

The background of the magazine cover is a photograph of a stone church with a large Gothic window, partially obscured by a tree with pink blossoms. In the foreground, there is a field of purple crocuses. The title 'WARWICKSHIRE VISION MAGAZINE' is overlaid on a dark blue rounded rectangle at the top. 'WARWICKSHIRE' is in white, 'VISION' is in white with a yellow circle around the 'O', and 'MAGAZINE' is in white. A vertical orange bar on the right side contains the text 'SPRING 2026'. Three orange callout boxes with white text are positioned over the image, each containing a headline and a short paragraph.

WARWICKSHIRE VISION MAGAZINE

SPRING 2026

FROM 'CALL THE MIDWIFE' TO WVS

Service User, Julia Curry shares her fascinating story.

MUSIC PLEASE, MAESTRO!

Our Music Vision sessions proved to be a huge hit.

BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE

How we helped Warwick Castle create their multi-sensory tour.

WELCOME

April marks four years since my appointment to the Chief Executive role at Warwickshire Vision, a moment to reflect on how far we have come together as a charity here in Warwickshire.

Over this time, we have made some significant changes to strengthen both what we do and how we do it.

We were delighted to be awarded the contract to provide rehabilitation services on behalf of Warwickshire County Council, and we have consistently provided response times and levels of support that are among the best in the country.

At the same time, we have strengthened our Eye Clinic Liaison team and continued to grow the number of vision support centres, clubs and other services across the county.



One of the most significant achievements has been relocating to our new head office in Market Place in Warwick.

Following a major refurbishment, we now have a welcoming, modern space that includes a dedicated function room.

This is already making a real difference, hosting a new support centre and social sessions, while also opening our doors to other charities and community groups.

Alongside this, we have refreshed our identity with a rebrand, a new website, and a redesign of our use of social media, helping us better reflect who we are today and how we want to connect with you and Warwickshire communities.

Whilst we have made pleasing progress, there is much more to be done, and looking ahead, our Trustees are now shaping a vision for 2030 and setting our direction for the next four years.



SPRING HAS ARRIVED

By Marian Shalloe, Support Centre Volunteer

You can feel it
 anticipation, transition
 then distinct arrival
 the breeze welcome now
 sunshine, softer warmer air
 brushes your cheek
 a silent golden touch
 You can hear it
 a definite awakening
 birdsong fills the morning
 marks the changing days
 You can smell it
 freshness, scent. aroma
 stretching trees and leaves
 buds unfurl, plants grow
 Spring asserts its presence
 rain drops as applause
 You can sense it
 the zing of spring
 life and light returns
 confidently, beautifully
 nature breathing out
 within and all around
 enjoy the season

Your voice is vital in this process.

In what are challenging times for all charities, it is more important than ever that we listen, learn, and respond to the needs of our community.

Our Chair, Louise Wallis, will be visiting support centres and other venues in the coming months to hear directly from you.

You will find more details in this magazine about how to get involved.

Thank you, as always, for being part of our journey.

Keith

Keith Eales
Chief Executive Officer

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IN THE GROOVE AT OUR MUSIC VISION SESSIONS

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

Our inaugural Music Vision sessions were a real hit by encouraging creativity in a fun, inclusive atmosphere.

Back in October 2025 we launched a series of unique music workshops for the first time.

Held in our Warwick head office and running through til February, these sessions were designed to be friendly, fun, and fully accessible.



The workshops created an atmosphere where creativity flourished and spirits were lifted through music.

The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the sessions as

uplifting, confidence-boosting, and wonderfully inclusive.

Led by Expert Music Teacher, Mendi Singh

At the heart of the programme was expert musician, Mendi Singh, whose warm teaching style and deep musical knowledge set the tone for each session.

His approach encouraged everyone (regardless of musical background) to explore rhythm, sound, and expression in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Participants experimented with creating rhythms using everyday household

objects such as mugs, egg boxes, pots and pans, discovering just how much music can be made from the simplest items.

This hands-on, playful approach helped people feel comfortable, engaged, and eager to join in.

A Line-Up of Exceptional Guest Musicians

One of the most exciting aspects of the Music Vision Room was the inclusion of guest artists from across the UK, representing a rich variety of musical traditions.

Attendees had the chance to experience Indian classical music, Scottish fiddle, Jazz piano, Chinese flute and a Singer-songwriter performance.

These guest musicians brought a vibrant mix of sounds and styles, offering participants the chance to listen, learn, and even join in with rhythms inspired by music from around the world.

Their performances were consistently praised for being deeply enjoyable.





A Warmly Received Experience

Feedback from attendees made it clear just how meaningful these sessions were.

Many expressed how refreshing it felt to be part of an activity that was both creative and fully inclusive.

Volunteers and staff also noted how quickly participants bonded and how enthusiastically they engaged with each activity.

My personal favourite session was when Mendi was exploring rhythms with the participants by playing his Tabla.

From seemingly nowhere, one lady spontaneously burst into song and the whole room joined in - a wonderful moment which I will remember fondly.

Capturing the Moment: Recorded Music for Participants

Adding to the excitement, all guest artists recorded music for participants to keep, a much-appreciated bonus that allowed

attendees to revisit the experience long after the sessions ended.

Mendi was also able to record each participant playing their own rhythms to some of these recorded clips.

Looking Ahead

The success of the Music Vision Room sessions has sparked enthusiasm for future workshops and musical events.

For everyone who attended, the Music Vision Room was more than a workshop - it was a joyful reminder of the power of music to educate, bring people together, inspire creativity, and brighten everyday life.



We will be supporting Mendi with his application to the Arts Council which, if successful, will allow us to offer a 'Global Vision Beats' series of workshops in Nuneaton.

We are aiming for September / October 2026. If you would like to be added to the list of people who would be interested in these sessions, please either email enquiries@warwickshire.vision or call 01926 411331.



BRINGING OUR PAST TO LIFE

By Imke McClelland, Training Manager (Visual Impairment)

Few landmarks capture the imagination quite like Warwick Castle. With its towering walls, dramatic exhibitions and rich history, it's long been one of the region's most popular attractions.

But recently, the castle has been working on something new - an accessible multimedia guide designed to ensure that visitors of all abilities can fully experience its stories.

We were delighted to be invited to take part in shaping this exciting project.

Testing the Tour

A few weeks ago, the first drafts of the guide's script arrived, and a group of visually impaired volunteers eagerly set to work.

With careful attention, they reviewed the text line by line, offering valuable insights and practical suggestions to help make the guide as clear and engaging as possible.

Once the feedback stage was complete, it was time for the real test... taking the tour into the castle itself.

Accompanied by the guide's scriptwriter, Wendy, volunteers walked the route while listening to the narration and checking how well the directions worked in the real environment.



More Than Listening

From the moment the tour began, Wendy's vivid storytelling proved its worth.

Her descriptive dialogue painted rich pictures of the castle's surroundings, helping visitors imagine every detail of the historic rooms and displays.

The tour also goes beyond listening. Along the route there are opportunities to touch - and even smell - elements of the experience, making the visit far more immersive and memorable.

These sensory moments transformed the tour into something truly inclusive and entertaining.



Accessibility in Action

Volunteers also played an important practical role. As they followed the route, they checked that directions were easy to understand and that any potential hazards, such as steps or uneven surfaces, were clearly explained in the narration. These details are vital for ensuring visitors can explore the castle confidently and safely.

A Journey Through History

The tour takes visitors through three of the castle's most fascinating exhibitions, the Royal Wedding Party, the State Rooms and the Kingmaker.

Altogether, the experience lasts around two hours, offering a richly detailed journey through centuries of history.

With the script now refined, the next step will be recording the final audio guide. Our volunteers are already looking forward to returning to Warwick Castle to test the finished version - this time with headsets in hand.

If the trial run is anything to go by, the result will be an engaging and accessible way for everyone to discover the castle's remarkable past.



SHAPING OUR FUTURE

By Keith Eales, CEO

As our charity continues to grow and evolve, we are looking to strengthen our Board of Trustees by welcoming new members who are passionate about making a difference.

Being a trustee is a rewarding opportunity to play a vital role in shaping the future direction of the organisation. Trustees ensure we remain sustainable, effective, and focused on delivering the greatest possible impact for people living with sight loss across Warwickshire.

We are particularly keen to hear from individuals with lived experience of sight loss. Your insight can help ensure that the voices of those we support remain at the heart of everything we do.

In addition, we would welcome people who can bring professional experience or expertise in areas such as finance, human resources, and business development. However, just as important as specific skills is a commitment to our values, a willingness to contribute, and a desire to support our community.

You do not need previous trustee experience, just the enthusiasm to get involved, ask questions, and help guide our work in what are increasingly challenging times for the charity sector.

If you have ever thought about using your experience in a meaningful way, or helping to shape the future of a local charity, we would love to hear from you.

Please express your interest by contacting us directly on 01926 411 331 or emailing enquiries@warwickshire.vision

JULIA'S JOURNEY

By Warwickshire Vision Support Team

Service user, Julia Curry recently shared some stories from her fascinating journey so far, from her 'Call The Midwife' style career, to discovering Buddhism.

Julia's story begins in wartime Oxford, where she was sent as a baby to live with her grandparents while her father worked on the railways.

Caring ran in the family as her mother was a nurse, and Julia always assumed she would follow the same path.

As a young woman, she won a coveted place at Middlesex Hospital in London, one of the most respected nursing schools of its day.

Training there in the 1950s was a world filled with discipline and standards.

Hair had to be cut to a regulation length, uniforms were precisely pressed, starched caps and collars were "so stiff they left marks on your neck" and heavy lace-up shoes were compulsory.

Life off the ward was just as controlled as trainee nurses lived in a home with a 10pm strict curfew.

In return, the hospital made sure nurses ate properly, with set mealtimes and hot, substantial food to keep them going through long shifts.

In total, Julia spent five years training before qualifying as a midwife from a major London hospital, but it was community midwifery that really captured her heart.

Her recollections of that time often resemble scenes from the TV show, "Call The Midwife".

As a pupil she went everywhere on a bicycle, including middle-of-the-night call-outs, and once fully qualified, she graduated to a car (first a steady old Morris Minor, later a little Mini she remembers with real affection).

Most families didn't have a telephone, so if help was needed urgently, a husband might have to run to the nearest phone box at the end of the road to ring the midwife or hospital.

There was a special "flying squad" ambulance service with doctors and equipment ready for emergencies, but everything started with that dash to find a phone!





What stays with her most from that period is the closeness between midwives and families.

She and her colleagues met women early in pregnancy, saw them regularly, ran evening classes for expectant parents and were then present in the home when babies were born.

Discovering Buddhism

In her early sixties she did something that many wouldn't - she went to university.

At Bath Spa she studied religions and creative writing, gained a first-class degree and wrote the opening chapter of a memoir about her life.

A stay at a Buddhist monastery in Northumberland proved particularly powerful, and she later lived nearby in a small cottage, attending regular teachings and absorbing a way of life that emphasised compassion and looking after yourself so you can look after others.

Julia's experience of sight loss

More recently, Julia has developed macular degeneration, which affects her central vision. She says many people misunderstand the condition.

"They imagine blindness as total darkness, like you've got your eyes shut", but her experience is different.

She explains, "I can see the whole of a room, yet if I looks straight at something, I can't see it".

Faces are particularly hard, so she relies on people's voices, mannerisms and the general outline of their hair and build to recognise them.

Warwickshire Vision Support

As her sight changed, she was introduced to Warwickshire Vision and now regularly goes to the Social Clubs and Vision Support Centres.

There, she found guidance and support - down to things like setting up accessible technology such as an Alexa so she can listen to the charity's audio magazine.

Julia loves the variety of the sessions, saying "you have no idea what you're going to get each week and I absolutely love that."

For Julia, Warwickshire Vision feels both like a community and, as she puts it, "a family as well".

After a lifetime of caring for others, she has found a new kind of support network around her, one that helps her stay informed, independent and connected, while still living by the values of compassion and service that have shaped her whole life.

SHAPING OUR VISION FOR 2030

By Keith Eales, Chief Executive Officer

Your voice matters as we shape our vision for the future.

Our Board of Trustees has begun an important piece of work to shape the future of our charity developing a clear vision for 2030 and setting priorities for the next four to five years.

This is an exciting opportunity to build on our strengths, respond to changing needs, and ensure we continue to make a meaningful difference for people living with sight loss across Warwickshire.

A number of key themes are already emerging.

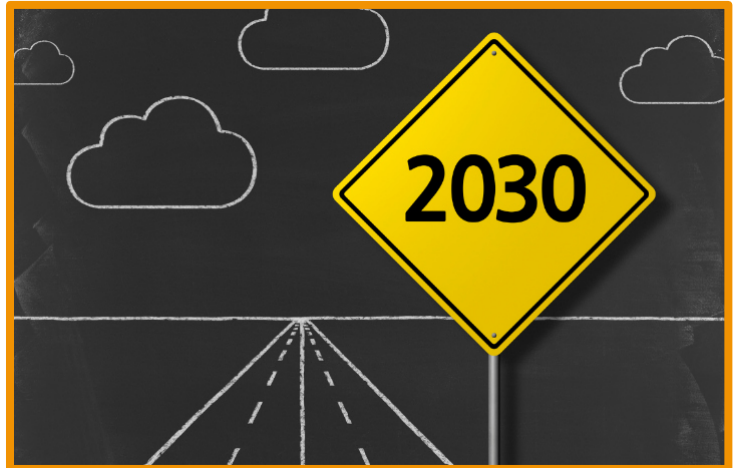
We know there is a need to expand our reach, particularly in the north of the county where access to services and awareness of support remains lower.

We are exploring options to establish a stronger local presence, alongside improving transport and outreach to reduce barriers faced by those in more rural communities.

We also want to connect with more people who are living with sight loss and who are not yet engaged with our services.

This includes strengthening our communication, reaching more diverse communities, and developing services that better reflect the needs of younger and working-age people.

Tackling loneliness and isolation remains a priority, with a focus on expanding befriending and peer support. At the same time, we are looking to build on our



strengths in technology and innovation, while continuing to raise our profile, attract new volunteers, and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Underpinning all of this is a commitment to strong governance, a diverse and representative Board, and a resilient organisation that can adapt to future challenges.

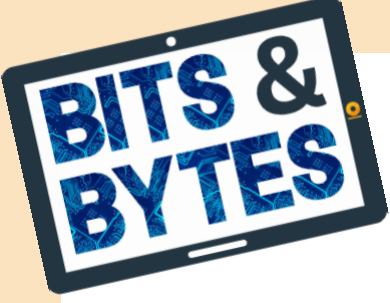
However, shaping and prioritising what we do must be determined by the people who matter most - you.

Over the coming months, Louise Wallis, our Chair of Trustees, will be visiting vision support centres and other venues to listen and gather your views.

Dates and venues will be communicated separately.

In the meantime, if you have ideas or feedback, we would love to hear from you.

Contact the office on 01926 411 331 or email enquiries@warwickshire.vision.



By Ruth Okey,
Technology Officer

IT4U is a one to one support service at Vision Support Centres to assist you with your mobile technology.

This includes helping you to install apps, adjust settings (to make the text bigger, brighter and easier to see), showing new features (like reading text aloud, magnify screens, voice typing or dictation) as well as teaching screen readers (Voiceover or Talkback) for people with little or no sight.

We offer a “try before you buy service” with the following equipment available for demonstration and discussion:

Synapptic Mobile / Tablet: Android devices with large menu software that guides you through many features of a smart phone.

RealSAM Mobile: Voice-controlled smart phone primarily for calls and texts but entertainment features available on some models.

BlindShell Classic 2 and 3: Voice controlled, tactile button mobile designed for visually impaired users.

Easology Smartphone: Samsung smart phone with simpler layout and larger text.

As well as: Apple iPhone and iPad, Android Mobile, Alexa Smart Speaker, Synapptic Smart Watch, Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses, Doro Feature mobile phones.

We’ve received grants for this equipment and the items were chosen as a good range of devices for service users’ needs.

DESCRIPTIVE TV

By Alex Khote

Audio Description is a feature that narrates visual elements that sighted viewers take for granted.

Audio Description offers concise narration of key visual details such as actions, facial expressions, scene changes and on-screen text during natural pauses in dialogue. This helps viewers build a richer mental picture of what’s happening on screen, making TV shows clearer and more enjoyable.

Audio Description is available on most TV platforms, including Freeview, Sky, Virgin Media, Freesat and YouView.

Viewers can usually activate it from their remote control or within the accessibility settings menu: many remotes have a dedicated “AD” button, and programmes that support it are often marked with an Audio Description icon in on-screen guides.

It’s worth noting that Audio Description isn’t automatically provided on every channel or every show - each channel determines its availability.

That’s why you might only see the “AD” label on some programme listings.

However, when it is available, it can increase your understanding of what you’re watching and immerse you more fully into the show.

Join one of our IT drop-in sessions!
Held at our Vision Support Centres from
9:30am to 11:00am
Rugby 13th May, 3rd June, 1st July
Nuneaton 14th May, 4th June, 3rd July

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.

TRAINING THAT GIVES A NEW PERSPECTIVE

By Warwickshire Vision Support Team

When it comes to sighted guiding, there's no substitute for experiencing it for yourself, as our team recently discovered.

The WVS team recently swapped the office for the streets of Warwick, gathering outside Shire Hall for a morning of sighted guiding training.

It was a practical, hands-on session - and one that left a lasting impression on everyone who took part.

Sighted guiding is a technique that allows a person with sight loss to move safely and confidently alongside a sighted guide, using a simple but specific hold and a set of clear, practised movements.

Reading about a technique and practising it are important - but these sessions added a whole new perspective - our team members took turns in both roles: as the guide, and as the person being guided.

For those experiencing the guided role, the effect was immediate.

Relying entirely on another person's judgement, trusting their awareness of steps, kerbs, narrow gaps and oncoming pedestrians changes everything.

A familiar environment suddenly feels very different, and it shifts your perspective in a way that no amount of reading or instruction can fully replicate.

Warwick town centre, busy and full of the everyday obstacles most of us barely notice, became a genuine challenge.

Uneven paving, parked vehicles, crowded pavements, the noise and movement of a working high street - all of it takes on a new significance when you are not able to see it for yourself.

That experience sits at the heart of why we run this training.

Understanding something intellectually is valuable but understanding it through lived experience is something more.

For our team, spending even a short time in that position builds an empathy and awareness that directly improves the quality of support we can offer to those living with sight loss.



OUR NEW WALKING BEFRIENDER SERVICE

By Rebecca Bourton, Community Services Manager

We're excited to confirm a new service that was directly introduced from community feedback.



Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more active, lose weight and become healthier.

We know that our rehabilitation team can support and train people to use a variety of canes to walk safely and so we thought about what some of the other barriers to walking may be for people with sight loss.

On speaking to our club members and support centre attendees, similar reasons were mentioned.

These were; transport to a safe walking route like a park, being unfamiliar with new surroundings, feeling vulnerable or lacking confidence and not having anyone to talk to.

The World Health Organisation states, "Social connection can protect health across the lifespan. It can reduce inflammation, lower the risk of serious health problems, and improve mental health."

We thought about how we could connect walking and social connection and "bingo!" ...

The Walking Befriender service was born.

We are currently in the process of recruiting and training volunteers so that they can be sighted guides and companions on regular walks.

Whether that is to the local park, cafe, shops or any other place of interest is for you to agree with your volunteer.

We are hopeful that with the nicer weather and longer days approaching, this is a service that will prove popular.

We respectfully ask that you don't use your volunteer to help with your weekly supermarket shop, please reserve this time for 'walking and talking'.

We ask our volunteers not to lift and not to help with making any payments, so they will not touch your money or payment cards.

If you are excited to be able to try out new walks in the fresh air with a volunteer by your side, please do get in touch by calling **01926 411331** or email **enquiries@warwickshire.vision**

We will add you to our waiting list, ready for when we have a suitable and available volunteer in your area.

KEEP ON MOVING!

By Rebecca Bourton & Warwickshire Vision Support Team

This edition, we have some interesting options for you to get active in both **Heathcote** and **Rugby**.

Hot on the heels of the Winter Olympics, Warwickshire Vision have booked a couple of trial sessions in May to provide opportunity to try curling.

We have booked an initial set of sessions for both evening and daytime in May.

The good news is we can confirm there will be no ice involved, and the sport can be played seated if required.

It is an opportunity to move, try something new, make friends and have fun along the way.

We will be learning alongside you as this is a new activity for staff and volunteers.

Daytime Curling Club:

Tue 19/05/2026 11:45am to 12:45pm

Evening Curling Club:

Wed 13/05/2026 6:00pm to 7:00pm

Both sessions will be held at the Heathcote Community Centre, Cressida Close, Heathcote, Warwick, CV34 6DZ.

Come and give it a try!



Rugby Sport for the Disabled is a well-established charity offering inclusive sessions aiming to make sport accessible, enjoyable and supportive for all.

Sessions take place at **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Centre in Rugby**, with a variety of activities available:

Regular sessions include:

Main Hall - Sunday, 2pm to 4pm

Archery/Crossbow - Wednesday, 1pm to 3pm

Swimming - Tuesday and Thursday (Studio Pool) 3pm to 3.50pm, and Sunday (Main Pool) 2pm to 2.50pm

Sessions are organised to suit different abilities, with participants encouraged to take part at their own pace. Carers and family members are welcome too.

Find out more by visiting www.rugbysda.org.uk or by scanning the QR code with your mobile phone:



WHEN AND WHERE

Come and join us!

We have guest speakers, equipment demos and they're a chance to build friendships and find support.

Sessions cost only £2 (and we provide the tea, coffee and biscuits!)

Our Clubs are also a great way to socialise and make friendships

Please contact us on 01926 411 331 for more details on any of the Support Centre or Clubs closest to you, including the latest programme of events.

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

Monthly Centres

Southam	St Wulstan Court, Daventry Road, Southam, CV47 1RT	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 Methodist Church, Priory Rd, CV8 1SB	2 nd Tuesday of month	2:00 to 4:00pm
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	4 th 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
Warwick	14 Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4SL	1 st Thursday of month	1:30 to 3:30pm
Warwick (support drop-in)	14 Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4SL	3 rd Thursday of month	1:30 to 3:00pm

Our Clubs

Atherstone	Every other Wednesday	10:30am - 1:30pm
Bedworth	3 rd Friday of month	9:30am - 11:30am
Kenilworth	4 th Tuesday of month	2pm - 4pm
Leamington Spa	1 st 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
Warwick	2 nd Wednesday of month	10am - 12pm



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