



Helping Blind and Disabled People

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Chairman's Welcome

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter.

It was wonderful to see so many of our service users, volunteers and supporters attend this year's AGM. I hope you all had an opportunity afterwards to chat and enjoy coffee, tea and cake!

I was elected as your new Chairman at the AGM and feel very privileged to be part of our fantastic



organisation. Paula will be a hard act to follow but she has agreed to remain on our Management Committee and will be heading up our fundraising group.

A little bit about me –

I am a member of the Reader Service Committee and have been involved with the Committee in different capacities for over 20 years. This year I have taken over co-ordination of the Talks Project.

I have lived in Milton Keynes for 42 years and have served on various local and county committees to support the needs of visually impaired people. I am

visually impaired myself and have been since birth.

I am employed by the Sensory Advice Resource Centre (SARC) at Milton Keynes Hospital Eye Clinic as a Rehabilitation Worker for people with visual impairment, meeting, signposting and providing information and advice to newly registered patients. I also visit clients at home to assess their needs and make referrals to local service providers.

I am looking forward to leading your Management Committee during the coming year and taking forward the new Business Plan for the organisation.



Margaret Abrahams shares her experiences as a new volunteer

I first became aware of Milton Keynes Reader Service in January of 2016 when a fellow member of Junction 14, a ladies Barbershop/A

Cappella chorus, suggested we choose the Reader Service as our 'Charity of the Year' for 2016. As my father had been blind for the last 25 years of his life, I was very interested in becoming a volunteer for this wonderful service.

I attended two training days in April, the first to make us aware of the various forms of sight impairment and different way MKRS was providing help for people with sight problems. The second training session was a practical one where we were shown how to 'accompany' and help service users out and about.

The next step was being 'paired up' with suitable service users. Karen introduced me to a gentleman who needed someone to read his post, we get on very well and I enjoy our fortnightly visits. He has also kept me well provided with provisions of mangos and lettuces from his garden!

I have also been introduced to a younger lady who likes Agatha Christie novels. I visit her once a week and enjoy catching up with our reading – the hour just flies by!

Occasionally I visit another member of MKRS to read articles from magazines and in July I had an unexpected visit to MK Theatre to help two of our service users see 'After Miss Julie', a very saucy play enjoyed by us all! I have also been a 'stand in' shopper and been able to help with transporting our service users to our support meetings and AGM.

I love being able to help all the lovely people I have met. I am retired so have some spare time and hope to continue for a long as I am able to do something worthwhile.

RNIB in Milton Keynes by Padma Cheriyan

Many know me as RNIB's volunteer campaigner. I now have a new role as a volunteer community connector for RNIB in Milton Keynes. The aim is to create a new vibrant community of blind and partially sighted people in order to reach as many visually impaired people as possible working through various groups that already exist in Milton Keynes. We also want to find new horizons to get more blind and partially sighted people involved and help them realise losing sight is not the end of the world.

The following is an idea of the kinds of volunteer roles that could be created within the new community:

- Local communications lead
- Community reporters
- Social media moderators
- Young people's lead
- Partnership advocate
- Service navigators
- Travel buddies

We are now looking for ideas for new activity groups for all age groups. Some ideas I am now working on are to set up:

- Singalong group/choir

- Dance group
- Drop-in session for help with digital devices such as smart phones
- Yoga or Tai-Chi groups

I welcome interested members to contact me. My details are: Tel: 01908 377058

e-mail: pscheriyan@gmail.com mobile: 07429 154 931

I look forward to hearing from you.

Give Winter the Cold Shoulder

It is common to see a rise in illness over the winter period as the colder weather can make people more vulnerable to infections, as well as slips and falls caused by icy pavements. Cold weather can also make symptoms of heart and respiratory problems worse.

NHS Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is a GP-led organisation responsible for commissioning (planning and buying) health services in Milton Keynes. This winter the CCG is encouraging people to be aware of the potential health risks associated with cold weather and to take a few simple steps to ensure a healthy winter.

- Ensure you get your flu jab. It's free for eligible people.
- Keep warm by heating your home to at least 18°C (65°F) if you can.

- If you start to feel unwell, even if it's just a cough or a cold, then get help from the appropriate healthcare source before it gets more serious. If you're not sure who you need to see call 111.
- Look out for people who may need a bit of extra help over winter – particularly the elderly and people who are vulnerable or isolated,
- Can you treat your minor illness from your medicine cabinet?
- Remember all the medical advice and treatment services that are available to you – pharmacists, GPs, Urgent Care Centre or NHS 111.
- Remember to go to A&E only in a case of life-threatening accident or emergency

Junction 14 Concert



What a great show the ladies' A Capella group, Junction 14, put on at the Peartree Centre on Sunday 9 October.

There was a song to suit everyone's taste and the standard of singing from the 30-strong group was just amazing. Fifty service users and volunteers were there and £250 was raised for the service.

We are Junction 14's charity of the year and we are so grateful to them for their support.

We would also like to thank Rose Haigh for kindly donating the proceeds from the sale of her beautiful homemade crafts which she sold during the afternoon.

Sight Impaired Gardening



Calling all "budding" gardeners - interested in sowing and growing your own vegetables? Why not join a gardening club for visually impaired people on an allotment in Milton Keynes.

Volunteer help will be at hand to visit a selection of garden centres to shop and select seed potatoes, onion sets and a variety of seasonal seeds - with some time for a coffee and a chat! There will also be help from a dedicated volunteer with propagating, planting out and even picking your crops! Why not give it a go?

Interested to learn more, then call Mike on 01908 665347.

Sight Village

Sight Village is an annual exhibition held in July in Birmingham, bringing together various organisations that provide services for people with a visual impairment.

This year the exhibition was held over two days and, as you can imagine, it is very popular and very busy.

Stands at the Exhibition comprise those specialising in technology: everything from computers, desktop magnifiers, devices for reading, braille, telephones, iPads, tablets and software. There are also exhibitions from RNIB and other companies showing off the latest daily living gadgets. Leisure is well covered too, with information on holidays, sport and theatre. Blind Veterans and British Wireless for the Blind also attended.

Guide Dogs had a stand this year, with one very patient dog ready for a trial walk!

The exhibition is well worth a visit for those that are interested in keeping up to date with the latest technology and information.

We will keep you informed of the next Birmingham date.

New Style Reader Service

Following two and a half years of negotiations with the Charity Commission, we have finally become a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). Before that, although the Committee had trustee insurance, the committee members had been liable for the debts of the Reader Service. This is a technical change that will limit the liability for the Trustees but will not alter the services that we provide for our members. Special thanks go to

Stephen Harrison for the many hours he has donated getting us through the process. Our new charity number is 1169548.

Your New Committee

Service Users:

Caroline Pearson (Chairman)

Jeff Bashton (Vice-Chairman)

Paula Suchy MBE (Fundraising)

Paula Varey (Walnut Tree Community Shop)

Representative and Flag Day and Car Raffle organiser)

Michael Baldry (Bucks Vision Representative)

Elaine Maries (Co-opted)

Judy Smith (Co-opted)

Volunteers:

Stephen Harrison (Treasurer)

Lynn Bovis (Minutes Secretary)

James Clifton

Terry Calvert

Committee Spotlight: Jeff Bashton



This is the second year I have taken on the role of Vice-Chairman.

I am totally blind and have personal and professional experience of visual impairment. I have managed

services for blind people in an Inner London Borough and worked as an advisor in sensory impairment at the Department of Health from 1991-2005. I have formerly worked as the Visual Impairment Adviser at the Open University and also as a trustee of the Disabled Living Foundation. I am currently a volunteer for the MK Citizen's Advice.

Upcoming Theatre Events

What is an audio described performance?

An audio described performance is a live, scripted verbal commentary of a show which is delivered by a professional audio describer via infra-red headsets. The commentary provides information which is otherwise only available visually; so it may include actions happening on stage, details of significant non-verbal communication or a character's entrance. The audio describer will do a pre-show introduction giving a detailed description of the set, characters and costumes in advance of the performance.

Upcoming audio described performances:

- Dick Whittington – 17 Dec 2016 – 2.30pm -(Touch Tour 12pm & 1pm)
- La Boheme – 23 Mar 2017 – 7.15pm - (Touch Tour 6pm)
- MAMMA MIA! – 20 May 2017 – 2.30pm - (Touch Tour 1.30pm)
- Jane Eyre – 15 Jul 2017 – 2pm - (Touch Tour 12pm)

Touch Tours

Touch tours are free to ticket holders and are led by an audio describer prior to an audio described performance. Touch tours provide the opportunity for members of the audience who are blind or partially sighted to familiarise themselves with the set, costumes and props. Places on touch tours must be booked at Milton Keynes Theatre box office.

The dedicated Access booking line is 0844 871 7677

Reader Service on the Move

We are delighted to be able to report that, following the news from Woughton Community Council that our rent would be almost doubled, the search for alternative office space has been successful.

Our new home will be at Margaret Powell House, Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes. This is a modern purpose built office block that also houses a number of other charities.

Our new office accommodation will be big enough to house our committee meetings, provide much safer and more accessible environment, and also provide opportunities for networking with the other occupants in the building

The move will take place before Christmas, so it will be a very busy time for us over the next few weeks.

Thank You from Karen

I would like to thank Walnut Tree Community Shop for their continued support and for their recent £3,000 donation.

I would also like to thank all our volunteers for all their help. Volunteers help by visiting their service users, helping in the office, serving on committees, transcription work and many other roles. I would like to take this opportunity in thanking Lesley Marshall for all the help she has given me in writing and producing this newsletter.

If you would like to receive this newsletter in an alternative format, please contact Karen in the Reader Service office.

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