

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

August/September 2021

ISSUE 103

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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

The Editor

Essex Sight

40 Osborne Street

Colchester

CO2 7DB

01206 548196

Email: services@essexsight.org.uk

Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by 6th September



The Editor writes:

I hope that you are all enjoying the summer, although the weather has been a bit of a mixture, one minute glorious, the next wet and windy! This edition is packed with news and articles that reflect the easing of the pandemic restrictions and the slight return to some sort of normality as services in the community increase.

One real positive from the pandemic has been the increase in digital services and the ability to get involved in activities online, no matter where they are based. From descriptive performances to art and dance, music to books, and virtual social activities, so much is now available. So, if you are not part of the digital revolution, now really is the time to get on board! The article on AbilityNet will tell you how to get their support with all things technological!

We hope you will find the articles informative and of interest. Please feel free to share Spotlight with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide copies in Braille or on cassette.

I hope you will all continue to send your contributions, as your stories and experiences make Spotlight of interest to everyone. You can email articles to services@essexsight.org.uk

Editor

Community Support Team by Jonathan Dixon

Normal service resumed? Well, not quite yet, however the community team are still active and available to provide you with assistance, including home visiting. Unfortunately, many of our partners are experiencing delays due to the pandemic, so access to training or clinics may take some time to catch up.

Whilst the Colchester Sight Centre remains open by appointment only, we are going to trial Tuesday as a drop in day, so no appointment will be needed and as long as there is space you can come down to access our services, get information or try some of the equipment we have for demonstration.

I thought I would share details of an interesting study that has been set up by the Sleep Study Team, exploring sleep and circadian rhythm disruption associated with vision impairment.

They have recently created a page on their website where they have put together some tips for better sleep, and some information about good sleep hygiene. Here's a link to the page:

<https://blindsleepstudy.com/information-and-sleep-tips/>

They are also still recruiting blind and partially sighted people, aged 18 and over who live in the UK, to participate in a sleep and health survey.

You can contact them:

By email, at sleepstudy@circadiantherapeutics.com

By phone, on 01865 546582 – please leave a name and number and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

Or, interested individuals can fill in this short online form and one of our researchers will be in touch as soon as possible -

<http://bit.ly/blindstudyregister>

Sleep Health Study

Circadian Therapeutics

Phone: 01865 546582 | Address: Oxford Centre for Innovation, New Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX1 1BY

Across the Region – by Carol Massey

It has been great to finally be back in the community and although some of our sight centres and other activities are not yet operating again, as (what was then) British Rail said in the 1970s – “we’re getting there.”

Our monthly sight centre on the first Tuesday of each month, 10am – 1pm at Maldon Library recommenced from July. This is now by appointment only, but it was a good day, fully booked.

Future dates: 3rd August, 7th September, 5th October.

Some more good news is that we will be back in Chelmsford Library from Friday 6th August. For the present, this will be a monthly service being held on the First Friday of each month 10am – 1pm.

Future dates: 6th August, 3rd September, 1st October, 3rd December.

On 23rd July, we were at Doddinghurst Village Hall for a Community Coffee Morning hosted by our friends at Brentwood CVS. It was nice to catch up with old friends and see new faces.

In June we held a pop-up sight centre in South Woodham Ferrers, with the support of the SWF Health and Social Care Group. It was a successful event and we were able to reach people living with sight loss who were not so familiar with Essex Sight and what we do.

We are planning several more events in the coming months. Please phone or check our website and social media for the latest news.

A new advocacy and campaigning group led by blind and partially sighted volunteers is set to launch in Essex later this year. The Essex Sight Loss Council will meet monthly to campaign for positive change and will base its work on three priority areas: Employment and skills, Health and Well-being and Inclusive Communities. If you would like to learn more or apply to become an Essex Sight Loss Council member, visit the Sight Loss Council website: <http://www.sightlosscouncils.org.uk/join-us/>

News and Products

Anglian Water's Priority Services Register

Anglian Water's Priority Services Register provides free practical support to various people who might need extra help due to varying factors, including age, ill-health, disability or those with caring responsibilities. The wide range of support services includes: -

- Helping you read your meter
- Supporting you in the event of a water incident
- Protecting you against bogus callers
- Sending bills in alternative formats or to a friend or relative

To find out more telephone **0800 232 1951**.

Goalball Report by Graham Stearn

Last month Goalball Training for the Cambridge Dons Goalball Club finally got back up and running after 15 months or more due to the uncertainty of COVID-19 and being in Lockdown.

I was very concerned about traveling to Cambridge from Essex to attend training but plucked up the courage to go. I was so pleased that I did and completed my first train journey in months after not traveling anywhere apart from local routes. I was unsure about the bus route to the new training venue so had to get a taxi from the station, but hopefully this weekend I will arrive at the station in time to meet up with others and learn the bus route to the venue.

I am now looking forward to the next training session taking place this weekend especially after watching lots of Goalball this past weekend online as the GB Men were competing in the IBSA Goalball European B Championships in Finland the first real major goalball event since before Lockdown.

Unfortunately, the GB Men didn't quite make it to the promotional stages but managed to come 6th after losing in the Quarter Finals.

Essex Library Services : Reading Friends

Do you know someone who would benefit from having a Reading Friend to talk to on the phone, as part of an online group or in person at one of the Essex County libraries?

The Reading Friends scheme brings people together with trained volunteers to read, share stories, meet new friends, and have fun. Taking part can help build connections with others and reduce social isolation.

The scheme uses reading - books, magazines, newspapers or anything else - to start chatting. Working together, the scheme will ensure Reading Friends meets each person's needs and matches their interests. They will set up one-to-one phone calls as well as virtual groups using video call technology and, now that restrictions are lifting, they will be welcoming in-person meetings either one-to-one or in small groups. The scheme will ensure a safe environment for these, adhering to Government and public health guidelines.

Are you If you interested in taking part, telephone Essex Libraries on 0345 603 7628.

Pre-owned Equipment

We have a number of pre-owned electronic video magnifiers and other low vision aids which need re-homing. If you feel you would benefit from one of these items, then please contact our Colchester Resource Centre to arrange a demonstration.

We do not charge for these items, but you would need to arrange collection from Colchester.

We also have a good amount of fitover shades. These are the inexpensive, plastic type that go over your own prescription glasses and are available in various shades of grey and also orange and yellow and are priced at £5 per pair.

Spotlight On

Talking Newspapers

Local Talking Newspapers are a great way to stay informed about the news and what is happening in the area where you live. Anyone who is visually impaired or print disabled can receive this free service which is primarily run by volunteers.

Each month, we will be asking one of the Talking Newspapers in our region to tell us a little bit about themselves and we will then publish the article in Spotlight. We start off in this issue with Chelmsford Talking News who also record every issue of Spotlight, for which we thank them.

If you would like to find out more about any of the Talking Newspapers in Essex, then please contact us for further information.

Pat Wilson of Chelmsford Talking News writes:

Chelmsford Talking Newspaper was started in 1975. Ronald Sturt - the founder member of Talking Newspapers in the UK moved to Chelmsford and together with his wife, Felicity, and daughter Jackie started our Paper.

We were lucky to be a Marconi town so were not short of technical help. The first edition went out in January 1975 with David Ward as Editor, Stuart Rawlings and Barbara Wood as Readers and Robin Stevens as Technician. Seventy five copies were duly recorded and sent out via Royal Mail Freepost to blind and partially sighted listeners in Chelmsford.

We have had many recording locations over the years, but are now in our own studio at the Beryl Platt Centre in Writtle. We were unable to record due to Covid from end of March 2020, but started again in September and now send out to 100 listeners each week.

Quiz

Flower and gardening quiz

1. A tropical flower named Strelitzia is also known as which kind of bird?
2. Which flower can change its colour from blue to pink by adding acid into the soil?
3. Which famous French artist painted a series of paintings of water lilies?
4. Saffron is extracted from which flower?
5. From which movie does the song Edelweiss come from?
6. What young girls name is associated with Green Gables?
7. What flower did Dame Edna Everage give away at the end of each show?
8. The Chelsea Flower Show is usually held in England every year in what month?
9. In Holland which bulb was once worth more than gold?
10. Which flowers were once known as Gillyflowers?
11. True or false, Gnomes are banned at the Chelsea Flower Show?
12. Which flowering plant takes its name from the Greek word for rainbow?
13. What colour is a Welsh poppy?
14. What forest was Robin Hood associated with?
15. Mary, Mary quite contrary how does your garden grow. What did Mary grow in her garden in the nursery rhyme?
16. Japan typically celebrates a cherry blossom season in what month?
17. In the song "A White Sports Coat" what flower was mentioned?
18. Finish the words to this popular Dean Martin song, I want some red roses for...
19. What flower shares its name with Donald Ducks girlfriend?
20. Name a flower that also shares its name with a part of the eye?

Technology

AbilityNet

For over 20 years, AbilityNet has been helping older and disabled people to use technology to achieve their goals at home, at work and in education. They do this by providing specialist advice services, free information resources and by helping to build a more accessible digital world.

AbilityNet offers the following free services:

- The **free helpline 0800 048 7642** is available 9am-5pm Monday-Friday for technology advice and information.
- A nationwide network of more than 300 carefully selected and vetted AbilityNet tech volunteers who are on hand to offer phone and remote support for groups and individuals. As well as diagnosing and fixing most computer related problems, the tech volunteers can help with sending and receiving emails, using the internet, installing new hardware and software and giving impartial advice on IT equipment and software and home visits when restrictions allow.
- Free online expert resources including factsheets, webinars and My Computer My Way, a unique series of step-by-step guides to the many ways you can adjust your laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone, including changes to your keyboard and mouse.
- Free training sessions on technology and staying safe online.

In response to the pandemic AbilityNet is running a series of live online events to help share useful information for disabled people and their carers and employers. More details on AbilityNet LIVE, and past recordings are available via the website <https://abilitynet.org.uk/>

Follow on Facebook and Twitter @AbilityNet, Sign up to the newsletter and receive three emails a week covering webinars, training, events and recent news.

Assistive technology for children with vision impairment

Guide Dogs have launched an exciting new initiative to help children and young people with a vision impairment.

Guide Dogs believe children with a vision impairment should have access to technology to develop learning, creativity, life skills, and ultimately, confidence and independence. Their 'Tech for All' scheme is offering a free Apple iPad or iPhone to children and young people (aged 3-18) with visual impairments, to use outside of school.

The devices have excellent accessibility features built-in, and online guides and tutorials are provided to help you get started so you can use it to independently play favourite games, listen to music or audiobooks, watch shows and connect with family and friends in the format that works best for you and to ensure you know how to stay safe online.

The devices are completely free of charge, with the only requirement being proof of vision impairment.

To check eligibility and apply for one of these devices contact Guide dogs at:-

<https://guidedogs-uk.secure.force.com/TechforAll>

If these devices aren't right for your child's needs, Guide Dogs also offer [grants for specialist assistive technology devices or software](#) (such as laptops or desktop computers with screen reading software, refreshable braille displays, video magnifiers or enlarged keyboards) that can provide a fully customised experience to meet your child's preferred style of learning and way they get information.

They also provide [grants for sensory equipment and toys](#), to help your child meet important development milestones with a choice of sensory packages with toys carefully selected by experts for different age ranges.

Entertainment

Vocal Eyes

Experience art and culture through audio description. Bringing theatre, museums, galleries and heritage sites to life for blind and visually impaired people.

For more information or to find out what's on near you, email: enquiries@vocaleyeyes.co.uk or telephone 020 7375 1043.

Sight Village

Sight Village will be hosting their first in-person event since 2019. On Tuesday 17th and Wednesday 18th August 2021, a Sight Village Information and Technology event will be taking place at Queen Alexandra College (QAC), Birmingham.

Visitors will once again have the opportunity to find out more about the latest technology, equipment and support services available to people who are blind or partially sighted. Timed entry is applicable, with morning or afternoon sessions available on both days. If you do not arrive within your allocated time slot, unfortunately entry may be refused so the organisers request that you only commit to this event if you are certain that you are available to attend.

Tickets are available online via www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/queen-alexandra-college-12689629940

or by calling of one of the team on 0121 803 5484

If you require any further information, please contact: sv@qac.ac.uk.

The British Science Festival

7th – 11th September, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford

This free festival is running in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University and it's set to be one of the most ambitious live events held in the UK since the start of the pandemic. There's an immersive after-dark installation, in-depth discussions with some of the UK's top scientists, and nature-inspired audio experiences in the line-up.

With so many different events, there should be something for everyone. There'll be opportunities to find out how science intersects almost everything in life, from music and fashion, to sport and the environment. This will also be the most sustainable in the festival's history and will shine a spotlight on topics such as the future of energy and transport.

The festival is free, but you will need to book for most events. Check out the festival programme on the [British Science Festival website](https://britishsciencefestival.org/) <https://britishsciencefestival.org/> or keep up to date with festival news by following BSF on [Twitter @BritishSciFest](#) and [#BSF21](#) and on [Facebook @BritishScienceFestival](#).

The Royal Collection Trust – A Portrait of the Duke of Edinburgh

Amy Stocker, The Access and Inclusion manager for the Royal Collection Trust has advised that their next Descriptive Zoom session will explore a newly released portrait of the Duke of Edinburgh that was painted in the year he retired from public engagements.

The session will start at 2pm on Wednesday 7 September and last about an hour.

If you would like to book a place, please email Amy at amy.stocker@rct.uk.

If you would like to receive email updates from the Royal Collection Trust, you can subscribe at www.rct.uk/keep-in-touch

Dance for Free with Dance Dosti Digital

Dance Dosti digital provides free, accessible dance sessions for blind and partially sighted people.

All sessions are delivered by South Asian dancers and are available in English, Bengali, Gujarati, and Hindi.

Step Change Studios Founder Rashmi Becker, who was recognised with an MBE for services to disabled people in the Queen's Birthday Honours List said: "The idea for Dance Dosti came from seeing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people from certain demographics. People from a South Asian background and disabled people have reported greater isolation and inactivity. As an inclusive dance provider, we know the positive difference dance makes to our quality of life, irrespective of age or ability. It benefits both body and mind.

"Our free digital programme is designed as short sessions that can be fitted in to daily life. We want to support people to enjoy learning to dance, to be active at home, and to transition to creative and physical activity outside the home."

Each session is 15-minutes long. Choose from seated and standing dance, and video and audio formats.

To start dancing, sign up for free at: www.dancedosti.com

Dance Dosti is delivered by Step Change Studios in partnership with Metro Blind Sport. The programme is supported by Vision Foundation.

For queries contact: admin@dancedosti.com

Answers to quiz

1. Bird of Paradise
2. Hydrangea
3. Claude Monet
4. Crocus flowers
5. The Sound of Music
6. Anne
7. Gladiolus
8. May
9. Tulip
10. Carnations
11. True
12. Iris
13. Yellow
14. Sherwood Forest
15. Silver Bells and Cockle Shells and Pretty Maids all in a row
16. April
17. Pink Carnation
18. A blue lady
19. Daisy
20. Iris

Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196
(Carol Massey, Christine Pratt, Denise Sanders and Steve Massey)

Eye Clinic Liaison Officers 01206 548196
Christine & Denise (Colchester + Tendring hospitals)

Read House 01255 673654
(Tina Cox, Administrator)

Read House is the residential care home run by Essex Blind Charity in Frinton on Sea. The home specialises in the care of elderly people with sight problems. We offer permanent and respite care (short breaks) by staff who have all been trained in visual awareness. The Home is situated on the seafront at Frinton on Sea, a short distance from the town Centre with its friendly local shops.

If you would like to find out more about Read House or receive an Information Pack, please contact Tina.

How you can support us

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However, donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

Thank you!

Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....

Post Code.....

I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:
Essex Blind Charity
Read House, 23 The Esplanade
Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU

Are you on our mailing list?

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Memory Stick.....Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Colchester Eye Clinic contact numbers

To book or change a NEW appointment only
01206 286870 / 286871 / 286872

To enquire about or change a date for SURGERY only
01206 286874 / 286875

To book or change a FOLLOW UP appointment only
01206 286860 – Mr Sheldrick and Mr Mukherjee
01206 286863 – Mr Patel and Mr Bansal
01206 286856 – Mr Dimitriou
01206 286769 – Mrs Shenoy

For any enquiry relating to Secondary Optometry 01206 286868

For any enquiry relating to Orthoptics 01206 286866

For the EMERGENCY EYE CLINIC only 01206 286882
Please Note self-referrals are not accepted unless the patient is already under our care or has a pink card for the same condition.

Email the department on chu-ftr.opthalmologydepartment@nhs.net

Broomfields Eye Clinic (Chelmsford)

Appointments - 01245 513900

Diabetic Eye Screening - 01245 516707

Age Related Macular Clinic - 01245 514899

Ophthalmology Surgery waiting list - 01245 514767

Essex Sight Centres

Due to the current restrictions, we are only able to offer a drop-in service at our permanent Resource Centre in Colchester. Please ring to make an appointment.

Colchester Sight Centre

40 Osborne Street

Colchester

CO2 7DB

Open Mon - Fri 10 am to 4 pm,

Saturday 10 – 12pm

Tel: 01206 548196

Maldon Sight Centre

Maldon Library

Carmelite House

White Horse Lane

Maldon CM9 5FW

First Tuesday of each Month

10am – 1pm by appointment only

Tel: 01206 548196

For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.

Email: services@essexsight.co.uk

For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:

Tina on 01255 673654

Email: info@essexblind.co.uk