# Monthly What’s On Guide April 2025

Welcome to your monthly update of accessible services and events in Bristol, Bath & NE Somerset, and South Gloucestershire covering April 2025.

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# Sight Support Events and Notices

## Try accessible voting technology at our Bristol office and hubs

If you live in Bristol and are blind or partially sighted, you’ll soon have the chance to try out the most accessible voting solution currently available in the UK – the McGonagle Reader.

Throughout April, you can drop in to the Sight Support West of England office at the Vassall Centre in Fishponds to try the device for yourself and ask questions. Our team will be on hand to demonstrate how it works and help you feel confident using it before polling day. Drop-in dates are:
**April 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 28th.**

You can also see the device in action at the following Sight Support community hubs in Bristol:

* **Tuesday 1st April:** Trinity Church, Henleaze, BS9 4BT – 10am to 1pm
* **Friday 4th April:** Guide Dogs, 10 Stillhouse Lane, Bedminster, BS3 4EB – 10am to 1pm
* **Wednesday 9th April:** Whitchurch United Reformed Church, BS14 0PQ – 10am to 1pm

This accessible voting device will be available in Bristol for the West of England Combined Authority Mayoral elections **on** Thursday 1 May. The McGonagle Reader is an audio-tactile device that enables voters to read the ballot paper and make their mark independently and in secret.

In an accessible voting trial run by RNIB, the McGonagle Reader was rated the most effective option available. It scored highest for both reviewing the ballot paper and correctly marking the chosen candidate, with 92% of blind and partially sighted participants selecting it as their top choice for voting independently. In RNIB’s 2024 Turned Out survey, 85% of users said the device made their voting experience “a lot better.”

### How to vote using the McGonagle Reader on election day

To request the use of the McGonagle reader, a request can be made via an online form via the Bristol Government website [Accessibility areas in polling stations](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/voter-accessibility) or by calling the Electoral Services team on 0117 922 3400 and they will obtain the information needed to pre-book a McGonagle reader.

Please note that for pre-booked requests, McGonagle readers are only available between 10am and 8pm. They can also be requested on the day at any polling station, but please be aware there may be a wait while the device is delivered, as it might be in use at another location.

There will also be a text only version of the ballot paper available online via [The West of England Combined Authority](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/election) election web page by Friday 11 April 2025 and there will be a link from the accessibility page to this text version of the ballot paper.

Staff at the polling stations will be able to show you how to use the reader, but trying it out in advance at our office or a local hub may help you feel more confident when voting.

## Could our Moving Forward Course help you or someone you know?

Our upcoming Moving Forward Course is designed to help people adjust to life with sight loss, build confidence, and learn practical skills for everyday life. Taking place over three online sessions in May, this course covers essential advice, accessible technology, and ways to stay active and independent.

Whether you are newly diagnosed, have been living with sight loss for a while but feel this course could help, or know someone who might benefit, these sessions provide valuable insights and practical guidance.

Each session is delivered by our experienced team – senior sight loss advisor, rehabilitation officer, and technology project coordinator – and provides an opportunity to ask questions and learn from others.

Course schedule

**Session 1 – First Steps: Introduction to Rehabilitation and Getting Out and About**
Monday 12 May, 2 pm to 3.15 pm
An introduction to living with sight loss, covering mobility, safety, and local support services.

**Session 2 – Bigger, Bolder, Brighter: Everyday Smart Access**
Monday 19 May, 2 pm to 3.15 pm
Discover simple tools and technology to help with reading, writing, and everyday tasks.

**Session 3 – Specialist Technology and Staying Social, Staying Active**
Tuesday 27 May, 2 pm to 3.15 pm
Explore specialist tech and find out about social and activity groups to help you stay connected.

We encourage people to attend all three sessions to get the most benefit from the course. However, if there is a particular session that interests you, you are welcome to attend just that one.

This course is open to anyone living in the areas covered by us and our partner charities, Wiltshire Sight and Insight Gloucestershire, who is looking to gain new skills and support. Each session is held on Zoom.

**How to register**
To book your place, call us on 0117 322 4885 or email info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

Find out more about each session on the [Moving Forward event listings pages](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/events/?tags=20).

## Need help with your smartphone, tablet, or smart speaker?

We offer free one-to-one tech support appointments at all of our hubs that include a social group. Whether you're just getting started and know nothing, want to learn how to make your device more accessible or have a specific question, our friendly team can help. We can show you how to use useful apps, adjust settings for easier use, get the most out of features like voice assistants and more.

If you’d like a tech support appointment, either give us a call on 0117 322 4885 or ask at one of the following hubs: Bedminster, Whitchurch, Henleaze, Yate, Midsomer Norton, Keynsham, Bath, Kingswood.

## Connect Online with Virtual Hubs

Our Virtual Hubs are open to anyone affected by sight loss. Hosted on Microsoft Teams, training is available for newcomers.

**Join one of our hubs:**

* **Parent Support Group:** First Thursday of the month 7:30 pm.
* **University Students Group:** Fortnightly, Wednesdays at 7 pm.
* **Working Age Group:** Third Thursday of the month at 7 pm.
* **Young Adults Group (18–30):** Fortnightly at 7 pm.

Would you like to join? **Contact us –** 0117 322 4885 / info@sightsupportwest.org.uk

## Eye Can Salisbury

Join us at Eye Can Salisbury on Wednesday 2 April, 10am to 3pm (last entry 2.30pm) at Salisbury Guildhall. Hosted by our partner charity Wiltshire Sight, this free event brings together local and national organisations offering services for blind and partially sighted people. There’ll be equipment and technology to try, and informative talks throughout the day. If this is too far to travel we do have Eye Can Bath coming up this October.

To pre-register, call us or book on Eventbrite: [Eye Can Salisbury 2025](https://EyeCanSalisbury2025.eventbrite.co.uk).

# Sight Support Hubs and Social Groups

Our monthly advice hubs offer consultations with local advisors across the region. At a hub you can get tailored information and guidance and explore accessible aids. Most hubs also host social groups where you can meet others living with sight loss. Full listings are available on our website or by calling us on 0117 322 4885.[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.

# Events & Notices From Other Organisations

## Platinum Bus Pass in BANES

BANES Council announce:

* The Platinum Bus Pass can be applied for by all registered visually impaired residents in Bath & North East Somerset
* If a resident is not registered with the Hearing & Vision Team they can still apply and provide a certificate of vision impairment (CVI) or a DB8 form (if issued before 2005)
* The Platinum Bus Pass allows free travel without time limit, so 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, within B&NES, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Hopefully North Somerset will also allow these passes at some point in the future.
* There have been some delays in the technology used by First Bus working with these passes, therefore drivers have been instructed to accept the passes without scanning. I have also attached a letter to this email that can be given to Platinum Pass holders to show to bus drivers if there is any question about using the pass outside the usual disabled bus pass hours.
* If a visually impaired resident currently has a disabled bus pass they are able to request a change of entitlement without charge.
* Platinum Passes can also be issued as a companion pass for residents who are unable to travel unaccompanied.

## Avon Talking Magazine now available on Alexa

You can now listen to Avon Talking Magazine using your Amazon Alexa device.

To get started, just say:
“Alexa, enable Talking Newspapers” – you only need to do this once.
Then say: “Alexa, open Talking Newspapers.”
When prompted, say “Avon Talking Magazine” and confirm.

Useful voice commands:

“Alexa, next track” to skip forward

“Alexa, previous track” to go back

“Alexa, pause” or “Alexa, stop”

“Alexa, play” to resume

For help, contact Chris at avontalkingmagazine@gmail.com

## Take part in Retina UK's Sight Loss Survey

Retina UK has launched its 2025 Sight Loss Survey and is keen to hear from people living with inherited sight loss – especially young adults and people from diverse backgrounds.

The survey helps shape support services, secure funding, and influence NHS access to treatments like Luxturna. It takes around 40 minutes and can be completed online or by phone.

Deadline: Friday 25 April 2025
Find out more and take part: <https://retinauk.org.uk/event/sight-loss-survey-2025/>

## RNIB report explores motherhood and sight loss

RNIB has published the findings from their recent survey on the experiences of blind and partially sighted mothers. Many people welcomed the opportunity to have this topic explored, and the report highlights key insights and lived experiences.

You can read the full report and summary findings here:
[Read Navigating Motherhood with Sight Loss I Voice of the Customer report 2025 | RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/reports-and-insight/navigating-motherhood-with-sight-loss-voice-of-the-customer-report-2025/)

You can also listen to a special podcast on the topic via RNIB Connect Radio:
[RNIB Connect / RNIB Research Explores Being A Mother With Sight Loss](https://audioboom.com/posts/8693760-rnib-research-explores-being-a-mother-with-sight-loss)

## Help RNIB improve post-diagnostic support

RNIB is collaborating with Thiscovery to research how post-diagnostic support for people with sight loss can be improved. They are inviting people with lived experience, family members, and professionals in the field to complete a short survey. Insights will shape future services across the Eye Care Support Pathway. To take part, visit: [RNIB Survey](https://bit.ly/4jZY7Rc)

## VICTA Science Fair

VICTA’s 2025 Online Science Fair is now live. Participants can explore a range of activities, including giveaways such as Amazon Echo Dots, Echo Show Kids, and Hot Wheels Braille Racers. Competitions and challenges are open in four categories, with £50 vouchers to be won. Families visiting a science centre can benefit from VICTA’s facilitated ticket offer. Full terms and conditions are available on the VICTA website [VICTA Science Fair 2025 - VICTA](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-science-fair/) For more information, contact the Activities Team at sciencefair@victa.org.uk

# 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/)

**All Aboard Watersports - VI watersports for children**

Is your child looking to try a new activity or interested in getting back on the water?

Come and find out more about the summer events at All Aboard Watersports, specifically for children and young people with a vision impairment.

Visit the centre, enjoy a coffee, and take a powerboat tour of the harbour.
No special equipment needed. A morning for the whole family.

Friday 11 April, 10am to 12 noon. Free for all.

To book or find out more, contact Jemma on 07874 399 409 or email centremanager@allaboardwatersports.co.uk

## News from Ignite Bristol

**Inclusive Multi-Sport Taster Afternoon**
Join an exciting free taster event for d/Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people and their families on Wednesday 28 May, 1pm to 4pm at Oasis Academy Brislington. Try out a range of accessible sports and meet inclusive local clubs. To express interest, email James.Snook@AccessSport.org.uk

**Sailing at Chew Lake with CLADS**
CLADS offers inclusive sailing sessions at Chew Valley Lake, welcoming people with a disability, with or without sailing experience. Enjoy fresh air, meet others, and build confidence on the water. Two free taster sessions available. Email info@clads.co.uk to find out more.

**Inclusive Padel Taster Afternoon**
Try the fast-growing sport of padel! Free taster sessions for disabled, d/Deaf and neurodivergent young people on Saturday 19 April, 2pm to 4pm at Padel4all Lockleaze. Sessions for ages 6–11 and 12+. Contact info@ignitebristol.co.uk for details.

**Tennis Camp for disabled and deaf players – Bath**
Children and adults aged 5+ are invited to Lansdown Club, Bath on Tuesday 8 April for inclusive tennis led by Deaflympics medalist Dan Tunstall. Sessions run from 2pm to 4pm and cost £5 each. Details at blueskytennis.foundation

**Inclusive tennis at Winterbourne**
Weekly tennis sessions for young people aged 8 to 18 who are disabled, d/Deaf or neurodivergent. Thursdays 5–5.45pm and Fridays 11.15am–12pm at Winterbourne Tennis Club. First session is free. Sign up via: <bit.ly/winterbourneAcez>

**Inclusive Table Tennis – Share Your Views**
Ignite Bristol is exploring a new inclusive table tennis programme and would love your input. If you’re interested in taking part or helping shape the sessions, fill in this short form: <https://forms.gle/iLEMMsS9GV17vmyEA>

**Free Travel Support from TravelWest**
TravelWest offers free travel support to help people travel more confidently. Includes bike loans, guided cycle rides, free bus and train taster tickets, and basic cycle training. Available to residents in the West of England. Details: <https://travelwest.info/for-communities/individual-support/>

## You're invited: Sonic Body workshop

Saturday 12 April, 2pm - 3.30pm at Bristol Beacon (Lantern Hall)

Experience a collision of music, dance, art and technology in a one-off movement workshop from Neon Dance. It's your chance to experience and feedback on some fascinating technology - a set of brand new wearable sound sculptures that we're developing for performance.
Facilitated by Neon Artistic Director, Adrienne Hart, these sessions have been designed for visually impaired communities, the general public and people interested in dance.
Timings and booking will be available via [Bristol Beacon Booking Link](https://bristolbeacon.org/whats-on/neon-dance-sonic-body-workshop/). Any questions please get in touch at info@neondance.org.

## Gloucestershire Growlers

The group aim to give visually impaired people in and around the county the opportunity to take part in sport and create an environment where they can socialise with people who truly understand the daily impact of having a visual impairment. Although the group aim play to win, team spirit is more important than results and the group pride themselves on their unique “Growler camaraderie!

They are organising two indoor sessions at Gloucestershire’s Nevil Road ground on 6th of April.  If you would like any more information contact Phil Gingell at bristolbluephil@googlemail.com

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

Takes place on the last Thursday of every month from 10.30am till 12pm. New members welcome. Audio books are chosen from RNIB’s talking book service so it’s helpful to sign up before joining. The next books are:

* 24 April - Prima Facie by Suzie Miller. Drawn from the play about a barrister who specialises in defending men accused of sexual assault.
* 29 May - The Second Sight of Zachary Cloudesley by Sean Lusk - An historical novel that roams from a clockmakers shop, in 18th Century London, to Constantinople in the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

Further information email vibookgroup.bristol@gmail.com or Katharine Seymour, Central Library on 07880 069877

# 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/)

## Working Well with Sight Loss – Residential Course

**April 23–25 / Thomas Pocklington Hub, London / President Hotel**

Looking for work? Want to boost your confidence with job searching, applications, and interviews? Thomas Pocklington’s new residential course offers practical support in a relaxed, friendly environment. Learn essential tech skills, job search strategies, and interview techniques, plus explore the latest assistive technology.

Completely free – including accommodation, meals, and travel.

How to apply: Email employment@pocklington.org.uk with up to 300 words about yourself and why you’d benefit. For an informal chat, get in touch at the same address.

## Bath Macular Group

The next meeting of the Bath Macular Support Group will be on Wednesday 16th April at 2.00pm at Good Living (The Bubble) at St John's Foundation, Bath. The speaker will be Lizi Williams, the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer at The Eye Clinic at the RUH. All welcome. Contact Jo Fishwick on 07947 373 244 or Jo.Fishwick@macularsociety.org to find out more information or find other local groups.

# Local Audio Described Arts Events

## Galleries and Museums

### Arnolfini Gallery

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA
Join Arnolfini for audio described tours of Barbara Walker: Being Here on Saturday 19 April and Saturday 10 May, 10am to 11am. This major exhibition features powerful figurative works exploring Black British history, identity and immigration, including pieces from Walker’s Turner Prize-nominated Burden of Proof series. Sighted guides will be available, and complimentary tea and coffee will be served in the café bar afterwards. The event is free, but please email to book a space: community@arnolfini.org.uk

## Theatres - Upcoming Audio Described Shows

### Bristol Hippodrome

* 16 April – Tina: The Tina Turner Musical
* 12 June – War Horse
* 16 July - Moulin Rouge

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

### Bristol Old Vic

* 29 March – Romeo and Juliet – the original text but with some of it in rap and R&B
* 31 May – The Beautiful Future is Coming - a fast-paced, inventive look at 250 years of history through the eyes of three couples.
* 5 July – How to Win against History – A Comedy Musical telling the riches to rags story of the 5th Marquis of Anglesey - one of the world’s wealthiest men - until he lost it all by being too damn *fabulous*.

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

### Bath - Theatre Royal

* 21 May – The Midnight Bell – Performed by Matthew Bourne’s dance company. It’s set in the pubs and fog-bound streets of Soho and Fitzrovia during the 1930s
* 12 June – By Royal Appointment – starring Anne Reid as the Queen and Caroline Quentin as her dresser.

Both shows have touch tours. For more details and tickets phone 01225 448844. Make sure you subscribe to the Theatre’s Access List.

You will receive a link emailed, beforehand, with pre-show audio notes. Hearing devices can be collected from all bars when the house opens - half an hour before the show.

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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