# Monthly What’s On Guide

Welcome to your monthly update of accessible services and events in Bristol, Bath & NE Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. This update mainly covers December 2024.

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# Sight Support Events and Notices

## Announcing Our New Virtual Hubs!

Are you looking to connect with others who understand life with sight loss? We understand that living with sight loss can feel isolating, but finding others who understand can make all the difference. That’s why we’re launching our new virtual hubs to help you connect with people who share similar experiences in a welcoming and supportive environment.

As a partnership of three sight loss charities – Sight Support West of England, Wiltshire Sight, and Insight Gloucestershire – our new hubs are open to people affected by sight loss across all the areas we cover. Each group will meet regularly on Microsoft Teams and be facilitated by volunteers with lived experience of sight loss. Training is available if you’re new to Microsoft Teams.

### Upcoming Groups:

* **Parent Support**: For parents of visually impaired children up to age 25, starting 28th November, meeting fortnightly on Thursdays at 7:30 pm.
* **University Students:** For over-18s (studying at Level 4 or above), starting 15th January, meeting fortnightly on Wednesdays at 7pm.
* **Working Age** (25–65): Starting in January.
* **Young Adults** (18–30): Starting date to be confirmed.

To join, simply let us know which group interests you. Once you’re signed up, there’s no need to book for each session, and attendance is flexible - you’re welcome to attend whenever you wish. It’s an opportunity to meet new people, share, learn, and build connections without pressure or obligation – all from the comfort of your home.

We’re also looking for volunteer facilitators for our Young Adults hubs – could this be you? Contact Becs at volunteering@sightsupportwest.org.uk.

## We Are Hiring! - Community Sight Loss Adviser (Bristol)

Are you passionate about making a difference for people living with sight loss? Join our team as a Community Sight Loss Advisor in the Bristol area. In this role, you’ll lead the delivery of our Information, Advice, and Guidance Service, supporting individuals with sight loss in Bristol and the surrounding communities. You’ll also play a key role in ensuring our services are inclusive and accessible to all, with a particular focus on reaching ethnically diverse and underserved groups in the area. • Salary: £25,000 per annum

• Location: Bristol

• Closing Date: Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 5pm

We’re looking for someone with excellent people skills who can provide advice and support to individuals living with sight loss. No prior experience in this field is needed – full training will be provided.

We actively encourage applications from all backgrounds, particularly those with personal experience of sight loss or from underserved communities. For more details about this role, as well as two additional opportunities offered by our partner charity, Wiltshire Sight, visit the [Work for Us page](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/get-involved/work-for-us/) on our website to apply.

## Smartphone and Tablet Training

If you’re living with sight loss and want to build your confidence in using a smartphone or tablet, sign up for one of our courses starting in the new year. Designed specifically for people with sight loss, these sessions will help you learn and grow your digital skills in a supportive and accessible environment.

### Beginner Courses – February 2025

Perfect for those new to smartphones or tablets. Learn the basics, including how to:

* Navigate a touch screen
* Use accessibility features
* Send emails and access messages
* Use a digital assistant and explore helpful apps

Locations and Times:

* **Bath**: Tuesdays, 12:15–2:15pm
* **Bristol (Broadmead)**: Wednesdays, 10am–12pm
* **Yate Library**: Thursdays, 10am–12pm

### Improver Courses – March 2025

For those who already use a smartphone or tablet, this course will help boost your skills and confidence while exploring more features and useful tips.

Locations and Times:

* **Bristol (Broadmead)**: Wednesdays, 10am–12pm
* **Yate Library**: Thursdays, 10am–12pm

Booking is essential to secure your place.

To find out more or book your place, contact us on 0117 322 4885 or email info@sightsupportwest.org.uk.

# Sight Support Hubs and Social Groups

Our sight loss advice hubs provide a space for consultations with your local advisor, offering information, guidance, and advice on equipment and technology. You can explore a selection of helpful aids, and many hubs also offer tech support and training from trained advisors or volunteers. Additionally, most hubs host social groups where you can meet others, share tips and tricks, and enjoy a chat.

For full details of our sight loss advice hubs and social groups, see our website which has the latest information, or you can call our office on 0117 3224885. [Click here for our website hub and social group listings.](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/events/) You can put your postcode in the search bar to find your nearest hub.

## Changes To Note for Upcoming Hubs

* **Thornbury Resource Centre**: Closed on 30th December. Reopens on 6th January.
* **Fishpond Resource Centre**: Closed on 26th December. Reopens on 2nd January.
* **Bath Community Hub**: Open as usual in December. Cancelled in January. Next session on 5th February.
* **Midsomer Norton Social**: Cancelled on 28th December.

# Events & Notices From Other Organisations

These events and notices are from other organisations. Please check with the contact given that the event is going ahead as planned. Sometimes changes need to be made to dates and times at short notice.

## RNIB Autumn Survey

RNIB is seeking feedback from adults with sight loss on a range of important topics, including getting around, personal safety, employment, family, and relationships.

This feedback will help RNIB improve the support available to blind and partially sighted people across the UK and ensure it focuses on what matters most.

To take part, complete the Autumn 2024 survey by visiting the link below before the closing date on 20 December 2024:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LWJFYHP>

For those unable to complete the survey online and who have not yet registered to participate, RNIB invites you to call their Helpline on 0303 123 9999. Advisors will assist by completing a registration form and arranging a follow-up call to ask survey questions on future topics.

## Shape the Future of Assistive Technology with Hope Tech Plus

Hope Tech Plus is an assistive technology company dedicated to creating innovative solutions that empower blind and partially sighted individuals. Their products are designed with input from real users through research and testing – and they need your voice to make a difference.

By taking part in a **short, confidential survey**, you can share your experiences of accessing assistive technology. Your feedback will help improve access to these tools and provide greater support for the visually impaired community.

**Take the survey here:** Hope Tech survey

Would you like to contribute even further? Hope Tech Plus is also inviting individuals to share their personal stories and experiences with assistive technology. If you’re interested in helping shape the future of these vital tools, contact Laura directly at **Laura@HopeTech.Vision**.

Your input is invaluable, and Hope Tech Plus will share the survey results soon – thank you for supporting this important work!

## Inclusive Social Play Research Project

The inclusivexplay project team at the University of Bristol is seeking participants for several studies. The aim of the project is to create inclusive play technologies for blind and visually impaired (BVI) children, as well as their sighted peers.

The team is looking for families with BVI children aged 2-4 years. They would like to observe BVI and sighted children during playtime, using video recordings. Additionally, they wish to speak with parents to gather their experiences and ideas about inclusive play. A small financial contribution will be provided to support involvement, along with coverage of travel and sustenance costs.

There are also future opportunities for families to contribute to the design and development of new, inclusive toys for social play.

To sign up or find out more, contact Amy at: amy.hicks@bristol.ac.uk

## Free Alexa Device from British Wireless for the Blind Fund

People living with sight loss can apply for a free Echo Show or Echo Dot device from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund. To qualify, they need to receive certain disability or income-related benefits and have an internet connection at home. Apply for a free Alexa device here: [Referrals - British Wireless for the Blind Fund](https://blind.org.uk/referrals/)

# Local Leisure and Sporting Activities / Events

## Regular Groups

For a list of regular sport and leisure groups that don’t change each month and offered by other organisations, please see our [Regular sport and leisure groups webpage](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/sport-and-leisure-groups/)

## VIP Reading Group – Bristol Central Library, College Green

Takes place on the last Thursday of every month from 10.30 till 12. New members welcome.

Audio books are chosen by members, mainly from RNIB’s talking book service so it’s helpful if you have already signed up. The next books are:

There will be no meeting in December. Instead, there will be meetings on:

* 3 January – Mudlarking: Lost and Found on the River Thames by Lara Maiklem
* 30 January - Book to be decided
* 27 February – Black Butterflies by Priscilla Morris
* 27 March - Annie Bot by Sierra Greer. A tale of what happens when a female robot rebels against her male, human owner.
* 24 April - Prima Facie by Suzie Miller. Drawn from the play about a barrister who specialises in defending men accused of sexual assault.

For further information please email vibookgroup.bristol@gmail.com or ring Katharine Seymour at the Central Library on 07880 069877

## Chat-e-Cycle tricycle taxi service

A new tricycle taxi service, Chat-e-Cycle, has been launched in the Somer Valley to help people with any mobility issues, including people with visual impairments, get out and about. This side-by-side electric tandem trike allows two people to cycle together while chatting. The electric assist makes hills and country lanes easier, letting riders exert themselves as much or as little as they like. More than just transport, Chat-e-Cycle aims to reduce social isolation and promote physical activity. Bookings now available for those in or around Chilcompton, whether you want to ride or know someone who would like to volunteer as a cycle pilot.

Website: <https://www.chatecycle.com/>

Contact Kate on: chatecycle@gmail.com / 01761 231433

## Keynsham & District Talking Newspaper

For those living with sight loss, staying informed about local news and events can make a big difference. The Keynsham & District Talking Newspaper offers a free, weekly audio news and magazine service for people who are registered blind or partially sighted.

This service provides:

* Local news from Keynsham, Bristol, Bath, and surrounding areas.
* Magazine features, including recipes, poems, profiles of local personalities, and light-hearted topics.
* An easy-to-use USB stick delivered weekly through the Royal Mail’s Articles for the Blind Scheme.
* An optional, user-friendly box to play the USB stick.

To sign up or learn more about this service, visit the [Keynsham Talking Newspaper Website](http://www.ktn.org.uk/) or Telephone 0117 299 3021

# Support Groups and Courses

## Regular Support Groups

For a list of regular support groups offered by other organisations that take place locally and online, see our website: [Webpage for regular support groups and services](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/support-groups-and-services/)

## RNIB Living Well with Sight Loss Courses

These RNIB courses cover a range of topics related to sight loss, including daily living tips, eye health, magnification, lighting, technology, and wellbeing.

**Upcoming Phone Group Sessions:**

**December Courses:**

* **Course 1:** Mon 2nd Dec, Wed 4th Dec, Mon 9th Dec and Wed 11th Dec. **Time:** 11am
* **Course 2:** Thurs 5th Dec, Fri 6th Dec, Thurs 12th Dec and Fri 13th Dec. **Time:** 11am

**Contact Information:**

* Email: communityconnectionsouthwest@rnib.org.uk
* Call: Trish Sail (07843 979975), George Hinton (07711 188292), Bernice Cocking (07761 328571)

# Local Audio Described Arts Events

## Galleries and Museums

### Arnolfini Gallery

**Rinko Kawauchi: At the edge of the everyday world.** There will be 2 described tours. Celebrating over twenty years of work by this acclaimed Japanese photographer’s poetic images.

Tours will be on:

* Saturday 25th January 2025 – 10am to 11am.

Coffee and cake provided in the café afterwards.

To book email community@arnolfini.org.uk and say if you need a sighted guide.

### Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2024, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Audio Description for a selection of images and the Grand Title winners will be available to listen to via QR code at the exhibition from the start of December to 27th April 2025.

Information on the exhibition can be found at [Bristol Museums Website](https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year/) Access information for the venue can be found here: [Bristol Museums Venue Information](https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/plan-your-visit/access/)

You can phone the museum on 0117 922 3571 to buy tickets in advance and discuss access arrangements.

### Royal West of England Academy

Saturday 7 December 10.30am – 12.00pm.

The second audio described tour of the 171st Open Exhibition with more works to discuss and handle. Refreshments available after the tour.

Book with connie.ngan@rwa.org.uk or phone learning and engagement team on 0117 973 5129. Please say whether you will bring a sighted companion or need a volunteer guide.

### Bath, Victoria Art Gallery

Art on Mondays talks for VI Visitors

* 9 December – David Birks – Exhibiting artist
* 27 January – Nixon and Rowlandson 18th century caricaturists

Sessions run from 10–11.30 am. But as the gallery is closed to the public on those days ring 01225 477232 for access information or email Kersti Haabjoern - Kersti\_Haabjoern@bathnes.gov.uk

## Theatres - Upcoming Audio Described Shows

### Bristol Hippodrome

* 2 January – Goldilocks and the 3 Bears
* 24 January - & Juliet. A musical show featuring songs by pop divas like Britney Spears and Ariana Grande
* 6 February – Only Fools and Horses
* 8 March – Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake
* 12 June – War Horse
* 16 July - Moulin Rouge

Book touch tours separately. Contact Access for All service - email bristoladmin@theambassadors.com or call the access booking line 0333 009 5399 for tickets

### Bristol Old Vic

* 21 December – The Little Mermaid
* 1 March - A Good House – a new comedic work by South African writer Amy Jephta about a couple who discover the limits of good neighbourliness and what is required to fit in.
* 29 March – Romeo & Juliet

For more details and to book - ring the Box office – 0117 987 7877

### Tobacco Factory Theatre

Raleigh Road, Southville, Bristol, BS3 1TF

**Hansel and Gretel**

* 3 January – 7pm
* 4 January – 2pm

The classic fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm with a modern twist – the theatre will be transformed into a magical and mythical land in this tale by the Brothers Grimm.

Tickets can be bought online at [Tobacco Factory Website](https://tobaccofactorytheatres.com/shows/hansel-and-gretel/)

by phone on 0117 902 0344 or by email at tickets@tobaccofactorytheatres.com

### Bath - Theatre Royal

**Snow White:**18 December - 2pm and 11 January – 7pm

Tickets and information on 01225 448844. Make sure you are subscribed to the Theatre’s Access List.

Note: Bookers for AD performances will receive a link emailed, beforehand, with audible pre-show notes. Hearing devices can be collected from all bars when the house opens - half an hour before the show. Demonstration models available to practice with.

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Tel 0117 322 4885, Email info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

Sight Support is a registered charity no 1178384. Registered Office: St Lucy’s Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AT