



MyVision Oxfordshire

Supporting Visually Impaired People

Spring 2024



**for helping us reach £7,018
in our Winter Appeal!**

MyVision Oxfordshire

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Upcoming Events

Museums and Touch Tours

- **Weston Library Chaucer Exhibit:** 14th March
- **Pitt Rivers Exhibit on Disability Throughout History:** 18th April
- **Museum of Natural History Water Exhibit:** 16th May

ActivEyes Events

- **ActivEyes Pub Social:** 21st March, 18th April, 16th May
- **Visually Impaired Tennis:** 28th March, 25th April, 23rd May
- **CyclAbility Cycling (formerly Wheels for All Cycling):** Tuesdays and Fridays

In the Community

- **Oxford Volunteer Fair:** 20th March
- **Faringdon Audio Described Cinema:** 27th March
- **'Sound Walk' at The North Wall Arts Centre:** 3rd April
- **Tandem Cycling Challenge:** 9th April
- **Blind Chess Club:** Dates to be Announced, Contact for Details
- **Didcot Technology Open Day:** 10th April
- **Bicester Get Connected Session:** 11th April

At Bradbury Lodge

- **Glaucoma Support Group:** 13th March
- **Braille Info Session:** 8th April
- **Optelec Open Day:** 15th May

For our social group schedule go to page 15 of the newsletter.

A message from Mark, our CEO

It's almost Spring – hoorah! I don't know about you, but winter always seems to drag; it's nice now the evenings are getting lighter and the days warmer!

Some of you may be aware, in the autumn my wife and I welcomed our second little baby boy to the family! Yes, it's very tiring but also, we're enjoying all the cuddles and watching him grow.

Adding to our family pushed us to do that one thing we'd been putting off for so long – writing our will. It's always a very difficult thing to talk about, but it is extremely important that our wishes are upheld if anything was to happen to us. We took the opportunity to use MyVision's free will writing service through Bequeathed. It was simple and straightforward and they helped us through all the jargon! I would highly recommend taking advantage of this, you can find out more on page 10.

This newsletter is packed full of interesting things happening, please do get involved. We're also making some changes to our membership and would love to have you join us – we're stronger together!

Thank you for all your continued support and encouragement. Our winter appeal was a whopping success, raising £7,018, enabling us to continue to reach out and grow our support for visually impaired people – you're all amazing!

Mark



Become a Member – Join our Mission!



With only 8% of our funds coming from local authority and government grants it's vital we have the support of our community. Our service delivery has increased over recent years and we're pleased to be able to offer more across the county – but this comes at a cost. Becoming a member not only ensures a source of income and support for MyVision but it also strengthens our voice when campaigning and speaking up for blind and visually impaired people. We are in this together and membership creates a much stronger voice!

Our membership is now £20 for the year. We also offer a lifetime membership which is £250 one-off.

As well as supporting the organisation you will receive an annual member's update outlining the work we've been doing. You'll also be invited to exclusive members events within your local community, and you'll get to have your say at our AGM and help us develop our strategic direction.

“I received so much support from MyVision I wanted to join and be a part of the organisation” - Barbara

Becoming a member will directly help us support visually impaired people to live independent and active lives across the county.

For more information and the application form please see the enclosed flyer or visit:

MyVision.org.uk/support-us/become-a-member

Thank you!



Thank You for Helping Us Raise £7,018 in our Winter Appeal!

In November we launched our Winter Fundraising Challenge. Some anonymous individuals and two companies (Technique Web and Blue Planet) collectively pledged to provide a match funding pot of £3,000 which would be released if our supporters raised a further £3,000.

We're so excited to let you know that you absolutely smashed the total target of £6,000. You raised an incredible £4,018 which, along with the £3,000 match funding, brings us to a huge £7,018.

We cannot tell you how much your generosity means to us, and what a huge difference your donations will make to the lives of blind and visually impaired people across Oxfordshire. Your kindness means we can continue to provide services and support for people across the county, and it really will transform people's lives.

If you're interested in hearing more about fundraising please visit: MyVision.org.uk/fundraise/

We want to hear from you!

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Your feedback is so important to us as it gives us a much better understanding of your needs and preferences. By listening to your thoughts we can identify our strengths and weaknesses and decide the best directions for our organisation. Our Community Engagement and Get Connected projects both came about after listening to you in a 2021 survey.

We're happy to hear your thoughts and comments any time, but we'd love it if you could complete one of our feedback forms today. You can access this via the QR code or contact us on 01865 725 595 and we can help you complete the form over the phone.



Claire: Making New Connections and Gaining New Experiences

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In January 2021 Claire went for a routine eye test. Her optician noticed that she had a cataract growing and referred her to the Eye Hospital, however, her referral was delayed by nearly a year due to the pandemic.

When she received her diagnosis of Angle Closure Glaucoma, the disease was already at an advanced stage in her right eye. "I have very little peripheral vision, some central vision loss in my left eye, but I can still see, and see enough to sew because my central vision is still pretty good in my left eye," said Claire.

After receiving her diagnosis, Claire said, "I decided to face my journey positively." She is a nurse by background, so she is very resourceful and has excellent knowledge of the healthcare world. She contacted various sight-loss organisations, and

met Devante, our Community Engagement Worker at a Glaucoma UK event held at Bradbury Lodge.

Claire and Devante talked about the various kinds of support available, as well as local support groups at MyVision Oxfordshire. "I was very keen on finding something local and face-to-face to meet other people in similar situations," said Claire.

Devante then contacted Claire about a MyVision social group near her in Didcot and she has been going regularly ever since. She has since joined our walking group, and our well-being group. "The MyVision groups are all about being positive.

Claire sitting on a rock outside, knitting



It's a great group of people, and the events are fun as well!"

Claire has found joining the well-being group to be a very fulfilling experience. **"I already do a lot of crafts; anything craft related, I'm your person but for many people these sessions give the opportunity to do things that they may not normally do with sight loss. Then you also have the mindfulness part of it which I think is very important when you're living with long-term health conditions. It's invaluable to me, that group. I'm really sad if I can't make it."**

The social groups have provided Claire with the opportunity to share her experiences with other people, and she has learned from others in the group by hearing about their experiences.

Building these connections with other people has been vital to Claire. "The big lesson for me was how visual impairment is a spectrum. I spent a lot of time feeling like I was a bit of an impostor because I have central

vision; the whole idea that I can still see while others can't, but it's been important to learn how visual impairment affects everyone differently and in different ways."

Claire's advice to people who get diagnosed with a visual impairment and find themselves in a similar position to hers is, "find as much info as you can and reach out and join things. The biggest turning point for me was after I did a lot of research, educated myself, and after I reached out to sight loss organisations for support. You don't have to go to groups to do that. It can even just be a Facebook group, just as long as you're not alone."

We have been very happy to provide that support and connection for Claire.

"My Vision been extremely positive," she said. **"It's given me access locally, and the group events have been very important to me; I find it really reassuring and I think it's nice to be with other people who have sight impairment who you can share stories with."**

Get Connected

Workshops Update

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by Andy Smith:

We have now held a total of four 'Get Connected' workshops in Henley, Oxford, Banbury, and Abingdon. Our team has developed a workshop that is both informative and interactive with an emphasis on showing people what can be achieved with a few simple adaptations to technology.

The format consists of the use of a simple day to day task such as shopping, and the difficulties that can arise if you have a visual impairment. The topics covered so far have focused on locating items and reading labels.

The groups have then discussed what they do to solve these problems and what could make it easier. This is then followed by a group activity where the group is shown how a piece of technology can assist them with the task. The workshops have received great reviews so

far and after the workshops a number of attendees have followed up with individual sessions to learn more skills.

We are really pleased with the success of this project and are really looking forward to the next few workshops in different areas of the county. Our next workshop will be in Bicester on 11th April; if you are interested in joining, please get in touch with us for more details.

We are also very excited for the next chapter of the project for which we will be recruiting and training tech buddies who will become an invaluable asset to the charity. You can read more about this on the next page.

Jamie and Andreas delivering a Get Connected session



Become a Tech Buddy Volunteer:

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We have recently launched a new volunteer role which aims to partner volunteers with our clients who are getting to grips with using new technology.

The purpose of the role is to provide ongoing support to those who have had initial technology training sessions with our technology and equipment officers, Jamie and Andreas.

Being a Tech Buddy would involve visiting an individual on a regular basis, to support them in using their phone, iPad or computer.

If you are interested in becoming a Tech Buddy Volunteer, please get in touch by either emailing **volunteer@MyVision.org.uk**, using the online form on our website, or calling **01865 725595**.

No previous experience is needed. We will provide technology training and visual impairment awareness training, as well as a DBS check. There are no specific requirements, however it is essential you are patient, have the confidence to talk to new people and have an interest in technology.

Or, if you would like to have a Tech Buddy to support you with your technology training, please get in touch, or speak with Jamie and Andreas, and we will do our best to match you with a volunteer locally to you.



A close-up shot of a tech session. A person is holding a phone with a laptop open to large print setting in front of them

Have You Left a Gift in Your Will?



Creating your will is extremely personal, and people choose to leave gifts to charity in their will for lots of different reasons. The decision is often influenced by someone's personal experiences, values, and a desire to have a lasting, positive impact on the world.

“What persuaded us to include [MyVision Oxfordshire] as beneficiaries was the fact your invaluable work depended somewhat on the generosity of the public.”

- a generous supporter who has remembered MyVision Oxfordshire in their will.

Over the years MyVision has received some incredibly generous legacy donations as people have kindly remembered us in their will. This has meant that the charity has been able to develop its projects, plan for the future, and continue supporting visually impaired people in Oxfordshire.

We are currently partnered with Bequeathed to offer an accessible and inclusive service where you can make a free Will For Good in a few easy steps.

If you would like to find out more about how you could support MyVision Oxfordshire by leaving a gift in your will, or how you can create a free will through our partners at Bequeathed, please contact us on **fundraising@MyVision.org.uk** or **01865 725 595**



Introducing our New Staff

John Coppock

John is our Support Worker who is working with Andreas Findlow. John has previously worked as a chartered engineer with a previous career in computer control of electrical engineering.



John Coppock

Lydia Hayden



Lydia Hayden

Lydia joined us as a Fundraising Assistant Intern through the Thomas Pocklington Trust. Along with her guide dog Rotary, Lydia is ready to support the team and raise vital funds to make MyVision's services possible.

Congratulations to our Trustee, Margaret, for Being Presented with an MBE

Thank you for all your support over the years, Margaret. We would not have been able to grow and evolve without your guidance, knowledge, and expertise. We are proud to have you as one of our trustees; the MBE award is a well-deserved honour for all your amazing contributions to the community.

Margaret Simpson
MBE



Andy and Guide Runner, Sharon, Get Ready to take on London Landmarks Half Marathon

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Andy Smith, our Service Delivery Manager, has had Congenital Nystagmus and Astigmatism since birth. He's also an avid runner currently getting ready to take on the London Landmarks Half Marathon with his guide runner, Sharon, while fundraising for MyVision Oxfordshire.

Andy said, "we chose to fundraise for MyVision Oxfordshire because it's an organisation with a varied range of vital services that support so many people; we want to help MyVision continue to provide the services that so many people rely on."

This is the 3rd running event for Andy with a guide runner and the 1st with Sharon, who he has been running with for about a year.

The London Landmarks will be an entirely new challenge for

the pair. Andy said, "I've done two 10k events with a guide runner but the longer events like this one are more challenging for both of us. In the 10k you don't have the mental fatigue. Sharon needs more mental stamina as well too. Even when she gets tired, she still has to keep looking for the hazards and be aware of the route."

Sharon has previously done the event on her own, but this will be her first time as a guide runner. "It feels like a big responsibility," she said. "For the first few runs we did I was so worried Andy would fall, but we have got used to each other now and I feel quite confident."

Andy and Sharon posing for a photo in their running tabards



“On our routes I point out any uneven paths, drains, people, cars, rises and dips. Now I find myself looking at the paths to see if they are uneven even when I’m not with Andy,” she said.

Andy and Sharon have now got used to running together and find it very enjoyable. Andy explained that when running with a guide runner it is much easier to stay motivated. During events when he and his guide runner wear ‘Visually Impaired Runner’ and ‘Guide Runner’ tabards there is a very supportive environment around them. “People would cheer us on and praise the guide runner so it’s a very positive vibe,” he said.

Andy then said, “One of the things that changed for me is that I take running as an enjoyment thing more now. We really enjoy running and it’s a social thing with my guide runner.” Sharon meanwhile shared, “It feels good to enable Andy to be able to get out and run again with confidence while I get the chance to have some company. Our first few runs

I was really nervous, but I don’t think about it anymore and just go out and enjoy a run with a friend.”

“I’d love for people to donate to show that being visually impaired doesn’t hold you back,” said Andy. “With the right support you can do what you want; if you’re visually impaired and would like to get into running or any other hobby, don’t let your eyesight hold you back.”

If you would like to support Andy and Sharon’s London Landmarks Challenge as well as follow their training journey, scan the QR code:



A selfie of Sharon and Andy during a run



MyVision Oxfordshire Annual Tandem Cycling Challenge

Date: Tuesday, 9th April, 2024

Location: Horspath Athletics and Sports Ground

2 of our
cyclists from
last year's
event

**Join our Tandem Cycling Team
and take on 24km to represent
the 24,000 visually impaired
people living in Oxfordshire!**

If you'd like to join but would prefer not to use a tandem, there are other cycling options available. Is 24km a bit too far? No problem, you can form a team and split the difference.



**If you'd like to join our cycling
challenge contact us on
fundraising@MyVision.org.uk or
01865 725595**

 **MyVision**
Oxfordshire

Supporting Visually Impaired People

If you aren't able to join our Tandem Team but would still like to support the event, please scan the QR code to donate to our JustGiving page.



Community Engagement Update

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We have a lot of very exciting events planned for you to start the spring off strong. We are starting up our Headington and Cowley groups again. We are launching a new North Oxford Group at The Common Ground. We will also be holding more sessions of our new Didcot Walking Group. In April we will take part in an interactive 'Sound Walks' art exhibit at The North Wall Art Centre. We are also looking to start a blind chess club and will be holding a Braille Info Session in April.

There are many more exciting events we have planned. For a full event listing, visit our website or go to page 2 for all our community events while our social group schedule is listed below.

If you have any questions or would like to sign up for any events please contact us at info@MyVision.org.uk or **01865 725595**

Social Group Schedule

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- **Abingdon:** 25th March, 29th April
 - **Banbury:** 4th April, 2nd May
 - **Cowley:** 25th April, 30th May
 - **Didcot:** 13th March, 10th April
 - **Didcot Walking Group:** 19th March, 2nd April, 23rd April
 - **Headington:** 12th April, 10th May
 - **Henley:** 26th March, 30th April
 - **Faringdon** 3rd April
 - **North Oxford:** 4th April, 2nd May
 - **Thame:** 21st March, 28th March, 4th April, 18th April
 - **Wallingford:** 18th March, 22nd April
 - **Wheatley:** 4th April
 - **Wantage:** 20th March, 17th April



Our first Didcot Walking Group. 6 people are walking down a path.

VisionZone 2024

Solutions for Low Vision



Would you like to find out more about assistive technology, Support, Services, Groups, and much more?

Our Vision Zone events bring together a variety of excellent services and charities covering your local area. No matter what your sight loss condition we are here for you. Whether it's just to gain knowledge or hands-on experience with new technologies, entry is free, our friendly staff is ready to greet you with a warm welcome.

Wednesday 15th May 2024

**My Vision Oxford, Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward
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www.lowvisionshop.co.uk