



Bury Society For Blind and  
Partially Sighted People

## Quarterly V.I. Link – Issue 48

### January-March 2026

#### **Introduction – Jill Logan - CEO**

Hello everyone, and welcome to our first newsletter of the year! I hope you enjoyed a peaceful and joyful festive break, and that the start of this year finds you well.

Last year was a busy 12 months, and as I look back on 2025 it's been a year full of activity, fun, growth, partner collaboration, encouraging advances in research, and remarkable developments in technology that continue to open new doors for blind and partially sighted people. There have also been significant changes within the Society, which will help us to grow even stronger, become more connected, and better equipped to support our community.

Now, with a new year ahead, we're stepping forward with energy and purpose as we start to build on our plans for our Future Vision Project. It's an exciting time and we can't wait to share updates with you. Whether it's new services, innovative tools, or opportunities to get involved, this year promises to be full of progress and possibility. Thank you for being part of our journey. Here's to a bright and inspiring year ahead for all of us!

#### **Information, Services and Support**

##### **Growing Our Sight Loss Community in Prestwich**

We're excited to announce that we are trialling a brand-new community hub in the Prestwich area, designed especially for people living with sight loss. This welcoming space will offer opportunities for people to meet others, build friendships and enjoy the benefits of peer support in a relaxed and friendly environment. We will use the hub to deliver some of our services and activities, raise awareness of wider developments hold workshops and bring together useful information to help people feel supported and connected.

At present it is envisaged the hub will be in the Methodist Church Hall, Bury New Road, Prestwich, M25 1AA. The venue has good public transport links and its own car park behind the building.

Anybody with a visual impairment (whether registered or not) is welcome to join us, and we warmly encourage family members and friends to come along too.

If you'd like to find out more or have any questions, please contact the Centre on 0161 763 7014. We'd love to hear from you.

### **Give your views on future transport plans for Greater Manchester**

People who live, work, travel, visit, or study in Greater Manchester are being asked to help shape the future of travel through to 2050, by giving their views during a public consultation.

The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan outlines how our growing city region will deliver a world-class, joined up transport system – better connecting people with places, new jobs, opportunities, homes and services, including healthcare and education. The plans are backed by £2.5 billion funding from government to deliver transport projects through to the early 2030s.

Every voice counts and you are invited to share your views if you have an interest in transport in Greater Manchester. See a full list of transport schemes, find out more and get involved by filling out the survey before **Monday 9 March 2026**.

More information is available at GM Consult along with details of drop-in sessions being held at public venues in every local authority area of Greater Manchester.

For more info visit: <https://www.gmconsult.org/transport/transport2050/>

### **Building an Age-Friendly Community Across the Borough**

Persona, which provides in-house services for Bury Council, has been working closely with residents aged 50+ in Moorside to look at how the area can become more age-friendly. The project has been led by local people and has focused on breaking down barriers, getting more residents involved, and building stronger links between community groups.

By working together, the project brought in support from organisations such as Age UK, HMR Circle, Bury Adult Education Centre, and several local groups. Although the funding for the Moorside Ageing in Place Pathfinder has now ended it has left a self-sustaining legacy.

One of the biggest successes is the Green Community Café, a warm, welcoming space offering weekly activities for all ages. It's become a great place for people to meet, chat, and feel part of the community. Nearby, the Top Green Garden has also been transformed into a safe, lively outdoor space that everyone can enjoy. Thanks to these achievements, Moorside is now in a strong position to apply for more funding to continue age-friendly work in the future.

The Ageing in Place Pathfinder is now moving into Bury East, Radcliffe (East & West), Prestwich, Whitefield and Elton. If you live in one of these locations and have any thoughts or suggestions about how and where improvements can be made, then Persona would love to hear from you. Your feedback will be used to shape what happens next and to steer the project. For more information telephone: 07356 108 494 or Email [Steven.Greason@personasupport.org](mailto:Steven.Greason@personasupport.org)  
You can also pick up an enquiry form from the office here at Bury Blind Society.

### **New volunteering opportunities**

#### **Members for Young Person's Forum**

Are you aged 18 to 35 years and keen to bring about change for young adults with vision impairment living in the Bury area? If your answer is yes, then We'd love to hear from you. We're creating a new Young Persons' Forum and are seeking passionate, committed, forward-thinking young people with lived experience of sight loss to help shape the future of our services.

The forum will play a key role in helping us understand how to better connect with younger clients and in strengthening the support we offer for the future. If this sounds like something you'd be excited to be part of, then we'd love to have you on board. Contact the office today and be part of the change.

## **Companions**

We're looking for friendly, reliable volunteers to act as companions and make a real difference in someone's life regarding remaining independent and avoiding isolation.

Many vision-impaired people would love to explore new groups, clubs, shops, or community spaces but may feel unsure about taking those first steps alone; and your support could be the boost they need to get started in overcoming the initial obstacles.

We're launching short support programmes, up to six weeks duration comprising one or two sessions each week, where volunteers accompany a client on initial visits in their local area.

As a companion, your presence can help them build the confidence they need to travel independently and feel more connected to their community. If you enjoy meeting new people and want to offer practical, meaningful support, we'd love to hear from you. Your time could open a world of opportunities for someone who needs it. Contact the Centre for more information and to register your interest - help to build confidence, one step at a time.

## **Research**

### **International Breakthroughs in Eye-Health Research:**

Around the world, researchers are making significant strides in understanding and treating sight-threatening conditions. Several breakthroughs in 2025 have generated excitement among clinicians, scientists, and patient communities.

One major area of progress is **gene therapy** with clinical trials continuing to show promise for conditions such as Leber congenital amaurosis, retinitis pigmentosa, and certain forms of inherited macular degeneration. Researchers are refining delivery methods to improve safety and effectiveness, and new trials are expanding to include more genetic variants.

Another promising field is **optogenetics**, which involves making remaining retinal cells sensitive to light. Early trials have shown that some participants regained the ability to detect movement and shapes, which is quite an achievement for conditions previously considered untreatable.

Stem cell research is also advancing. Scientists continue to develop techniques to grow healthy retinal cells in the laboratory and transplant them into damaged retinas. While still experimental, these approaches show promise.

Meanwhile, ongoing global studies highlight the importance of preventing avoidable blindness. Cataract remains the world's leading cause of reversible sight loss, and international programmes are working to expand access to surgery in low-income regions. Diabetic eye disease is also a growing concern, with researchers calling for improved screening and early intervention worldwide. These international developments reflect a shared global commitment to reducing blindness and improving quality of life for millions of people.

### **Major UK Study Reveals Hidden Levels of Sensory Loss in Older Adults**

A significant new pilot study has revealed that sensory loss among older adults in the UK is far more widespread than previously understood. The research, carried out as part of the UK National Eye Health and Hearing Study (UKNEHS), examined the vision and hearing of adults aged 50 and over and uncovered striking results. The study found that one in four adults over 50 has a level of vision impairment in at least one eye that would affect daily life. Even more striking, 76% of participants had measurable hearing loss, and 81% had never had a hearing test. These findings suggest that thousands of older adults may be living with undiagnosed sensory impairments that could be treated or managed with the right support.

Researchers emphasised that sensory loss often develops gradually, meaning many people do not realise how much their sight or hearing has deteriorated. This can lead to reduced independence, increased risk of falls, social isolation, and poorer mental health. The study also highlighted the need for routine, combined vision and hearing screening, especially as the UK population ages.

The pilot results have strengthened calls for a full national study, which would be the first of its kind in the UK. Such a study could transform public-health planning, helping the NHS and local authorities better understand the scale of need and allocate resources more effectively. The findings also underline the importance of early intervention.

Many causes of sight loss, including cataracts, glaucoma, and diabetic eye disease can be treated or slowed if detected early. Similarly, hearing loss can often be improved with hearing aids or medical treatment, dramatically improving quality of life.

This research marks a major step forward in understanding the true picture of sensory health in the UK and highlights the urgent need for coordinated national action.

For more information visit Anglia Ruskin University at <https://www.aru.ac.uk/news/new-uk-study-finds-widespread-hidden-sensory-loss>

## **Campaigns**

### **Purple Tuesday: A National Push for Accessible Retail**

#### **Experiences**

Purple Tuesday, the annual global movement promoting accessible and inclusive customer experiences, saw strong participation from UK retailers this year, with Sight Loss Councils playing a key role, working with businesses to improve accessibility for blind and partially sighted customers.

A key message from the campaign is that 70% of disabled people do not return to a business after receiving poor customer service. For blind and vision-impaired customers, common barriers include cluttered shop layouts, poor lighting, poor or inaccessible signage, and staff who lack confidence in offering assistance.

As part of the campaign, training was delivered, accessibility audits were undertaken and awareness-raising events occurred. Retail staff learned how to offer sighted-guide assistance, how to communicate clearly, and how to support customers using guide dogs or mobility aids. Many retailers pledged long-term improvements, such as clearer store layouts, better staff training, and more accessible digital platforms. Some introduced quiet hours, tactile signage, or improved lighting.

Purple Tuesday continues to grow each year, and the involvement of sight-loss organisations ensures that the voices of blind and partially sighted people remain central to the movement. You can rest assured that Bury Blind Society will be supporting this through plans of our own and our Future Vision Project and we subscribe to the campaign's

message that accessibility is good for customers, good for business, and essential for equality.

## **Technology**

### **Focus Day - VisionAid Technologies Ltd**

Thank you to everybody who came along to the VisionAid Focus Day on 26 November. Some of the latest assistive technology demonstrated by Jonathan was impressive, and what a long way technology has come over recent years. If you didn't manage to make it, then don't worry, we will be organising another in 2026.

### **Exploring Ray-Ban Meta Glasses: Client Experiences & Live Demonstrations**

A few of our clients have recently started to use the new Ray-Ban Meta glasses, and the early feedback has been incredibly positive. They've found the glasses helpful, intuitive, and surprisingly empowering in their day-to-day lives. As a result, we are looking to organise one or two informal sessions where these clients can share their experiences with everybody, explain how the glasses help, and hopefully give a few simple demonstrations of the device's features.

It is hoped these sessions will offer a terrific opportunity to see the technology in action, ask questions, and hear honest opinions from people with sight loss who are using the devices in real-life situations. If you're interested in coming along to learn more about the glasses, then please contact the Centre to register your interest and we will send you the details as soon as we have finalised them. Everyone is welcome, including family members and/or friends.

### **Be My Eyes: A Simple App Making Everyday Life a Little Easier for People with Vision Impairment**

Be My Eyes is an app that's helping make everyday life a bit easier for people with sight loss. Lots of people already use it, but if it's new to you, it's designed to give quick visual support in those moments that can be a bit fiddly like reading a label, checking an expiry date, or finding something you've dropped.

The app connects blind and partially sighted users with sighted volunteers through a live video call, and it also offers Be My AI, which

gives instant visual descriptions from a photo. It can be used in many different languages and is one of the most accessible tools available.

It's relatively simple to use; open the app, tap a button, and you're instantly connected to either a friendly volunteer or the AI assistant. Volunteers can help with anything from reading instructions to navigating an unfamiliar space, while the AI is perfect for quick tasks like identifying objects or reading text. Many people say it boosts their confidence and helps them get things done with far less stress - and the best part is that it's completely free on both Apple and Android devices.

Getting started only takes a few minutes: download the app, create an account, and choose whether you're signing up as a visually impaired user or a volunteer. After that, it's ready whenever you need it.

### **Digital drop-in sessions at Bury Blind Society**

If you're curious about how Be My Eyes or other apps might work on your own device, or if you'd like to build confidence in using them and getting the most out of your equipment, then we have great news for you – we're planning to run a series of digital drop-in sessions as part of our Future Vision project.

These sessions will be relaxed and friendly and offer opportunities for you to explore technology that could make your life a little easier – including learning about features built into your own devices, which you might not be aware of or finding difficult to use.

We will be releasing more information soon but, in the meantime, please let us know if this is something you are interested in, and also tell us if there is anything in particular that you would like us to include in the sessions.

### **Trips and Activities News**

**First Wednesday of every month; An Introduction to Visual Awareness, 10.30am to 12pm.** Part of your induction if you are a new volunteer, or a refresher if an established volunteer. These sessions are also open to friends, families and carers.

If you are interested in attending, please contact us and we will include you in our invitation list.

**Second Monday of the Month: A new Creative Workshop.  
10.30am-12.00pm, starting in February.**

We're launching a brand-new practical workshop for those who enjoy making things or want to try a new hobby. It's a great chance to explore your creativity, learn tactile skills, and experience the satisfaction of creating something that you can proudly display or use. Each month we will have a guest 'crafter' providing a fun 'hands on' workshop ranging from decorating mugs and making soaps to woodworking, and everything in between.

Whether you're already a keen maker or simply curious, the workshop offers a relaxed, social space to build confidence and discover new abilities. Places will be limited to ensure plenty of support, so if this sounds like something you'd enjoy, contact the Centre on 0161 763 7014 for more information and to book your place.

**This Valentine's Day – why not fall in love with Showdown?**

We are delighted with the progress of our new Bury Blind Society 'Bury Aces'. Thanks to Louise and Kara's support, players are coming along a treat at the weekly sessions – so much so, a couple are already potential competition entrants! If you haven't been bitten by the bug yet, why not come along to the Open Day on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February between 11am and 3pm? You can treat yourself to a home baked cake from our cake stall, browse our book sale and try your hand at this fast-paced table sport. For further details contact the Centre.

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March:** As one of the current Mayor's chosen charities, Councillor Noel Bailey has arranged for a fundraising meal at the Armaan Indian Restaurant in Radcliffe, £20 per person. Please contact us if you are interested in booking a place and we will update when we have further information.

**One for the diary:** On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April, there will be a Charity Afternoon Tea on the East Lancs Steam train. Again, this is being organised by the Mayor of Bury so full details are currently not available. If you would like further information, please contact us.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March: User Forum, 10.30am to 12pm.** Come and join our Forum. Your opportunity, whether you are a client or volunteer, to hear what we've been up to and to feedback on what you want!

## **Fundraising and Donations**

**Gift Wrapping Success:** Our festive Wrapping Service truly outdid itself this year, raising a record-breaking £2,524.36. We were genuinely overwhelmed by the generosity, kindness, and festive spirit shown by everyone who helped, used the service, supported us through the Tombola, or donated. A huge thank you to everybody.

If you would like to be involved in our forthcoming tombola stalls at the Millgate for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Easter, or help out on our 'Trash or Treasure stall at St John's in Tottington on 8<sup>th</sup> March – give us a call.

**BBS On Tour 2.0 – Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm for 7.30pm.** Following on from the success of last year's event we're back! Join us for an evening of music and variety featuring the amazing talents of both clients, friends and volunteers, including Danni, Michael, Geoff and the wonderful Moondance. Tickets now on sale via The Met website £12.00 including booking fee. It promises to be a great evening.

### **100 Club, Monthly Prize Draw**

Is 2026 going to be your lucky year? Have you bought a number? Numbers cost £1 and you can purchase as many as you like! Half of the money raised is distributed in prizes and the other half contributes directly to BBS services to help support local blind and partially sighted people. Packs are available from the Centre.

Winning numbers since our last VI Bulletin:

**November:** 1<sup>st</sup> prize: No. 017, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: No. 473, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: No. 141.

**December:** 1<sup>st</sup> prize: No. 126, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: No. 131, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: No. 408.

### **Donations and legacies**

We are grateful for all donations made to the Society, whether it is a general donation or in memory of a loved one. Your donations are used to directly help people living with sight loss, ranging from providing transport to attend an activity to awareness training for volunteers and families. It all helps, so thank you.

If you have any articles, your story or information you would like to be included in future editions of our VI Bulletin, then do let us know!

**Sir Norman Wisdom:** 'As you get older, three things happen. The first is your memory goes, and I can't remember the other two.'



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## **Regular Centre Activities:**

Here is an insight to the Calendar of events involving BBS over the next few months at the time of going to press.

### **Monday:**

**First Monday of the Month: Housing & Benefits Drop-in with Calico and CAB. 9.30am-12.30pm.** Contact office to book appointment.

### **Mornings:**

**Drop In 10.00am-12pm:** You are welcome to drop in any time for a cuppa. Our Meet & Greet volunteers will provide a warm welcome.

### **Afternoons:**

**Music Buddies Fun Afternoon: 1.15pm-2.30pm:** Held every Monday apart from the Fourth of the month.

### **Evenings:**

**Bury Aces Showdown Sessions 6.00pm-8.30pm**

**Fourth Monday of the Month: 1.15pm-2.45pm – Musical Social Afternoon.** £3.00 includes entertainment and refreshments. To book please contact the Centre.

### **Tuesday:**

**Weekly: Phoenix Foot Care Appointments available: 9.30am-3.00pm**

The Centre is open for appointments only and external room bookings.

**Morning: Ten-pin Bowling:** Meet at the Centre for 10.30am or at Hollywood Bowling, The Rock for 11.00am. Please confirm your attendance in advance, either by the WhatsApp Group or by telephoning the Centre by no later than Monday morning to ensure a Volunteer Buddy. Note: bowling may be paused during school holidays.

**Afternoon:** 1.30pm Community Walk at The Burrs. Note: BBS Walking group paused during the winter.

**Wednesday: LVA Clinic: 9.30am onwards.** Appointment only.

Referral through BBS or ring direct to the community booking service on

0300 323 3316. **Mornings: 10.00am-12.00pm Drop-In session:** a warm welcome as always from Carole and crew.

**First Wednesday:** 10.30am-12pm every month: Introduction to Sight Loss Awareness. Open to volunteers, friends, family and carers.

**Second Wednesday: 10.30am-12.00pm Alternating Users' & Volunteers' Forums** (User Forum; 14 January & 11 March. Volunteer Forum (11 February & 8 April).

**Third Wednesday: 10.00am-12.00pm:** Eye information drop-In clinic with staff on hand for advice and support.

**Afternoons:**

**First Wednesday, 1.30pm-3.00pm:** New Macular Degeneration Support Group.

**Third Wednesday, 1.30pm-3.00pm:** Macular Degeneration Support group.

**Fourth Wednesday, 1.30pm-2.30pm,** Glaucoma Support Group.

**Evenings:**

**Weekly:** Bury Aces Showdown sessions 6.0pm-8.30pm – informal play sessions.

**Thursday:**

**Morning sessions 10.30am-12.00pm:** Drop In and crossword club.

**Afternoons: 1.30pm-3.00pm: Age UK Tea & Chat cluster with Jane Lees.** A relaxed session in the Lounge area to catch up and meet friends and make new ones. Week 2 includes 'Gary's Quiz', Week 3, Bridie's Bingo.

Please note, this programme is subject to change due to trips out.

Please check with office beforehand.

**Friday:**

**Fortnightly:** Henshaw's/BBS Digital Clinic **from 10.00am:** Referral via BBS.

**Weekly: 11.30am-2.00pm 'Lunch Club.'** Carole and Mags provide either a cooked meal or light snack each week. Places must be booked and paid for in advance, no later than Thursday morning. For menu details and to book a place, call the office on **0161 763 7014**.

**Saturday: Third Saturday: 11.00am-12.30pm:** BBS Book Club – monthly sessions. Lively discussion and fun. The chosen book is available in audio format for the group to review and enjoy.