



Bury Society For Blind and
Partially Sighted People

Quarterly V.I. Link – Issue 49

April-June 2026

Introduction – Jill Logan - CEO

Hello everyone, and welcome to our Spring Edition of VI Link. As April waves goodbye, spring is happily making itself at home. You can feel it in the softer air, the livelier mornings, and the general sense that life around us is shaking off the last bits of winter and getting on with things. It's that lovely time of year when you might catch a hint of blossom in the breeze, hear birds singing and chatting louder than they did a month ago, or simply notice that your days feel a little lighter. Spring has a way of nudging us forward without any fuss, and we're leaning right into that feeling in this newsletter. We've put together a mix of stories, updates, and cheerful bits and pieces to match the mood of late April; easy-going, hopeful, and full of small joys. Here's to enjoying the rest of spring together, however it finds you.

Information, Services and Support

Welcome to Ian.

We're pleased to share some exciting news about the continued growth of our organisation. Mr. Ian Mayer has recently joined our board, bringing a wealth of experience, fresh perspective, and a shared commitment to supporting our purposes and objectives. His insight and contribution will play an important role in shaping and strengthening the services we provide. To help you get to know him better, Ian has kindly provided the following personal statement.

I first came into contact with Bury Blind Society because of rapidly deteriorating sight and the need to undertake long cane training. I am a father of two young children, and I was working near full time in Manchester and even though my sight condition (a cocktail of a genetic corneal dystrophy, glaucoma, cataracts, uveitis) had been on a steady decline on or off for the past two decades, it suddenly went into free-fall. It was at Bury Blind Society that I first received tangible and practical support for how to keep living my life day to day - how to stay safe and independent, and for that I am truly grateful. I managed to keep working

during this sight-loss period; I took help from various quarters, but the lived experience of this acute period of sight-loss inspired me to try to help others in a similar position.

I work at Chetham's School of Music as their Music Department Manager and have over 20 years' experience managing teams, budgets, organisational strategy and logistics and policies. I still perform regularly as a musician myself (I am one half of the folk duo *The Apple Sellers*), I help manage a volunteer restoration project at Holly Mount Orchard and I am also a keen tandem cyclist (and yes, I sit at the back, not the front!). I hope that some of my combined professional and personal experience will help the Board at Bury Blind Society to continue to support their transformational work.

Healthwatch Bury – Enter & View Report

Healthwatch Bury has published a new Enter and View report following two visits to the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department at Fairfield General Hospital. The visits took place on 26 November and 1 December and were carried out to understand people's real experiences of urgent and emergency care during a very busy time of year. Enter and View visits allow the Healthwatch team to speak directly with patients, families, carers, and staff, and to observe how services are working. The aim, as always, was to highlight what is working well and where improvements can be made.

The visits were arranged after an invitation from the Northern Care Alliance, which runs Fairfield General Hospital. With A&E departments under significant pressure and especially during winter, the Healthwatch team wanted to understand how these challenges were affecting people in Bury. Across the two visits, authorised representatives spoke with 28 patients and 6 staff members and observed activity in both the main A&E department and the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC).

The Northern Care Alliance reviewed the draft report and agreed that it provides a fair representation of the service. They also highlighted improvements already underway, including extended UTC and Same Day Emergency Care opening hours, and ongoing expansion of the A&E department to improve space, privacy, and patient flow.

The full report can be found in the News and Reports section on the Healthwatch Bury website at <https://healthwatchbury.co.uk>

Spotlight on Volunteering

We begin our spotlight on volunteering with a few words from Nick Garsrud on why he volunteers for Bury Blind Society

Someone said. 'You get as much out of volunteering as you put into it,' and this is certainly true of Bury Blind Society. Whether driving or going to ten-pin bowling with visually impaired clients, collecting donations, or attending social events, there's a role for most – including making toast! I find it thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable, but don't just take my word – give it a go!

Volunteering opportunities

we are urgently seeking Group co-ordinators for the following groups.

- **Macular group** – meets first Wednesday of the month at the Centre from 1.30 to 3pm
- **Sight support group Prestwich** – meets second Wednesday of the month at the Creative Living Centre in Prestwich from 2-4pm
- **Music buddies' group** – meets every Monday (Except the fourth Monday of the month), at the Centre, 1.15 to 2.30pm
- **Newsletter narrators** - to help transform written content into clear, engaging, and accessible audio so our members who prefer audio formats can fully experience and understand the information contained in our quarterly magazine.
- **Newsletter mailing assistants** – to help prepare our quarterly newsletter for posting by stapling, folding, and inserting into envelopes, ensuring each issue is neatly assembled and ready for timely distribution to our clients.
- **Reception** – to answer telephone calls to the Centre and carry out basic administrative tasks.

Whether you have a couple of hours to spare each week, each month or every few months, you could be the person that makes a huge difference to the lives of visually impaired people by helping them to

connect, build confidence and feel included in community life. There is nothing onerous about these roles, and they allow you to give a little something back in a way that feels personal. Training will be given and qualified staff are always at hand to support you. If you feel you would like to help us and be part of a wonderful, caring, and dedicated team, then we would love to hear from you. For more information, contact Carl at the Centre.

Campaign Spotlight

Platform for Change: Barriers to Accessible Train Travel for Blind and Partially Sighted People

Accessible train travel is essential for blind and partially sighted people to live independently, get to work, visit friends and family, and access healthcare. Yet, the RNIB's recent report, Platform for Change: Making rail journeys more accessible for people with sight loss, shows that too many journeys are still impacted or prevented by unnecessary barriers such as inconsistent passenger assistance, difficult ticket buying methods and the inaccessible design of trains and stations.

The report is based on a survey of nearly 1,200 blind and partially sighted people across the UK, alongside focus groups. The findings are clear: more than one in three people with sight loss can't make the train journeys they want or need to. Each aspect of train travel can be inconsistent and stressful. Only 44 per cent said they are reliably met by assistance staff, and 82 per cent said they struggle with the gap between the train and platform edge.

Last year marked 200 years of the railway in Britain, and yet, even after so much time, the system regularly misses opportunities to meet the needs of passengers at each stage of the journey. Blind and partially sighted people's most common barriers to rail travel include.

- Planning their journey
- Navigating within train stations.
- Locating / identifying staff for assistance at train stations.

- Everything to do with tickets – not just buying them but then managing them: using them to operate ticket barriers, keeping track of them, and finding the correct ticket when staff ask.
- Staying safe on the platform.
- Boarding the train – finding the door, finding a seat.
- Orienting within the train, including which side the train doors open
- Locating and using train toilets, which can be so difficult that some blind and partially sighted people choose not to travel rather than having to deal with them.
- Coping with disruptions to the journey, like delays, cancellations, or the train having to stop somewhere other than the required destination.

RNIB Policy Lead, Erik Matthies, who has sight loss, said: “With the creation of Great British Railways (GBR) via the Railways Bill that is currently going through Parliament, there’s a unique opportunity for the UK Government and transport authorities to embed accessibility from the start - to make sure everyone can travel freely and safely. We’re calling on the UK Government, devolved administrations, and transport providers to ensure accessibility is at the heart of GBR as it is rolled out.”

This report is the third in a series showing how blind and partially sighted people experience three modes of getting around. It follows the In My Way report on pedestrian journeys (September 2025) and the ‘All aboard?’ report on bus travel (May 2025), all of which collectively paint a picture of the most popular ways to travel still not working for people with sight loss.

Technology

Lynn’s First Adventures with Her New Meta Glasses

For many people, a quick trip to the library is nothing out of the ordinary. But for Lynn, a client at Bury Blind Society, her recent visit marked a moment she wasn’t sure she’d ever experience again. Here she shares her first adventure with her new meta glasses.

“Today, I went to the library to borrow a book. ‘So what?’ you might say - unless you’re vision impaired.

“The library used to be my favourite place, right up until a few years ago when my sight declined so much that I could no longer read. It was a terrible blow. But recently, I bought a pair of Meta glasses, and now I’m able to choose any book I like from the shelf and have the prefaces read to me as I browse through different topics, titles and authors before deciding which books I want to take home and enjoy.

“I have to say, though, matching up the glasses to my mobile phone wasn’t easy.

“My son took me to our local Currys store, and despite saying they sell Meta glasses, they had none on display. The store assistant told us the Ashton-under-Lyne branch had the full range available. We decided to try Vision Express instead, where they had two pairs - and one of them was exactly what I was looking for: the Ray-Ban Wayfarer. They were priced between £380 and £420, so we thought there might be a little room for negotiation.

“It took the staff an hour to get them up on the computer, but they kindly gave me a free pair of sunglasses for the inconvenience, which was very nice of them.

“I was excited to try my new Meta glasses, but it was almost two days before I had them up and running, despite my son being very ‘techy.’ At first, my phone wouldn’t accept the Meta app because it didn’t have enough memory or capacity. Then we discovered it had a virus - and I didn’t know the password. According to my son, there was a lot of rubbish on my phone that needed deleting too. In the end, he bought me a new phone as an early Mother’s Day present but added that I wouldn’t be getting any daffodils this year! So now I have a new phone, which I’m learning to use.

“Anyway, despite all of this, I am absolutely thrilled with my Meta glasses, and I’m very much looking forward to discovering what else I can do with them - especially when it comes to reading and visiting the library more often.”

Brews and Views – Smart Glasses (Meta and Oakley) Coffee Morning

Lynn's story is just one example of how new technology can open doors in unexpected ways. It's been wonderful to see clients exploring smart glasses with curiosity and confidence. These glasses are becoming a popular tool for people with sight loss, especially the audio features and hands-free voice commands that can support everyday independence. We know many of you are keen to hear more about these glasses, so we are inviting you to come along to learn more about them over a drink and a chat at the Centre on **Friday 29 May, from 2pm to 3.30pm**. The session offers a great opportunity for you to.

- Enjoy a relaxed and friendly learning space – at your pace!
- Learn more about the glasses
- Hear how vision impaired people are using them
- Witness the glasses being used
- Try the glasses for yourself and explore some of their features
- Ask lots of questions
- Decide if the glasses may or may not be of use to you too

For more information, and to book your place, contact the Centre on 0161 763 7014.

Digital Inclusion sessions – Get to Know Your Device Better

We're delighted to share that we're working with our friends at Bury Council Adult Education Service to offer a warm and welcoming series of digital inclusion sessions designed especially for vision-impaired beginners. Our goal is to help you feel more confident and in control when using your everyday devices. Across six friendly weekly sessions, you'll get hands-on support with mobile phones, iPads, and laptops. Together, we'll explore the basics, including:

- Adjusting settings to suit your needs
- Making the most of accessibility features
- Navigating your device with confidence
- Finding and managing apps
- Staying safe online and avoiding scams

We're also looking at adding a bonus session on smart speakers, such as the Amazon Echo Dot, to help you get comfortable with voice-activated technology at home.

This programme is all about staying connected, being informed, and remaining independent. Places will be limited to six to eight participants, so if you'd like to register your interest, then please contact the Centre at your earliest convenience.

All we ask is that you commit to **all six sessions** because the course builds week on week. Sessions will run from **3.00 to 5.15pm**, commencing **3rd June**.

Free Tech Support for Over-50s in Bury

Residents aged 50 and over in the Borough of Bury can now access free, personalised digital support thanks to a new offer from Circle, a Community Interest Company, and a not-for-profit organisation. The service is designed to help people feel more confident using everyday technology, whether it's a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or other digital device.

Circle provides friendly, one-to-one assistance **in the comfort of your own home**, making it easier for you to get the help you need without having to travel or attend a training session. The support is completely free of charge and tailored to individual needs.

For more information or to book a visit telephone 01706 751 165 or email claire@hmrcircle.org.uk

Browsable

BrowsAble, is a software company, which is carrying out research into a new software product they have developed to make it easier for vision impaired people who shop online (or would like to shop online) to navigate websites easier. The organisation is inviting people to register their interest in attending an online interview, which will last for approximately an hour and during which time the participant can test the software on a few online shops.

A couple of things to consider ahead of the sessions:

BrowsAble is currently available as a Chrome browser extension, and ideally, they would like participants to install it before the interview. If participants need any help getting set up, the Organisation is happy to take people through the process beforehand. If you're unable to use Chrome – for example, if you rely on a specific browser for assistive technology such as a screen reader – you're still very welcome to take part. In which case BrowsAble will use screen sharing, though this may limit how much of the product you're able to interact with directly.

As a thank you, each participant will receive £150 compensation.

If the dates or technical requirements don't work for you right now, then don't worry, BrowsAble is planning further research sessions later in the year and would still like to hear from you.

If you interested in taking part, then you can use the BrowsAble booking form at:

<https://calendar.app.google/WwtsDtp4Jn9tZDr36>

Trips and Activities News

Tuesday 12th May: Group Co-ordinators meeting

New meetings for group co-ordinators, offering a friendly space to share ideas, learn from one another and help shape how our groups continue to develop and meet the needs of group members. These meetings will be held at the Centre, from 10am to 12pm on the third Tuesday of January, May, and September – except for the next meeting, which will take place on Tuesday 12 May due to other events

Wednesday 13th May:

GM Walking Festival 2026 – Steps Beyond Sight

Bury Blind Society is delighted to be taking part in the GM Walking Festival 2026, celebrating walking and wheeling throughout May under the theme Celebrating Connected Communities. Our walk will take place on Wednesday 13th May at 1:30pm, starting from the Centre. Steps Beyond Sight will offer 1-mile and 2-mile routes so everyone can join in. If you would like to join us, please register in advance so we can ensure we have enough sighted guides available on the day.

We'd love you to take part and celebrate the power of walking together as a community.

Wednesday 20th May:

12.30pm-3pm: Afternoon Tea & Chat: With Gill Currie: As many of you are aware, Gill retired from her role as Sight Loss Support Officer at the end of March after over 10 years as a member of the staff team. We are pleased to report that Gill hasn't disappeared completely as she is still involved on a sessional basis. However, if you've ever met Gill, you will be aware she is a lady of many talents! Both Jim and Gill were avid tennis players but there are many other areas that Gill has been involved in. This afternoon event will give you the opportunity to hear more and to ask questions of this amazing lady. Included is a tasty Afternoon Tea. Tickets are £15.00 per person, to be held at The Bury Masonic Hall.

Thursday 4th June: Celebrating Volunteers Week 7pm-10.30pm. In recognition of the immense contribution of our volunteers, we invite you to join us for the Annual Celebration party at The Masonic Hall, Bury. Tickets just £5.00 includes food and fun! All welcome. Book via the office.

Wednesday 10th June: Volunteer Forum, 10.30am to 12pm.

The **volunteer forum** provides a similar informal opportunity for volunteers to discuss activities, share experiences, and suggest improvements. This forum meets quarterly on the second Wednesday in March, June, September, and December – from 10.30 to 12.00

Wednesday 8th July: User Forum, 10.30am to 12pm.

Come along to hear what we've been up to and tell us what you want! The user forum offers a relaxed setting for clients to share feedback, meet others, and help guide the direction of our work. The forum meets quarterly on the second Wednesday in April, July, October, and January – from 10.30 to 12.00

Summer Activities: Brief information on the Calendar of events involving BBS over the summer at the time of going to press. The majority of shows are on from 11am-4pm unless stated otherwise.

- Sunday 17th May – Prestwich Clough Day.
- Sunday 24th May – Ramsbottom Rotary Duck Race at Bridge Street, Ramsbottom.
- Thursday 4th June: Volunteers Week: Celebration Party at The Masonic Hall.
- Sunday 7th June 8am-4pm: Car Boot Sale at Railway Station Car Park, Ramsbottom
- Sunday 5th July – Tottington Big Day Out. 11am-7pm
- Wednesday 22nd July: Collabor8te Event in The Millgate Shopping Centre – displays from emergency services as well as stalls and activities.

Fundraising and Donations

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:

January: 1st prize: No. 506, 2nd prize: No. 365, 3rd prize: No. 483.

February: 1st prize: No. 008, 2nd prize: No. 330, 3rd prize: No. 410.

March: 1st prize: No. 1`20, 2nd prize: No. 498, 3rd prize: No. 296.

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, whether it is providing transport to attend an activity or providing training for a volunteer to sight guide safely. It all helps, so thank you.

We are very sorry to report that our wonderful cleaner and friend, Sonia, Carole Allen's sister-in-law, sadly passed away earlier this month. Sonia has been an integral part of our staff team for nearly ten years, and we were devastated when she was diagnosed with cancer less than 12 months ago. Sonia went about the building, keeping us all neat and tidy, with her

quiet sense of humour and is greatly missed by us all in the Centre. Our thoughts and condolences go out to Joe and Sonia's family.

And finally...

'The happiest of people don't have the best of everything, they just make the best of everything they have.'

If you have any articles, a story or information you would like to be included in future editions of this newsletter, then do let us know!



Bury Society For Blind and
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Regular Centre Activities:

Monday:

Drop In 10am - 12pm: Drop in for a cuppa.

Housing & Benefits with Calico and CAB. 9.30am-12. 30pm.

Music Buddies: 1.15pm-2.30pm: Every Monday except 4th Monday.

Bury Aces Showdown, 6.00pm-8.30pm join the fun!

Second Monday of the Month: 10.30am - Creative Workshop

Fourth Monday of the Month: Musical Social, 1.15pm-2.45pm – £3.00, entertainment & refreshments. Contact the office to book.

Tuesday:

Pheonix Foot Clinic, 9.30am – 3pm Appointment only. Contact the office to book.

Ten Pin Bowling Group: 11.00am-12.00pm: Meet at the Centre 10.30am or Hollywood Bowling, 11am. Please confirm your attendance by Monday morning to ensure a buddy volunteer.

Wednesday:

LVA Clinic: 9.30am onwards. Appointment only. Referral through BBS or ring community booking service on 0300 323 3316

Drop-In session: 10.00am-12.00pm - welcome from Carole and crew.

First Wednesday:

Introduction to Sight Loss Awareness: 10.30am-12pm Open to volunteers, friends, family, and carers.

Macular Support Group: 1.30pm-3.00pm

Second Wednesday:

Quarterly alternating Users' & Volunteers' Forums: 10.30am-12.00pm.

Sight loss support group (Prestwich), 2 to 4pm

Third Wednesday, Macular Support group 1.30pm-3.00pm

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

Thursday:

Drop In & Crossword club, 10.30am-12.00pm:

Tea & Chat: 1.30pm-3.00pm: Quizzes, Bingo - Contact the office.

Bury Aces Showdown: 6.00pm - 8.30pm Learn from our experienced players.

Friday:

Friday Lunch: 11.30am-2.00pm, Places must be booked and paid for in advance. For the menu and to book, call the office on 0161 763 7014.

Every fortnight, Tech Support Clinic, 9.15am-4.00pm: with Henshaws, for referral, contact the office.

Every Third Saturday: Book Club, 11am-12.30pm: Please contact the office to confirm your attendance.