

WARWICKSHIRE **VISION** MAGAZINE

SPRING 2025

GET SET FOR SUMMER

Practical tips for the sunny days ahead



VITAL VOLUNTEERS!

A look at the positive impact of our amazing volunteers

A NEW SERVICE FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

*The launch of our Visual
Impairment Awareness training*

WVS HAS TALENT

Who gets the 'golden buzzer'?

WELCOME

I've just reached the three-year milestone in my role as Chief Executive at Warwickshire Vision Support.

It's hard to believe how quickly the time has gone by, but that probably speaks to how busy it has been, with each day bringing something new and different!

This was my first role in the charity and not-for-profit sector, and when I first accepted the

position, I expected it to be a positive experience, marked by collaboration and a strong sense of community - a refreshing change from my previous roles in the public and private sectors.

However, the reality has been a bit different.

These past three years have turned out to be some of the most challenging of my career, as I've navigated the complexities and pressures of a sector facing significant challenges.

One of the biggest challenges for all organisations in this sector is fundraising.

That's why I'm especially grateful to everyone who has donated or supported us in other ways (you can see the list of our grant providers over the past year on the opposite page).

As I reflect on my time in this role, what stands out the most are the relationships and connections I've made.

The unwavering support and guidance from our trustees, both past and present,

have helped make this challenging role a little bit easier.

I've also been surrounded and inspired by an incredibly dedicated and talented team of individuals, both paid and volunteer, without whom we simply wouldn't be able to do everything we do.

It is witnessing or hearing about the impact the team at Warwickshire Vision has made on the lives of people living in Warwickshire with sight loss, that has made these last three years some of the most rewarding of my career.

I'm looking ahead to the next three years, I only hope they don't fly by quite so quickly!

Best wishes,

Keith

Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer



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A SPECIAL “THANK YOU”



We've been supported by various local, regional and national grant makers, with our largest grant awarded in December 2024, from the National Lottery Community Fund's 'Reaching Communities' grants programme.

We have been awarded £258,000 over 3 years, helping fund core costs and new initiatives, particularly our new work in North Warwickshire.

We'd like to thank the grant makers who supported our work in the last year:

Alcester Town Council
Coventry and District Charitable Trust
Develop Warwickshire
The David Family Foundation
Dumbreck Charity
The Forrester Family Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
The George Perkins Charitable Trust
GJW Turner Trust
The Goodenough Charitable Trust
The Grace Trust
Inclusive Communities Fund
Edgar E Lawley Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Royal Leamington Spa Town Council
Schroder Charity Trust
Soroptimist International of Rugby Charitable Trust
Warwick District Council
Warwickshire CC Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne
Warwickshire CC Councillor Andy Crump
Warwickshire CC Councillor John Holland
Warwickshire CC Councillor Tim Sinclair
Warwickshire CC Councillor Richard Spencer
The WPH Charitable Trust

Our new Training Kitchen was funded by:

Baron Davenport's Charity
The King Henry VIII Endowed Trust, Warwick
The Rowlands Trust
Screwfix Foundation
St. Mary's Hall Trust, Warwick
Warwickshire Royal Arch Freemasons
W.G. Edwards Charitable Foundation

Find The Gifts by Marian Shalloe, Support Centre Volunteer

Within every situation that stirs our
emotions,
whether positive or negative,
happiness, joy
disappointment, frustration, or
sadness
there is a precious gift waiting to be
found
It could come as a sudden realisation,
a positive feeling, a beautiful memory,
a lesson to learn, an opportunity to
grow,
a prompt to change direction, to
forgive,
to let go of something, to cherish
more,
to put our wellbeing first, to reach out
to others,
to seek out help if needed,
to appreciate family, friends,
colleagues more,
and the list goes on...
Sometimes the gift is hard to imagine
parcelled up within a challenge to
overcome.
Unwrap the layers, trust your intuition,
fully experience, and find the precious
gift,
the blessing, the jewel in all things.

BUILDING LOCAL AWARENESS

By Imke McClelland, Training Manager (Visual Impairment)

Introducing our **Visual Impairment Awareness Training**, a **brand new service** for local organisations.

All of us in the team at **Warwickshire Vision Support** are passionate about improving awareness around the challenges that people with a visual impairment face.

Part of this is supporting others to improve their knowledge and confidence around sight loss with the aim of creating a more inclusive society.

As such we are excited to have recently launched our **Visual Impairment Awareness Training**.

An hour-long taster session delivered by a qualified vision rehabilitation specialist offers bespoke advice and exercises designed to give people more confidence around working with people with sight loss.

The sessions can be tailored to suit any audience from care workers to civil engineers, retail businesses to teachers and everything in between!

We cover things such as the main causes of sight loss and how they present.

We have simulation specs for people to experience real life tasks, like filling in forms or finding a best before date.

We also talk about the importance of lighting and contrast and the use of tactile markers, as well as offering advice around using descriptive language.

We end with a sighted guide session where everyone on the course will have the opportunity to learn how to guide correctly and experience being guided themselves.



“We’re excited about the potential impact it could have on the lives of local visually impaired people”

It's all designed to give people more confidence around working with clients with sight loss and improve the level of service they can offer.

For the visually impaired people they work with, it enables them to feel more valued and respected knowing their employer/ carer/service provider has a greater understanding of their sight loss and related needs.

We recently ran a session with a group of care managers who really engaged with the practical exercises and learnt a lot from the sighted guide session.

They commented on how simple things like announcing your name when entering



a room and describing the location of food on a plate will make a big difference to some of their clients.

We also delivered a presentation to a group of graduate town planners and engineers where the focus was more about designing inclusive environments.

We talked a lot about the impact of using contrast and different textures, and of course we had a discussion on the problems of shared spaces!

We are thrilled to be able to offer this training and excited about the potential impact it could have on the lives of local visually impaired people.



If you would like to know more, please contact us on 01926 411331 or email imke.mcclelland@warwickshire.vision

WARWICKSHIRE'S GOT TALENT!

By Graham Buckingham-Underhill, ECLO / Vision Support Officer

Having a visual impairment doesn't stop some of our service users from expressing their creativity!

What is a tin whistle? It's a question I would have struggled to answer until I joined this WVS Tin Whistle Group.

A tin whistle (or Irish Whistle) is a wind instrument similar to the recorder family.

Every Thursday, after our Vision Support Centre meeting in Nuneaton, a group of our members gather round and are taught how to play tunes and understand music.

This initiative is the brainchild of one of our long time volunteers, **Andrew Harris**, who formed '**Springboard Into Music**' to give sight impaired aspiring musicians the chance to play music.

All the 'whistlers' have overcome various sight difficulties in learning the playing techniques needed.

They also had to learn when to start and finish, and how loud or quiet they need to be in order to produce music with their fellow whistlers.



It is difficult to comprehend, for those of us who can see, the hurdles that need to be overcome to play a musical instrument when one is sight impaired.

However, overcome them they do and it goes to show that disabilities do not prevent those who have the will to achieve anything that the sighted community can!

Paul's Got (many) Talents!



Paul Bowler has been visually impaired since birth but has not let this stop him from expressing his creativity!

He started writing poetry about 10 years ago and wrote a lot during lockdown. He's put together a book of his poems and intends to publish the book and donate the money to WVS.

Paul gets his ideas from things people say, the news and events, making verbal notes on his phone and developing the poems on his laptop.

He is part of the WVS Tin Whistle Group and says he really enjoys it.

Paul is also a member of the Whitacre Shantymen, a singing group made up of friends in his local pub.

by Jenny Lewington, Vision Support Officer

IT'S MOVIE MAGIC!

How The UK Cinema Association's CEA card is making a visit to the cinema more accessible.



By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

The UK Cinema Association's CEA Card scheme allows the holder to bring a companion, carer, or personal assistant for free when purchasing a ticket at participating cinemas

Eligibility:

You'll need proof of disability, such as receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or be registered as Severely Sight Impaired or Sight Impaired

To apply:

1. Gather your documents - your photo and your proof of disability (as above)
2. Visit www.ceacard.co.uk and complete the online application form.
3. Upload your photo and documents.
4. Pay the application fee of £6.00.
5. Submit the application and your card will be posted to you.

You can also download an application form and mail that with your photo ID, document and cheque or postal order.

The CEA card is valid for one year and can be easily renewed.

Cinemas around Warwickshire participating in the scheme:

Vue Cinema, Leamington Spa

Offers Audio Description (AD) on a selection of the films. Call 0345 308 4620 (local rates apply) to find out when these screenings will happen and for which films.

Cineworld, Rugby & Solihull

AD performances are available at these cinemas and guide dogs are welcome.

If you need to use a headset you may be asked to leave a credit card or other form of ID while the set is being used.

Odeon, Nuneaton & Coventry Skydome

Accessibility Helpline: 0333 015 1208

AD performances available for some films.

You can get a set of headphones at the cinema, just speak to a member of staff.

Showcase Cinema, Coventry

AD screenings are available and shown on the website or call 02476 602555 to enquire.

Everyman, Stratford upon Avon

AD performances are available, and you can book tickets using a CEA Card online, at the venue box office, or by calling them on 01233 555642.

You can also search on the website www.accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk to find days and times for AD screenings at your local cinema.

The CEA Card scheme is a valuable resource for visually impaired individuals to enjoy cinema outings with the support needed (by bringing a companion for free).

It can make the whole experience much more inclusive and enjoyable.

MAKING A REAL IMPACT

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

A closer look at the vital contribution our **volunteers** make and how you could join them.

Warwickshire Vision Support relies on the kindness and generosity of volunteers to provide our essential services.

With approximately 150 volunteers already making a difference, we are now reaching out to the community for more helping hands to join our team.

You can help us by encouraging your friends and family to volunteer with Warwickshire Vision Support.

Support Centres

Volunteers play a crucial role in the smooth operation of Vision Support Centres, where they provide essential services and support to members.

Whether it's offering a listening ear, helping with daily tasks, or simply being a friendly presence, their contribution is invaluable.

Current priority areas needing volunteers: Rugby and Bedworth

Social Clubs

Club Leaders and Helpers help organise and run social clubs, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for visually impaired

individuals to socialise and enjoy recreational activities.

Their enthusiasm and dedication bring smiles and laughter to many faces.

Current priority areas needing club leaders: Southam, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth, Coleshill, Bedworth, Nuneaton

Current priority areas needing club helpers: Southam, Leamington Spa, Coleshill

Behind the Wheel

For those who enjoy driving, Driver Volunteers provide transportation for those unable to use public transport or walk to and from social clubs and support centres.

This ensures the passengers have access to the support and social interactions they need.

A volunteers' willingness to drive opens up a world of opportunities for someone who might otherwise be isolated.

Current priority areas needing driver volunteers: all areas



Getting Technical

If you know someone with a knack for technology, IT Volunteers working with clients using mobile phones and tablets help visually impaired individuals navigate the digital world.

This is mostly by adjusting settings and downloading useful apps and this empowers people with visual impairment to stay connected with loved ones and access important information.

Our IT volunteers' patience and expertise make a significant difference in daily lives.

Priority areas: Rugby, Nuneaton, Coleshill, Bedworth, Atherstone

Staying Connected

Lastly, Befrienders provide companionship and support through regular telephone calls or home visits.

This role is perfect for those who enjoy chatting and building relationships.

Telephone befrienders: a simple phone call can brighten someone's day and provide much-needed emotional support.

Home Visiting befrienders: visiting someone at home to provide much needed assistance with reading correspondence, checking use-by dates of food or simply enjoying a cuppa and a chat.

Priority areas for befriending volunteers: all areas

Events

We are looking to build a team of volunteers who will help us at events, often outdoor, raising our profile and sharing information about our work.

Martyn Parker has more on this in Fundraising Focus over the following pages.



We value diversity and welcome volunteers from all backgrounds.

We provide training, including safeguarding, to ensure volunteers are well-prepared for their roles and all volunteers are required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and give two references.

Volunteering with us is not just about giving time - it's about making a meaningful impact on the lives of visually impaired individuals.

If your friends or family can spare a few hours a month or more, their contribution will be much appreciated.

By spreading the word and encouraging others to volunteer, you can help create a supportive community dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for visually impaired people across Warwickshire.

Together, we can make a difference, one volunteer at a time.

For more information or to apply, call 01926 411331, or visit our website by scanning this QR code or email enquiries@warwickshire.vision,



GETTING SET FOR SUMMER

By Imke McClelland, Training Manager (Visual Impairment)

It's hard to believe that we're almost half way through the year already, and with that comes the advent of longer days and warmer weather.

Here are some of our top tips for preparing and making the most of the season.

Protection from the Sun

For many people with a visual impairment the extra light can be really beneficial, but for others, glare can be a real problem and actually make getting out and about a bit harder.

Our vision support centres as well as our Rehab team have a varied selection of different UV shields to help reduce glare and enhance definition.

These specially designed lenses block out varying degrees of light from all angles and come in many different shades and styles depending on how your eye condition affects you.



Protecting our skin from UV damage is just as important as our eyes.

If you have different strengths of sun cream, try placing an elastic band around one to differentiate it from another.

If you're worried about not rubbing it all in correctly, perhaps try a spray instead.

Entertaining

Perhaps by now you're digging out the BBQ hoping for a nice dry day to invite your friends over. If so, organisation is key.

We all know that having different zones for cooked and raw meat is very important.

You could also consider using a talking meat thermometer or a timer on your phone if you want to be sure everything is cooked through.

Heat resistant gloves can also be helpful to prevent any accidental burns.

Generally speaking a gas grill is easier to use than charcoal as you can set the controls using the knobs (these can be marked up with bumpons to help you select the correct temperature).

If it's your first time you could practice flipping food on a cool grill to build your confidence.

Using plain contrasting plates and cutlery can be helpful too, not ones that will blend into the tablecloth!



Getting the Garden Ready

You may have already started pottering in your garden, perhaps planting seeds and mowing the lawn?

There's still plenty of time to think about ways to make life a little bit easier if you feel your sight is holding you back.

Sometimes planting seeds can be tricky, especially if they are very small.

Using seed tape can make this task a little easier or perhaps mixing the seeds with a little silver sand to help them stand out a little.

You could consider buying plug plants to pop straight into the ground avoiding the need for seeds.

When you're thinking about what to grow consider planting things that will contrast against each other, perhaps with different textures and smells to help you identify them.

It can be helpful to label where you have planted, although you may not be able to read the label it helps to identify where the plants are - as opposed to weeds!

Raised beds can often be more accessible, these could be painted in different colours.

You could also paint the edges of paths and steps to make them stand out.

Another tip to help with orientation could be the use of water features or wind chimes.

Following the sound can be useful when navigating the garden.

And finally... mowing the lawn.

Placing a brightly coloured object at end of each row can help with keeping in a straight line, just move it across a step each time.

Or you could try using a radio and following the sound.

Some people are even able to use the position of the sun!



And don't forget to lift the cord out of the way at regular intervals!

If these tips have piqued your interest and you'd like to know more there's lots of useful information on **thrive.org.uk**

This is a gardening charity that supports people with varying needs to enjoy the benefits of horticulture.

Alternatively, give us a call on 01926 411 331 and chat to one of our rehab team.

KEEPING YOUR IDENTITY SAFE

By Ed Hodson, Citizens Advice

Identity theft is unfortunately all too common these days so here's what you need to know.

What is identity theft?

Identity theft happens when fraudsters access enough information about your identity to be able to assume that identity in formal actions, whereas **identity fraud** is the use of that stolen identity in criminal activity (e.g. buying goods by deception).

Spotting efforts to steal your identity

The Information Commissioner's Office (**ICO**) has identified a number of signs to look out for to spot efforts to steal your identity such as:

- Items that you don't recognise appearing on your bank or credit card statements.
- applying for state benefits, but being told you are already claiming.
- receiving bills or receipts for goods or services you haven't asked for.

Protecting yourself from ID theft.

The ICO also provides advice on steps to follow to significantly lower the risk of falling prey to ID Theft such as:

- Storing documents carrying personal information in a safe and secure place.
- Destroying old documents so that nothing showing your name, address or other personal details can be stolen.
- Monitoring your credit card and bank statements for suspicious activity.



What to do if you're a victim of ID Theft

The most important thing is to act quickly to minimise any financial losses.

Call **Crimestoppers** on **0800 555 111** immediately and take their advice.

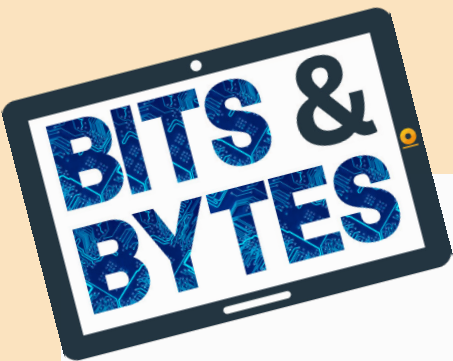
You will also find a checklist of actions laid out by the ICO on their website below.

Learn more:

As well as the ICO website, you can also learn more about ID theft on the **Which** website at <https://shorturl.at/g8XPP>



For more in-depth advice about ID theft, visit the ICO website by scanning the QR code



By Ruth Okey, Technology Officer

Ruth Okey shares some advice so you don't get locked out of your device or email.

To make things difficult for fraudsters, manufacturers are continually improving security measures for smart phones, tablets and laptops.

However, if you're not careful you could get locked out of the device, requiring you to reset and wipe your data to gain access again.

Smart devices have a user account associated with them so ensure that you have set up the user name, generally an email address, with a strong password.

Check that a separate recovery email address and phone number have been configured in the device settings.

You may need to use a family members email or mobile number if you don't have access to a second device.

Make sure that you keep this recovery information up to date.

Apple Devices have an Apple Account, formally Apple ID, this can be any email account.

Android Devices use a Google account, which can be a gmail account or any other email address.

Windows PCs / Laptops use a Microsoft account.

This user account is used to share data between your devices and to access services from Google, Apple or Microsoft.

Similarly, you should configure separate recovery email and phone numbers on your **email services**.

Passwords are needed to access all kinds of applications and services like email, BBC iPlayer, RNIB Talking Books, banking, on-line shopping apps etc.

Best practice is to not use the same password for everything, so set up unique ones for shopping and banking where your data needs to be secure.

Top tips:

Use a mixture of lower and uppercase letters and numbers, perhaps like:

The first letter of each word of a sentence relating to the app.

E.g. "I loved shopping for a new dress for my son's wedding 6" becomes "Ilsfandfmsw6".

Combine significant date and information together but not something that is widely known (e.g. a birthday).

E.g. Fred married in 1973 and honeymooned on the Isle of White becomes "Fred1973IoW"

Password Managers can be used to store your passwords, but it might also be wise to keep an up-to-date list in a secure location, just in case.

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.

FUNDRAISING FOCUS

By Martyn Parker, Community Engagement Officer

One of the best ways of raising a charity's profile is to attend community events, like fetes and carnivals or to organise shop collections, quizzes or other fun activities.

You may remember that we were present at Leamington's **Art in the Park** festival last year which was attended by several thousand people over the weekend - and we'll be there again later this year!

We'd love to do more of these sorts of events, especially in areas of the county where we would like to make more people aware of the charity.

To that end, we're creating a team of **Event Volunteers** to help us and we're looking for trustees, staff, volunteers, corporate partners and other supporters to join us.

It's great fun and you would be raising the profile of the charity and helping us to generate much needed funds to support our work.



There is also absolutely no commitment with this - if you put your name forward to be part of our events team, we will contact you as and when we have events booked, to see if you would be available.

On the fundraising front, we are grateful to the people behind **Village Voices Choir**, who have nominated Warwickshire Vision as their 'Charity of the Year' and will be supporting us through their concerts in April, July and December (look out for details on our social media).

Also, good luck and 'thank you' again, to **Alex Barke** from **Zeiss Vision** in Stratford, for his 30Km run on 11th May, in support of our charity.

You can still sponsor Alex through Localgiving at <https://shorturl.at/aALs3> (the page will be open until the end of the year).

We would also like to thank the team at **The Old Post Office** in Warwick for their unwavering support with fundraising.

The bi-monthly quiz at the Old Post Office has raised a fantastic £1,259 over the last year so a huge thanks to Tim, Rachel, and everyone at the pub.

If you'd like to join our Event Team, or come along to one of our events, or if you have any fundraising ideas, or would simply like to help out in anyway, please contact Martyn at martyn.parker@warwickshire.vision or call the office on 01926 411 331

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 £2 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 4:00pm

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.

Friday 9th May – 10.00 to 12.00

Senior Citizens Club, Abbey End, Kenilworth, CV8 1QJ

Tuesday 13th May – 10.00 to 11.30

Tyler House, Tyler Street, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 6TY

Tuesday 3rd June – 14.15 to 16.15

Wattons Lodge, Wattons Lane, Southam, CV47 0HX

Tuesday 15th July – 14.15 to 16.15

Malt Mill Community Centre, Malt Mill Lane, B49 5QR

Tuesday 26th August – 14.15 to 16.15

Stour Court, Old Road, Shipston, CV36 4HE

0800 145 6115

www.lowvisionshop.co.uk

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enquiries@warwickshire.vision

www.warwickshire.vision