

# News & Views

Autumn 2024



**National Eye  
Health Week**



**Starting 23rd September**  
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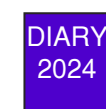
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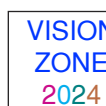
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# Message from the CEO

Carol O'Brien



Carol O'Brien.

Dear Readers,

As we head into autumn, I'm excited to invite you to Sight Concern's one-day event in Bedford on **Monday, 23rd September**. It's a great opportunity to connect, and I'm really looking forward to meeting as many of you as I can.

Whether you'd like to have a chat with me or get to know our colleagues who have stalls at the event, including Bedford Borough Healthwatch, Voiceability, Age UK, Blind Veterans UK, Citizens Advice Bedford Borough and more, there will be plenty of chances to find information that could be helpful for you, your family, or friends.

You will find more details about the event inside this magazine, and I hope you'll be able to join us.

I also want to take a moment to thank our wonderful funders. Sight Concern Bedfordshire is incredibly grateful to BLCF for awarding funding as part of the Luton Rising - Community Investment Fund. This support is crucial for our visual impairment advisor work with Luton residents.

For our Bedford project, we're very thankful to have received grant awards from the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust, the Connolly Foundation, and a recent award from the Panacea Charitable Trust. Your generosity makes a big difference and helps us continue our important work. Thank you to G W Dickins for a grant allowing us to buy equipment such as Liquid Level Indicators.

Thank you all for your ongoing support.

I'm looking forward to meeting many of you at the event and working together as we move into this exciting autumn season.



Funded by:



Managed by:



# Welcome to the Team!

## Laura – Access and Triage Officer

My name is Laura, I am part of the new Access and Triage Team here at Sight Concern Bedfordshire and I started with the organisation in March.

My role is to assess referrals that come into the organisation from Eye Clinics, Opticians, Self-referrals and any others that come through.

As well as enquiries about our services, I call our clients to do a short assessment which helps to understand individual situations and highlight which services could be beneficial, be it a Low Vision Clinic appointment to find a magnifier, Social Group to be around others going through similar situations, or support from a Visual Impairment Advisor to support with concessions or disability benefit forms, which make finances easier.

People are kind enough to share their difficulties and worries and together we discuss services within Sight Concern Bedfordshire, as well as other local service providers who may be more suitable for other needs. It is incredibly rewarding being able to inform people about what is available for our clients and referring them to the support that they need through these calls.

I also have brilliant colleagues here that support me, keeping me up to date with information and services available and we work together to achieve a timely and effect service.



*Laura Robinson –  
Access and Triage Officer*



**Monday 23rd September**

**Sight Concern's National Eye Health Week event on Monday 23rd September at Kings House Bedford - Teas and coffees plus some light bites**

- Event is open 10am-2pm and is free to attend. For more information please contact the office on 01234 311555
- Blind bowls champion who will show and help you participate
- Cocoon sunglasses demonstrations
- Mindfulness session delivered by Mind Blmk 11-11.30 and opportunity to discuss with Mindfulness instructor 11.30-12.00



- Seated Dance session delivered by 12-12.30



- Stands from other local organisations Bedford Borough Healthwatch, Voiceability, Age UK, Blind Veterans UK, Citizens Advice Bedford Borough and more



## Guiding Training and Visual awareness training - book your slot

### Sighted Guiding and Visual Awareness Training

Are you interested in learning how to guide your friend, family member or patient? Our Sighted Guided trainers will show you basic techniques to safely guide someone who is blind or partially sighted if they need it. We will also give you the opportunity to perform everyday task like making a drink using a simulation spectacle to help give an understanding of a variety of conditions.

To book one of the two sessions we will be holding throughout the day, please sign up when you arrive at the event. If you have any transport queries, please get in touch.



**Tuesday 24th September**

**Sight Concern Bedfordshire staff will be in Ampthill library, 1 Dunstable Road, Ampthill. Beds. MK45 2N, from 09:30am-12:30pm**



It is an informal event to promote Sight Concern Bedfordshire's work across Central Bedfordshire as part of National Eye Health Week.

We support individuals of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and communities through a wide range of services for people with sight or hearing loss.

Maureen will be able to discuss benefits, concessions, as well as social groups and befriending opportunities.

Kathie will also be able to discuss ways to look after your eye health, make the most of your remaining vision and our display of magnifiers, sunshields and other Low Vision aids that we are able to provide through our Low Vision Service.



## Wednesday 25th September

**Gill and Kathie from Sight Concern's low vision clinic team will be visiting local opticians in the town centre to speak to eye care professionals about the free services Sight Concern offers.**



## Saturday 28th September

**Family Group Bedford Pop Up Event!  
Join us for a Family Group Pop Up Event at Clapham Methodist Church on Saturday 28th September from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.**

The whole family are welcome, including siblings.

Our aim is to provide a caring, fun, friendly environment for you and your family to enjoy.

Our staff and volunteers are on hand with craft activities and games for the children, allowing adults time to connect with other parents over a cup of tea.

We would love to see as many families as possible and hope to hold more events in the future!

For more information or to book a place contact 01234 311555 or [office@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:office@sightconcern.org.uk)



# Volunteer News

We're incredibly grateful to all of our volunteers. Here's a few of the things that have happened since our last edition of Volunteer News:

## **Bedford Coffee Mornings**

Stefan, David, Lionel, David and Lin were all on hand to help at The Pavilion, Bedford Park over the last few months. Pop along on the last Friday of every month from 10.30 to 12.30 to meet other visually impaired people and to find out about our Sight Concern Services/ Events.

## **Low Vision Clinic at Moorfield's Eye Clinic Bedford**

Matt and Marufah visit Moorfield's on the 1st Tuesday of every month from 10am to 2pm. They have useful information about Sight concern Services and can refer you to our Low Vision Clinic and Assistive Tech services. Do come along to see what we can offer after your appointment with the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer.



*Marufah and Matt at Moorfield's Eye Clinic.*





*Bedford Volunteers.*

### **National Volunteers Week**

It was lovely to see new and familiar faces at our celebration coffee mornings! We had a great turnout at Wardown Park and Bedford Park, we think our volunteers are the best and deserve a treat!

### **Youth Forum**

Our resident kite flyer, Lionel, helped welcome new members to our Youth sessions for 11-to-16-year-olds. The weather was great, we had some expert first time kite flyers and a lot of fun!

*Lionel & Youth Forum. >*

### **Socialeyez in Bloom**

Members of Socialeyez have produced another fantastic entry for Dunstable in Bloom. We wish them lots of luck!



## Volunteer with us

Welcome to the team: Julie, Helen and Cathy; it's great to have you on board!

If you have an interest or skill that you want to share with others and would like to be part of our volunteer team, please contact Lisa Drummond on **01582 256093** or email, [lisadrummond@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:lisadrummond@sightconcern.org.uk) for more information.

## Above and Beyond Award

We announced last quarter that the 'Above and Beyond Award' been given to Harpur Centre Manager Sam Laycock and her team, so in this edition we would like to share the photo of the award being given.

From the left in the photo: Karol, Ryan, Sam, our VIP Champion George, together with Usef the wonder dog, and Darren holding the award.



The award was given in recognition of the assistance they provide to blind and partially sighted shoppers as well shoppers with other additional needs or disabilities. Sam and her team have also done great work in raising awareness of the sunflower lanyard scheme, training shop staff to recognise that some people may need a bit of extra time or assistance when doing their shopping.

Once again, congratulations and thanks to Sam and her team for their continued support!

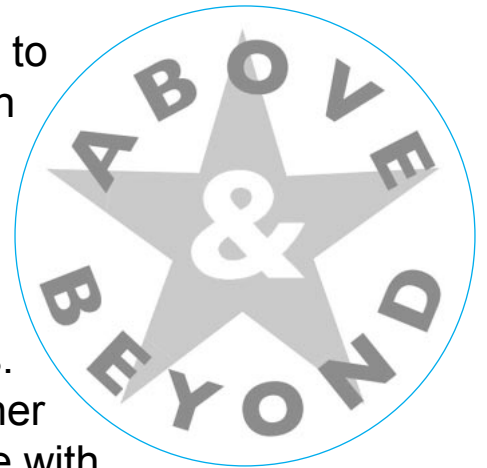
This quarter's 'Above & Beyond' award goes to Lauren Cox, Social Inclusion Manager at Luton Borough Council.

This is for her DisABILITY Celebration events in Luton that Sight Concern has attended over the past two years and Lauren's ongoing work to support social inclusion for people with disabilities.

Sight Concern would like to thank Lauren for her hard work and tireless efforts to champion people with disabilities in the town.

This leaves the door open for you to nominate a company or person or service that you believe has gone the extra mile and 'above and beyond' to support people with sight loss across Bedfordshire and Luton.

Please contact George by emailing: [georgehogman@sightconcern.org.uk](mailto:georgehogman@sightconcern.org.uk) or telephoning us on **01234 311555**.



## Upcoming Events

Our Visually Impaired Champion George, together with his team, are out and about across the county this Autumn for more fun meeting you all!

We are joining many other local 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 5<sup>th</sup> September, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> 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 tea.

George is celebrating National Eye Health Week by having an

information stand in town centres at: **Bedford's Harpur Shopping Centre, MK40 1TJ** and then **Luton's The Mall Shopping Centre, LU1 2LJ**.

Dates are to be confirmed, but do check out our social media or contact us for updates.

We will back at Flitwick's Rufus Centre, Steppingley Road, MK45 1AH on **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October** for Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's very popular Festival for Older People. Doors open at 10am and it finishes at 2pm. Entry is free.

Come and enjoy the entertainment and a large number of stalls in different rooms across the Rufus Centre. Plenty of free parking. There will be a large range of exhibitors sharing advice and information about their services, plus there will be an opportunity to purchase locally made goods.

On **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October**, we'll be at Vision Zone Bedford, at Bedford Rugby Club, Goldington Road, MK40 3NF with low vision equipment supplier Optelec – from 10am – 2pm.

Come and find out about and try out digital magnification equipment and come and talk to Sight Concern and other local organisations.

Please see our social media for further details and updates.

We also expect to be attending the annual Ageing Well Festival at the Bedford Corn Exchange in October.

Please see our social media for updates. Dates are to be confirmed but do check out our social media or contact us for updates.

On **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November**, we expect to be at **Bedford's Harpur Shopping Centre** again, from 10am-2pm to celebrate 'Purple Tuesday'.

See this webpage for more information about Purple Tuesday:

<https://www.purpletuesday.co/About-Us/About-Us>

On **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November**, we'll be at **Wixams Retirement Village's Health & Wellbeing Event** from 10.30am – 1pm.

**Wixams, Bedford MK42 6EA.**

On **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December**, you'll find us at:

**Asda's supermarket in Dunstable, Court Drive LU5 4JD**, giving out information about our services and fundraising.

Please do come along to one or all of these free events, we would love to meet and greet you.

Please keep an eye on our socials for more details and any other upcoming events.

# VisionZone 2024

## Solutions for Low Vision



Would you like to find out more about assistive technology, Support, Services, Groups and much more!

Our Vision Zone events bring together a variety of excellent services and charities covering your local area.

No matter what your sight loss condition we are here for you. Whether it's just to gain knowledge or hands on experience of new technologies, entry is free to our events, and our friendly staff will greet you with a warm welcome.

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October – 10am to 2pm**

**The Scrum Bar, Bedford Blues Rugby Club, Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3NF**



**Bedfordshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service



**0800 1456115**

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

# Café Connect Queens Park

All welcome for fun, friendship  
and home-cooked food!

**Wednesdays from 12.15pm to 2.15pm,  
fortnightly during term time**

- Free craft activities
- Free support and advice
- Meet local services
- Free coffee/tea/biscuits
- Free wifi
- Free charging point



Free home cooked food available to share at the café



Where: **Queen's Park Community Centre**  
**52 Marlborough Road, Bedford MK40 4LF**



The café starts on the **18th September** and will then run on the following dates (more dates to be added so please use the QR code to check):

**2024**

**2nd October, 16th October, 6th November, 20th November,  
4th December**

**2025**

**15th January, 29th January, 12th February, 26th February, 23rd  
April, 7th May, 21st May, 4th June, 18th June, 2nd July, 16th July**

# 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/>

**Feedback:** We are always looking for your feedback on the magazine and all of our services. Good or bad it all helps us to get a better idea on how our services impact you. Please do get in contact with us to share your thoughts. It really does help us to shape the charity and the services we deliver.

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