



Bury Society For Blind and
Partially Sighted People

Monthly V.I. Link – Issue 11

11 September 2020

Welcome to our September V.I. Link, a little longer than previous editions and with an added 'Table Top' flyer! Next month we will be talking about... yes, that dreaded word 'Christmas'! We'll be taking the stress out of Christmas for you and providing our Christmas brochure full of wonderful ideas and stocking fillers for you to peruse. No need to wear a mask from your armchair! In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this month's offering.

Let's Get Physical!

Over the next few editions, we are going to feature some simple exercises for strength and balance. Try these exercises two or three times a week, every day if you like – and you should soon notice improvements to your co-ordination and balance. First, a couple of areas to highlight,

- Make sure the chair you use is sturdy
- Wear supportive shoes
- If you experience chest pains, dizziness or severe shortness of breath, stop and call your GP or call 111
- A slight soreness the day after is quite normal.

Heel Raises: Stand tall, holding the back of a sturdy kitchen-type chair or kitchen sink, then lift your heels off the floor, taking your weight onto your big toes. Hold for three seconds, then lower with control. Repeat 10 times.

Toe Raises. Stand tall, holding the same support, then raise your toes – taking your weight on your heels. Don't stick your bottom out! Hold for three seconds, then lower with control. Repeat 10 times.

Mental Well Being: Now more than ever, we need to look after our minds. The restrictions, whilst necessary, can be very difficult to live with and isolating. If you would like a friendly voice to speak to, why not join our Phone Friends programme? We have a number of friendly, trained volunteers who can call you on a regular basis or just time to time. Contact the office for more details. If you are really struggling with your mental wellbeing, Early Break have recently set up a confidential helpline for residents in Bury of all ages. Their experienced call handlers offer support by giving advice, guidance and signposting to appropriate services. This

non-clinical, non-urgent support for anyone experiencing difficulties with their mental wellbeing is available Monday to Saturday 8am-8pm. The Help Line no. is 0161 464 3679. Alternatively, contact our Early Intervention Team who can forward a referral to this service.

TV Licence Update: As we mentioned in last month's edition, letters are now being sent out for over 75's to renew their TV Licences. We understand from members; the letters have not been sent out all at the same time so please don't worry if you haven't received yours yet – it will come! Remember, you will have to pay in full unless you meet the following criteria:

- a) If you or your partner are receiving Pension Credit and living at the same address, you will receive your licence free.
- b) If you are registered severely sight impaired/blind you will qualify for a 50% reduction of the total price. You will need proof of this registration. If you require help in completing the form or in providing proof, then please call the office and we can arrange for one of our Benefit Support team to assist.

Bury Shopping Experience

One of our clients, Malcolm Jaffe, sent in his observations regarding his first visit into Bury since February 2020.

'All the stores visited had one-way systems in and out which I found very confusing. If I had been on my own, I would not have been aware of the barriers and signage directing people into the store plus some stores did not have clear floor marking. Fortunately, I was with my mother but, with my limited sight, I don't feel I would be confident to go out at the moment under these present circumstances.'

It is a confusing world out there for all but particularly if you are living with sight loss. If you feel you would benefit from our 'Confidence Guide' scheme then do give us a ring and we can discuss your requirements. **0161 763 7014.**

Forthcoming Information Sessions:

On 25 August we held our first 'workshop' – Basic Introduction to Mobile Phones. Both attendees felt safe and comfortable in the Centre, with the room set out with everyone socially distanced and staff with appropriate PPE. We had some wonderful feedback on the value of the content, clarity,

knowledge and patience of the staff! Michael and John felt it was also helpful to hear someone else's issues and realise you're not the only one struggling! Both gentlemen said they would very much like further sessions on Zoom, tablets and Synaptic software. In addition, we have had a number of requests for magnification equipment demonstrations. To this end, the following sessions are available to book on or discuss further. (Please note, there will be a maximum number of between 3 and 4 places available per sessions.)

'Let's Magnify' – Wednesday 23 September 2-3.30pm. Glynis from the Early Intervention Team, will be demonstrating magnification equipment, including the mono-mouse, Clearview reader as well as electronic handheld magnifiers. Our equipment isn't the newest around but it will give you a good understanding of whether this type of equipment will be beneficial and allow you to see enough to read.

'Accessing Zoom' – Tuesday 13 October – 2-3.30pm. Another member of our Early Intervention Team, Kelly is putting on a workshop to demonstrate how to access and use Zoom, the on line meeting programme.

'Eye Talk Bite Size' – Gill Currie who runs our 5-week Eye Talk Support programme, has developed some mini sessions focussing on specific topics usually covered within Eye Talk. Gill is currently contacting anyone who has expressed an interest in attending the programme to offer these individual sessions, either at the Centre or virtually. If you are interested in any of these subjects, please contact Gill to be included on the sessions. Topics include: Eye Conditions explained, Travel and other concessions, Benefits and allowances, Daily Living Skills, Specialist equipment.

Wednesday October 21, 1.30pm. As we are not able to meet face to face in the Centre, in October, our Macular Degeneration Group are having their first 'Telephone Conference meeting'! Each member of the group will be issued with a telephone number to call, once connected they simply press 1 and are 'in the meeting'! The sessions last 55 minutes (calls are charged at local rate) and the Macular Society's Regional Manager, Adele Francis will be giving a talk about the work of the Macular Society at the first session. Carole, the Group leader will be in touch with all the current

attendees, but if you would like to join us, please do get in touch and we'll add you to the call.

National Eye Health Week is set to take place from the 21st to 27th September 2020. It is an opportunity to promote the importance of eye health and the need for regular sight tests for all. Did you know that 2 million people in the UK are living with sight loss? A sight test easily detects the early signs of eye conditions such as glaucoma. Also, health conditions including diabetes and high blood pressure can be detected. To maintain healthy eyes, you should eat well, avoid smoking and wear eye protection during bright sunlight.

Notice of Annual General Meeting, 22 September. What better way for the Society to celebrate National Eye Health Week than to hold its Annual General Meeting during that week. Due to the coronavirus, sadly we are not able to hold our usual Open Day and AGM at the Centre, but the AGM will be held virtually by Microsoft Teams. At this event, the Board of Trustees will present the accounts for 2019-20 and welcome any new members to the Board as well as re-electing Trustees who have served their 3-year term. This year, Tracey Marno and Mohammad Iqbal have submitted their nominations to be considered for a further term of 3 years and we welcome new trustees, Councillor Joan Grimshaw and Ms Heather Crozier to the Board. If you would like to attend the AGM you are very welcome. Please contact Jill Logan for details on how to log in. A summary of the meeting and accounts will be included in our next Bulletin.

Friends Updates:

Many of you who attended the Centre will be familiar with Janet, and her son Darren who provided many a delicious bacon barm, soup and lunch on a Friday with Carole. Unfortunately, we understand from Janet that Darren is not very well at the moment and so has had to withdraw as a volunteer with the Society. Janet also is taking some time out to support Darren. We wanted to let them know we were thinking of them and particularly sending our good wishes to Darren.

'End of an Era': Sid Pritchard & Jill Logan. A regular sight at the Centre over many years was Sid Pritchard's guide dog, James. James retired in February 2018 and was 'adopted' by Jill Logan. Sadly, in June, James

passed away peacefully but both Sid and Jill wanted to share a few of their thoughts with you to celebrate 'The wonder that was James'!

Sid: It all started on a day in October, 2008. I was told to go and sit down in our lounge. Suddenly I was leapt on by 77 lbs of dog straight on to my knee. After giving me one monstrous lick, James settled on my knee, put his head on his paws and reckoned to go to sleep. Contented, yes! This was the start of a wonderful friendship with a working partner who would be extremely reliable, loyal and a pal like none other for the next nine and a half years. James settled in so quickly and loved Kath and me in equal measure, laying at Kath's feet (not mine) in the evening during his 'down time'.

James was so caring in his work – well, 99% of the time – nobody's absolutely perfect! One day he walked me slap bang into a post, so I tapped the post rather heavily with my baton. From then on, every time we approached that post, he would slow right down till we were safely past. What a memory! He was my constant companion, supporting in many ways, at Church, or when attending the Music group at the Blind Society, tucking himself away – which wasn't easy for him as he was a big lad, but not a murmur of complaint. Every time we went on holiday and James would stay with friends; we were never disappointed on our return. "He's been absolutely wonderful and a perfect gentleman" was so often the comment. Obviously there comes a point where a guide-dog deserves his retirement and that day arrived quite late for James, when he was nearly 11. Never an easy time to part with such a wonderful companion and friend but imagine my joy in knowing that James would be going to someone he and I knew, Jill.

Jill: From my perspective this was a partnership made in heaven. I had been trying to persuade my husband to take a little more exercise. Following an assessment by Guide Dogs for our suitability (it's not just a given!), it was agreed that James could join our family. As with Sid and Kath, James just settled in as if he'd been with us all our lives. My husband and James quickly developed a 'bromance' and I swear they even started to walk like each other, a laid-back strolling along! James was a delight. We acquired a wonderfully, well trained dog and he embraced his new 'retirement home'! Initially he came into work with me, patiently sleeping in my office, but greeting everyone who went passed with his

favourite soft toy and huge sweeping tail, and getting mentioned as 'in attendance' when I went to meetings! At weekends, he made friends with everyone at the Burrs Country Park, and even made it onto The Lamp Post Café' Facebook page! In December, my eldest son and his wife had a little boy. James welcomed William into our family and one of my last memories of James is him watching protectively over William as he had his first taste of a paddling pool! I'd like to think James enjoyed his retirement, we certainly did. Looking back, would I do it all again? The answer has to be yes. We gained so much from having James in our lives. We all acknowledge that a guide dog changes a blind person's life, but little did we realise, it would change ours so much too!

Monthly Prize Draw – '100 Club'. We are delighted to welcome three new entrants to our Prize Draw this month! It's a great way to support the Society. Don't forget, 50% of the money raised is distributed in prizes and the other half contributes directly to provide services for local people living with sight loss. The draw takes place on the second Friday of every month, and to buy a number it costs just £1.00! Let us know if you would like an application form. August winners were: No.21 - £92.10, No.217 - £46.05, No.93 - £15.35. Thank you for all your support.

Bury Lions Walk 4 Sight, Peel to Peel, on Saturday 10th October: Glynis and Jill are forming 'Team BBS' to take on this challenge. From the Peel statue in Market Place Bury, commencing at 10.00am, to the Peel tower on Holcombe Hill, an approximate distance of six and a half miles. Entry fee of £20 goes towards Lions sight-saving projects, and any additional sponsorship we raise will be for Bury Blind Society. If you would like to join us, please contact us and we will pass on the details for registration. If you would like to support us through sponsorship, you can do so via our Virgin Money Giving page set up on our web site under 'Fundraising' or a one-off donation via the button on our front page. Alternatively, we do have a sponsor form at the Centre and we would be happy to include your donation details on this. Simply ring 0161 763 7014 for details.

Monthly Sales: As promised last month, we know that many of you enjoyed supporting us by purchasing items from 'Margaret's Table Top Sale'. Well, not to be put off by a virus...we've brought the Table to you! Attached is a flyer with several items listed that you may wish to buy. Also

available, for a small donation, are hand crafted 'Be Happy, Be Safe' cards, perfect for letting family and friends know you are thinking of them, as well as our face masks – including some with cute doggie pictures on them! If you would like to purchase any of these items, please ring the Society (0161 763 7014) and we can arrange for them to be delivered and payment collected (local delivery only available).

Handmade, personalised cards. Are you struggling to get out to purchase that special card, and then there's the challenge of writing it if you are living with sight loss. Never mind Moonpig! What about purchasing a wonderful unique card from us whilst supporting your local blind society too? We can even write and send the card for you. And, if you want it in braille, we can do that too! Prices start from £3.00.

Covid Update: As we go to press, local lockdown restrictions have been implemented in neighbouring Bolton and we are still seeing an increase in cases of Covid-19 here in Bury. Sadly, this virus is not going away and until a vaccine has been found, we must all be vigilant. In our last bulletin we highlighted the new restrictions for Greater Manchester, and these are still in place. You can no longer meet with people you don't live with:

- Inside private homes
- Inside public venues
- Or outside in private gardens.

In addition to these, from Monday 14th September a further restriction will be implemented across England of no more than 6 people in a social gathering.

Our advice is consistent, stay safe and well by minimising the risk. Wash or sanitize your hands, wear a facemask and social distance of 2 metres where possible. Use your symbol cane, long canes etc to highlight you have a visual impairment. If you would like to have a printed lanyard or high viz waistcoat highlighting this, please give us a call and we can arrange to send you one.

If you feel unwell, get a free test by calling 119 or go to nhs.uk. We also understand that two new local testing centres have been opened in Bury at The Mosses Community Centre and 95 Chesham Fold Road.

If you need help with food deliveries and prescriptions, please phone Bury Community Hubs on **0161 253 5353**.

Just for Fun – Brainteaser.

First the answers from last month:

Brain Teaser: Q: What begins with an 'e' and only contains one letter? A: An envelope!

This month's teaser: You're escaping a labyrinth and there are 3 exits. Exit A, leads to an inferno. Exit B, leads to an assassin. Exit C leads to a lion who hasn't eaten for 3 years. Which exit do you pick?

'Take 5' Quiz.

Answers from last month:

1. Which sea creature has 3 hearts – **An Octopus**
2. Who was Henry VIII third wife- **Jane Seymour**
3. What language is spoken in Brazil -**Portuguese**
4. In what year did Coronation Street first air on TV – **1960**
5. Which city had the most visitors in the world in 2019 – **Bangkok**

September's Five Questions:

1. In which year was the Grand National declared void after two false starts?
2. Which rank in the Royal Air Force is immediately above a Wing Commander?
3. What does the acronym HTTP stand for?
4. In the novel by D H Lawrence what was the name of Lady Chatterley's lover?
5. What is the best-selling type of soup in the UK?

Whilst the daily Drop In remains closed, the Centre is available for bookable sessions, you are always welcome. A member of staff is always in the Centre Monday-Friday so do give us a call.

Stay safe and well everyone and we look forward to catching up again next month. Jill and all the Bury Blind Society Team.