



Herts Vision Loss



Charity Number 1047148
Company Number 3033089

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



Sight News



Winter 2021 Issue 160



Happy Christmas everyone and have a splendid New Year

News from Chief
Executive
Officer
Joanna Carter



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

All our services have now resumed so please do not hesitate to contact us or refer someone to us that may need our help. We are in the process of putting together our 2022 programme for our Junior Sight Life groups, which is supported by BBC Children in Need. If you or anyone you know would like to be involved, then do give me a call.

We continue with our pursuit to find our “forever home”. We are hopeful that we will find something that enable 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!

We have had a recent offer on a premises accepted and are now going through the process of

valuations and enquiries. I hope that I have some very positive news to report in the next edition. 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.

We are holding our Curry night again in early spring. More details will follow soon but do get your names down early to secure your place. It is a great event and aimed at bringing people together as well as boosting much needed funds for HVL.

As we move into the colder months it is important that we are all vaccinated appropriately to keep ourselves and others safe. You will know that all those over the age of 40 have been called for their boosters and I urge you now to book yours. With changes implemented in care homes and various consultations emerging to identify vaccinated staff, I would like to collate a comprehensive record of all our team's vaccination status. Would you please get in touch with me and let me know your COVID-19 vaccination status? I will also be writing to you all separately about this.

As always, my utmost thanks and best wishes to you all.
Jo Carter (CEO)



News from our Chairman Alex Hickinbotham

As nature takes us from autumn with its bright red, yellow and brown colours, and leads us into winter, I wonder what is in store for us going forward. Having braved the 2020 and 2021 Pandemic and financial difficulties, neither of which we see the end of, HVL steadfastly looks at how the services and care we offer to the visibly impaired can continue to be supplied. Fortunately, our innovative staff and CEO are very skilled at devising ways of continuing. Much of which you will find in this edition of Sight News.

With the see-sawing of restrictions and freedoms it has been difficult for some to know what is okay and what is not, at times. Should any of our readers, members or service users have queries, please remember our staff will always be available to advise you.

We are also aware of the requirements from government to now ensure all staff, contractors and volunteers visiting care homes need to have had the covid vaccinations regime.

It has also been decided by the Secretary of State for Health, that hospitals will come under the same requirements from April 2022. HVL as a supplier of services and individuals attending these venues, needs to adhere to this requirement. So, for those of you who visit the care homes, and hospitals, please can you notify Sue Firth of your vaccination status for our records and requirement to meet the new regulations.

Sadly, at the AGM we bade farewell to Keith Harding who has served as Trustee, Company Secretary and Finance lead for HVL over 15 years. We will miss his advice and input and wish him well for the future. Likewise, we also have seen the retirement of Ardeshir Laloui our Independent Finance Auditor who has also provided service to HVL over many years. We wish him well for the future too. Happily, we welcomed a new Company Secretary, Independent Finance Auditor and two more Trustees to the Board, confirming their appointments at the AGM.

As you may remember HVL is seeking new premises, hopefully for long term/ forever. As such a working group of Trustees and Staff, chaired by our HVL Deputy Chairman, have been focused on this aim.

Much progress has been made and the CEO will keep you informed as our plans unfold.

As Christmas comes nearer, I take this opportunity to wish you a safe, happy and healthy festive season.

Alex Hickinbotham
Chair HVL

Trading Standards and Visually Impaired People

Scammers or fraudsters can target anyone. They are seasoned criminals that use a business, or mimic one, to add legitimacy to their activities. They are purposely trading with the intent to exploit for their own financial gain, usually leaving the consumer with damaged property and/or a loss of money.

For those that are visually impaired, it can add a further layer of difficulty knowing who is at your door. Scammers carry out 'door knocks' to scout out and identify potential victims and make unsolicited phone calls trying to gather information or to sell a product or service.

There are some steps you can take to help prevent falling victim to scams and rogue traders:

The simplest way to avoid scammers is 'if you're not sure, don't open the door'. Genuine callers will make an appointment first or leave you a note. If you do happen to open the door politely decline, say 'no thanks', and do not engage with them. They may tell you that the work is urgent – it is a tactic used to create panic and cloud your judgement to make an on-the-spot decision. If the trader refuses to leave when you have told them to, call the police on 999.

If looking for a trader, ask your family and friends if they have any recommendations. Hertfordshire Trading Standards has a trusted trader scheme in partnership with Which? Trusted Traders. Go to <https://trustedtraders.which.co.uk/> or call 01707 292429 for details of local traders.

If you are suspicious of an unsolicited call you, or someone on your behalf, can get advice: Contact the Consumer Advice Service via freephone 0808 223 1133 or

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

To report scams to the Police, contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or on www.actionfraud.police.uk

VOLUNTEER



Hello Volunteers

This edition of Sight News will be arriving with you a couple of days after our Christmas Party where we hope we will have seen some of you along with our service users.

We know that with busy lives it can be hard to find time to volunteer which is why we appreciate your efforts so much, but it is also true that there are benefits to both physical and mental health from volunteering. Studies have shown that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not. Older volunteers tend to walk more, find it easier to cope with everyday tasks, are less likely to develop high blood pressure, and have better thinking skills. Volunteering can also lessen symptoms of chronic pain and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Volunteering also helps to counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety and the social contact aspect of helping and working with others have been proved to make people happy.

Being helpful delivers pleasure, most of us are hard-wired to give to others. Being appreciated is also a source of happiness and we really do appreciate you.

You will have read elsewhere that hopefully we will be in new premises in 2022. We will then have space to have more regular get-togethers which I hope you will be able to attend – I've asked in the past, but is there anything in particular you would like to cover in these sessions, please let me know?

One of our volunteers who has a particular interest in technology has been ‘attending’ the RNIB Lunch and Learn sessions on Teams and has found them useful. There are a few tips he has picked up later in this edition. For any of you who would like to join please email RNIB’s Technology for Life team on tfl@rnib.org.uk. Let me know how you get on.

It just leaves me to say we hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas and a happy new year. See you in 2022.

Sue
volunteering@hertsvisionloss.org.uk



Warm Homes

Applications are now open for our heating grants to help people on low incomes to keep warm during the coming winter months.

Please read the information below and kindly share these details and the attached application form with your colleagues.

Additional information:

- * Beneficiaries must live in Stevenage or the surrounding villages of Aston, Benington, Cromer, Datchworth, Graveley, Knebworth, Little Wymondley, Old Knebworth, Walkern, Watton-at-Stone, Weston or Woolmer Green.
- * You must obtain consent to share the beneficiary's personal information before applying.
- * An application does not guarantee that a grant will be issued.
- * The application form needs to be submitted by a professional person working with the family. We cannot accept self-referrals.
- * The final date for applications is 31st March 2022.
- * Beneficiaries must be in financial hardship through low-income employment or state benefits.

Applicants do not need to be in receipt of state benefits to qualify.

- * Working families on a low income or people in receipt of a pension will be considered for a grant.
- * Successful applicants will be awarded a £200 heating grant which will be paid directly to their energy provider.
- * Incomplete applications or those lacking sufficient information will be declined.

Caroline Haskins

caroline@stevenagecommunitytrust.org

Stevenage Community Trust
Stewart House, Primett Road,
Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3EE
01438 525390 / 07527 636469
stevenagecommunitytrust.org

Tuesday Allsorts

2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month
Welwyn Garden City Library
10.00 – 12.00

Allsorts of things, for Allsorts of people

Drop in for a chat; make new friends over tea and biscuits

11th January
ZooLab

25th January
Life on The Road: a Talk From Musician Steve T

8th February
Tea, Chat & More

22nd February
Tea, Chat & More

8th March
Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

22nd March
Hertfordshire Holly Morris Dancers

12th April
Easter Crafts

The Low Vision Service at East and North Herts NHS Trust, Kavita Kathuria



In East and North Herts NHS Trust we run low vision aids (LVA) clinics at the Lister Treatment Centre and at the New QEII. The overall aim of the service is to improve the quality of life for people with low vision. A person with low vision is someone whose vision can't be improved with spectacles, contact lenses, or medical intervention.

In our clinics we provide a range of services for people with low vision to enable them to make the best use of the eyesight they have. If you are referred to our service, we will start off by asking you about your needs. Then we demonstrate low vision aids. A low vision aid is a piece of equipment designed to improve vision, such as:

- Hand and stand magnifiers, illuminated magnifiers, telescopic lenses,
- Electronic aids, e.g.: CCTVs, specialised computer adaptation, mobile phone and tablet applications,
- Non-optical equipment, e.g.: lighting, typoscopes, large felt tip pens.

We issue on permanent loan certain low vision aids that may help, and we advise you on how best to use them.

We can also give advice on other vision techniques, e.g.

- Different eye movement techniques for locating objects or reading,
- How best to position and hold a hand magnifier,
- Adaptation of the home, e.g.: finding the best lighting or using colour contrast.

We usually have an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) from Herts Vision Loss present who can discuss your eye condition and signpost you to other charities, support groups or clubs.

If you have been referred to the low vision clinic, we look forward to helping you



Dementia Café thriving after local community donations

A local Dementia Friendly Community Café has received £1,000 in donations thanks to local fundraising efforts. The donations will be put towards the Digsowell-based café's activities, community events and social outings.

Welwyn Garden City Runners donated £800 which they raised at a local village fundraising event in conjunction with the organisers of the Welwyn Festival.



The Mayor, Cllr Peter Hebden donated £200 in support of the Locality Budget Scheme.

The Café is run by Home Instead Welwyn and Hatfield's dementia trainer and champion, Jane Andrews, the donations will also go towards the café's annual Christmas party on the 21st of December which is open to everyone from the community for 3 hours of Christmas joy, entertainment plus social interaction.

The café provides a safe and welcoming environment and helps reduce the stigma associated with dementia by supporting those affected plus educating the local community on the neurological condition.

Jane commented: "We have been overwhelmed by the generosity and hard work of the community; we can't thank them enough for their kind donations. It's brilliant to see local community events up and running after a year of little activity due to the pandemic, and we are very excited to welcome everyone on 21st December."

Owner of Home Instead Welwyn and Hatfield, Aakash Pattni said: "A huge part of our services offered at Home Instead is our specialist dementia care. Our CAREGivers are trained to support those living with the condition continue to live well independently in their own homes.

"The café has been a huge part of educating the community on dementia and Jane has been at the forefront of this effort. It's fantastic to be able to host events like our Christmas party and we look forward to doing more in the future."

To find out more about the Dementia Friendly Community Café and Home Instead's Welwyn and Hatfield home care services visit <https://www.homeinstead.co.uk/welwyn-hatfield/> or call 01707 240 650

Welcome to the first article from East Herts Frontline

Your multi-agency digital referral platform for local health and wellbeing services has grown considerably since its inception back in January. There are now 65 local services listed on the library for children and adults. All these services deliver face-to-face in the district and range from the large – e.g. Age UK and Citizens Advice – to the very small that you may not even know about!

Did you know your clients and patients can refer themselves to many services listed on East Herts Frontline? They do not need to login or have a user account – they can look up service information themselves and ‘Request a Callback’ from the service they want to contact. Quick, easy and secure.

In addition, anyone - professionals and the public - can download our app ‘Frontline Referrals’ for free from their app store and have all the service information at their fingertips.

Hot Topic

With escalating living costs, many more residents may need access to services they've not needed before. They may not even know where to look for support.

Citizens Advice East Herts and CAP are just two of several organisations well-placed to give advice and guidance in the district. You can refer to them direct via East Herts Frontline.

Spotlight

HomeHealth is a new service designed to support people aged 65 and over who are beginning to find it difficult to do the things they like to do for themselves. This service aims to help people stay independent and healthy for as long as possible as they get older. For more information search ‘Homehealth’ on East Herts Frontline.

If you know of health and wellbeing services that are not on East Herts Frontline, then please tell them to contact us. We'd be happy to have a chat and explore how Frontline can support the work they do.

Email: info@frontlineuk.org.uk

Best wishes, The Frontline Team

Watford Social Centre for the Blind



Watford Social Centre for the Blind were honoured that HRH The Duke of Gloucester, accompanied by The Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, was able to join us on Wednesday 23rd June 2021 to celebrate 70 years of providing support to the visually impaired.

Mrs Jenny Marsh, Chairman of the Trustees and Lead Volunteer introduced him to members and volunteers who were taking part in various activities from darts to knitting before enjoying a light lunch. HRH then unveiled a plaque to commemorate the dedicated service of volunteers over the last 70 years without which the charity would not be able to exist.

Jenny Marsh said “The last year has been especially difficult for those with a visual impairment and to be able to welcome HRH The Duke of Gloucester to help celebrate our 70th Anniversary

has been something we have all been able to look forward to. We were delighted that he was able to join in some of the activities, including a game of darts, before unveiling the plaque.”

Robert Voss, Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire added

“It was a great pleasure to be able to accompany HRH The Duke of Gloucester to Watford Social Centre for the Blind to celebrate their 70th anniversary. What an enjoyable experience with so many wonderful members and volunteers. It was fun for everyone especially winning the darts tournament...! Thank you to Jenny and her team for an excellent visit.”

The charity, which is self-funded, and voluntary led, provides a twice weekly social support club for anyone with a visual impairment in the local area and is an Associated Macular Support Group. The club is fully open after COVID and welcoming new members who are experiencing various degrees of sight loss.

If you would like more details about the sessions please email Jenny Marsh at contact@watfordblincentre.org and visit their website at www.watfordblindcentre.org



Tips from HVL Volunteer, Julian Wells

Radio and Podcasts

There is an app called 'Speech Radio' for both [Android](#) & [Apple](#) users. You can use voice commands to find a radio station. Within this app you can do a 'simple search' using text, and by clicking on the result(s) it will open the selected station. You can store favourites. It has a Jukebox option to select between genres or categories. It is a free app and carries no advertisements. Less useful is the 'Tune In' app, which also supports favourites but is a more cluttered interface. There is a useful primer on podcasts [here](#). You can also use Alexa and Google to play podcasts too.

Transcriptions

RNIB provide an extensive, and free service by using an army of volunteers to transcribe many different types of items. From tactile diagrams for musical scores & maps, they also turn books into talking books, and are happy to try new ideas, for example they recently made a Monopoly card game more inclusive by adding transparent braille tape to the cards, allowing all the family to play.

Text to Speech Reader

There was a good demonstration of the Hawk Reader, a small and portable reader with integral battery that can power its camera and light for 10 hours of usage before needing a re-charge. The Reader detects the text & reads aloud irrespective of which way round the content is placed underneath the camera. Free no obligation demos are available at home.

Voxmate

Is an all-in-one Android App designed to help users play games, chat, listen to audiobooks and more using 4 swipe options. At time of demo, they were aiming for a free (limited) version, and a full mode less than \$5 USD per month under their early access scheme.

Help in the kitchen

Amazon sell a Breville one cup hot water dispenser, designed to remove the need for a conventional kettle for hot drink making, cost approx. £35. Other helpful gadgets include Talking scales, a syringe with grooves in 5ml increments, talking food thermometer, and PenFriend for creating recording audio labels for items around the home. Alexa could be put to use by commands such as "Alexa, set a pasta timer for 10 minutes".

Also, the Alexa Show could be put to good use for displaying information in the kitchen such as a recipe.

A Knitting Aid

We found an electronic counter on Amazon. Every time you complete a row you click it and it keeps count of how many rows you have done with a digital display.

Sullivan+

Sullivan+ is a free app only available on Android.

It can turn text to speech; recognise faces; describe images; indicate colours; detect light; and has a built-in magnifier and PDF reader.

The app has a built-in help menu and ability to use voice guidance within the app (if you do not have Talkback turned on normally).

A few other tips include opening a hot chocolate sachet by putting it inside the mug you are about to use to give you both hands free to open the sachet. Using the back of a dessert spoon might be easier to spread butter than using a knife. Create a makeshift baking tray by double folding all 4 sides to form a rectangle is a tidy way of getting oven chips out without dropping some of them.

Lastly using a dessert spoon to fish a tea bag out of a cup is perhaps easier than a teaspoon.

Lastly, and not an RNIB session... I have been using knowledge kindly shared with me by Martyn about suitable mobile phones. Martyn bought one a few weeks ago and now Ruth is about to take delivery of one too. The phone is the Blindshell Classic 2. It is too early to give first-hand feedback on the device, but it does look promising.

There is a website run by a former RNIB member which publishes weekly a list of TV programmes that have audio description. The address is: <http://tvhelp.org.uk/>

Winter readings with Hertfordshire Libraries!

The colder, darker evenings can be the perfect opportunity to dedicate some time to a good book and with Hertfordshire Libraries. We've got large print and talking books collections in all our libraries and new titles are being added all the time. Just a few of the titles that have arrived on our shelves recently include:

Barclay, Linwood	Find You First	Large print
Fraser, Antonia	The case of the married woman: Caroline Norton, a 19 th century heroine who wanted justice for women	Talking book, non-fiction
Gibson, William/Sterling, Bruce	The Difference Engine	Talking book
McDermid, Val	1979	Talking book
Mann, Shirley	Lily's War	Large print
Morton, Andrew	Elizabeth & Margaret: the intimate world of the Windsor sisters	Large print, non-fiction
O'Connor, Carlene	Murder at an Irish Christmas	Large print
Saunders, Kate	The case of the wandering scholar	Large print
Silverman, Jen	We play ourselves	Talking book
Zulczyk, Jakub	The Institute	Talking book

Library members can reserve all these titles and thousands of others like them to be collected from your local library. This service is free if you are blind or have any disability.

Hertfordshire Libraries also offers a “Home Library Service”, we could bring the library to you if:

- you have a physical disability which prevents you from travelling to a library building
- you have a learning disability or mental health condition that makes it difficult for you to leave home alone
- you are registered blind (severely sight impaired)
- you're frail or in poor health

- you're a carer looking after someone affected by any of the above, and you are prevented from getting to the library.

Our Home Library Service is largely provided by a team of volunteers who choose the books and deliver them to people in their homes. To find out more and if you could be eligible for this free service you can visit our website <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/other-library-services/home-library-service/home-library-service.aspx> or telephone our customer service centre on 0300 123 4049.

“Hello, and Welcome to WHATnews!”

Ever since 1978, volunteers of the Welwyn Hatfield Talking Newspaper Association have been making recordings of local news stories for people with impaired vision. The items are generally selected from the latest edition of the Welwyn Hatfield Times.

Our production processes have changed over the years, and the Covid pandemic caused us to modernise again. We now produce an edition every week, as soon as we can after the Welwyn Hatfield Times has come out. CD is the medium preferred by our listeners, and we now post these out in paper envelopes, so there is no need to return anything to us. We also put our recordings onto a web page, for our on-line listeners.

We no longer meet around a table with microphone stands, but all our production process - including editing, recording and copying the CDs - is now done remotely in our homes, making full use of smartphones, laptops and the internet.

There is no charge for receiving WHATnews and we are always pleased to welcome new listeners.

You might like to listen to WHATnews on-line - to listen to the latest edition, go to our website www.whatnews.org.uk and click on the big red words "*Latest Edition*". Please let us know if you do try it.

If you would like to receive WHATnews as CDs, or you have any comments or questions, please call me, the WHATnews secretary, on 07708 468 708, or you can email me at info@whatnews.org.uk

The lockdowns made it necessary for us to work on WHATnews in our homes, and, as the days get colder, the idea of staying inside is certainly appealing again. I hope you are all able to stay safe and warm over the winter season.

Robert Handscomb

RNIB + Amazon Echoes



The RNIB are giving away 3,000 Amazon Echoes (smart speakers) to celebrate the launch of our Talking Books library being available on Amazon Alexa. You can simply say “Alexa, open RNIB Talking Books” to access thousands of titles.

RNIB Library and Reading Services are fully accessible via an Amazon Echo and you can also ask the device to call the RNIB Helpline.

Terms and conditions do apply.

The applicant must:

- Be blind or partially sighted
- Be a UK resident
- Do not currently own an Echo device
- Be connected to the internet
- Have an email address
- Have a smart phone, tablet, or computer access, necessary to enable the device; this may be via friends or family if not personally owned
- Be for your own personal use; this device is not for resale
- One device per customer.

To register interest in the offer, customers should contact Herts Vision Loss on 01707 324680 or RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999.



Dedicated to improving the lives of visually impaired people
Telephone: 07985 536216

www.fourswansvision.org.uk
fourswansvision@gmail.com

Four Swans Vision members have slowly been starting to meet up again at various locations. A few members enjoyed the Gangster bus tour around the East End of London in October, and we had our first meeting since the lockdown began at the Beaumont Centre in Cheshunt in November.

We have decided to hold our meetings every two months at the Beaumont Centre, so our next meeting will be in January 2022. We have trips to the Brick Lane Music Hall planned for February and up to London in March to see the show, Pretty Woman.

Sadly, we have not been able to restart our sessions of Visually Impaired tennis at the Laura Trott centre due to lack of players.

Anyone with a visual impairment that would like to try V. I. tennis, then please get in touch with us.

Hopefully, 2022 will be a better year for everyone, and we look forward to brighter and healthier future.

Alan, and all at Four Swans Vision.
Registered Office, 110, Northfield Road, Waltham Cross EN8 7RD

The Therapy Space

It's the Christmas season once more bringing with it the potential for parties, get togethers, re-connections, sharing and giving and spreading love and joy. It can be a time of excitement, decorations, food preparations and festivities but it can also be an overwhelming time of panic, stress, and sorrow.

The last couple of years there has been such little time spent outside with people that perhaps the thought of milling around shopping centres or supermarkets and mixing with crowds of people can feel rather disconcerting and worrisome. Maybe even the planning of meals and sorting of presents is stressful and we may find ourselves caught between moments of euphoria and excitement and moments of panic, anxiety, loneliness, and stress.

These feelings tend to increase during the Christmas season and it's also that time of year when SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) makes itself known, particularly affecting those with generalised anxiety disorders or other mental health issues, so, everything can seem rather amplified and overwhelming.

With this in mind, I thought it would be good to focus on **self-love** and **self-care**. It's important to take care of yourself not just because you are a human being worthy of and entitled to being taken care of - especially by yourself. It's also a scientific fact that possessing a good, solid base in self-love and self-care is the cornerstone to healthier states of physical and mental wellbeing.

There is a difference between self-love and self-care; they are closely connected but are not the same. Important to note is that neither is a selfish or indulgent practise but ultimately benefits you and those around you.

What is Self-love?

Self-love is the appreciation, love and acceptance of yourself despite your imperfections. Essentially speaking, it's how you see, speak, and feel about yourself especially when you experience moments of failure or inadequacy, when you make mistakes or when things don't go quite right.

We are often our own worst critics and can frequently judge ourselves too harshly and too often for not being good enough, for dropping the ball and for saying or doing the wrong thing.

The practice of self-love is to learn to nurture a self-talk that is less critical and more forgiving. To make a concerted effort to speak, think of and feel about yourself in a kinder and more compassionate way. Not beating yourself up or putting yourself down but acknowledging and accepting that you are an imperfect human being. We make mistakes, we don't need to continuously punish ourselves for them. As Alexander Pope said, 'To err is human, to forgive, divine'.

What is Self-care?

Self-care is about the nurturing things you do that endorse and enhance your self-love. In effect, all the actions you take to address your needs and support your physical, emotional, psychological and, perhaps, even spiritual growth.

The practice of self-care can be difficult. As a nation we find it hard to do nice things for ourselves. It's often drummed into us that thinking of oneself is indulgent, selfish, greedy, narcissistic.

However, taking time to replenish yourself in whichever way that makes you feel nourished, healthy, calm, grounded and ready for whatever the world throws at you is in fact, an act of love towards yourself and ultimately towards those around you.

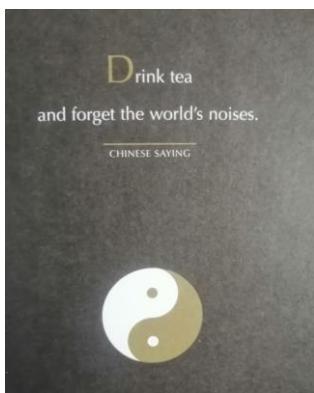
You know those safety cards you get on an airplane, the one that tells you that in an emergency to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others? It's not saying that your life is of more value than anyone else's but is a reminder that you can only be useful and helpful to your fellow companion if you are alive and breathing. Ensuring your own consciousness, puts you in the best position to be able to help others.

Self-care is like putting on that oxygen mask. It's about taking time to reflect on your needs and finding ways to address those so that you can be at your prime, capable of then attending to others around you. It doesn't matter what it is you do. Whether it's a long soak in the bath, getting a haircut, a beauty treatment, making mince pies, listening to music, eating something indulgent or having a peaceful walk, if it is nourishing, replenishing and makes you feel good and ready to face the world again.

These small acts and ‘self’ moments are especially important during the Christmas season when we can get so caught up rushing around thinking of others’ needs and wants.

So, make yourself a cuppa, sit down, and take a moment to reflect upon the things *you* would like or what would make *you* feel nurtured. It doesn’t have to be anything strenuous, costly or feel like a chore. This is only an opportunity for you to consider how to intentionally set time aside to do something just for you whether it’s something that lasts 5 mins (less if it means eating chocolate truffles!) or 5 hours.

If the answer doesn’t come easily don’t worry. Simply having that tea break to be in the moment, is a first step to self-care.



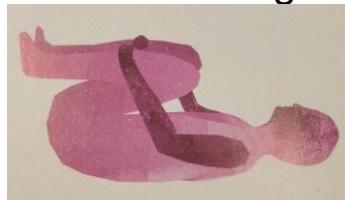
Some things you may want to try out for a quick relax or time out while you ponder your needs - these are also great for releasing tension!

1. The Serenity Roll Down



- Stand with feet hip-width apart, arms at your sides with the palms facing in.
- Bending the knees softly, breathe in deeply, lengthening your spine.
- Slowly breathe out and bring your chin to the chest letting your shoulders drop round and forward.
- Slowly roll your spine forward and down, one vertebra at a time, sliding your hands down your thighs to help balance.
- Go as far as you feel comfortable and holding that pose, take another breath in and out.
- On the next breath, as you exhale, roll your spine back up one vertebra at a time ensuring your neck is the last thing that comes up.

2. The knee hug



- Lie on your back on a yoga mat or blanket. Use a rolled-up towel or pillow to support your neck if needed.

- Take a deep breath and feel the spine pressing down onto the floor.
- Keeping your spine long and lengthened, hunch your shoulders up to your ears and then drop them down to where it feels comfortable.
- Bend your legs one after the other, into the chest and gently hold them there. If you struggle to hug your legs, try holding them behind the knees.
- Take a few gentle breaths, paying attention to the way the air fills your body, your chest rising and falling.
- When ready, gently let go of your legs one at a time, lowering them onto the floor and relax your body.

I hope these exercises have been helpful and you manage to carve out a little time for yourself to do the things that fill you with love and nourishment. You too matter.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!

Alma

Dates for your Diary 2022

7th April
17th June

Curry Night
Quiz Night

Curry Night

The annual curry night is set to take place on 7th April. Tickets will soon be going on sale. You can expect an event with over 50 people, enjoying a relaxing evening with curry, drinks a raffle and more. We are currently deciding where the curry night will be and we will be in touch soon with more details. Do, however save the date and also let us know if you would like to reserve your space.

Quiz Night

The annual quiz night will take place on 17th June. It will be in Hitchin. Teams of up to 8 are encouraged but you can also come along and join another team. There will be a cash bar and raffle. Secure your place now!



01462 420751



01707 324680

**Information Focus Day
Professional Vision Services Exhibition
In conjunction with Herts Vision Loss
To be held on the following dates, no appointment necessary, at**

**Professional Vision Services, 90, Walsworth Road, Hitchin SG4 9SX
16th December 2021, In 2022 12th, 18th, 26th January and 24th February
Tea & Coffee will be served**

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



Would you be prepared to let us know your vaccination status for our records please?

Name

Address

I have had

1 Vaccination

2 Vaccinations

Booster

Signed:

Date: