



Bury Society For Blind and
Partially Sighted People

Quarterly V.I. Link – Issue 51

October - December 2026

Introduction – Jill Logan, CEO

Welcome to the October edition of VI Link! With a slightly colder nip in the air, the evenings drawing in and autumn colours beginning to appear, it's the perfect time to settle down with a warm drink and catch up on everything happening at the Society. This issue is packed with news, inspiration, and opportunities for you to enjoy, from our exciting big reveal to our new Working Age and Young Persons' Panel. You can enjoy stories from a few of our recent adventures and look ahead to a lively programme of seasonal events. So, make yourself comfortable, sit back and enjoy!

AGM & The Big Reveal

Thank you to everybody who attended the AGM on the 8th of October. More than 40 clients, volunteers and friends of the Society joined us for the official opening of our new garden pergola, and we were delighted that Phil Gibbons was able to join us to cut the ribbon in memory of his late wife, Linda, who was our Treasurer for more than 20 years. It was a fitting tribute, and we hope many of you will enjoy this lovely new feature. We also announced our new trading name following almost two years of consultation. Our registered name remains Bury Society for Blind & Partially Sighted People. However, Bury Blind Society will become **Bury Sight Support** - a name that better reflects our work and takes us into the future. We'll introduce the new name over the next six months. Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation process and shared their views with us.

If you would like a copy of the annual review, telephone 0161 763 7014

Technology

BrailleNote evolve

For more than 36 years, HumanWare has created solutions to empower people who are blind or partially sighted. Braille has been central to this mission from the beginning, including the release of the first BrailleNote in 2001. BrailleNote Evolve is the latest step forward: a braille-first

device that combines the familiar KeySoft experience with the power of Windows 11, full NVDA support and compatibility with Microsoft 365. It enables blind users to read, write and collaborate in braille while working directly with the mainstream tools used in classrooms, workplaces, and remote environments.

By pairing KeySoft's structured, braille-centric interface with Windows 11 Pro, BrailleNote Evolve enables blind users to join virtual meetings, share documents and collaborate with sighted colleagues using the same applications and workflows. Every device includes full NVDA integration and six months of JAWS at no additional cost, giving users the freedom to start with their preferred screen reader from day one. For more information, call HumanWare free of charge on 0800 587 or contact its Northwest representative, Sarah Meakin, on 07977 227 929.

BBS Tech Talk - Technology drop-in sessions

If you are interested in hearing about how technology can help you to live more independently or simply make some tasks a little easier to manage, then you might be interested to know we are launching a series of Tech Talk sessions here at the Centre. It doesn't matter if you don't know anything about technology if you are a novice or an expert everyone is welcome to come along to share and learn.

Our first session will take place on Friday 27 November, 10 to 11.30am, and will be hosted by Chris Garry from the Digital Team at Henshaws. The session will provide the perfect opportunity for people to talk about the latest news and information around Technology, Apps, accessibility features, and apps designed for people with Sight Loss.

Information, Services and Support

Working Age and Young Persons' Panel

We're delighted to announce we have formed a new working age and young persons' panel as part of our Future Vision Project. The Panel will initially focus on how the Society engages with younger clients and consider some of the significant challenges younger people with sight loss encounter. It promises to be an exciting venture and one which we hope will bring about positive change.

Help shape our Breakfast Club and Friday Lunch

Our Wednesday Breakfast Club and Friday Lunch are all about bringing people together over good food and friendly conversation, and we'd love your help in shaping what comes next. Attendance has been a little lower in recent months, so please tell us which of these options would suit you best:

1. Keep the weekly breakfast and lunch as they are.
2. Offer a simpler Wednesday option, i.e. tea and toast or a crumpet.
3. Hold a themed breakfast or lunch once a month.
4. Stop serving the meals altogether.

We'd love to hear your ideas. Leave us a note in the suggestion box in Reception or have a chat with a member of staff who will be happy to write it down for you. Perhaps there's a dish you'd love, a theme you'd enjoy or a simple change that would help. Every idea is welcome.

Congratulations, Dougie!

As many of you will know, Dougie from Phoenix Foot Care has provided a highly valued weekly foot health service at the Centre for several years. During that time, his warmth, professionalism, and reliability have made him a trusted and welcome presence.

For many people with sight loss, looking after their feet can be difficult and, without support, sometimes impossible. Dougie's work goes far beyond routine foot care. It provides important preventative care and, when needed, timely intervention that can help stop problems from becoming more serious. We are delighted that Dougie has received a 'Recognition and Referral' award from the Alliance of Private Sector Practitioners in recognition of his services. Please join us in congratulating him on this well-deserved achievement. Congratulations, Dougie!

Lola the Guide Dog Saves Christmas

Coming this October, *Lola the Guide Dog Saves Christmas* is a new festive children's book written, illustrated and self-published by Ananché Jeffrey, a former staff member of the Society whom many of you will remember. The story's four-legged star is named after Ananché's own guide dog, Lola.

How could a guide dog possibly save Christmas, you may wonder? In *Lola the Guide Dog Saves Christmas*, a dog many of you will remember, has an extraordinary adventure ahead of her. Filled with magic, wonder and a little mischief, this illustrated picture book invites children aged five to eight to discover whether one very special dog can make all the difference at Christmas.

Those who remember Lola will know her little quirks, but above all, her dedication as my guide dog and the independence and comfort she brings to my everyday life. Naturally, I think she's the best guide dog in the world - although I accept that her author might be slightly biased! Her kindness, character and everyday skills inspired the story, bringing something of the real Lola into a world of Christmas possibilities. The book offers young readers a gentle introduction to sight loss, and the difference guide dogs make through a fictional festive adventure. Whether shared aloud at bedtime or enjoyed by a young reader, it's a chance to get to know Lola, explore the illustrations and imagine how a guide dog could become a Christmas hero.

After around a year and a half to two years spent writing and illustrating the book, I'm excited to share it with readers. Copies are expected to be available towards the end of October, depending on printing and distribution. If you're looking for a Christmas gift for a young book lover, Lola's adventure could be waiting for them under the tree. The book will be available in paperback (£12.99), hardback (£19.99). Order forms are available at the Centre, or you can email: lolatheguidedog@gmail.com

Year 2027 Diaries and Calendars now available

We now have diaries and calendars for 2027 now in stock at the Centre. Sizes and prices are as follows.

A6 pocket diary - £7.00

A5 midi diary - £9.50

A4 desk diary - £11.50

A3 wall calendar (Portrait) - £9

A3 wall calendar (Landscape) - £9

They're available to buy from the Centre, so pop in and pick yours up while stocks last! Alternatively, you can place your order by telephone. Simply call the Centre on 0161 763 7014 but hurry!

Spotlight on Volunteering

We continue with the spotlight on our wonderful volunteers and in this edition of VI Link, we are delighted to share John's story with you.

Hello, my name is John Greenwood, and I have been a volunteer at Bury Blind Society since 2004, on and off, starting when we were based on Bolton Street opposite the East Lancs Railway.

My first role was arranging the monthly socials and putting a transport list together for 'Ring & Ride.' I had a break from the society for a few years and not long after Jill Logan took the helm, I was asked if I would be interested in doing something musically at the Centre, I had previously known Jill from The Mosses Centre where she was centre manager and I had been working as a volunteer with another local charity based there. During the covid lockdowns the centre became a bit of a life saver for me as I was able to do several odd/maintenance jobs at the society such as painting the cellar floor and repairing loose fitting cupboard doors.

One of the more rewarding aspects of volunteering with the Society is just chatting with the clients, who are at different stages of their journey and just listening to how they cope and adjust to their everyday life.

I am currently facilitating a crossword club on a Thursday morning which is attended by both vision impaired and sighted members.

I could go on about how I enjoy volunteering, but I do think if you have time on your hands, it could be a great move to find out a bit more about volunteering opportunities as there are a myriad – nay, a plethora of areas where your skills would be helpful.

Volunteering opportunities

we are seeking volunteers in the following areas.

1. **Wrappers and order takers** – to help with our Christmas wrapping event in the Millgate Centre 10th to 24th December. There will be a gift-wrapping promotion and demonstration on

Wednesday 18th November in the Millgate. For more details contact us on 0161 763 7014.

2. **Ten-pin bowling buddies** – strike up some fun with our Tuesday morning group! We're looking for friendly volunteers to support members as they enjoy a couple of games at Hollywood Bowl. No bowling expertise needed, just plenty of encouragement and a willingness to join in and have some fun.
3. **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.
4. **Event Helpers** – Various local events and venues over the course of the year, including our usual Christmas wrapping in the Millgate.
5. **Drivers** – to occasionally transport clients between their homes and the Centre
6. **Companions** – to accompany clients and help them gain confidence as they navigate a new route or visit a new venue
7. **Walker Support** – to accompany clients on our gentle Friday stroll
8. **Garden Help** – to support Jean and Michael maintain the small garden and potted plants for clients and visitors to enjoy

Whether you have a couple of hours to spare each week, each month, every few months, or just now and then, you could make a huge difference, and we would love to hear from you. Please take that step. Contact the Centre today, ask for a volunteer application form, and become part of an incredible team.

Volunteer Forum, Wednesday 9th December 10.30am to 12pm.

The volunteer forum provides a friendly and 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

Group co-ordinators' meeting, Tuesday 19th January 2027, 10am to 12pm

These meetings offer a friendly space for group co-ordinators 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 take place on the **third Tuesday of January, May, and September.**

Trips and Activities News

Pony Tales

In August, some of our clients spent a wonderful few hours at Margaret Haes Riding School, where they had the chance to meet some very special four-legged friends.

The visit was a lovely opportunity to try something different. Everyone could meet the horses, help with grooming, and learn more about caring for them before enjoying the excitement of riding. For some, it was a completely new experience, offering the chance to build confidence, ask plenty of questions and have fun along the way. There were smiles all round – and, of course, lots of new equine-tances! (Apologies - couldn't resist that one!). A huge thank you to everyone at Margaret Haes Riding School for making us feel so welcome and for looking after us so well.

Ahoy, mateys – hoist the sails!

At the beginning of September, we were joined by the Mayor of Bury, Councillor Mohammed Tahir Rafiq for a fabulous sailing experience, kindly hosted by the friendly and supportive team at Elton Sailing Club. We spent several hours enjoying the freedom of being on the water, feeling the wind and the movement of the boats while learning from the club's knowledgeable and skilled members. Everyone had the chance to sail in a small yacht and ride in one of the much faster motorised rescue boats before returning to the clubhouse for a delicious meal. It was a fantastic experience, enjoyed by all. We came back with the same number of people we set off with – always a bonus – and, for the most part, we even stayed dry! The good weather and the sounds of nature all around us added to the experience to make the day truly memorable one. A heartfelt thank you to the Commodore and the whole team for looking after us so well. We're already looking forward to returning.

Bury 10K

On Sunday 20th September Peter Halligan and Michael Johnson generously gave up their time once again to run in the Bury 10K to raise some much-needed funds for us. A huge thank you to the both of you

from everybody connected with the Society. We are grateful of your support and appreciative of your efforts. All of the money raised will be used directly to support blind and partially sighted people.

Events

Tech Talk with Chris Garry, Friday 27 November, 10 to 11.30am.

Come along and learn about latest news and information around technology, Apps, accessibility features, and IT designed for people with Sight Loss.

Join Us for an Evening with Prestwich Community Choir. The Stoller Hall in Manchester on Sunday 13th December at 7pm.

We are delighted to share that the wonderful Prestwich Community Choir will be performing at The Stoller Hall in Manchester on Sunday 13th December at 7pm. The choir has very kindly chosen Bury Society for Blind and Partially Sighted People as its charity, and we are incredibly grateful for its generous support. This special concert will not only bring people together for a fabulous evening of music but will also raise vital funds and awareness to support local people living with sight loss. We would love you to come along, enjoy the music, and show your support for the choir and Bury Society. It promises to be a truly uplifting evening, and it would be wonderful to see you there!

If you are interested in learning more about Prestwich Community Choir, then you can email them at prestwichcommunitychoir@gmail.com or visit its website at prestwichcommunitychoir.com

The choir also has a page on Facebook and Instagram

User Forum, Wednesday 13 January 2027, 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**

Celebratory Dining

Carole and Mags are preparing a delicious line-up of celebratory lunches. With tempting seasonal menus and a warm welcome waiting, we hope you'll join us and enjoy these special occasions together.

St Andrew's Day lunch – 27th November 2026

Starter: tattie scone with sausage and a poached egg

Main course: haggis, neeps, and colcannon

Dessert: cranachan

Please book by no later than 20th November 2026. A £6 deposit is required when booking. Enjoy a taste of Scotland with friends!

Christmas dinner – 18th December 2026

Starter: tomato soup or prawn cocktail

Main course: roast turkey, baked ham, stuffing, pigs in blankets, roast potatoes, honey-glazed parsnips, carrots, and brussels sprouts

Vegetarian option: vegetarian Wellington

Desserts: Christmas pudding or sticky toffee pudding, served with cream or custard

Gluten-free option: puff pastry fruit round

Followed by tea or coffee and a mince pie

Please book no later than 1st December 2026. A £10 deposit is required when booking. Make this festive feast part of your Christmas celebrations!

Burns Night lunch – 29th January 2027

Starter: cock-a-leekie soup

Main course: pork and apple stew with neeps and tatties, cabbage, carrots, and gravy

Vegetarian option: spiced vegetable stew

Dessert: pear cake with whisky cream

Gluten-free option: pear cake

Please book by no later than 22nd January 2027. A £6 deposit is required when booking. Raise a toast to Burns Night over a hearty lunch!

Valentine's lunch – 26th February 2027

Starter: spinach cannelloni with tomato sauce

Main course: 'marry me' chicken with Parmenter potatoes, diced carrots, and green beans

Dessert: salted chocolate brownies with chocolate-dipped strawberries

Please book no later than 19th February 2027. A £6 deposit is required when booking. Treat yourself to delicious food and lovely company!

Places are limited and expected to fill quickly, so book early to avoid disappointment. To reserve a place, call the Centre on 0161 763 7014.

Cancellations – with the exception of the Christmas lunch, please try to give us at least one week's notice if you have to cancel your reservation. For the Christmas lunch it would be helpful if you could let us know at least two weeks in advance.

Other Activities

There's plenty to look forward to as we ease into the festive season! After St John's Tottington Trash & Treasure on Sunday 25 October and our Halloween Lunch on Friday 30 October, November brings Christmas crafts, a gift-wrapping demonstration at the Mill Gate, St John's Craft Event, and a lively Christmas Social with Steve. We'll round off the month at Unsworth Christmas Market before December gets us fully into the Christmas spirit, with festive refreshments and music at the Masonic Hall, wreath-making, Christmas gift wrapping at the Mill Gate, a special afternoon buffet and, finally, our Christmas meal on Friday 18 December - a wonderfully warm and sociable way to celebrate together.

Full details of the activities will be issued in a separate 'Festive News' due out at the end of the month.

Donations and Legacies

We are truly grateful for every donation made to the Society, whether it is a general gift or one given in memory of a loved one. Your generosity directly supports people living with sight loss. It may help provide transport so that someone can attend an activity, or fund training that enables a volunteer to guide someone safely. **Every gift makes a difference, and we sincerely thank you for your support.**

Since our last newsletter, we were saddened to hear of the passing of Sid Pritchard, a well-known client and friend of the Society. Before his death, Sid kindly made a donation, which we agreed would be used to purchase new chairs for the centre. They will be a lovely and lasting reminder of Sid, as well as a meaningful example of how donations directly support the Society's work.

The pergola mentioned earlier was also made possible through a donation from Philip Gibbons, husband of our late Treasurer, Linda Gibbons. It provides another lasting tribute to a wonderful friend of the Society.

100 Club Monthly Prize Draw

Are you participating in the monthly prize draw yet? 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 our services to help support local blind and partially sighted people. Packs are available from the Centre.

First, second and third prize winners since our last VI Bulletin:

July: 1st prize: No. 12, 2nd prize: No. 353, 3rd prize: No. 65.

August: 1st prize: No. 46, 2nd prize: No. 348, 3rd prize: No. 134.

September: 1st prize: No. 396, 2nd prize: No. 497, 3rd prize: No. 118.

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

Christmas Closure: Please note. Our offices will remain open for support until 5pm Thursday 24th December and then re-open at 9am Monday 4th January 2027.

Best wishes from all the Team at Bury Society for Blind & Partially Sighted People.

The image on the right shows a snowman in a Santa hat and red & green tartan scarf, surrounded by evergreen sprigs and red berries



REGULAR CENTRE ACTIVITIES

Monday:

Drop In: 10–11.30am. Come in for a cuppa.

Music Buddies: 1.30 to-3pm. Every Monday except 4th Monday.

Bury Aces Showdown: 6-8.30pm. Come and join the fun!

Calico / CAB: 9.30am-12. 30pm. First Monday of the month

Creative Workshop: 10.30am–12pm. Second Monday of the Month

Musical Social: 1.30-2.45pm. Fourth Monday of the Month (£3)

Tuesday:

Pheonix Foot Clinic: 9.30am–4pm. Appointment only. Contact the office

Ten-pin bowling: 11am -12pm. At Hollywood Bowl. Meet at the centre

Wednesday:

LVA Clinic: From 9.30am. Appointment only. Telephone 0300 323 3316

Drop-In Session: 10am-12pm. Breakfast & craft activities with Carole

Macular Support Group: 1.30-3pm First Wednesday of the Month

Sight Loss Support Group: 2-4pm. Creative Living Centre Prestwich.

Second Wednesday of the Month

Macular Support Group: 1.30-3pm. Third Wednesday of the Month

Glaucoma Support Group: 1.30-2.30pm. Fourth Wednesday of the Month

Thursday:

Drop In & Crossword Group: 10.30am-12pm. Lots of fun & laughter

Age UK Bury Cluster Group Tea and chatter: 1.30-3pm

Bury Aces Showdown: 6-8.30pm. Come and have some fun

Friday:

Henshaws' Tech Support: From 9.15am. Every fortnight. Appointment only

Friday Lunch: 11.30am-2pm. Book in advance.

Walk & Talk: 1.30pm. Enjoy a gentle walk with friends.

Saturday:

Book Club: 11am-12.30pm. Third Saturday of the Month. Confirm attendance in advance