

Keeping you informed of local sight loss news



Winter 2021/Spring 2022

WILTSHIRE
Sight

Sight
SUPPORT



Welcome to our latest issue of Visible magazine

This issue is special as it's our first one written for both Sight Support West of England and Wiltshire Sight together. Although we are separate charities, we are working closely together where we can, to ensure people get the best service wherever they are in the region. We know that some people find it easier to travel outside of their county to our community hubs, and we want to reassure you that you'll get the same great service and support whether you are in Swindon, Wiltshire, BANES, Bristol or South Glos. Writing one magazine for the whole region also helps both our charities save time and money.

On the central pages of this issue, you will find a map of the West of England region, helping you to find the closest places to meet one of our team. It might be the town where you live, or the town where a friend or family member is, or where you work.

In this issue you can also read about our new Eye Can events, starting in 2022. We will be bringing together advice, speakers, suppliers and technology all in one great day so you can find out more about what is out there to support you living with sight loss. Our plan is to hold Eye Can events in four accessible locations across the region.

And as we're now in the darkest time of the year, in this issue we have a special focus on lighting in your home. Learn more about what kind of lighting can help with your sight loss, and tips about different ways to use light depending on your eye condition and what you're trying to do.

We hope this issue of Visible is useful to you, and we hope that you're staying safe and warm this winter.

Best wishes,
Mike Silvey

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike Silvey'.

Meet the team

Hi, I'm Charlie, Community Sight Loss Advisor in Bristol, Bath and South Glos.



I started in this role a week before the first COVID lockdown in 2020. This was a truly strange start, as it not only meant much more time providing support over the phone and email initially, but also that there were some members of my team that I didn't meet in person for many months!

Thankfully as the pandemic restrictions were eased, the job slowly turned more into the role I was expecting when I started - I was able to meet more clients face to face (behind a mask!) at our resource centre in Bristol, and eventually to get out into the community.

My time at work is split between different parts of the services provided by Sight Support. Part of my role is to contact people in South Glos who have recently been issued a certificate for their sight loss and to talk to them about whether rehabilitation is something that may be helpful to them. This entails establishing a few facts around the person's eye condition, how they are managing around the house, mobility with getting out and about and much more. This helps to ensure they are referred for the right type of support for their needs. I also talk people through the registration process and answer any questions about rehabilitation while they are waiting to be contacted by the rehabilitation officer.

The remainder of my time is spent working in the community at our hubs, which are located all around the region, offering advice and support, demonstrating daily living aids or providing technology training. It's a varied and very rewarding role.

It's great to be finally meeting my clients face to face and I am thoroughly enjoying meeting lots of different people. Seeing how much people can achieve with the right advice and support at the right time is what inspires me every day in the job.



Launch of our new Knowledge Hub

In November we launched our new combined Wiltshire Sight and Sight Support website, designed to help people find out more about available services and events across the region. The website also includes our new 'Knowledge Hub', full of information, tips and resources to help with everyday living with sight loss, from exercise classes to simple kitchen recipes. For those without web access, all resources can also be sent out on a USB stick or large print, so do contact us to find out more about what is available.

Summer Raffle

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Summer Raffle. We raised an amazing £3,265! This is enough to pay for all our community hubs for a whole month – so your support really does make a huge difference to our work. Mr Taylor in Wiltshire won our top prize, and told us he was absolutely thrilled with his winnings.

Would you like to help us improve our services?

We are looking for interested people with sight loss in our region to join our new Sight Loss Advisory Group. The aim of the group will be to help us understand client needs better, review client feedback, shape new services, and provide advice on communication and awareness raising. If you might be interested in getting involved, do get in touch to find out more.

Getting the word out

With so many people with sight loss delaying seeking support during the pandemic, our focus is now on ensuring as many people as possible know about the support and services we can provide in the community. If you know anyone who would be interested in helping us, we are looking for enthusiastic and friendly volunteers who could take the lead in promoting services in their local area. Local representatives could help us with finding suitable venues to run services, display information or hold events, make contact with local community groups, and keep us informed of local initiatives which might be of interest to our clients. If you know anyone who might be interested, please do encourage them to get in touch.

100 kilometres in 23 hours!

Huge congratulations to Richard Burt and his guide dog, Dilly, who successfully completed the gruelling 100k Race to the Stones in the summer. The first ever VI person to complete the race, Richard raised over £2,500, which will be used to help run our Community Sight Loss Service in Wiltshire.

A fabulous achievement! After finishing, Richard (rather surprisingly) told us that he would be very happy to do the same again next year!



New Free Wills Service

Making a will can be a daunting prospect, and something that many people worry about. A will is the only way that you can make sure your wishes are carried out after you die. It protects your loved ones and can even help prevent arguments at a difficult time.

But lots of people don't have a will, or don't know how to make one. We have partnered with Kwil to offer a free will to all our clients and supporters. You can quickly and easily make your will online or over the telephone. It will take about 30 minutes, and will take you through all the steps you need to consider. It will then be checked by a lawyer, and emailed or posted to you ready for it to be signed and witnessed.

You can of course choose to leave a gift in your will to us, to help blind and partially sighted people in the future. There is absolutely no obligation to leave a gift. But for some people, a gift in their will is a lovely way to make sure that causes they care about can continue to support generations to come. The content of your will is of course absolutely confidential, and we will not know whether you chose to include a gift or not.

To find out more about our free wills service, or about leaving a gift in your will, please give us a call.



Welcome to our New Salisbury Hub!



On Saturday 6th November, the Mayor of Salisbury officially opened our new Salisbury Hub, combining our very first charity shop with a services and resource centre for clients.

The design of our stunning, fresh look shop has accessibility at its core, particularly for people with sight loss. It has wide pathways and spacing on the shop floor, high contrast colours for the till area and doorframes, and an accessible till system designed with visually impaired volunteers in mind.

After a couple of very busy set-up weeks, we had a fantastic opening day. We had three new clients seeking support within the first hour. The shop was busy all day, taking almost £1,300 by closing time, way beyond our expectations. We had visits from the Wiltshire Hearing and Vision Team, staff from the Salisbury General Hospital Eye Clinic, Salisbury Talking News, and representatives from several of our local generous funders.

In addition to traditional charity retail items and new goods, the store is also selling some of the most commonly used daily living aids and large print diaries, calendars and games. Our consultation room and resource centre is situated on the ground floor of the building and is a safe and confidential space for appointments. The resource centre will be stocked with a full range of magnifiers, task lighting, talking clocks and watches and other items. The shop will be open seven days a week, but if you would like to visit the resource centre, give us a call and make an appointment to meet Alison, our South Wiltshire Community Sight Loss Advisor.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who were able to donate items to us to sell in store, during the run up to opening. Now we are open, please do continue to bring in donations – either direct to the Salisbury shop or to our Devizes office. If you have any good quality clothing or homeware items, we would love them.

Your donated items have filled the shop floor and we are selling a wide range of quality items including ladies' and mens' clothing and accessories, children's clothing and toys, homewares, puzzles and games.

The shop is also selling a range of new goods, including Christmas cards, scarves, and ladies' handbags, all great for gifting at this time of year.

In store, you can expect to be greeted by our full-time shop manager, Becca, or our part-time supervisor, Vicky. The resource centre also has its very own rear entrance which backs onto the Brown Street Public Car Park in Salisbury's centre for easy accessibility, avoiding the high street shop entrance.

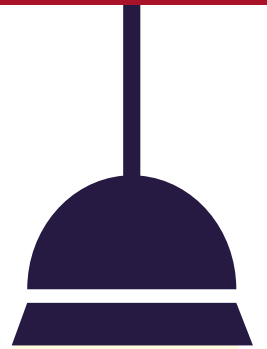


***Please
do come
and visit us!***

The Hub is located at 23 Catherine Street, Salisbury, SP1 2DQ.

Top Tips - Lighting in the Home

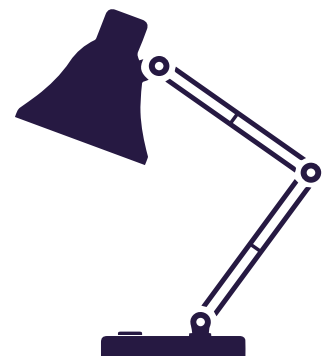
For our Top Tips feature this edition, we'd like to share some ideas and considerations when thinking about lighting at home. Of course, getting the right level of light will vary for each individual and their specific eye condition. However, we hope some of the advice below will help.



- 1** Make the most of daylight. Keep windows clean. Keep curtains secured or tied back from windows. Avoid using net curtains as they block light.
- 2** Increase the amount of light in a room. By increasing the number of lights in a room you will get a more even spread than when using just one light. Add wall, table, or floor lights in dark areas. Change the light fitting from a single pendant to one with multiple arms.
- 3** Using lighter colours for furniture and decorations will reflect more light than darker colours. Increasing colour contrast between existing surfaces, fixtures or furnishings may make objects easier to see.
- 4** Make changes - plug a table, desk, or floor light into existing sockets. Consider fitting bulbs that give more light. Change shades and fittings to increase light levels or change the direction of light to reflect from white surfaces.
- 5** Task lighting directs light where it is needed most for detailed activities. Even with good general light levels in a room, the amount of light available may not be adequate for close-up tasks such as reading, writing, eating, preparing food and hobbies such as woodwork or sewing.
- 6** To get the most from your task lighting, you should place it between you and the task so that the shade is below your eye level to reduce glare.

- 7** Task lighting offers great flexibility. Mains and battery-operated lights can be moved easily to use them where you need them. You can also use portable lights in the kitchen, over the cooker, in wardrobes and for reading.
- 8** Under cupboard lighting in the kitchen can increase the light for tasks on the worktops.
- 9** Adhesive 'stick-on lights' can be helpful for cupboards and wardrobes to assist with identifying items.
- 10** It is important to use general lighting alongside task lighting to help avoid your eyes having to adjust to different light levels.

If you are unsure of what type or style of task lighting you need, we have lots of demonstration models of desk and floor standing lighting in our resource centres that you are welcome to try out. Or if you would rather meet us at a community hub, please let us know beforehand and we can bring some different options for you to try.



Where you can find us



Community Sight Loss Advisors will be at the following hub locations to answer your questions. Some of our hubs also include social groups. You can drop in between the times indicated, or call to make an appointment. For our resource centres in Devizes and Fishponds, please do call ahead if you would like to meet with a Sight Loss Advisor.

Bristol

Fishponds - Vassall Centre
Open every day

Bedminster
- **Quaker Meeting House**
Fortnightly on Fridays
10am-1pm

Southmead
- **Greenway Centre**
1st Monday of the month
11am-1pm

South Glos.

Thornbury Library
4th Monday of month
10am-1pm

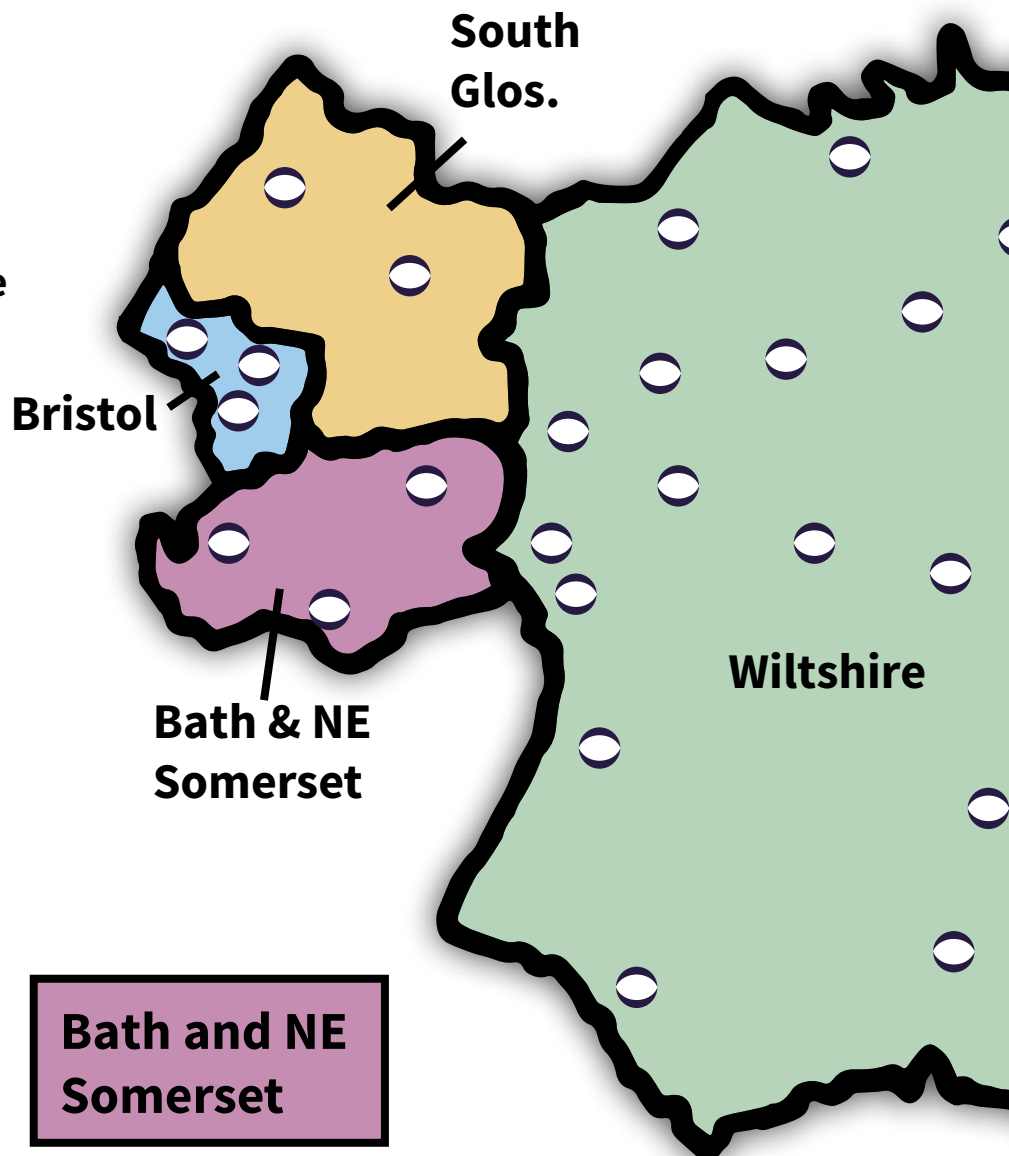
Yate Library
2nd Thurs of month
10am-1pm

Bath and NE Somerset

Bath - Manvers Street Baptist Church
1st Weds of month
11am-1pm

Stanton Drew - Village Hall
2nd Weds of month
10am-12pm

Midsomer Norton - Town Hall
4th Thurs of month
11am-1pm





South Wilts

Amesbury - Evergreen Court Community Café

2nd Weds of month
10am-12pm

Tisbury - Nadder Leisure Centre

3rd Thurs of month
10am-12pm

Warminster - MS Therapy Centre

4th Thurs of month
2.30-4.30pm

Salisbury - Wiltshire Sight Hub

Every Tues,
10am-4pm

Mid Wilts

Devizes - St Lucy's Sight Centre

Open every day

Pewsey - Village Hall

4th Tues of month (not Dec)
9.30-11.30am

West Wilts

Bradford on Avon - Wallington Hall

1st Weds of month
9.30am-12.30pm

Calne - Lansdown Hotel

3rd Tues of month
1.30-4pm

Chippenham - The Community Hub

2nd Weds of month
10am-1pm

Corsham - Pound Arts Centre

2nd Tues of month
10am-1pm

Melksham - Riverside Club

1st Thurs of month
1-4pm

Trowbridge - Old Town Hall

3rd Weds of month
10am-1pm

North Wilts

Malmesbury - Town Hall

2nd Thurs of month
10am-1pm

Starting in early 2022, we also hope to be running community hubs in **Swindon, Royal Wootton Bassett, Highworth, Cricklade** and **Marlborough**. Please call for further details.

Meet the Volunteer



Hello, I'm Diane, Wiltshire Sight Volunteer.
I live in Chippenham with my husband
John and our dog Alfie.

We have 3 grown-up children and I am a retired
Optometrist. We have lived in Chippenham since
1988 and during this time I worked as both a Community Optometrist and as
Head Optometrist in the Eye Unit at the RUH in Bath.

In my spare time I enjoy boating on the Thames with my husband and dog,
drawing and watercolour painting, reading and time with my family. If I
could have a superpower I would like to be able to teleport myself between
Chippenham and Scotland so that I could visit my mum whenever I wanted!

Over the years, I have always been aware of the work done by Wiltshire Sight
and referred my clients to them for their advice and support. So when I
retired, I asked about volunteering here. I enjoy interacting with people and
had experience and skills that I could share, so it all fitted together nicely.

The thing I enjoy most about my volunteer time is working alongside the staff
and clients and the diversity of the role I have. I work in the office at St Lucy's
Sight Centre in Devizes answering the telephone helpline, which frees up time
for the Sight Advisors to be in the community at local hubs while also making
sure anyone who calls the office is directed to the support they need.

I also attend information events in the community such as a recent sight loss
information day where I was able to meet people and share information about
Wiltshire Sight services. I have contributed to staff training by sharing my
experience, supported the Moving Forward course for people newly diagnosed
with sight loss and was a telephone befriender during COVID lockdown!

Volunteering is a fulfilling and enjoyable activity. Whether you have a little or
a lot of time to spare and whatever experience or skills you may have, your
contribution is valuable. Wiltshire Sight and Sight Support would particularly
welcome people to answer the phone and greet clients and visitors to the
resource centres in Bristol and Devizes.

Sharing your Stories



Maureen contacted us recently having read about the tablet course we offer for complete beginners. Maureen hadn't used a tablet before, so we started by talking about how to turn on the device and what the different buttons did.

Together we adapted the settings to make it more accessible by changing the text size, installing a larger keyboard, and turning on the inbuilt magnification. This has allowed Maureen to enlarge what's on the screen to a size that she can comfortably read.

Having got to grips with the basics we started to explore what Maureen could use the tablet for, from following the news to using apps that can read text aloud. Together we downloaded a bus timetable app that enables her not only to plan journeys better, but also see if the buses are running on time.

Over the summer sport seemed to dominate the TV schedule. Maureen isn't a sports person and so was finding the disruption annoying as she had been finding it difficult to read a paper TV guide. So, we downloaded a TV guide onto the tablet and found this was a great solution to the problem. Maureen has been able to look up what's next on TV and can avoid the football! We talked about using emails and Maureen explained she was reluctant to use emails as she was worried about scammers. We provided Maureen with an audio guide we produced with the Southwest Regional Crime Unit about how to spot a scam and the best ways to avoid it.

By loaning the tablet from us, Maureen has been able to practise at home and find ways it can help in everyday life. She has even learnt to download and play games such as solitaire and hangman. Incredible progress in such a short time!

"The training has been really great. I've learnt to do so many things with the tablet that I didn't think I'd ever be able to do beforehand."

Announcing 'Eye Can' Exhibitions

The new MUST VISIT event coming in 2022!

Sight Support and Wiltshire Sight are very pleased to announce that, starting in 2022, we will be holding four large exhibition events every year. The one-day 'Eye Can' Exhibitions will take place in four key locations across the region: Bristol, Bath, Swindon, and Salisbury.



We hope that these will become the annual 'not to be missed' events for all those living with sight loss in the region. We have chosen these locations to be accessible to as many of our service users as possible, and whilst these will still present a distance to travel for many of you, we hope to ensure they offer enough value to justify travelling a bit further than usual.

The exhibitions will be free public events designed to provide an opportunity for blind and partially sighted people, along with their friends and family, to meet national and local product suppliers, opportunity providers, and services. Each exhibition will have 30+ exhibitors covering a range of interest areas, including technology, sport & leisure, work & employment, health & wellbeing, as well as a dedicated area for children, young people, and families. In addition, there will be a varied speaker programme and opportunities to meet new and old friends.

We are expecting a mix of commercial and voluntary sector organisations, and our hope is that we will be able to showcase the full range of products and services for people with sight loss – from the latest in new technology to holidays. So, if there is only one event you attend this year, make it one of our Eye Can events!



Save the date

Our first exhibition will be taking place in Bristol on **Wednesday 16th March**.

The event will be held at Memorial Stadium, home of Bristol Rovers Football Club. The stadium is well served by public transport (there are several buses from the city centre, and two train stations within two miles), plus plenty of free parking.



We will be inviting people to register for the event early in the new year when we will also announce speakers. We will announce registration opening in our monthly updates, and on our website, so watch out for further news! We look forward to seeing many of you at this exciting new event.

The Bristol exhibition will be followed by Salisbury in late spring, Bath in the summer and Swindon in the autumn. We will confirm dates and venues as soon as possible.

We are very grateful to our sponsors Optelec, Newmedica and Associated Optical for helping to make the 2022 series of Eye Can events possible.



Making Tech Work for You



It's built in and it's better than ever!

Accessible tech has long been an expensive means of reading, writing or generally having access to the world at our fingertips. Whether you wanted to read the latest novels, write your next blog or stay in touch with relatives across the world, for too long we have needed expensive software, magnifiers or extra gadgets in order to do it with any kind of ease. But all that has now changed, and in this article we are going to explore how.

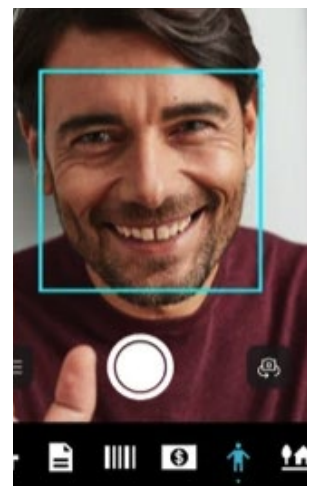
When we say built in, we mean it. Microsoft for example have had their 'Ease of Access' centre for a long time, ironically it wasn't that easy! However, the upgrade included with Windows 10 has made a huge difference.

The inclusion of full screen magnification is the biggest improvement. It is so much easier to track what you are looking at with full screen magnification than with the fixed window included with previous versions of Windows.

Combine the magnifier with the excellent high-contrast settings and you have yourself a screen big enough and clear enough to read without breaking the bank.

The front runners in built-in accessibility, in my opinion, are Apple. VoiceOver and Zoom have long been featured on Apple Macs and when Apple launched the iPhone and changed the way we all used mobile phones, they did so with blind and partially sighted people in mind. Whilst the original iPhone didn't feature VoiceOver, the 2009 model did, and since then it has become a go-to for many blind and partially sighted people.

Android was next to the party when they introduced TalkBack. Working in a very similar way to VoiceOver, TalkBack allows blind and partially-sighted users spoken access to all aspects of smartphones and goes some way to levelling the playing field with sighted peers. As well as the screen reading functions, both iPhones and Android phones also feature magnification, so if something on the screen is too small to read, you can expand it with your fingers, and it is magnified to a level that will make it easier to read.



No more need for an optical magnifier to read your screen.

With such amazing high-resolution screen quality, high-contrast black on white or white on black (dark mode) built in to almost every device on the market, blind and partially sighted users finally have some degree of parity and can access anything we want to with far more simplicity and affordability.

In addition to built-in features, there are also a huge range of Apps which can be downloaded and can really help blind and partially sighted users. An app is a piece of software designed to perform a specific dedicated task, and there are lots out there which focus on increasing accessibility.

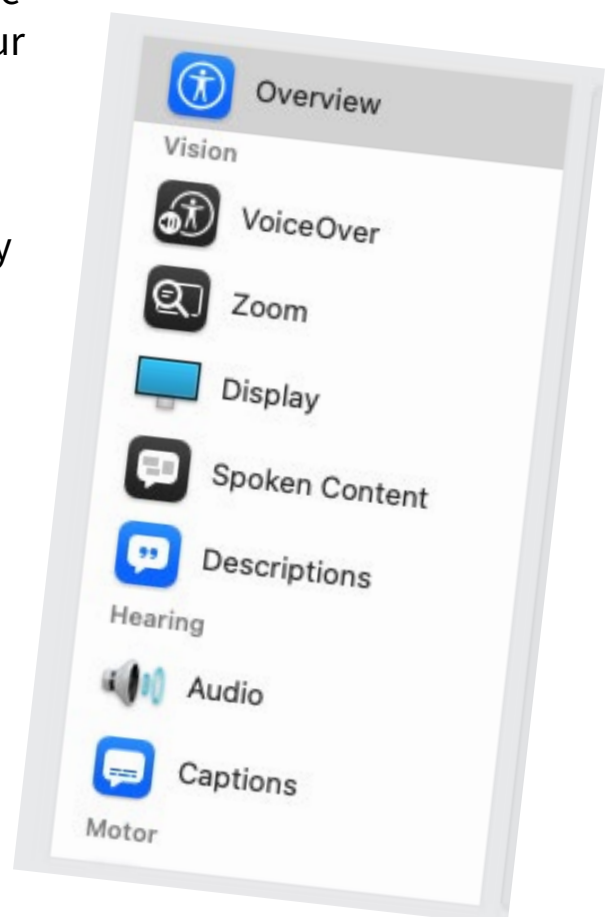
Let's start with SeeingAI for Apple, and Google Lookout for Android. Both are very similar in what they do. Basically, they will use your device's camera to look at text and read it back to you, identify products such as groceries and they can even describe scenery. Both SeeingAI and Lookout are excellent at what they do and are free to download.

Other Apps such as Google Maps, Moovit and UK Bus Checker can all help you to navigate and travel with far more confidence.

Whether it's step by step direction or accurate bus times, these Apps all make getting to your favourite places far easier than ever before. Again, they are all free to download and use. So, whilst high-tech gadgets do a very worthwhile job and are still worth using, they are not the only option. Take a look at the phone in your pocket, the tablet on your coffee table or the PC on your desk and check out what it can do for you without you having to spend more money.

If you need any help to set it up and get to know what your current devices are capable of, then give us a call and we can help.

**By Marc Gulwell,
Senior Sight Loss Advisor**



The History of Talking Newspapers



In 1968, senior librarian Ronald Sturt went on a study visit to Västerås in Sweden. The library there had, with the help of the local association for the blind, started a talking newspaper. In January 1970, Ronald started the first Talking Newspaper in the UK, when tape cassettes dropped through the letterboxes of twenty blind people in Cardiganshire. The idea caught on and, slowly but surely, Talking Newspapers began to spring up in other parts of the country.

As technology has changed, talking newspapers have moved from cassettes to CDs and in the last 20 years most have moved over to USB memory sticks.

What is a Talking Newspaper?

A talking newspaper is a local newspaper recorded in audio format for people who find it difficult to read the printed version. Talking newspapers vary, but usually consist of a digest of the week's news taken from local newspapers together with other items of general interest.

Talking newspapers are typically run by volunteers. They are usually free to subscribe to, and will send listeners a USB memory stick by post every week or fortnight using Royal Mail's 'Articles for the Blind' service. After listening, listeners are asked to turn the address label round to the other side, and post back the memory stick using the same envelope.

If needed, most talking newspapers will provide listening devices for free on long-term loan, typically a very simple-to-use Sovereign or Sonic Player. You do not need a computer to play a USB stick and we can support you in learning how to use these players.



Alternatively, you can also listen using your Amazon Alexa by enabling the Talking Newspaper skill (free). To get started using the skill you will need to ask, “Alexa Enable Talking Newspapers”, before requesting your choice of title or location. You can also listen on your smartphone or tablet, by downloading the British Wireless for the Blind free Talking Newspaper App.

Talking Newspapers in our region

We are fortunate to have several thriving talking newspapers in our region, each covering their local newspapers and features from regional newspapers and magazines. If you would like to sign up to any of those listed below, please contact Wiltshire Sight or Sight Support for further information.

- **Avon Talking Magazine**
(covering the Bath and Bristol region)
- **Chippenham & District Talking Newspaper**
(covering Calne, Corsham, Malmesbury & Chippenham)
- **Devizes Talking Newspaper**
- **Keynsham & District Talking Newspaper Association**
- **Marlborough & District Talking Newspaper**
- **Melksham Talking News**
- **Salisbury & District Talking Newspaper**
- **Swindon Talking Newspaper**
- **Trowbridge Talking Newspaper**
- **Warminster & Westbury Talking Newspaper**
- **Cotswold Vale TN**
(covering Yate, Chipping Sodbury & parts of Gloucestershire)

If you or someone you know is losing their sight or living with sight loss, we can help.

Our Sight Loss Advisor team are here to help you adjust to living with sight loss, and to give you the tools you need to live your life the way you want to. Our support includes:

- Information, advice and guidance on living with sight loss, remaining independent and getting the most from life
- Demonstration and training on a range of useful resources to help with daily living, including making the best use of magnification and lighting aids to support reading and writing
- Advice and training in how to use smartphones, tablets and other devices to minimise the impact of your sight loss
- Social activities, sports clubs and opportunities to meet others living with sight loss

Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire

Call us: on 0117 3224885

Email us: info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

www.sightsupportwest.org.uk

Sight Support West of England is registered in England and Wales under charity number 1178384

Wiltshire and Swindon

Call us: 01380 723682

Email us: info@wiltshiresight.org

St. Lucy's Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, SN10 2AT

www.wiltshiresight.org

Wiltshire Sight is registered in England and Wales under charity number 1119462