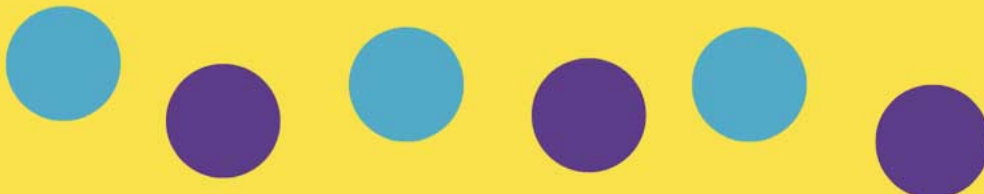


# News & Views

Autumn 2023

## National Eye Health Week

18th - 24th September 2023



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# National Eye Health Week

Clare Anderson

National Eye Health Week runs from **18th to the 24th September**. For the week our team will be out and about raising eye health awareness and reaching out to people who could benefit from our services. Our Central Bedfordshire Sensory Impairment Advisor will be out and about visiting local opticians and stores that support the local community.

Our Low Vision team will be open for their usual clinic day at our Bedford Office on **Tuesday 19th September** but with some added guests! We will have Bedford Borough Citizens Advice joining us, although the Low Vision Clinic will still run on an appointment only basis, we are pleased to announce we are accepting walk ins to come and chat to Bedford Borough Citizens Advice.

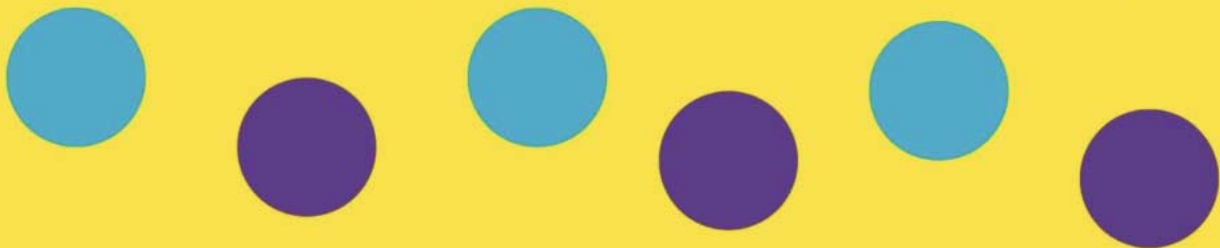
The Citizens Advice outreach worker will be available to listen and advise on what is the next best step. This may include signposting to another organisation, giving some initial information, or if the issue requires more specialist advice/casework, arranging a referral for benefits, money advice or housing advisers. They can provide information/signposting on many issues such as employment, housing, immigration, consumer, family/relationships and neighbour disputes. They will also be visiting us again on **3rd October 2023**.

You will find on the next page details of our event being held at Flitwick Football Centre on the **20th September**, there will be some interactive activities and information stands from other organisations from across Bedfordshire.



# **Sight Concern Bedfordshire Invite You To Join Their National Eye Health Week Event**

**Wednesday 20th September 2023 at Flitwick  
Community Football Centre 10am-3pm**



**Come and join Sight Concern Bedfordshire and friends!  
As well as information from other local organisations  
there will be a seated yoga session, a talk from Sassy  
Wyatt the creator of 'Blind Girl Adventures', visual  
awareness and guiding training, a mindfulness session  
delivered by Mind BLMK and some outdoor activities  
including kite flying. Light refreshments will be available.  
If you would like to come along or you would like to find  
out more about the event and session times please  
contact Clare Anderson on 07719 047425 or email  
[clareanderson@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:clareanderson@sightconcern.org.uk)**



**SightConcern**  
Bedfordshire



# National Eye Health Week – Low Vision Clinic



As part of National Eye Health Week, on Tuesday 19th September by appointment only, our friendly staff and volunteers will be on hand at our Bedford Office to give you information about eye health, including the importance of diet, eye protection and regular eye checks. They can also discuss how you can access further advice and support from Sight Concern and other organisations.

In addition, you will be able to view our range of Cocoons, a leading brand of polarised sunglasses which are designed to fit over your prescription lenses. They filter 100% of damaging UVA and UVB, cut out glare and can enhance contrast and depth perception. We can help you find a lens that will best suit your eyecare needs and activity. They are available to purchase from Sight Concern at less than recommended retail price.

We also have a variety of portable and desktop electronic magnifiers available for demonstration and purchase. With an electronic video magnifier, you can zoom into and magnify images and text on screen, as well as change the colour of the text and background. Some models are also available with a text to speech function.

Please call **01234 264028** to make an appointment.



## Fundraiser Extraordinaires!

The Inner Wheel Luton North (District 26) has had an extremely busy year!

Their main fundraiser this year was a fashion show held on the 3rd of May, which raised £566 for charity. Members also hosted individual events throughout the year including: a New Year Walk, a Beaujolais evening, an Advent Tea and a Pancake Lunch as well as selling personal items on FaceBook Marketplace, impossible quizzes and lavender bags to raise money for local charities.

The monies raised this year were split between The Luton Foodbank and Sight Concern Bedfordshire; charities chosen by the 2022/ 2023 chair Linda Russel. Along with a donation earlier in the year Sight Concern received a huge £1500, for which we are extremely grateful. Thank you to all the Inner Wheel members involved!

Volunteer Team Leader Lisa and volunteer Jessica were invited to collect the donation at the Annual General Meeting. They had a lovely time getting to know members and hearing all about the fantastic work done by The Inner Wheel to support local charities.

Photo shows volunteer Jessica and fifteen members of The Inner Wheel Luton North, including SCB volunteers Mary, Rona, Pam, Brenda and Linda. Jessica is holding a cheque for £1000.





# Vista's Children and Young People Calvert Trust Trip 2023

Vista, a charity based in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland supporting people with sight loss and their families, holds an annual residential trip for children and young people at the Calvert Trust, Outdoor Activities Centre in the Lake District. This year they decided to extend the invitation to other sight loss charities across the country so that more visually impaired children and young people could experience the fun filled week. Sight Concern Bedfordshire were lucky enough to be one of those charities; connecting Vista with a local family who met the criteria to take part in the project.

As you can see from the photos Julie, Jasmine, and Lois had a fantastic time! The days were spent canoeing, sailing on a catamaran, and learning bushcraft skills, while the evenings were more relaxed; socializing, playing sport in the hall and having sleepovers with other families.

Here is what mum, Julie, had to say about the week... 'The week was brilliant from the start, and we felt welcomed by Vista families as soon as we arrived. Lois is not very outgoing and was a bit apprehensive about some of the activities, having a designated support worker for the stay helped put her at ease. Jasmine and Lois loved sailing, and canoeing and really enjoyed the evenings spending time with their new friends. The team made sure all the activities were accessible, lifts were available for Lois' wheelchair... nothing was too much trouble for them. Lois was more confident by the end of the stay and Jasmine has made some great new friends that she will keep in touch with now she's back. It was a great week, so much so that Lois has decided to move to Cumbria!'



*Photo above Jasmine and Lois sailing with their new Vista friends.*

*Photo below shows Jasmine and Lois onboard the catamaran with big smiles on their faces.*



New opportunities to meet people in a similar situation,  
If you are interested in joining us,

**Office: 01234 311555 Social gro**

## Monday

**Luton Low Vision Clinic 10am-3pm** – Luton Office

Vision assessments, advice, equipment and support - Appointment only.

## Tuesday

**Bedford Low Vision Clinic: 10am-3pm** – Bedford Office

Vision assessments, advice, equipment and support - Appointment only.

**Crafty Bunch: 11.30am – 12.30pm** – Grove Corner, 76a High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1JF. £1 a week for tea and coffee.

**SocialEyz Lunch Club: 12.30 to 3.30pm** – Grove Corner, 76a High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1JF. £3 a week for tea and coffee. Purchase a lunch for an additional cost or bring your own to eat together.

**Luton IT Club: 1.30 to 3.00pm** Cafe50nine Tablet and iPhone advice and support.

## Wednesday

**1 to 1 IT sessions: 2.00 to 3.00PM** - Bedford Office Taster sessions for tablet, phones and PC.

**Youth Forum: 4:00 to 6:00pm fortnightly** – Join our group of 11 to 16 year olds for, fun, games, tech tips and snacks at Cardinal Newman High School.

## Thursday

**Bedford IT Club: Thursday 10.00am to 12.00pm**

Homebrook House, 1 Cardington Road, Bedford MK42 0RL.

Phone, iPhone, Tablet, iPad and Alexa support.



# Activity Pull Out 2023



learn new skills and get out and about.  
please call before attending.

**Contacts: Lisa Drummond 01582 256093**

## Friday

**The Friday Club: 10.00am to 11.30am fortnightly** - St Paul's Church, New Town St, Luton LU1 3EB Quizzes, trips, listening to music and guest speakers.

## Saturday

**Monthly Family Group: 10.00am to 1.00pm** - St Paul's Church, New Town St, Luton LU1 3EB 1st Saturday of the month – Games, trips, arts and crafts for children, young people and their parents/carers.

## Other VI clubs not run by Sight Concern

**The VIP Club: every Thursday 10am - 1pm:** At St Margaret's Church of Scotland, 20, Bolingbroke Road, Luton LU1 5JD  
[vipsocialclub@hotmail.com](mailto:vipsocialclub@hotmail.com) or call **07769 627957** (between 10am- 4pm Mon-Fri). Activities ranging from, talks from outside organisations, trips, projects including cookery, participation in Luton International Carnival and much more.

**Bedford Macular Society: 3rd Monday of the month starts Jan 17<sup>th</sup> 10.30 to 12.30pm** - Meets at Bedford CVS, 43, Bromham Rd, MK40 2AA. Contact Sue Drew **07517 543948** for group contact details.

**Fortnightly Bedford Pub Club:** For more information, please contact SCB's Volunteer Team Leader, Lisa Drummond on **01582 256093** or email [lisdummond@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:lisdummond@sightconcern.org.uk)

**Bedford Quarterly Social Events:** Lisa Drummond on **01582 256093** or email [lisdummond@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:lisdummond@sightconcern.org.uk)

# Volunteer News

It was lovely to see so many faces at our 'Volunteers Week' get-togethers in June. We had a lovely time at Stockwood Park, Luton and Priory Park, Bedford with walks in the sunshine, coffee, and cake. We hope to see lots of our volunteers next time!

Top two photos show Luton volunteers at Stockwood Park taking a break from the walk standing in front of a tree and Bedford volunteers enjoying cake in the sun at Priory Park.

As usual it's been a busy time of year. Our summer sessions for Youth Forum included kite flying with Lionel and a visit to Grove Corner, Dunstable. Sight Concern worked alongside Community Central and the Disability Recourse Centre in Luton to deliver Visual Awareness and Guiding training to members of the community. It was a great opportunity to give practical advice to the friends and family of people with sight loss.



*Guiding Training at Community Central.*

## Upcoming Events

Our Visually Impaired Champion George, together with Usef the wonder dog and his team, are out and about across the county this Autumn for more fun meeting you all. Come along to our stand at the following free events for information and advice about services and living aids to support blind and partially sighted people. Please drop by and chat with us, we'd love to meet you!

**Friday 6th October** - Festival for Older People at the Rufus Centre, Steppingley Road, Flitwick MK45 1AH from 10am – 2pm. Organised by Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire. Advice and information for older people from local organisations, voluntary and community groups. Come along and enjoy the entertainment, activities, and refreshments too. This year the focus for the day is to celebrate older people and the contribution they make to society. The theme of this year's event is 'Resilience of an Older Person in a Changing World'. This is always a lively event with lots of things to see and do.

**Wednesday 11th October** - Ageing Well Exhibition at Bedford's Corn Exchange, St. Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL from 10am – 3pm. Organised by Age UK Bedfordshire, this promotes independence and involvement in the community for those over the age of 50 and will provide people with a wide range of information and advice, including community, health and well-being services.

**Monday 23rd October** – Optelec's Vision Zone at The Weatherley Centre, Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade SG18 8JH from 10am – 2pm. At this event, as well as meeting Sight Concern, you can see specialist low vision equipment supplier Optelec demonstrating their latest magnification equipment and giving you the chance to get hands-on too. More stands to be confirmed at this event, please keep an eye on our social media channels for more information.

Also, Sight Concern is joining many other local support organisations at free coffee morning drop-in sessions organised by East Bedford Primary Care Network at Christ the King Church Hall, Harrowden Road, Bedford, MK42 0SP from 10am – 12pm on the following dates:

**Thursday 5th October, Thursday 2nd November and Thursday 7th December.**

You will be able to access free support and information, or you can just pop in for a chat, or a free cup of coffee/tea and biscuits.



## Sight Concern's Tech Clinic is up and running

George Hogman, our VI Champion, is in his fourth month of running a Tech Clinic on the first Tuesday of every month in our Bedford office. You can come along and see technology ranging from the Orcam Read to Digital Magnifiers and CCTV. George is also happy to demonstrate apps and talking software like VoiceOver and Talkback for use on mobile phones and tablets.

The Tech clinic also runs on other Tuesdays through the month in the Bedford office and on other weeks is run by Low Vision Clinic staff and volunteers.

You can come along and visit the clinic via a Low Vision Clinic appointment or, if you have recently attended a Low Vision Clinic appointment, you can also book yourself in at: [office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk) or by calling **01234 311555**. This service is by appointment only.

## Above and Beyond Nominations

by George Hogman, VI Champion



After numerous nominations, this quarter's Above & Beyond Award winners for providing excellent services to visually-impaired people in Luton and Bedfordshire, are all Thameslink Railway Ticket Offices from Bedford to Luton Airport Parkway stations, including ("which will be calling at") Bedford, Flitwick, Harlington, Legrave, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway stations. I have had nominations for all of these, and now would seem to be a poignant time to celebrate the great services they provide to people with disabilities and additional needs.

The comments we have received include:

- Simon from Luton: "The ticket offices have been nothing but helpful, from buying a ticket to my onward journey, where they have contacted the station ahead and there have been people waiting to help me and my group navigate through the station exit. They even walked us to the venue we were heading for, which was completely above and beyond."
- George from Legrave: "The staff in the ticket office at Legrave station are friendly and incredibly helpful. They often chaperone me to the correct platform. In the times where there hasn't been a ticket office open there it became incredibly difficult to buy a ticket."

- Sue from Flitwick: "The ticket office and staff at Flitwick were really helpful and also helped me to find the correct platform."

Sight Concern has worked with Luton Parkway station and the DART and found the staff at the ticket office there to be very helpful, again, offering assistance to the platform.

Please look out for our social media posts where you'll be able to see and read about our presentations. There will be more to follow in next quarter's News & Views.

This opens the door to us receiving your nominations for next quarter's Above and Beyond Award. Please send your nominations to:

[georgehogman@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:georgehogman@sightconcern.org.uk) or telephone us on **01234 311555**.

## Out and About



*Left and Below:  
2023 July 24 Drop in day  
with Professional Vision  
Services at Rufus Centre.*



*2023 July 25 Drop in day with  
Professional Vision Services at  
Cople Village Hall.*



# Low Vision Open Day

Solutions for all areas of sight loss



**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October - 10am to 2pm**  
**The Weatherley Centre, Eagle Farm Road,**  
**Biggleswade, SG18 8JH**

Our low vision open days are where you can talk with your local societies about the support they can offer you. Learn about activities and groups you can get involved in. Our experienced products consultant will assist you in gaining hands on experience with low vision aids and technology. Electronic magnifiers, reading machines, desktop, portable and much more.



**No Appointment needed, entry is free**  
**We look forward to meeting you there !**

**0800 145 6115**

**[www.lowvisionshop.co.uk](http://www.lowvisionshop.co.uk)**



# Supporting Sight Concern Bedfordshire

If you would like to support this work by donating to us, you can:

**Set up a standing order** – to donate regularly. This will help us plan ahead to structure our services and activities. If you wish to donate in this way please contact Alison Taylor on **01234 311555** or email:

[office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk) for a copy of the form and support with completing it.

**Debit/Credit card** – please contact Alison Taylor on **01234 311555** or email [office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk)

**Online** – via the Donate Now button on our website:

<https://www.sightconcern.org.uk/>

**JustGiving page** – <https://www.justgiving.com/sight-concern>

**Facebook** – via our Sight Concern Bedfordshire page:

<https://www.facebook.com/sightconcernbeds/>

**By Cheque** – to Sight Concern Bedfordshire, 116 Bromham Rd, Bedford, MK40 2QN

**By Leaving us a gift in your will** – When arranging your affairs, please consider us in your last will and testament by leaving us a lasting legacy to support blind and partially sighted people across Bedfordshire.

Please contact us with any queries on **01234 311555**

Email [office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk)

Thank you for your support.



## Getting in Touch

Please contact us by telephone or email

10am to 3pm Monday to Friday

Telephone 01234 311555

Email: [office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.sightconcern.org.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sightconcernbeds/>

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