



Summary Minutes of HVL Forum 28th March 2024

Date	28/02/2024
Time	11:30am – 2:30pm
Meeting Location	The View, Old Herts Lane, Welwyn Garden City.

Ref	Speaker	Subject and discussion
1.	Clement Musonda + Will Davis	Clement opened the meeting and welcoming everyone and thanking the guests and speakers for coming along. He covered general housekeeping matters and updated everyone on new staff, in relation to our new lottery funding, and other developments at HVL, as well as introducing our speakers for the event. He requested feedback about the event at the end of the day, and asked people to let us know what we could cover in future events. Will spoke about the range of Talking Newspapers across the County and how we want to help promote those. He also spoke about updates to our website and Facebook pages.
2	Clement Musonda	Open Discussion and Questions: The issue of helping people get more support and information on using new technology was discussed. People said that they would like more help in this area as many are not aware of what is now available that may be helpful. The issue of the 'digital divide' was raised. People without technology, such as smart phone, feeling excluded from some services and support. We discussed that HVL is planning to arrange more Technology Hub events in conjunction with the RNIB, and that the recent event in St Albans went very well.



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		<p>The issue of contacting GP's and hospitals was raised, with people routinely needing smartphones, emails and apps to be able access health services. It was raised that requests for correspondence and letters in accessible formats are often not met. It was pointed out that there is legislation in place to ensure appropriate formats are accessible. It was also mentioned that there is inconsistency between the different locations and services. Some GP's and hospitals reportedly doing better than others. It was suggested that HVL could ask GP practice managers to explain how they meet the needs of people with sight loss that need accessible information that complies with the Equality Act on other disability related legislation. HVL agreed to look into this issue further. It was raised that energy companies want people to just use their website, but this isn't accessible for many. Note that large print paper statements should still be available. Clement said that we want to help improve the situation through the charity being the voice of people we support who are facing these issues.</p> <p>It was also asked if more activities and events could be organised for people by HVL. This point was accepted and will be worked on within HVL.</p> <p>It was suggested that an audio book group might be something people would like, with a group listening to the same audio book in a month and then coming</p>



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		<p>together to talk about it. People were interested in this, we discuss how the idea could be developed, we will ask people for more suggestions and views on how this could work best.</p> <p>It was suggested that people could meet by telephone using one of the free or cheap conference call services.</p> <p>People raised the new smart glasses by Envision and OrCam, and how they might be beneficial to some people, links to those products can be found at the end.</p> <p>It was also raised that telephone directory enquiries on 195 do not appear to have Herts Vision Loss on record. We have investigated this with them, our details have now been updated in the directory.</p>
3.	Stephanie Bevan – Herts Careline	<p>Operators are on the phone 24/7, they try to be as accessible as possible and have large print/braille information available. The alarm unit is small and tactile, and a person is available at the press of a button 24/7. They can also call for medical services when required. Herts Care Line is a not-for-profit part of Herts County Council (HCC). They fund the home equipment; the user pays a monthly monitoring fee of £20 a month regardless of how many sensors you have. It's often less expensive than other providers. They can also install a key safe outside. They have been covering the County with their service for 7 years. They can also provide pendant alarms, smoke detectors, and other detectors such as heat sensors.</p>



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		<p>They can also be alerted when a front door is opened. Equipment is used to mitigate risks at home and help people remain independent. They also have an outdoor pendant alarm that works outside almost anywhere, and can send them the wearer's location details, in case help is needed.</p> <p>No land line or mobile phone is needed, the unit works alone. Pendants are waterproof and battery lasts 5 years or so. They have no waiting list and can install equipment within a week. Will work for two days if there is a power cut at the home.</p> <p>Herts Vision Loss can make referral to the service for people.</p>
4.	Lunch	Sandwich Buffet and refreshments available to everyone.
5	Helen Snowden - National Lottery Community Fund & Clement Musonda	<p>Lottery Community Fund: They are the largest source of lottery funding in the County. National Lottery raises £30 million pounds a week for good causes. They fund about 50 projects across the County, all different kinds of projects. They are supporting HVL for next four years. Helen said that 23p from every ticket goes towards grant funding for Community Fund good causes. Last year they made £17 million worth of grant in Herts and Essex. Clement noted that the lottery funding will help us deliver the Access to Peer Support service which also supports our Sight Life groups, such as a new one in Letchworth. That funding will also help us deliver</p>



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		<p>assistive technology support to people to enable them to better overcome barriers using new technologies. Whether in employment or elsewhere. It was asked how visually impaired people can buy lottery tickets in an accessible way? Helen said she will find out more, tickets can also be purchased via an app. Note: See link at the end of this report with information about lottery accessibility.</p> <p>Helen said the lottery itself is now run by a new company called Allwyn, they are not involved with grant funding. It was noted that the lottery does a lot of good for communities through its funding.</p> <p>The lottery funding for HVL over the next 4 years is £380,530.00. for which the organisation is very grateful as it will help us deliver more support to people with visual impairments in Hertfordshire.</p>
6	<p>Ryan Heard Development Manager Sensory Strategy Herts County Council</p>	<p>Ryan said he works on the Sensory Strategy. They are looking at the accessibility of community services, sensory services and employers. They also cover working with children with sensory needs. Ryan spoke about book clubs run through libraries, there is one running at St Albans now. Ryan said that by law health and social care agencies have to offer information in formats that comply with the accessible information standard (Link follows at link at the end of this document). It was stated that services should be developed with accessibility in mind from the outset, rather than a later adjustment.</p>



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		<p>Ryan spoke about Coproduction and that there are people with sensory needs sitting on the coproduction board. They are open to new people getting involved with their sensory coproduction board to help develop services on a co production basis.</p> <p>The issues of accessibility of buses was raised, and that timetable print is too small. It was raised that there are often no stop announcements on buses, he said they are working on this. He also spoke about bus driver awareness and their accessibility training. He pointed out that bus services are run by private companies rather than by the Council itself.</p> <p>Ryan spoke about the Orange Wallets that let bus drivers know the user has a disability. We said that HVL now have some orange wallets that can also be given out to people we support, with the appropriate information inserted inside.</p> <p>Ryan said there has been feedback about the inconsistency of tactile pavements (bobbles) etc. He said they have worked with visually impaired people one new pedestrian crossings. He spoke about pavement parking issues, and how HCC are working with local councils on issues that are their issue too like pavement parking.</p> <p>Ryan said that feedback received is being acted upon and they are trying to work on these matters. Overhanging vegetation was discussed, and the issue of getting it removed. These issues can be raised to the Council. It was said that not all</p>



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		pedestrian crossings beep, because if two crossings are close together the person might hear the wrong one and walk onto the road when it isn't safe to do so. It was said that most crossings have the rotating cone underneath now, which people can feel turn when the crossing is green and safe to cross. Ryan said that sensory loss awareness courses for bus drivers were not mandatory at the moment, they want to do more around this area.
7	Closing Clement Musonda	Clement thanked everybody for attending today and thanked the HVL team. He also said he would value any feedback about the event today. Feedback forms were given out to everyone along with support for people who wanted help recording their own feedback.

Useful Contacts:

Herts Careline telephone number is 0300 999 2 999

Their website is: www.care-line.co.uk

Equality Act 2010 overview from RNIB:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/equality-and-employment/the-equality-act-2010/>



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The Accessible Information Standard for the NHS:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/accessilbe-info-specification-v1-1.pdf>

National Lottery Accessibility Information:

<https://www.national-lottery.co.uk/accessibility>

Orcam Read smart glasses and other product information is online here:

<https://www.orcam.com/en-gb/low-vision>

Envision Smart glasses information is here:

<https://shop.letsenvision.com/en-gb>

HCC Orange Wallet Information:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/adult-social-services/factsheets/easy-read/orange-wallet-guide-easy-read.pdf>