

# EAST SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

## NEWSLETTER

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**EAST SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND**  
Registered Charity No. 1173918

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## **CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

I'd like to open by warmly welcoming to our organisation all those who were previously service users of Ipswich Blind Society (IBS). I hope you find this newsletter informative and an enjoyable read or listen. Our intention for the newsletter is to provide a balance of useful information and some slightly more light hearted articles, we hope we have achieved this aim. Our office – who work very hard to publish the newsletter - would be very interested in any feedback you may have on the content or indeed suggestions for future editions.

This is a momentous time for us all at ESAB with the expansion as from March this year of our operation into Ipswich town with the closure of the Ipswich Blind Society and our planned amalgamation with West Suffolk Sight (WSS) later this year. Both actions are intended to create a more sustainable county wide organisation focused on providing the very best support to those with a visual impairment. To those who have been associated with ESAB for many years, I'd say "please do not worry about these initiatives, they in no way change our organisation's objectives or ambitions. All the changes are designed to ensure that services for the visually impaired of Suffolk are protected and hopefully improved". In the short term ESAB will continue to operate from our office at Little Bealings as well as the old IBS office in Tower Street Ipswich. This situation will be kept under review and things may change as we get to more fully understand the new ESAB operating area including Ipswich. After the planned amalgamation with WSS, the challenges of trying to provide consistent services across the entire county, whilst remaining accessible, will also have to be considered. Early thoughts are that in the longer term, maintaining office locations in both Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds may be the best way forward. You will hear more about this in the future as options are reviewed and plans created.

As stated in previous newsletters, volunteers are the life blood of our District Committees, social meetings and many other activities ESAB organises. Previous appeals for new volunteers have resulted in a few people stepping forward to help, but we still need more. So, if anyone reading or listening to this newsletter has family or friends that may be able to help out for a few hours each month, then could I ask that you or they contact the office or one of our local Community Workers to offer their help; we are happy to put the right people in touch in order to explain what's involved and make any introductions needed. Hopefully

we can attract a few more fantastic folk to join those who already volunteer; we can never have too many.

On behalf of the board of trustees I'd like to welcome Abigail to the ESAB team as the community worker for the new Ipswich area. Abigail, previously employed by IBS, has joined ESAB to ensure that the people of Ipswich continue to have available locally based support via the telephone or through home visits.

Finally, I hope that you, your families and friends all have a very enjoyable summer.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Association would normally have been holding its AGM in July 2019. However, at the first October 2018, the Association became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and the pre-CIO Association charity ceased to operate at that time. As a result, there is not a requirement to hold an AGM for the old charitable Association. Once plans are finalised for an AGM for the CIO, notifications will be made as required by the governing document (Constitution).

### **IPSWICH OFFICE OPENING HOURS AND SERVICES**

As mentioned in the Chairman's message above, the East Suffolk Association for the Blind now has an office at 19 Tower St, Ipswich IP1 3BE (telephone number 01473 219712) which is adjacent to the Tower Ramparts bus station.

The office opening hours are 10am to 1pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but not Friday. Visitors can drop in to seek advice and support on a range of matters relating to visual impairment as well as having the opportunity to try out a range of daily living aids on display in the equipment room. In addition demonstrations and training on some IT products can also be arranged. If appropriate, it is possible to arrange for our Community Worker to visit service users in their own homes.

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### **HOME VISITING MAGNIFIER SERVICE**

All East Suffolk Blind home visiting Community Workers are now trained in assessing members' individual magnification needs, from the simple handheld through to the more sophisticated electronic

hand held types. They are each equipped with an extensive range of demonstration magnifiers which can be used to find the appropriate one to meet any individuals' needs and circumstances. Once an appropriate choice has been made, the Community Workers can arrange for the purchase of the magnifier and once delivered they are able to help with training to ensure they are used correctly. It should be noted that the NHS Hospital eye clinics have their own low vision aid clinics which all members can request to be referred to for a similar service.

It is important to note that before you seek to obtain any magnifier, you should first be certain that you have had a recent eye test and that you are using glasses that were prescribed from that eye test. To arrange for a home visit by one of our Community Workers, please call the office on 01473 611011 to make an appointment.

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**INNOVATION IN EYE HEALTH** - By Professor Andrew Lotery who is Chairperson of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Scientific Committee.

In this article Professor Lotery outlines why registration rates for blindness are falling and mentions exciting innovations in eye health.

### **Macular degeneration**

In terms of treatment of macular degeneration the outcomes have really improved because of the use of new types of drugs in the treatment of this condition. By this, I mean monitoring all antibodies that target a specific molecule in the back of the eye. We can now stabilise or even improve vision quite successfully in people with wet macular degeneration. As a consequence of that, we've seen registration rates for blindness decreasing over the last few years, so I think that's a mark that we're actually making some progress. That's an innovation that actually started over 100 years ago when the notion of having a drug that could target a specific organ or tissue was first suggested and it's taken 100 years to develop the idea of monitoring all antibodies. They're now used in cancer therapies and rheumatology and one of the most successful used has been in the treatment of macular degeneration. These are drugs that people might have heard of such as, Lucentis or Eylea and Avastin. All very successful in treating wet macular degeneration.

## **Eye imaging**

Another big innovation has been in imaging of the eye with a technology called optical coherence tomography (OCT) which allows us to take very accurate images of both the front and the back of the eye, the retina and see exquisite detail of the tissue which makes it much easier to make a diagnosis say of a retina problem. This technology is now widely used through the NHS and it's changing how we manage patients.

The big challenge is of course lack of capacity, to see patients as quickly as we want. So with this new imaging technology, increasingly we're developing what are called virtual clinics where patients have an image of their eyes taken but they don't necessarily see a doctor on that visit. Because the imaging is so good we can reliably look at the pictures and see a lot more patients.

## **Cataract surgery**

Cataract surgery has got much better over my lifetime as an ophthalmologist. Previously it required stitches, a few days in hospital and a long recovery time. Now, most cataract surgery is day case surgery, the operation takes 20 minutes in most cases and patients have a very fast recovery and don't require any stitches because we can, with modern materials, put a new lens in the eye through an incision that's maybe only 2mm in size.

So the technology, better artificial lens for cataract surgery and better equipment to do cataract surgery has meant that the operations are faster and people heal quicker.

## **Genetic diseases**

The other thing maybe that has happened is our understanding of genetics of eye diseases; this has led to new ideas on how to treat macular degeneration. We know that faults in a pathway called the Complement Pathway in the body are to blame for people developing macular degeneration, so drugs targeting this pathway are now being developed.

We're also starting to see gene therapy, replacing a faulty gene, being developed for eye diseases, this is still at a very early stage but the first licenced gene therapy treatment for any disease in the world was actually for an eye disease and that's just been licenced in the United States for a rare form of inherited blindness called Leber's

congenital amaurosis and there's now efforts to have this treatment brought to the UK. This work started with clinicians and scientists working together to find the genes that caused this early onset form of blindness and after many years of research developing gene therapy, replacing faulty genes, it's now become a licenced therapy that patients in the United States can get access to. It's very new and will hopefully become available in the UK in the next couple of years.

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## **A PERSONAL COUNSELLING EXPERIENCE STORY**

(Reproduced by kind permission of The Macular Society)

It is normal to experience powerful feelings after diagnosis and subsequent losses and changes. These deserve time, attention and thinking about. When we give our feelings space and time, the intensity lessens and we can get on with the business of living with macular disease.



Norma contacted the Macular Society's Counselling Service after feeling a profound sense of loss when she was diagnosed with macular disease. She has reflected on the process and how much she has mourned, but also what she has found.

"I am 71 years old and have wet macular degeneration in both eyes. As many people have described, the onset can be quite sudden. I had just had an eye test, ordered new glasses the week previously and by the time I collected my new glasses I was aware something was terribly wrong with my vision. My optician instructed me to go to A&E at the eye hospital as soon as possible. The diagnosis and its implications were shocking. The second eye showed symptoms three months later, and I was prescribed injections in both eyes, five weekly for the left eye and ten for the right eye.

"The biggest loss at the time for me was the way the disease affected how I read and especially reading music. "There have been ups and downs in the past two years but the main thing that urged me to seek counselling was that I had a lot of pain after injections. It was excruciating and it seemed we'd found a solution and my consultant was very supportive. For nine months things were fine but just before Christmas I had another very painful injection. I was devastated. "Whereas previously I had not found the injections particularly difficult, I now dreaded them. I became preoccupied with thinking about the pain. I couldn't stop thinking about it, ruminating, obsessing, talking to everyone and anyone. I was totally preoccupied by the whole situation. I realised I needed help. This whole process was taking up too much of my mind. I am a healthy, active, lively person and I did not like this further loss of myself and the impact on my daily life.

"I was paired with a counsellor very quickly. I told her my story and cried, talking about the shock and impact on my life, the adjustments I have had to make and allowances I have to factor in every time I go for an injection.

"For the first few sessions I focussed on my fear of having excruciating pain in both eyes at the same time. How helpless and dependent I would be. I have a loving and supportive husband and family, and friends, but I was used to being the one who helps, not the one who asks for or receives help. "Over six sessions I felt heard and understood by my counsellor. She held me during the time we had on the telephone and helped me to contain the feelings of fear, anxiety, despair, helplessness and lack of control I was experiencing. I had two injections during this time and because of a slight change in my injection regime I did not have any more pain after injections. But I had, with the help of my counsellor, prepared myself for what if. Before leaving for the injection clinic I had set my bedroom up with a radio, mindfulness meditation CDs and a comfortable back rest so that I could sleep upright.

"Ironically I felt more in control. Counselling has been a very positive experience for me. I have got the injections and the pain into more perspective. There is no choice, if I don't have the injections I will lose my vision very quickly. I am very grateful to have regular injections which are working for me. Our NHS is wonderful.

"I have expressed all of my concerns and distress in a safe, contained way. I have my mind back, I am no longer so preoccupied and can get on without constantly being drawn back into the anxiety of my next injection date. By having a regular time each week to talk I felt freer and more able to get on with things.

"My counsellor was a very sympathetic, warm, lovely person. Most importantly she was a very professional and skilful counsellor. So, thank you Macular Society for providing such a wonderful and much-needed service. I would recommend it to anyone who is struggling with the diagnosis, implications and impact of a diagnosis and treatment for this condition."

The Macular Society's team of professional accredited counsellors are available for free confidential telephone sessions for anyone with macular disease or their family. For more information, please call 0300 303 0111 or email [help@macularsociety.org](mailto:help@macularsociety.org)

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## **ACCESSIBLE SMART METERS**

If you're blind or partially sighted, you'll soon have the option to get a smart meter with an accessible in-home display (AIHD) unit installed in your home, making it simpler for you to manage your energy usage. They will be available from selected suppliers from June 2019 and is the result of partnership work between RNIB, Energy UK (the trade association for the UK energy industry) and Geo (a smart meter display manufacturer).

### **What is a smart meter?**

Smart meters are often described as the next generation of meters, because they work in a cleverer and more intuitive way than today's standard gas and electricity meters. It's a bit like the difference between an ordinary phone and a smartphone. The government have tasked energy companies with rolling out smart meters to all homes they provide energy to.

### **What are the benefits of a smart meter?**

Smart meters come with an in-home display (IHD) unit and will show you how much energy you're using in real time and how much it's costing you. Smart meters also send energy usage data to your chosen energy company, meaning you will no longer need to let meter readers into your house or provide a meter reading to your

supplier and you will receive bills based on actual rather than estimated meter readings.

Smart meters with accessible in-home displays have all the features of a regular smart meter in-home display unit, with the addition of accessibility features such as:

- text-to-speech function for screen navigation
- adjustable volume for the text-to-speech function
- six large printed buttons with vibration that confirms a button has been pressed
- three coloured LEDs for indicating electricity usage
- LED push button to replay speech
- Large crisp typeface
- LCD screen with a high contrast colour scheme optimised for visual impairment and colour blindness.

### **How much does it cost?**

There is no cost to customers for the initial smart meter with an AIHD; the energy suppliers will bear the cost of these.

### **How can I get one?**

While the accessible smart meter will be available from selected suppliers from June 2019, different suppliers have different roll out plans, and may not be installing smart meters in your area right now. If you or a family member have sight loss or other accessibility needs, contact your energy supplier to discuss the available options. Your supplier will be able to provide further information on smart meters, including the accessible in-home display. Alternatively, speak to your supplier about accessibility options when they contact you about installing a smart meter. You can find out more about smart meters by visiting the Smart Energy website.

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## **NHS LAUNCHES DATA-SHARING 'OPT-OUT' TOOL FOR PATIENTS ACROSS ENGLAND**

The NHS has launched a national data opt-out tool so patients in England can choose not to share their confidential information for use in research and planning. Coinciding with the recent introduction of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the tool will collect patient preferences between now and 2020 - by which point

health and social care organisations across England will be expected to apply these to the choices they make in sharing patient data.

Data is generated about each of us every time we speak to a GP or consultant, have a medical test or receive a treatment. Only health professionals directly involved with your care can see your full medical record, so in the past it has been hard to see the patterns that might lead to a new treatment or a change in policy.

Increasingly this information is being pooled and analysed, but it is always anonymised wherever possible. Personal details that might make it possible for an individual to be identified are stripped out, and a code or string of numbers is sometimes used to represent the details that remain. But what remains is incredibly useful to NHS commissioners trying to spend their budget in the best way possible, and to researchers developing new tests or treatments. Rather than spend years planning and running expensive clinical trials, they can look at real-world results from more people than they'd ever get into the laboratory. If you choose to opt out, it means that you deny the NHS permission to use your personal data for anything other than your own health care.

Health information is vital in helping us understand disease and in finding new treatments. People are understandably cautious about sharing their medical information and it is crucial that everyone has a right to opt out. However, we will all benefit from a better understanding derived from health information.

There's a lot more information about how your data is protected and used, and stories about the ways that patient data has already improved care at the following website:

[www.understandingpatientdata.org.uk](http://www.understandingpatientdata.org.uk).

You can also speak to your GP or consultant next time you see them. The NHS will never share your personally identifiable data for marketing or insurance purposes unless you specifically say that it is OK. If you are happy for your data to be shared, there's no need to do anything. If you've decided that you want to opt out, you can do so online. For more information visit [www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters](http://www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters)

## **HEARD ANY GOOD MOVIES LATELY?**

Cinema audio description (AD) is a fantastic service for people with sight loss. The normal film soundtrack is broadcast to cinema speakers in the usual way, whilst a recorded narrator explains what's happening on screen - in gaps in the dialogue - through personal headphones.

Hundreds of UK cinemas can screen almost every popular film with audio description (AD). That said, not all cinemas provide audio description so we suggest that you contact cinemas in your area and ask if they provide it. We also suggest that you request that the cinema informs you of its AD shows regularly.

Around 50 per cent of cinemas have audio description receiver facilities. Almost all modern multiplex cinemas have it including almost all Odeon, Vue and Cineworld sites, but many smaller cinemas have yet to invest in AD receiver facilities. It's also rare for a pop-up cinema, outdoor event, community club etc. to provide access via AD (or subtitles, for people with hearing loss).

Note that AD tracks are not always included on the eventual DVD release, even if they have been produced for the cinema release, and although many TV channels can now offer audio description on programmes and films, and online, available AD film tracks are not always re-used by TV companies.

UK film distributors spent almost £500,000 on subtitle and audio description tracks last year for almost 200 films. Every week more than 300 cinemas nationwide, including almost most multiplex cinemas, provide thousands of accessible shows.

### **The future?**

The cinema industry is looking into new solutions. Products are available that can receive audio description (AD) tracks via a standard headphone socket, enabling customers with sight loss to use their own, familiar regular headphones to experience the isolated AD narration track, rather than the current choice of cinema-supplied, over-the-ear headphones (which can block out the 'regular' film soundtrack that's delivered via cinema surround speakers).

Smartphones can be used as AD solutions, via a simple app. But as yet, no official infrastructure is in place to synchronise an AD track to a phone. In theory, there's no need to depend on cinemas to provide

an AD service. Film distributors and cinemas could work together to ensure that all films have an audio cue that triggers an AD track to stream to smartphones, and sync to the film.

It's hoped that eventually, subtitles and AD will be just another ubiquitous access facility - like beeping traffic crossings, bus audio announcements etc. In the meantime, here's a link to some great 10 minute AD samples of the latest films:

<https://www.yourlocalcinema.com/ad.mp3samples.html>

And here is a testimonial from a sight impaired visitor to an AD film:  
"Last night I thoroughly enjoyed a film for the first time in my life. The film was Gravity. I had heard it looks fantastic, amazing visuals, spectacular, all descriptions that are not very useful to a person with severe sight loss. But I'm a space-buff, I just had to catch it on a huge screen. I've seen IMAX space films before I lost my sight, so kind of knew what to expect. For Gravity, all I could see on the cinema screen were black and white blobs and mis-shapes of various sizes. But that's more than I can usually see in a film. The contrast of the white suits of the astronauts floating around the black of space made the film clearer than any I've seen in a long time. But without the audio description explaining what was going on the story, with its many long dialogue-free scenes would have been lost on me. It was absolutely gripping. I was on the edge of my seat! I really felt like I was up there with the characters. It was a wonderful experience."

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## **GOOD FOOD TALKS – ACCESSIBLE MENUS**

Matt Wadsworth founded a company in 2013 which makes restaurant menus accessible to blind and partially sighted diners via a smartphone and a mobile optimised web site. This is done either by making the screen print bigger or easier to read or by having the menu spoken to you. The service is completely free to diners and restaurants pay a subscription for its service.

Visually impaired people are sociable creatures. They love food, wine and beer, and above all else, they value their independence; basically, they just want to be treated like anybody else.

There's something about the restaurant experience, though, that can often make you feel like some kind of special needs case. You've either got a dining companion reading the menu, or you've got a

hurried waiter, who, with the best will in the world, just doesn't have time to read everything out loud. Then there are Braille menus – a nice gesture on the restaurant's part, but if you try grappling your way through a Braille menu, everybody else has ordered and you're still reading through the starters.

With their shared passion for creative problem solving, they put their heads together to invent a universally accessible restaurant menu – the kind of thing someone could read as casually and effortlessly as an ordinary menu. After 4 months of research and testing, they figured out that the ideal medium for this was the device most people already had in their pockets. We live in an incredible age of technology. Matt remembers a time when deciding to read a book meant ordering the special Braille version – if it even existed – and then hoping it arrived (in multiple volumes) before you decided you'd rather read a different book. Now, we just order ordinary e-books for our Kindle app and read them on our phones. Most smartphones, tablets and computers now come with a host of customisable accessibility features, including a built-in screen reader that will speak everything out loud. For people who have limited vision, you can also enlarge the print, highlight buttons, and even invert all the colours. Every time your smartphone gets an upgrade, you'll invariably notice more of these choices.

After 6 years, they have over 2500 venues on the platform all over the UK and Northern Ireland, including some of the biggest high street names, such as Carluccios, Pret, Nandos, Café Rouge, TGI Fridays, Strada and Whetherspoons. For more information, go to their web site at <https://goodfoodtalks.com/>

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## **TIPS FOR VIPS**

### **Bathroom organisation**

Have a designated place for things in the bathroom. If you don't, you can end up cleaning your teeth with face cream! You get to know where to put things and keep them in the same place.

If sharing a bathroom with family, either choose a clearly different colour of toothbrush or wrap some bright tape round the handle of yours so it can be identified easily. You can also cut a notch in the handle if preferred.

Don't waste your time trying to put toothpaste on the brush – it will go everywhere! Just squirt some on your tongue and brush away! It also saves a lot of toothpaste as you put far less on your tongue than you would have done on the brush.

Try to get soap that contrasts with your sink/basin colour. Use a combined shampoo/ conditioner rather than separate products so you don't need to identify which is which.

## **Clothing**

I was having difficulty in distinguishing colours in my wardrobe but now have a tiny torch hanging on the inside of the door. It has a very bright light – if I shine it on the clothes I can tell black from navy blue etc.

OR

I have a 'super bright switch' from JML Direct, which I have stuck inside my cupboard. It is wonderfully bright and allows me to see different colours clearly, while leaving my hands free for looking through clothes.

OR

I have attached different plastic shapes to the labels on all of my clothing – including ties. Each shape represents a different colour, and allows me to select matching clothes through feeling the shapes. I find that, in artificial light, many colours appear the same. To distinguish between them, I write on the washing care labels (which are normally white) with a letter to represent each colour.

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## **DRIVING WITH MACULAR DISEASE**

Being able to drive is very important to many people as it helps maintain independence, especially in areas with less reliable public transport. However, many people with macular disease are not able to continue driving.

What are the rules? As long as you are able to meet the minimum sight requirements for driving (possibly using corrective glasses or contact lenses), then you can continue to drive. Many people with macular disease may still be able to drive safely and legally. However, there is a legal requirement for you to report your condition to your licensing authority if you have been diagnosed with the condition in both eyes. Additionally, if you are over the age of 70 –

and whether you have macular disease or not – you will need to renew your driving licence.

If you have been diagnosed with macular disease, seek advice from an optician or ophthalmologist to determine whether your sight passes the required driving requirements. If in doubt, don't take risks – it could hurt you or others. We want everyone with macular disease to live as well as they can with their condition, and to be safe. For some people, this means giving up driving before they are legally required to do so.

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## **TENNIS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN SUFFOLK**



Since 2016, iFit Suffolk have been running a weekly tennis session for Visually Impaired (VI) players at Ipswich Sports Club.

This year they can run the programme with funding from Suffolk Community Foundation, through the David and Jill Simpson fund. The sessions run from 1pm to 2.30pm on Wednesdays.

There are a regular group of players with varied levels of sight and, during 2018, three members of the group attained coaching qualifications.

iFit are always keen to welcome new players and those who have never tried VI tennis before. The sessions are fun and everyone enjoys the social time in the clubhouse before and after. If you would

like to go along, or have any questions, please contact Kelvin Sole on 07712 006852 or email [info@ifitsuffolk.org](mailto:info@ifitsuffolk.org).

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## **UNSCENE SUFFOLK**

Unscene Suffolk runs drama and singing workshops for sight impaired people in Ipswich and surrounding areas. Why not come and see one of their performances this summer or why not think of joining them as a participant? Two upcoming performances are:

On Monday 10th June at 1pm, the Unscene Singers will perform a selection of songs on the Bandstand at Aldeburgh Beach.

On Saturday 6th July at 3.30pm and 7pm, Unscene Suffolk presents *The Tree of Dreams* at the New Wolsey Studio, St George's Street, Ipswich. This is a story about expectations, reality, fantasy and family, devised by the company, incorporating beatbox-style enhanced audio description by Rationale Method. For tickets call the box office on 01473 295900 or visit their website:

[www.wolseytheatre.co.uk](http://www.wolseytheatre.co.uk)

They will also be touring to community venues in Castle Hill and Chantry - please see [www.unscenesuffolk.co.uk](http://www.unscenesuffolk.co.uk) for full details.

Would you be interested in joining them? They have space in their workshops for new members! Singing takes place on Monday afternoons 2.15pm - 4.15pm at Dance East, Ipswich Waterfront.

Drama takes place on Thursdays 1.30pm - 4.30pm at Ipswich Quaker Meeting House, Fonnereau Road, Ipswich.

To book a taster session please call 07528 189865 or email [email@unscenesuffolk.co.uk](mailto:email@unscenesuffolk.co.uk)

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## **SEABLE HOLIDAYS**

Seable is an award-winning tour operator based in London that organises tailored holidays abroad for the blind and partially sighted travellers.

Their mission is to improve accessible holidays for the sight impaired community; holidays that can improve well-being by providing trained assistance and tailored activities that stimulate independence, self-esteem, and confidence.

Established in 2012 with only 1 destination to offer, they now have over 300 returning customers every year and 7 exciting destinations to offer. Their destinations now are: Sicily, Lanzarote, Cyprus, Rome, Slovenia, Amsterdam and from this year Thailand. They organise relaxing holidays, sport activities, food and wine tasting sessions and much more.

At Seable, your visual impairment no longer means you have to depend upon your family members or carers to go on holiday. As a blind or sight impaired traveller you can simply choose a date, destination and activity and they will take care of the rest. When you travel with them you will receive assistance from the time you reach the destination until the time you depart.

All of their activities are tailored for you, your friends and family. Their guides are local to the destinations you visit and they will look after you as a friend, not as a tourist.

Seable brochures are available in print, braille, audio, online pdf or Word. You can download or request one from the website: [www.seable.co.uk](http://www.seable.co.uk) or email them at: [emma@seable.co.uk](mailto:emma@seable.co.uk) or call them on 0203 3756947

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## **KEW GARDENS - SENSORY GUIDED WALKING TOURS FOR VISITORS WITH SIGHT LOSS AND THEIR CARERS**

This sensory experience gives you the chance to touch and smell elements in Kew Gardens.

These sensory guided walking tours are for visitors with sight loss and their carers, and are led by one of Kew's specially trained tour guides. Tours take place on the second Sunday of every month (next two are on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> August) at 11.30am and last about 60 minutes. Walks start from Victoria Gate. These tours are free and free entry to the gardens is included for visitors with sight loss and their carers. This tour has been created in partnership with VISOR Richmond and Richmond Talking Newspaper.

They have a limited number of people per tour, so registering is essential. Please register in advance by emailing [discovery@kew.org](mailto:discovery@kew.org) or phoning 0208 332 5643.

**TECHNOLOGY NEWS** by Matt Harrison (technology services manager at The Beacon Centre)

Vital Tech – a new website for assistive technology. Let's be honest, finding a product that is accessible to someone with a visual impairment is a difficult task. I speak from pained experience having recently had to replace my washing machine and TV. It's rare to find a mainstream product that actively promotes any inbuilt accessibility features which would be of use, and quite often the whole buying process can feel like something of a gamble. As technology becomes smarter, and as it incorporates a greater use of Artificial Intelligence, it will, by default, become more accessible to people with differing needs. This is a positive shift but there are still a large number of visually impaired consumers fazed by technology who don't really know what they are looking for, despite appreciating that they have a need for something assistive. A new website, Vital Tech, is the ideal starting point.

Vital Tech is a website constructed and maintained by visually-impaired people for the very same audience. Our needs are of primary concern and so, on reading an article about a particular range of products, there is no need to question whether or not it would be suitable for someone with sight loss; the fact that it is on the site means that it is.

As you would expect, the website itself is very accessible with clear text and images, a button to switch between various contrast options, and embedded audio for key articles. The site is arranged thematically, meaning that you do not have to know what you need in order to find it. The themes include: reading and magnifying; jobs around the house; computing; health and wellbeing; and heating, lighting and access. There are also sections containing bite-sized video tutorials and a resources page.

While the site does not necessarily make specific recommendations regarding, say, the most appropriate model of TV to buy, it does tell you what features to look for. All information is presented in a format that is easily digestible – there is even a 'jargon buster' section to explain any technical terms, but the site is so friendly you are unlikely to need this.

Not only is the site a must for any visually impaired consumer, but it is also the perfect starting point for anyone who supports someone with a visual impairment. The information provided will help avoid the purchase of inappropriate, inaccessible products whilst highlighting the design features vital for a visually impaired person to use a product independently.

Visit the website for yourself at [www.vitaltech.org.uk](http://www.vitaltech.org.uk)

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## **IN YOUR POCKET**

In Your Pocket is the world's first totally voice operated smart phone. It is a smartphone that has been customised for people with any degree of sight impairment. The following five points summarise its main features:

- On Demand – easy access to listen to 100,000 talking books, 200 newspapers and magazines and 50,000 podcasts whenever you want.
- Communicate – use natural speech to make phone calls and text messages and manage your contacts. Although it can connect to the internet, this is purely to enable Pocket to access its content.
- Anywhere - you can read while lying in bed, walking in the park on the train or anywhere within the O2 network or an accessible WI-FI.
- Direct Access - It works straight out of the box, without a computer.
- Uses Natural Speech - click a button and ask for what you want.

You can also ask it for the weather forecast for your location, the time, and indeed your current location. You communicate with the device by pressing any of the three buttons located underneath the screen and then talk to it. Pocket understands certain phrases and commands such as “What Newspapers do you have?” and “Read new messages.” The user guide will get you started with some useful phrases.

A new very useful feature recently added is ‘Be My Eyes’ which is a fantastic service that connects you on a video link with over one million volunteers from around the world. The volunteer will be able to see through the camera on the rear face of the In Your Pocket device, so point this at whatever you want help with.

For example, you may wish to ask them which cans of food you have in the cupboard, or to help you choose a matching shirt to wear on a special occasion, or to read you a piece of mail. Volunteers are available 24 hours a day, so you will always have someone to help you when you need it.

Other recently added features include;

- internet radio providing access to hundreds of internet radio stations,
- access to the Calibre audio library
- access to the Torch Trust audio library, providing accessible Christian literature, resources and services
- the ability to connect to other blue tooth devices, such as speakers and hearing aids.

In Your Pocket is priced at £22 per month on a two year contract or £528 for a single payment. Included in the price is:

- the handset
- unlimited UK phone calls per month
- 3Gb data per month
- streaming books, newspapers and magazines
- all future capability upgrades
- 24 month plan.

After the two years is up you would continue on a monthly rolling contract, update to a new model of phone if a new model is available, or you can return the device at the end of the two year period. The current model of phone is a Doro phone. There is a dedicated telephone support service available during the contract period.

More information is available online at [www.inyourpocket.net](http://www.inyourpocket.net) or you can phone 0333 7727708 with any questions or queries with no obligations.

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## **BRISTOL BRAILLE TECHNOLOGY REVEALS A BRAILLE E-READER TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO BOOKS FOR BLIND PEOPLE**

The new e-reader displays nine lines of Braille simultaneously, a major improvement on existing devices that display only a single line. They are set to launch the e-reader for blind people with the aim of

making digital Braille books a practical alternative to their bulky print counterparts.

Bristol Braille Technology spent six years developing the Canute 360, which it hopes will make Braille e-books “affordable, practical and enjoyable”. The firm showcased the desktop device, which weighs 2.8kg and is expected to go on sale during 2019. The device will be about the price of an expensive laptop, said Stephanie Sergeant of Vision Through Sound, a company providing technology training to blind people and which worked with the developers of the e-reader. "Eighty per cent of blind people who work are Braille users but the reason that the use of Braille use has fallen is because of the cost," she added. "We are trying to make sure the cost of the Canute is as low as possible."

"All too often we hear that Braille is on the decline, and people are being discouraged from learning it," said Claire Maxwell, senior product developer for Braille at RNIB. "We are committed to reversing this trend, and welcome new Braille technology devices to the market, which can support people in developing their braille literacy skills." While sight loss is most prevalent among the elderly, RNIB says that there are more than 25,000 visually impaired children in the UK aged 16 or under.

The new e-reader may deliver advantages to blind and partially sighted people, many of whom currently rely heavily on audio description.

"Through listening alone it is not possible to pick up on the nuances of language, such as spelling and grammar," said Maxwell. "Braille in conjunction with screen readers can develop and improve literacy, which in turn opens up education and employment opportunities for people with sight loss."

Its main features are:

- 360 cells: nine lines of forty characters of Braille
- Supports all six-dot Braille codes (including music, maths and foreign languages) and tactile graphics
- Dimensions: 36.5 X 18.5 X 8 cm (approx. 14 x 7 x 1.5 inches)
- 3 page navigation buttons
- 9 line select keys
- Contextual help button

For general enquiries, email [enquiries@bristolbraille.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@bristolbraille.co.uk) or phone 0117 325 3022. You can find their web site at <http://bristolbraille.co.uk/>

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## **KINDLE APP REVIEW**

Amazon's Kindle is probably the most popular and well known E-Book reader. As well as being a stand alone device, the Kindle Software is freely available for download on almost every phone and computer system. However you access the software, the functionality is the same but options and settings might be in different menus. You need to have access to an Amazon account in order to download content and if you have an Audible account you can download your books onto the Kindle. You can pay as you read books and where available for an extra fee you can download the Audible version. Or you can buy a monthly subscription of £7.99 for Kindle Unlimited which works like a lending library allowing you to download up to 10 books at a time for free where you see the Kindle Unlimited logo next to the book title. Once you return a book you can download another. You can purchase books directly through the Kindle Device but if you are using the app you have to purchase the book through the Amazon Website then sync your Kindle app to download the new content.

There are many advantages to reading through Kindle. Your books are stored on your device and at Amazon so if you use the app on another device, as long as it's connected to the same Amazon Account it will resume where you left off reading. If you go abroad and luggage weight is a factor then Kindle comes into its own. No more decisions about which books to take with you and you can download more when you have web access. The only downside is battery life, especially if you're using the app on a phone or tablet. The Kindle Device has a much longer battery life because it's not running a ton of other apps at the same time.

Kindle is very customisable including the text size and preferred text font. On the App you can even have white text on a black background. If you don't have an Audible Account you can get the kindle device or your phone/computer's speech software to read the text shown on the screen, however this is an electronic voice.

In conclusion, Kindle is a fantastic free app, well worth the download. There are hundreds of free books and others at very low prices. Lots of authors start out only publishing on Kindle so it's a great way to discover different authors and books.

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## **MACULAR SOCIETY TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The Macular Society has launched a new technical support service to help people with macular disease get to grips with using digital assistive technology. Through the service they are offering guidance to anyone needing help with using gadgets and technology such as smartphones and tablets, digital magnifiers and other assistive technology. They have created the new service after receiving an increasing number of calls from people relating to the use of new technology. If it is successful, they plan to develop the roles of their existing digital volunteers, and potentially recruit new helpers to deliver support regionally at macular support group meetings all over the UK.

Many of the calls they receive to their main Helpline each month come from people who want to ask questions about how to use their smartphones, tablets or other equipment. Going forward, they hope to be able to offer comprehensive technical support across a greater range of gadgets and technology.

Although they will not be able to recommend specific products, or offer repairs, they will be able to help people get the most from their digital assistive technology, and they expect the service to prove extremely popular.

You can contact the Macular Society's technical support service by calling the existing Helpline number on **0300 3030 111** and select option 2, email [techsupport@macularsociety.org](mailto:techsupport@macularsociety.org) or visit their web site at [www.macularsociety.org/techsupport](http://www.macularsociety.org/techsupport)

## **VAT ON MOBILITY AIDS**

If you're over 60, you pay a reduced rate of VAT (5%) on certain mobility aids when you pay for them to be supplied AND installed in your home.

You can get the reduced rate on:

- grab rails
- ramps
- stair lifts
- bath lifts
- built-in shower seats or showers containing built-in shower seats
- walk-in baths with sealable doors

You do not get the reduced rate if you repair or replace the goods after they've been installed.

You do not have to order and pay for the product yourself - a friend, local council, charity or housing association can do it for you.

### **How to get the reduced rate**

Your supplier should know about the reduced rate and apply it. You qualify if:

- you're over 60 when the product is supplied or installed
- the product is installed - you do not get the reduced rate if you just buy it
- the product is for a private home, for example your own home or one shared with friends or relatives (a residential care home does not qualify)

You'll need to confirm to your supplier in writing that you meet these conditions. They may give you a form, or you can sign your own declaration. Ask a relative, partner or other responsible person if you're not able to fill it in yourself.

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## **INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT TEA**

- There are around 1,500 different types of tea.
- In the UK we consume about 165 million cups of tea a day (62 billion cups per year)
- The Lipton Tea Factory, in Dubai, produces 5 billion tea bags a year.
- At least 50 inches of rain a year is needed for tea plants to grow successfully.

- If left unharvested, a tea plant can grow into a tree that is as tall as 52 feet. However cultivated plants are usually pruned to waist height.
  - The world's most expensive teabag is a handcrafted diamond teabag made by Boodles Jewellers, worth £7,500, to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PG tips. It featured 280 diamonds, both inside and out and the tea was sourced from a rare Darjeeling leaf in India. It toured seven shopping centres around the country before being used in a prize draw to raise money for the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.
  - Studies suggest that tea, especially green tea helps reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, helps bad breath, reduces some forms of cancer, reduces blood pressure, helps with weight control, acts as an anti-inflammatory, kills bacteria and virus, and has neuro-protective power.
  - Legend has it that tea was discovered accidentally, by Chinese Emperor Shen-Ning in 2737 B.C., when tea leaves blew into his pot of boiling water.
  - From one pound of loose tea leaves more than 200 cups of tea can be brewed.
  - Tea bags were invented in 1908 in the United States by Thomas Sullivan. He created small silk bags to distribute samples of tea to his customers. However some of them thought that the bags were meant to be put directly into the tea pot rather than empty the leaves into an infuser, and thus the tea bag was created.
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## **IT'S A BIG SURPRISE UNDER THE DUVET**

She was preparing dinner as usual  
As her husband came running in,  
He was home very early from work  
And was causing rather a din.  
He appeared worked up and excited,  
His face reddened and flushed.  
He was loudly calling out her name  
As into the kitchen he rushed.  
He said 'You must come with me now,'  
As he took her by the hand.  
He had the oddest look within his eye  
That she didn't understand.

He then gently pulled her towards him  
And up the stairs he led,  
Right into their bedroom he guided her  
And laid her on the bed.  
She was shocked, surprised and excited,  
His intention seemed to be clear.  
She hadn't known him to be this intense  
For many, many a year.  
He then pulled the duvet over them both,  
It seems he'd recaptured his spark,  
But he said to her then 'Just look at this –  
My new watch glows in the dark.'

## **RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUE**

**Agency:** "Sir, we found 3 candidates as per your requirements, now how do you want their placements sir?"

**MD:** "Put about 100 bricks in a closed room. Then send the candidates into the room and close the door, leave them alone and come back after a few hours and analyse the situation:-

1. If they are counting the bricks, put them in the Accounts Department
2. If they are re-counting the bricks, put them in Auditing.
3. If they have messed up the whole room with the bricks, put them in Engineering.
4. If they are arranging the bricks in some strange order, put them in Planning.
5. If they are throwing the bricks at each other, put them in Operations.
6. If they are sleeping, put them in Security.
7. If they have broken the bricks into pieces, put them in Information Technology.
8. If they are sitting idle, put them in Human Resources.
9. If they say they have tried different combinations yet not a single brick has been moved, put them in Sales.
10. If they have already left for the day, put them in Marketing.
11. If they are staring out of the window, put them in Strategic Planning. And ...
12. If they are talking to each other and not a single brick has been touched, congratulate them and put them in Top Management.

## EAST SUFFOLK BLIND CONTACT NUMBERS

Beccles/Halesworth/Southwold/Lowestoft      JENNY      01502 717159

Leiston/Woodbridge/ Framlingham      LESLEY      01473 611650

Felixstowe/Shotley/Eye/Stowmarket      IAN      01473 788380

Ipswich      ABIGAIL      07515 063254

ESAB Office      01473 611011



## RETURNS SLIP FOR THE SUMMER 2019 NEWSLETTER

If you require any of the following please tick relevant boxes.

Instead of large print I would like to receive the ESAB Newsletter:

On USB Memory Stick

On CD

By email at: .....

(Insert your email address)

I no longer want to receive the Newsletter

I would like my Community Worker to visit

If there is anything you are concerned about please use this space to let us know

**YOUR NAME:**

**POSTCODE:**

**Return to ESAB, The Old Station, Little Bealings, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6LT**

# **EAST SUFFOLK BLIND INVITES YOU TO ATTEND AN EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION EXHIBITION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN LOWESTOFT**

This is a fabulous opportunity for visually impaired people and their families or carers to come along and have access to an enormous amount of information and advice about local services that are available and in addition to see demonstrated a huge range of affordable daily living aids that may also be purchased, to help with independent living. Please do all that you can to attend. The exhibitors who will be there are:

Enhanced Vision  
Optelec  
Synapptic  
Cobolt Daily Living Aids  
Guide Dogs  
RNIB  
Blind Veterans UK

British Wireless for the Blind  
Sensing Change  
Sound East  
Blind Veterans (UK)  
Age UK Suffolk  
Macular Society  
ESAB

**MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> September, 10am to 2.30pm  
LOWESTOFT OVER 60s CLUB,  
CLAPHAM ROAD  
LOWESTOFT NR32 1QS  
(Next door to the Library)**

**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE**