



CONTACT

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Editorial

Welcome to the Winter Edition 2016 of CONTACT magazine.

Change, change, and more change!

Someone once wrote, possibly paraphrasing the Prayer of St. Frances of Assisi, "Let go of the things you can't change; Focus on the things you can!"

So much of our world is changing...from Presidents, world leaders, climate, SCILL and even our own bank notes (see article below)! Did you notice the change in the cover material of the Autumn edition of Contact? Let us know what you thought of the change? Did you like it? Does it improve its appearance? Also, keep watch as Sutton Vision are planning some further changes to our Contact magazine in the New Year!

Comments and contributions from Sutton Vision members and local partners are always welcome and should be sent to our Editor, Michael Parsons at editor@suttonvision.org.uk. We are always interested to hear what you think of the newsletter and to receive ideas about articles for inclusion in future editions.

Please note that the deadline for the Spring 2017 edition of Contact is Thursday 9th March 2017.

Chairman's Christmas Message

I am writing this message on Monday 28th November and I cannot believe that my wife and I have already completed our Christmas card writing and bought most of our presents. This is a first for us. There is no doubt that sorting out cards and presents for individual people can be time consuming and mentally stressful trying to find what you consider would be appropriate for each person.

In that regard, my family agreed a few years ago, to stop sending presents to each other because, in reality, we were just exchanging one gift voucher for another, so to speak. However, this arrangement did not last more than five minutes because my mother said that she really felt that she wanted to give something to people and got pleasure from thinking about, and finding, a present that she hoped would please the recipient.

Isn't this the whole point of Christmas. That we have thought long and hard about individuals and what would please them. The same can be said of all those who volunteer their time and skills to helping others.

So, very heartfelt thanks and appreciation go to our team of volunteers for their work on behalf of Sutton Vision this year. But, of course, those sentiments also go to our staff, including Nicola who is our new Chief Officer and is like a breath of fresh air and a very capable young lady. I am sure Nicola will steer Sutton Vision to greater things next year.

A very happy Christmas to all our readers.

Eric Kennedy
Chair of Trustees.

British Woman gets 'bionic eye'

A British woman with 'bionic eye' speaks of joy after reading clock for first time in years.

A blind woman fitted with a “bionic eye” has spoken of her joy after she was able to tell the time for the first time in more than six years.

Rhian Lewis, 49, was given the retinal implant as part of an ongoing trial at Oxford’s John Radcliffe hospital. Surgeons at the Oxford Eye hospital implanted a tiny electronic chip at the back of her right eye’s retina in an attempt to help her see.

The mother of two, from Cardiff, has suffered from retinitis pigmentosa – an inherited disorder – since she was five. The condition causes gradual deterioration of photoreceptors, the light-detecting cells in the retina, which can lead to blindness. One in 3-4,000 people in the UK have the disease, for which there is currently no cure.

Rhian is completely blind in her right eye and has virtually no vision in her left eye. The implant, made by a German firm, Retina Implant AG, was placed in Rhian's eye in June in an operation that can last six to eight hours.

During follow-up tests, Rhian was asked to look at a large cardboard clock to see whether she could tell the time. She had not been able to tell the time with her right eye in 16 years or with her left eye for about six years.

She said "Oh my God" when she realised she had managed to recognise it was three o'clock. She added: "Honest to God that felt like Christmas Day."

The implant – a 3mm square array of around 1,500 light sensors which sends pulsed electrical signals to nerve cells – is connected to a tiny computer that sits underneath the skin behind the ear. This is powered by a magnetic coil on the skin. From the outside, it looks like a hearing aid.

When the device is first switched on, patients see flashes of light, but over a few weeks the brain learns to convert those flashes into meaningful shapes and objects. The images can be black and white and grainy but still have the power to transform lives.

Describing the moment the device was turned on, Rhian said: "They said I might not get any sensation and then all of a sudden within seconds there was like this flashing in my eye, which has seen nothing for over 16 years, so it was like, oh my god, wow!"

Rhian was then taken to the cloisters of New College, Oxford, to see whether she could make out its features. She said: "I walked up the

street, and the lady from social services said to me to point out anything I thought might or might not be there. And the first thing I thought 'there might be something there,' there was a car, a silver car, and I couldn't believe it, because the signal was really strong, and that was the sun shining on the silver car.

"And I was just, well, I was just so excited, I was quite teary. The enormity of it didn't hit me until I'd actually got home, thinking 'Oh my god, what have I done? I've actually spotted something out that I haven't been able to do.'"

(Editor's Note:

For more information, support and advice about the eye condition, Retinitis Pigmentosa, see RP Fighting Blindness (Formerly British RP Society) on www.rpfightingblindness.org.uk/index.php?tl=aboutrp or call their helpline on 0845 123 2354.)

Future for SCILL and Sutton Vision

We are sure that the majority of you are aware that from March 2017, the charity SCILL will no longer be providing services. However, after discussion between SCILL Trustees and the Local Authority it has been agreed that the services currently being provided by SCILL will be taken on by Encompass Local Authority Training Company.

This agreement means that we, at Sutton Vision, will be able to continue working in the SCILL Centre and are looking forward to offering new groups and services in 2017.

Christmas Day Lunch

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME COMPANY ON CHRISTMAS DAY?



Once again, the Churches Together in Wallington and Beddington will be hosting their very popular Christmas Day Lunch.

The lunch will be held at St. Patrick's Church, Park Hill Road, Wallington SM6 0RU. For further details please contact Frances Drake on 0208 647 2688 or francesmdrake@aol.com.

If you require transport please contact George Dow on 0208 669 0608 or georgedow51@btinternet.com

New Awareness Sessions for 2017

Sutton Vision has some new awareness sessions planned for 2017.

LOOKING AT A HEALTHY DIET

Two sessions are planned:

26th January & 6th March 2017 – 11.00am to 12.30

Come and join us for some nutrition and healthy eating ideas. This will cover the importance of eating a balanced diet for good eye care. Ideas for sensible swaps and portion sizes.

HOME & FIRE SAFETY

9th February & 6th March 2017 - 1.30pm to 3.00pm

Come and join in with another of our awareness sessions, this one focusing on home and fire safety. Highlighting what is available for the visually impaired and what works well, getting help correctly when needed and fire safety ideas and how to get these.

If you would like to attend any of these awareness sessions planned for the New Year, please call the office and book a place on 020 8409 7166

Befriending Volunteers

We are fortunate enough to have recruited some new volunteers who would like to offer their services. If you would like to have a home visitor, help with your personal shopping (local) or speak with someone regularly on the telephone please call our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Amanda Larter, on 020 8409 7166. (We carry out DBS checks on all our volunteers.)

Tech Talk Drop-in

Some may have attended the Online Today Sessions during Summer and Autumn 2016. Following the wonderful success of these sessions, Sutton Vision are running a new volunteer led group starting up in January 2017 -TECH TALK.

This group will be hosted by Mick and Shirley Mitchells & Erica Grimsey and held once a month at Sutton Vision, as a drop-in session and follow up to the Online Today provided by Action For Blind People.

Each session will run from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 Noon. The dates for Tech Talk are as follows:-

- Thursday 12th January 2017
- Thursday 16th February 2017
- Thursday 16th March 2017

Sutton Vision will provide tea, coffee and biscuits for the drop in session.

Bring your Smart device along to learn more useful tips about going online, apps, accessibility options and peer support.

Call Amanda or Andrea for more details 020 8409 7166.

New Bank Notes

Following the release of the new, accessible £5.00 note the Bank of England will be issuing new £10.00 and £20.00 notes next year.

The RNIB have been working with the Bank of England to develop features to help visually impaired people identify their money more easily.

The new notes will be made of polymer and will retain tiered sizing, include bold numerals and have similar colour palette to the current notes. The new notes will also have a tactile feature with a series of raised dots.

'Super Star' in Training

Welcome to a new Superstar in training, Luna.

September 2016 saw the arrival of brand new puppy with a purpose, Luna, on ITV's This Morning.

After the success of last year's superstar pup, Clover, Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield simply couldn't wait to welcome little Luna on set to help raise awareness for Guide Dogs.

The show will follow her progress throughout the year, as the adorable puppy starts her early socialisation training in preparation to become a life-changing Guide Dog.

Luna, a Labradoodle (cross between Labrador and Poodle) was born on 23rd June 2016 as living with volunteer puppy walker Michelle Henman, her husband, 2 year old daughter and Michelle's pet dog, Kaiya.

Michelle has said that our confident little lady has no problems fitting in to a busy household: "She's feisty, confident and fearless, but most of all, she's cute! My daughter loves her, and she's inseparable from my pet dog, Kaiya. I can tell she's going to make a fantastic Guide Dog in the future".

We think she will too, especially as she will be following in the famous paw-steps of her half-sister, Clover, who is currently in Training School learning important guiding skills, like stopping at kerbs and avoiding obstacles. Clover will be meeting up with Luna regularly to show her the ropes behind and in front of the camera.

In fact, the two of them will be training side by side, as the amazing Michelle is not only Luna's Puppy Walker, but she is also Clover's Guide Dog Trainer. As they say Michelle, two is better than one!

Everyone can follow Luna's progress on ITV's This Morning on Monday and Thursdays from 10.30 a.m. and keep up with her latest antics on FaceBook, Instagram and Twitter.

Taken from Guide Dog's Forward Magazine.

Access Awareness & Issues

This quarter we are starting a small series on Access Issues and Awareness that can have a positive impact on the mobility of blind and partially sighted people in the public realm.

In the forthcoming issues, during 2017, we will be looking at items such as different tactile warning surfaces and how they can help, as well as the 'hot potato' of shared space, 'courtesy crossings' and how to approach them. In case you missed it, we are starting with an item that first appeared in Issue 43 of Sutton Vision's Contact magazine in the Summer of 2013!

The secret button at pedestrian crossings

Few seem to know about this useful little device, which is surprising because in many areas of the country it can be found on every street and it saves lives.

What is it?

It's a small, unassuming plastic or metal cone which can be found on

the underside of pedestrian crossings' control box, below the 'WAIT' sign.

When the green man lights up, the traffic should stop, and it's your turn to cross, the cone starts spinning. It points downwards and has tactile ridges on it, like the edge of a 10p coin.

What's it doing there?

It's there for those people who can't see the lights, like visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind people. When they feel it spinning they know they have the right of way across the road.

When crossing a road you can stand near the control box with your hand on the cone and independently know you can cross when it spins, without having to get help from a passer-by, if there is one!

But I thought crossings beeped for blind people?

Not all crossings make sounds. For instance, if two crossings are close to each other (i.e. like the junction of Brighton Road and Grove Road, just below Sutton Station) neither will beep in case pedestrians are misled into walking out into oncoming traffic on the wrong road, and, in any case, a tactile indicator helps deaf-blind people too. They can't hear audible signals.

When you can cross the road in a single movement, with no other crossings near-by (i.e. From St. Nicholas Centre, across St. Nicholas way, Sutton to the Cinema) you may find that a bleep has been included too!

The cones provide the same information as the beeping signal but in tactile form. Some crossings both beep and rotate.

How do people use it?

Hugh Huddy is blind and works for visual impairment charities' umbrella group Vision 2020. He says he is always pleased to see a cone on a crossing but wouldn't just walk into a road because of a spinning mechanism: "An important point to make is that I wait for the cone to rotate but combine the information that it gives me with listening to the traffic on the road in front of me. You can hear

whether they're changing gear or slowing down.

"The cone isn't telling you it's safe to cross, it's telling you the light is on. For instance, cyclists like whizzing through crossings sometimes, even though they shouldn't."

Do all crossings have cones?

No. Crossings are maintained by local authorities which are not legally obliged to make them accessible. The Department for Transport says it encourages their use, though, and says that all signal-controlled crossings can have them. This includes the ones with the attractive bird related names - pelicans, puffins, toucans - and also junction crossings.

Who invented them?

Nottingham University took the idea to the Department of Transport, as it was known then, in the 1980s. It wasn't until 1989 that they began to appear on our streets. Interestingly, the cones still aren't built into the boxes and have to be retro-fitted. Radix, the company behind the cones, says it has sold around 10,000 units per year since 1995.

Information was provided by the Department for Transport and Royal National Institute of Blind People

(Editor's Notes:

1. If there is a light-controlled crossing near you and it doesn't have a rotating cone underneath, then please contact your local authority and request one.

2. The City of Coventry are trialling a device and app that can be on a person's smartphone that will indicate when you are near a controlled crossing, if the vehicles are moving, and when the traffic stops.

NB. This device is still in its embryonic stage and not available for circulation...but watch this space!! Technology is slowly getting there!)

Recreation and Leisure Committee (RLC)

The Recreation and Leisure Committee (RLC) organises its own programme and acts as the point of contact for participants. Although Sutton Vision supports and encourages RLC and their activities, members should be aware that any events organised directly by the RLC are independent of Sutton Vision and are the responsibility of RLC only. Please contact RLC Committee members direct if you wish to learn more about the programme or to book a specific event. Their activities are listed on our Regular Dates page, if you are interested in coffee socials or book club please contact Sue Christie on 07891 783291 or email susanchristie48@btinternet.com.

Quote for the Quarter

Continuing our series of Quotes for the Quarter here is one for the festive season:

A careless word may kindle strife;
A cruel word may wreck a life.
A bitter word may hate instil;
A brutal word may smite and kill.
A gracious word may smooth the way;
A joyous word may light the day.
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless.

From an unknown poet.

Regular Dates

For information on any of these activities please call Sutton Vision on 020 8409 7166:

Event	Date	Venue
Music Group	2nd Monday of each month 12.15 – 2.30 pm	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
News & Muse Group	3rd Monday of each month 12.15 – 2.30 pm	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
Social Eyes	Alternate Thursdays 2.00 – 4.00 p.m	SCILL Centre, Robin Hood Lane, Sutton
Friendly Club	Alternate Wednesdays 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.	Thomas Wall Centre, Benhill Ave, Sutton
Rotary Club Gentle Exercise Class	Every Monday 10.00 a.m -12.00 noon	Community Hall Church Road, Cheam (St Dunstan's Church)
Hello! Club	Every Thursday 10.00 a.m -12.00 noon	Christchurch with St Philip, Cheam Common Road, Worcester Park
Sutton Macular Group Monthly Meeting	2 nd Monday of the month 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon	Friends Meeting House Cedar Road, Sutton
RLC Coffee Morning Waterstones	1 st Friday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
RLC Book Club	4 th Monday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
RLC Lunch Prince of Wales Pub	3 rd Tuesday of each month from 12.00 noon	The Prince of Wales, 28 Malden Road, Cheam,
RLC Evening The Hope Pub	1 st Monday of each month from 7.00 p.m.	The Hope Pub, 48 West Street, Carshalton
RLC Coffee Morning Wallington	2 nd Wednesday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Garden Café, Wallington Library, Shotfield



Useful Telephone Numbers

The following list of useful numbers includes an emergency number for the London Borough of Sutton and Sutton Eye Unit.

RNIB/Action for Blind People Helpline	0303 123 9999
London Borough of Sutton	020 8770 5000
First Contact	020 8770 4337
Pension & Benefits	020 8687 3621
Sutton Eye Unit	020 8296 3817
Macular Society (National)	01264 350 551
Macular Society (Sutton)	07970 525 143
Friendly Club	020 8669 4106
Age UK (Sutton)	020 8770 4090
Sutton Carers Centre	020 8296 5611
Sutton Talking Newspaper	020 3759 6679



**We would like to wish you a
Happy and Peaceful Festive Season
And very best wishes for
2017**