



Herts Vision Loss



Charity Number 1047148
Company Number 3033089

"Supporting and empowering people in Hertfordshire with a visual impairment"



Sight News



Summer 2021 Issue 159



With congratulations to our team
GB Paralympians!
Please see article on page 18

News from Chief
Executive
Officer
Joanna Carter



Hello from all the team at Herts Vision Loss and welcome to our summer issue of Sight News. I hope that you are all keeping well.

I am pleased to announce that our services are starting to resemble those pre-pandemic, although we remain cautious and careful. We held our reunion in June and our Sight life groups are now planning some face-to-face activities and events. We are so excited at the prospect of getting together again more frequently.

We have now begun, what is probably the largest project that HVL have undertaken, to secure our new premises and “forever home”. We are hopeful that we will find something that enables us to have an interactive resource room, drop-in centre, counselling suite as well as an administrative hub. We hope that once up and running you will be able to drop by and try our equipment, join us for some dedicated courses and teachings as well as to have a space for you to come along just to see us and chat!

If you would like to be part of this project group and help us to find a suitable place to operate from then do call me to discuss it in more detail.

You will know that we have not been able to hold our much-loved fundraising events, including our curry nights and quizzes. We are hopeful to get these going again soon and look forward to welcoming you to these events.

As we finalise our end of year accounts, I am pleased to tell you that HVL remains in a healthy financial state, despite a very challenging period. We are always looking for new opportunities to raise additional funds and would be interested to hear from anyone who may be able to help us. A reminder that our AGM will take place on 23rd November at 12 noon. This is where we will discuss the year in detail and take any questions. If you would like to join us, then please do let us know. If you would like to become a voting member then again do tell us and we can help you to join.

As always, my utmost thanks and best wishes to you all.

Jo Carter (CEO)



News from our
Chairman Alex
Hickinbotham

I hope your summer has been happy and healthy. Not sure the Relaxation of Covid Restrictions made a huge difference to some of us, though nice to have the choice. You will be aware that HVL has remained cautious in how we liaise with our colleagues and service users during this pandemic. We will continue to do this and keep in mind the recommendations from Government and our local Hertfordshire Public Health department to keep us and you as safe as we can.

The consequences of running a service during the Pandemic have been challenging. We never expected in last March that we would still be coping with its limitations mid-2021. Jo and her team have done sterling work, adapting to all the changes required by Government and has continued the changes in working practices, though we have missed the face-to-face interactions. Likewise, the volunteers have been fantastic in adapting their way of maintaining contact with their users.

While we managed a welcome summer event on 30th June, we cannot be sure when we can host the next one. But will be looking to do so.

Finances have been stretched as the usual income streams have been completely altered, as you might imagine. All charities have been in the same difficulties. We have been fortunate that the local councils, Captain Sir Tom NHS Charity funds and other support funding streams that have been forthcoming, and we have been successful in our bids for a number of them. This is allowing HVL to continue support to our service users.

In my last article, I mentioned that HVL was located in temporary accommodation at the Weltech Centre in Welwyn. As a Charity we are actively pursuing a more permanent and suitable 'home'. We have instigated a Working Group, comprising of Trustees and staff to undertake this work, and are looking forward to its conclusion. The group is considering the type of premises HVL needs, appropriate location for most service users to attend if wanted, budget and suitability. We will keep you up to date with progress.

I am pleased to inform you that we have successfully co-opted two more trustees to our Board, Raj Visram and David Ottolangui. Both bring new skills to our team and are keen to be involved in our work. They will be appointed formally at our next AGM in November.

Our AGM will be held in November 2021, the method we will use, either in person or online, will be confirmed nearer the time. All are welcome to attend, and our members will be notified of the details once known. Stay safe and healthy in the meantime.

Alex Hickenbotham
Chair HVL

A tip from Ben, one of our readers in Hitchin:
Ben is 87, disabled and has been housebound for several years. He wrote in to tell us that he had good news:

“Ben applied to NHDC for a reduction of one rating level for his bungalow. This was granted on the grounds of his severe health problems. They had been paying Council Tax band D, but his plea was accepted by the NHDC and they are now in Band C and are £209 p.a. better off.”

Our new Vision Loss Advisor, Patsy Slew



Hello!

I used to work in a care home where I would socialise with the residents, take part in activities and ensure that they were happy and living life as independently as possible.

I have been working with Herts Vision Loss since June 2021 as a Vision Loss Advisor covering North and parts of Central Hertfordshire. I am also working as an office administrator so I am sure to speak to many of you over the coming weeks.

I am enjoying speaking to and visiting service users and I hope to make a difference to those living with a visual impairment. I am also going to be visiting hospitals to support our volunteers and will be speaking to patients about their requirements and providing them with information on the services that Herts Vision Loss provide.

I look forward to meeting you soon.

Patsy

Fond Farewells to:



and



We are sad to announce that Sophia Ramsden and Vanessa Browell have left HVL.

Sophia left us back in April to follow her dreams of starting her own business and travelling the world once the pandemic has eased.

Vanessa retired from HVL at the end of August. She plans to get more involved with her family and travel further afield.

We shall miss them both greatly and we wish them all the very best for their futures.

With their departure comes new opportunities for some. If you or anyone you know would be interested in getting involved with the work we do here then please do give Jo a call to talk through potential opportunities.

Jo 07932 605366



Hello Volunteers

Well, hopefully by the time this gets to you we won't have been locked down again! I hope you are all well and have been enjoying the summer with a bit more freedom.

Our summer reunion went ahead at the end of June, with fewer people than we had hoped. Those who attended had a great time. It was lovely to see people again.



Thank you, Simon, Philip and Steve, for bringing along your service users and their friends. I know they appreciated it.

The venue at St. Francis Church in Welwyn Garden City worked well and hopefully if we use it again we will be able to get out into the garden.



It would be lovely to see more of you and at some stage we will hold another Volunteer Drop In. Is there anything you would particularly like to cover in this session, any training or information you would like?



We were very pleased recently to receive accreditation from the voluntary organisation Communities 1st for the 6 Point Promise for Valuing Volunteer Management.

This recognises our efforts in recruiting, involving, and managing volunteers (although I don't really like to think of 'managing' volunteers) and I hope you agree that we deserve it.

If you can think of any improvements we can make let me know and we will do our very best to achieve them. Volunteers Tina and David gave very useful input to this process for which we are very grateful.

We now have cover at the hospitals with several of you coming forward for the roles at Lister, St Albans and QEII. Thank you. If anybody wants else wants to volunteer for these roles, we can organise a rota system as it is always useful to have back-up. Hemel is also covered and we are trying to persuade Watford Hospital to have one of our volunteers. Watch this space.

For those of you who have resumed home visiting, how is it going? Are you happy to be seeing your service users again and how have they coped during lockdown?

To all of you – thank you. I wish there was another way of saying it but please believe it is always very sincerely meant.

**Margaret
Clutterbuck,
HVL Volunteer
at QE2
Hospital**



Having retired from a full-time job with the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in December 2016, I decided to sit back for a while and do nothing. That was the plan, but I soon got bored and started to research volunteering opportunities in my local area and this is how I came across HVL ...

Initially I volunteered as a speaker in local junior schools, but when a volunteering opportunity came up at my local hospital, QE2, I jumped at the chance.

I volunteer for 3 hours a week at the low vision clinic and I absolutely love what I do. Most of the people I meet have recently experienced, to a greater or lesser degree, sight loss. Many people are looking for practical advice, i.e. aids for the home to enable them to carry on independently. Others want to find out how to access books, magazines, or newspapers in an accessible format.

As I have lived with sight loss since birth, I find I can often pass on little tricks and tips which I have perfected over many years. We often find ourselves chatting about kitchen aids or discussing the best way to put toothpaste on a brush if you have little or no vision. Obviously, I have many leaflets and catalogues which people can take away with them. Also, I meet many people who are just coming to terms with their sight loss. Many of them have concerns about their future and how they will manage at home. I think that a very important part of my role is being a good listener and to realise when someone just wants to talk. I've had many long chats with people about what they have achieved in their lives, and I feel privileged that these people have chosen to share these stories with me.

I have certainly learned a lot as a hospital volunteer, meeting the whole spectrum of people and sharing their experiences. I hope that in some small way, I send them away feeling more optimistic and positive about their future.

Margaret

**Walking with
a cane by
Lynne
Nicholson**



Occasionally when I'm out walking I get a little bit muddled as to if I should turn left or right. I wonder if what I see has anything to do with it.

Okay now you're all panicking about this blind woman who is roaming around the countryside with just a white cane and a walking stick. How can she do that?

Using my white cane with whichever tip is needed for the terrain I clearly "see" my path. There is the tactile feedback that I feel through my white cane. Depending on which tip I am using the sensitivity of what I am feeling changes. I feel the depth of ruts, the height of projecting stones, how high a kerb or step is, and the different textures of the surfaces I am traversing. Each tip also gives an audio feedback which differs according to the surface that I am running my cane across. The different tips have different shapes and are made of different materials which affect the feedback, but also the different canes I use also affect the feedback.

My folding canes lose a little of the tactile feedback due to the number of joints, however my graphite cane is lighter than my aluminium cane, but not by much. My aluminium cane is slightly more robust so is that is the one I use "off road".



Lynne

Out to Lunch at Last!

Wednesday 28th July was a big day for the Bishop's Stortford VIP Club. We had planned an outing to the Hunter's Meet, a local hotel in Hatfield Heath for May 2020 but of course by that time we had been confined to our homes. We little realised how long it would be before we could all get together again for our monthly social gatherings.

Our first Club meeting was on 6th July, and I was unsure how many people would feel able to come out again. I need not have worried! Everyone was very keen to make the most of any opportunity, and we had a very enjoyable afternoon.



Our next event was the outing for lunch. Bishop's Stortford's Mayor, Keith Warnell, had kindly offered to support us and provided a minibus and driver. 21 members, friends and helpers enjoyed a delicious two course lunch (in some cases, three courses!) which was followed by musical entertainment.

It was so good to see everyone having such a good time together after so long. By the end, 'please, let's do it again soon' was the general consensus!



Keith Warnell with two members of the Club.

Monika, Bishop's Stortford VIP Club

Where have all our Curry and Quiz Nights Gone?



Well, you'll be pleased to hear they will return in 2022!

We plan to hold a Curry Night in April 2022 and a Quiz Night sometime during June 2022.

If you have any thoughts as to how we can raise much needed funds, please speak to a member of staff, or phone our Sight Line on 01707 324680.

‘I was asked to describe the role of a carer’ by Jane Andrews, Home Instead

‘A carer is described as a person who helps others with daily activities in maintaining their own personal well-being.

Typical duties of a carer might include taking care of someone who may be living with an illness; managing medications; helping to bath or dress someone who is frail or disabled; or taking care of household chores, meals, or something as simple as providing companionship to alleviate loneliness or isolation.

With an aging population in all developed societies, the role of CAREGiver has been increasingly recognized as an important one, both functionally and economically.’

‘So what makes a CAREGiver from Home Instead a cut above the rest?’

Letting someone provide care for you in your own home is a truly personal experience. This is why Home Instead set the bar extremely high and take pride in ensuring we deliver the very best standards of home care for you or a loved one.

Our CAREGivers are the best of the best. During our selection process, we look for people who enjoy similar interests so we can find the right person to support you.

A CAREGiver is always introduced to you before the care service begins, to ensure they are compatible and are the right fit. In beginning your home care journey we hand-pick for their character and values and are expertly trained to support older people and their families. We do this to ensure we can closely match their interests, hobbies and personality with yours and they can become the friendly faces you’ll grow to know and trust.

We strongly believe in the benefits of relationship-led care, so we’ll ensure that you see the same familiar faces every time.



This means that not only can you build trust and establish a friendly relationship, but your CAREGiver will be able to monitor changes that might affect your health or even prevent worsening health conditions.

Our CAREGiver will get to know you which makes it much easier to spot anything unusual and provide the bespoke, personalised care you want.

If you are wondering what it's like to care for someone or find out more about a becoming a 'cut above the rest' CAREGiver for Home Instead Welwyn and Hatfield visit www.homeinstead.co.uk/welwyn or call Patricia on 01707 240 650 for an informal chat

Did you know! – Fun eye facts!!

Your eyes are about 1 inch across and weigh about 0.25 ounce. The human eye can differentiate approximately 10 million different colours.

Our eyes remain the same size throughout life, whereas our nose and ears never stop growing. The human eye blinks an average of 4,200,000 times a year.

Celebrating accessible books and services

The first two weeks of June was Hi VIS fortnight in libraries and all our libraries across the county joined in with celebrations around the diversity of reading.

Hi VIS fortnight provides an opportunity to raise the profile of accessible library services, collections, and activities, and to connect people with a vision or print impairment to them, to reading, and to fellow readers. We were keen to share all the wonderful stock we have available for people affected by sight loss including our large print collections, talking books on CD and MP3 and, of course, our eLibrary on BorrowBox which is jam packed full of thousands of eBooks and eAudiobooks all with their own accessibility features.

Did you know we have a collection of giant print and braille picture books?



Published by Access2Books, each of these brilliant books features enlarged images, 75-point text and grade 2 Braille so they are an ideal choice for Braille reading adults to share with children and grandchildren as well as helping children with a visual impairment to enjoy stories more clearly. These books were by far the most popular collection on display during Hi VIS fortnight and many flew off the shelves as customers commented that they didn't know we had these fantastic books in our collection!

Continuing our celebrations for Hi VIS, we were also delighted to host an event with professional storyteller, Vickie Holden Swinton from The Listen Inn, who entertained us for a very enjoyable evening online with *Tales from Hertfordshire*. Covering topics as diverse as Jack o'Legs, Hertfordshire's own giant, and the true story of Dolly Shepherd who was a record breaker for saving the life of her fellow hot air balloonist, Vickie demonstrated that you needn't open a book to enjoy a great story.

While we enjoyed our celebrations for Hi VIS fortnight, our library services are accessible and available all year round. We are keen to welcome you back! Many of our libraries are back to their

pre-pandemic opening hours and volunteers and staff in our community libraries are increasing their hours of opening all the time. Please remember membership of Hertfordshire Libraries is absolutely free and, if you are eligible for concessions, you can reserve stock from any of our 46 libraries for free, to be collected from whichever library is most convenient for you.

For more information about our stock and services and for the opening hours at your local library, please visit our website www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/libraries or telephone our enquiry team on 0300 1234049.



St Albans Old People's Trust

St Albans Old People's Trust is a local charity whose aim is to support older people across St Albans District, by paying for things that, for all sorts of reasons, they couldn't easily afford to fund themselves. The Trust gives free items and services worth around £200,000 each year.

Household and personal Items:
bed, reclining chair, cooker,
washing machine, fridge, warm
clothing, furniture.

Mobility aids wheelchairs,
walkers, scooters.

Services: regular cleaning, meals
on wheels, care alarm.

Financial support: travelling
expenses to hospital, utility bills.

Small home repairs: repairing a
leak, decoration of a room, new
carpets.

Boiler service – free annual boiler
service and small repairs.

New boiler - we may pay @40%
of costs for a new boiler via the
Energy Companies Obligation
(ECO) scheme which can fund
@30% of a new boiler.

Other - if you need something that
is not on the list please call. We
do not fund gardening, care costs
or holidays.

To apply you just need to be 60 or
over, live in St Albans District and
be on a lowish income or in
hardship.

As an independent charity we do
not use the same criteria as the
Council or the NHS and approve
over 90% of applications.

For further information and to
apply over the phone or request
an application form to be posted
to you, please call our friendly
team, on 07541 659442 or
grants.admin@staopt.org

RNIB Technology

For those of you who are
interested in technology the RNIB
are holding a series of 'Lunch and
Learn' sessions on Teams
between 1 and 2 pm each
Wednesday in September. These
may help you to support our
service users or just be of interest
to you.

The sessions for September cover
08/09/2021 Transcription
15/09/2021 Audio Description
22/09/2021 Customer Service
Skills
29/09/2021 PC and Console
Gaming

The Teams link for these sessions
can be obtained by emailing
RNIB's Technology for Life team
on tfl@rnib.org.uk or you can
email me.

If you miss these sessions or
would like past videos you can
email
Christine.Harrison@rnib.org.uk to
be invited to their Sharepoint site.

If you do take part, we would be
interested to hear how you got
on. I have asked our contact at
the RNIB if they will be continuing
these sessions and will keep you
posted.

Sue,
Volunteering@hertsvisionloss.org.uk

The Therapy Space

Hello and a warm welcome to our second instalment of the Mental Health Toolkit!

Just to recap, the Mental Health Toolkit that we are building up here at Herts Vision Loss is a collection of techniques, strategies and information for you to have at your fingertips whenever you need a bit of help sustaining and maintaining your mental health while you seek and await professional help. In this edition we will be discussing Anxiety.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is our body's natural response to stress. When we encounter threatening, worrying, or fearful situations we go through a range of physical, psychological and reactive responses. These could be anything from sweating, increased heart rates and nervousness to more severe and debilitating symptoms such as panic attacks, feelings of being out of control and palpitations. Other symptoms can also include restlessness, difficulty sleeping and trouble concentrating. These responses, symptoms and feelings vary from person to person so what one person may find thrilling, eg public speaking, another person may find extremely stressful.

Research seems to indicate that this vast response variation is a result of a combination of genetics, environmental factors and brain chemistry.

Feelings of anxiety have been part of our genetic makeup since the dawn of time and evolved because of the hormones, adrenalin and cortisol, that rushed through our bodies in response to approaching predators and imminent dangers. These hormones were necessary for our survival and helped us to develop a process we now know as 'fight, flight or freeze', a stance we take to either confront, run away from or 'play dead' to threats to our safety- we automatically and unconsciously choose whichever option gives us our best survival chance.



Nowadays our anxieties don't revolve around being eaten by a sabre-toothed tiger but around the perils of modern day living; work problems, money, family life, health issues, moving house, public speaking, sitting exams

and all other important life events. What is known is that anxiety usually presents on two levels: General Anxiety and as an anxiety disorder.

General Anxiety is a normal and healthy reaction to stress. It comes and goes and doesn't usually interfere with everyday life. For some, this kind of general anxiety is used as a driving force to overcome difficulties and face challenges. However, if feelings of anxiety are extreme, debilitating, last over several months and prevent you from participating in everyday life, then this can develop into an anxiety disorder and will need medical and professional attention.

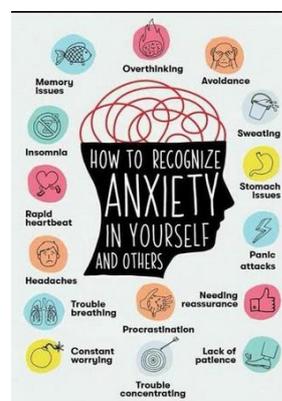
Some common anxiety disorders include:

- Phobias
- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Post-Traumatic Stress
- Health Anxiety

What can I do about it?

The first thing to do is to learn to spot the signs of anxiety. Sometimes we can get swept up in the anxiety provoking moment and before we know it, suddenly feel very overwhelmed with feelings and physical symptoms.

If this happens, it's a good idea to set some time aside after to process what happened. Ask yourself what the symptoms were, their intensity, any triggers and reactions. By recognising your triggers and symptoms, you will be able to understand them better and hopefully be able to pre-empt them or find a way of managing them by having just a few tricks up your sleeve.



The second thing to do is reset your nervous system. There are 2 parts to our nervous system: sympathetic and parasympathetic. When threat to our lives is perceived, we trigger the sympathetic part of our nervous system which causes the fight/flight/freeze response to kick in. However, if the threat turns out to be bogus, then we need to be able to calm our body back into its natural state and remove all that cortisol and adrenalin that has been flooding it. We do this by stimulating a very important nerve called the vagus nerve.

Stimulating this nerve sends a message from your brain into all parts of your body that it's now time to de-stress and reach a calmer state of mind and body.

Tricks and techniques to de-stress.

1. Move your body.

Start off slowly by shaking your hands up and down and side to side- imagine you are shaking water off. Then incorporate the elbows and then shoulders so that your entire arm is moving, like you are flying. If you can, raise your arms above your head while you shake and 'fly'. While 'flying' start bouncing, then shake one leg, then the other. Shake your entire body so that you feel you are shaking off the experience. If it helps, put on some music!

Just 30 seconds of vigorous (as vigorous as you can!) shaking can really help with the reset. You can do this as often as you like!

2. Breathe.

This is the most natural and simplest way to help calm down the nervous system. Sounds easy enough but what we are talking about here is a specific type of breathing. With practise, these breathing techniques will help you to quieten your mind, reconnect with your body and bring your awareness back to the present.

By mastering your breathing and incorporating breathing techniques into your daily routine you can stop stress responses in their tracks. There is a plethora of breathing techniques on-line, but these are my two favourites:

Exercise 1: The Deep Belly Breath

This is not your usual fill your lungs kind of breathing (ordinary day breathing) but a breathing style that activates your body's natural relaxation mechanism. Upon activation it changes your physical state and your emotional state. Deep breathing increases the oxygen supply to your brain, stimulating your nervous system. It decreases your heart rate, blood pressure and releases muscle tension. Research has found that 20-30 minutes of daily deep breathing can reduce stress and anxiety but start off slowly doing between 3-10 minutes a day gradually building up to 30 mins daily.

Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your belly, below the ribcage. Allow your belly to relax, without forcing it. Do not squeeze or clench your stomach muscles. Breathe in slowly through your nose. The air should move down into your belly so that you feel it rise and expand.

Exhale slowly through slightly pursed lips. * top tip, exhaling while making a 'Vooooooo' sound speeds up the calming process! The hand on your chest should remain relatively still. Repeat as often as needed.

Exercise 2: Square or box breathing

This is a great one for improving performance, concentration and is also a powerful stress reliever. Find a chair in a quiet space. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor and with your hands in a relaxed position on your lap. It helps to imagine drawing the box as you practise.

- Slowly exhale through your mouth to empty your lungs
- Slowly inhale through the nose for a count of four
- Hold your breath for a count of four
- Exhale through your mouth for a count of four
- Hold for a count four
- Repeat the pattern until you feel a state of stillness.

Children also experience stress and anxiety but not all of them can articulate how they feel. Some signs you may notice that can indicate stress and anxiety are clinginess, irritability or tantrums, mood swings, sleep troubles or bed wetting. Older children may find it more difficult to focus, become more withdrawn, have

erratic sleep or eating patterns or have frequent angry outbursts. The Five Finger breath is an excellent way to get children to switch off from their stress responses, slow down their heart rate while deepening their breath. It's brilliant at focusing the mind and also provides lovely sensory feedback to the brain. Better still, it can be done anytime, anywhere because all you need are your two hands!

The Five Finger breath

Choose a hand and hold it out in front of you like a star.

With the index of the other hand and starting at the base of the thumb on the outside of the hand, take a deep breath in through your nose while you slowly trace up the thumb to the tip. Pause briefly at the tip and then slowly breath out as you trace down the other side of the thumb.

Pause and then as you breathe in, continue up the next finger, pausing at the tip and exhaling as you trace down again.

Repeat until all fingers have been traced round.

Shake your hand out and see how you feel

Repeat if necessary.

If your child dislikes the sensation of sliding their finger up and down their hand, you can trace an outline of their hand on a piece of card and cut out the shape for them to trace.

For a more sensory experience you could try making the outline textured or why not go to town and decorate the entire hand! Spending some time together doing something creative and fun may be all that is needed to slow down the stress responses.

3. Counselling

Sometimes we all need a safe and confidential space to talk about our worries and concerns. It can really help to talk to someone impartial and non-judgemental. Talking to a counsellor can help you to offload and process feelings, explore and understand your thoughts and behaviours. It can also help you to recognise unhelpful patterns and assist you in developing skills for dealing with life's challenges. Here at HVL we have a counselling service. We also run Talk Time on Thursday afternoons where you can have a 15-minute conversation with one of our qualified counsellors. If you are struggling at the moment or would like to know more about our counselling service and/or Talk Time please get in touch at earsforeyes@hertsvisionloss.org.uk or call 07464 548 618. If you have tried any of these tips why not get in touch and share your experience or drop me a line if there is a topic you would like to see in the next issue.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you. Alma

For more information on anxiety, symptoms and disorders please visit:

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>
<https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety-symptoms>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/managing-your-anxiety>

<https://www.headspace.com/>
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/>

For the five-finger breathing video watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQVZgpyVQ78>

Useful links and organisations

AGE UK: For advice and support, befriending services, information on money, care or health visit www.ageuk.org.uk or call: 0800 678 1602

Silverline: 24 hour helpline offering free information, friendship and advice for the older generation. Call 0800 470 8090 or visit www.thesilverline.org.uk

Samaritans Crisis Team: Free 24/7 confidential support for those in crisis. Call 116123. Email jo@samaritans.org or text 07725 909090

GB Paralympians 2021

Have you been watching the Olympics this summer? Wasn't it fantastic? Well, it continued with the Paralympics. This is so inspirational and as we go to press, we remain in awe of how these great athletes have overcome their disabilities and battled through to be great athletes.

The history of the Paralympic Games dates back to 1948, when Sir Ludwig Guttmann, a physician working at a hospital in Stoke Mandeville, England, organised an archery competition involving World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries as part of their rehabilitation programme. In 1952 the event became an international competition, and from the 1960 Games in Rome they have been held in the same host country as the Olympic Games. Since the 1988 Games in Seoul, they have been held shortly after the Olympic Games using the same venues and facilities.

It seems sometimes that the Paralympics don't get as much press as the Olympics. Well, we will put a stop to that!

Britain has taken a team of 228 athletes to the Tokyo Games, where there is a medal target of between 100-140 set by UK

Sport, with predictions hard to make given how little para-sport has been able to take place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Did you know that Britain's first winner of gold in the winter Olympics was at the Sochi 2014 Games by Kelly Gallagher and guide Charlotte Evans in the Women's Super-G Visually impaired?

It's not just the Brits that have incredible athletes. Have you seen David Brown? We honour him with his picture on the front cover of this edition of Sight News. David is the world's fastest blind man and will look to defend his Paralympic 100m title in the T11 category – where athletes are nearly or totally blind and require a guide to race – five years after his Rio coronation alongside former Olympic hopeful Jerome Avery. Diagnosed with Kawasaki disease at 15 months and blind in both eyes due to resulting glaucoma by the age of 13, he remains the only totally blind sprinter to have broken the 11-second mark.

It's just amazing, how brilliant these guys are, and we wish them all the best of luck in the remaining competitions.



Information Focus Day Professional Vision Services Exhibition

In conjunction with Herts Vision Loss

**To be held on
8th October 2021 - 10:00am – 2:00pm
at**

**Professional Vision Services, Wellbury House,
90 Walsworth Road, Hitchin SG4 9SX**

Tel: 01462 420751

Staff will be wearing PPE

Come along to our low vision drop-in day, where we will be demonstrating all the latest technology and equipment for the visually impaired.

