shorturl.at/upoRO>

or you can visit him in person at Zeiss Optical in Chapel Street, Stratford.

If you are an athlete, like Alex, or you want to support Warwickshire Vision by organising an event, please get in touch with me and I will be very happy to help.

You can email me at martyn.parker@warwickshire.vision



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.

Weekly Centres

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

Monthly Centres

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

Our Clubs

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

VisionZone 2025

Solutions for Low Vision



Would you like to find out more about assistive technology
to support your sight loss?

We will be attending numerous groups over the year with
Warwickshire Vision Support. Whether you are a familiar face, or new
to the group everyone is welcome to come along, and gain hands on
experience with products and technology.

No matter what your sight loss condition we are here for you. Whether
it's just to gain knowledge. Entry is £2, our friendly staff are ready to
greet you with a warm welcome.

Here are our first few dates and Locations, for more information on
others later in year please contact us.

5th February - 9.30 to 11.30

Rugby Baptist Church, Regent Place, Rugby, CV21 2PJ

6th February - 9.30 to 11.30

New Town Community Centre, Newton Road, Nuneaton, CV11 4HG

17th March - 10.00 to 12.00

Leamington Chandos Court, Chandos Street, CV32 4YU

0800 145 6115

www.lowvisionshop.co.uk

Follow us:



Tel: 01926 411 331

enquiries@warwickshire.vision

www.warwickshire.vision