



LONDON  
VISION

## London Scene

January 2021

London Scene is a regular newsletter to inform people with sight loss about accessible activities and events happening around London, including local society events.

If you would like to unsubscribe from this newsletter at any time, then please call 020 37613651 or email [info@londonvision.org](mailto:info@londonvision.org)

Please note that a copy of this newsletter may have been despatched before receiving your request to unsubscribe. If you would like to submit local society events for promotion in this newsletter, please email or call using the same details as above.

Welcome to the January edition of the London Scene newsletter.

London Vision will continue to be in contact with our clients/members regularly via the London Scene newsletter. We hope everyone is well, staying safe and adapting to life in an ongoing pandemic. London Vision staff are still working and contactable. If you are feeling particularly isolated during this difficult time, then please do get in contact using the normal channels.

[www.londonvision.org](http://www.londonvision.org)

Twitter / Facebook / Instagram @LondonVisionUK  
Charity number: 1183741

## Sports

Keen on staying active while at home? [Try Metro Blind Sport's Audio Exercise Programmes](#)

## Theatre

[Stage shows, musicals and opera you can watch online for free.](#)

Royal Albert Home brings exclusive sessions from artists' homes to yours whilst the Hall is shut. [These shows are all available for free.](#)

## Tours

The best virtual tours to help you beat boredom.  
Art galleries might not be so interesting unless you have some useful sight, others work well.

[8 Stunning virtual garden tours around the world](#)

[Free virtual globe-trotting, tours and experiences](#)

## Esme's virtual friends

Do you or someone you know have Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS)? This condition affects people with sight loss. A condition first identified 300 years ago by the grandson of Charles Bonnet, over the last three centuries people with sight loss have experienced similar hallucinations to those first described by Charles Bonnet. Some are mildly aggravating whilst others can be terrifying.

Esme's virtual friends is a support and information group hosted on Zoom by London Vision for people with CBS. It meets at 6pm every other Thursday with the next meeting on 14 January.

Why not come along and share your story?

If you'd like to join this informal session contact [info@londonvision.org](mailto:info@londonvision.org) or give us a call on 020 3761 3651

## **Managing Sight Loss Sessions Winter/Spring 2021**

London Vision has been hosting Managing Sight Loss sessions since the summer of 2020. The sessions are loosely based upon the Living with Sight Loss course delivered by the RNIB. All the sessions are currently held via the online video conferencing platform Zoom; people join in via computers, tablets, mobile phone, and the traditional house phone. Whenever we can, we do our best to help people join in. Our sessions are relaxed and informal; they are a mixture of information giving and listening to participants' experiences of living with sight loss. All our sessions are one hour in length unless we tell you differently. Friends and family are most welcome to sit in to find out more. Want to join a session? Call us on 0203 761 3651 or email on [info@londonvision.org](mailto:info@londonvision.org)

### **January**

#### **7<sup>th</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – All about registration: the benefits and rights it brings**

In this session we will explore certification and then registration as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. We will explore the services you can expect from your local council along with the benefits and concessions registration brings.

#### **12<sup>th</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Getting out and about safely**

We'll discuss techniques for moving safely and independently around the home, considering the use of lighting and contrast. We'll then explore independent travel outdoors, chatting about simple tips and tricks along with directing you to support that's available from your local council and others.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Life hacks – everyday living: in the kitchen**

In this session we will explore ways of making drinks, cooking snacks, marking appliances, and labelling and identifying products.

#### **19<sup>th</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Life hacks – everyday living: your daily routine**

In this session we will explore equipment and techniques that can assist you with your daily routine, from identifying hair conditioner to basic DIY.

#### **21<sup>st</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Introduction to assistive technology**

This session is an introduction to the world of assistive technology. We will discuss apps that read text, phones that talk to you and will introduce you to

the accessibility features on smartphones. This session will be led by Graham Page from Thomas Pocklington Trust.

### **26<sup>th</sup> January 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Sport, leisure, and hobbies**

In this session we will explore sporting, leisure, cultural and other fun activities with the help of Metro Blind Sport and Vocaleyes.

### **27<sup>th</sup> January 6 pm – 7.30 pm – Advanced assistive technology**

This session is for regular users of assistive technology and takes the form of a discussion. It will be led by Graham Page from Thomas Pocklington Trust and Davinder Kullar from RNIB's Technology for Life team. We will also update you on any new technology.

## **February**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> February 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Feeling good, staying healthy**

In this session we'll explore different techniques for staying positive and relaxed when dealing with the pressures of everyday life.

### **10<sup>th</sup> February 6pm – 7.30 – All things reading**

With the support of Paul, RNIB's Digital Transformation manager and Davinder Kullar from RNIB's Technology for Life team, in this session we will explore all the different ways of accessing reading material

### **16<sup>th</sup> February 6 pm – 7.30 pm – All about registration: the benefits and the rights it brings**

In this session we will explore certification and then registration as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. We will explore the services you can expect from your local council along with the benefits and concessions registration can bring.

### **18<sup>th</sup> February 6 pm – 7.30 pm – Making the most of your vision**

This session will be delivered alongside the Macular Society. We will talk about the range of different ways you can make the most of your vision, where you can get help with low vision aids, and more.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> February 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Getting out and about safely**

In this session we will discuss techniques for moving safely and independently around the home, considering the use of lighting and contrast. Then we will explore independent travel outdoors, discussing simple tips and

tricks along with directing you to support available from your local council and others.

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2.30 pm – 3.39 pm – Life hacks - everyday living: In the kitchen**

In this session we will explore ways of making drinks, cooking snacks, marking appliances, and labelling and identifying products.

**March**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Life hacks - everyday living: your daily routine**

In this session we will explore equipment and techniques that can assist you with your daily routine, from identifying hair conditioner to basic DIY.

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm – Introduction to assistive technology**

This session is an introduction to the world of assistive technology. We will discuss apps that read text, phones that talk to you and will introduce you to the accessibility features on smartphones. This session will be led by Graham Page from Thomas Pocklington Trust.

**9<sup>th</sup> March 6pm – 7.30pm – Advanced assistive technology**

This session is for regular users of assistive technology and takes the form of a discussion. It will be led by Graham Page from Thomas Pocklington Trust and Davinder Kullar from RNIB's Technology for Life team. We will also update you on any new technology.

**15<sup>th</sup> March 6pm – 7pm – Feeling good**

In this session we will explore different techniques for staying positive and relaxed when dealing with the pressures of everyday life.

**24<sup>th</sup> March 6 pm – 7 pm – Celebration of COVID community support fund and new beginning**

In this session we will be saying thank you to the COVID community support fund and looking back over six months of Managing Sight Loss sessions. This will also be an opportunity for participants to feed back and suggest ideas for future sessions and topics.

## Join the Working Age Forum on Zoom

London Vision organises regular meetings of the Working Age Forum or WAF for blind and partially sighted people who consider themselves of working age. Whether you are employed, self-employed or seeking work, join our forum to hear from invited speakers and take part in group discussions about all aspects of the world of work.

Due to the lockdown, our meetings are currently being held on the Zoom online platform.

If you wish to become a member of the WAF please email [waf.london@londonvision.org](mailto:waf.london@londonvision.org) and ask to be put on the database to receive news and invitations. We can also email you information on how to obtain Zoom.

The next WAF meeting is scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> January at 6 to 7.30pm

## Eye Matter - Beyond Sight Loss

New multi activity group for anyone living with low or no sight. All ages and abilities welcome.

Welcome to our weekly meetings

Tuesday 6 pm-7 pm discussion. Every fortnight

Tuesday 7 pm- 8 pm Activities for an adult audience including salsa, comedy, meditation and mindfulness, quizzes

Wednesday 11 am – Cookery with VI tips

Thursday 5 pm -Discussion group

Friday 11 am -Discussion group followed by

12 pm - Fun activities, such as comedy workshop, neurobics, meditation, quizzes and body conditioning.

Remember, Tuesday and Friday lunchtime activities change each week.

Link for all the groups: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2599114264>

Beyond Sight Loss are delighted to welcome you every Thursday evening 5pm to 6pm for a discussion group with Ashrafia Choudhury.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2599114264>

Eye Matter is proud to present  
Turning Surviving into Thriving  
With our new monthly group  
Helping your mental wellbeing with a solution focussed approach

First Monday of each month starting Monday, 4th of January 2021  
3pm to 4pm  
Facilitated by Natalie  
(Retired NLP life coach, CBT, clinical hypnotherapy practitioner, Reiki  
Master/teacher)

This will take place on Zoom, which is accessible via landline, mobile or  
computer.

For more information or to book your place call Natalie on 07818 048039 or  
email [eyemattervi@gmail.com](mailto:eyemattervi@gmail.com)

Eye Matter is accessible via mobile, landline or computer Tel: 02080806591  
ID: 2599114264

Followed by # key. It will then ask for your participant number, press # again.  
You will be then put into our waiting room, we will let you in as soon as we  
notice! <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2599114264>

## December issue Riddles and Answers

Riddle: Name Santa's reindeer which can be seen on Valentine's Day.

Answer: Cupid

Riddle: I love to get chopped evenly and decorated brightly. What am I?

Answer: A Christmas Tree

Riddle: Name an animal who is never angry on Christmas?

Answer: Turkey because it is always stuffed

Riddle: Name someone who delivers Christmas gifts to puppies.

Answer: Santa Paws

Riddle: What has many needles, but doesn't sew?

Answer: A Christmas Tree

## January Riddles

Riddle: What has many teeth, but can't bite?

Riddle: What is cut on a table, but is never eaten?

Riddle: What has words, but never speaks?

Riddle: I am full of holes but I can still hold water. What am I?

Riddle: I can be cracked, I can be made, I can be told, I can be played. What am I?

## Baking

### Honey Gingerbread

125g butter or margarine

50g soft brown sugar

2 eggs beaten

500g bananas, mashed

250g plain flour

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

125g clear honey

125g black treacle

50g golden syrup

3 teaspoons ground ginger

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

120ml milk

Chopped nuts to decorate (optional)

1. Pre heat the oven to 160°C, or Gas 3.
2. Sift the flour and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl, make a well in the centre.
3. Place the honey, treacle, syrup, sugar, butter or margarine, spices and milk in a saucepan and heat gently, stirring.
4. Cool slightly, then beat in the eggs. Pour into the flour and beat well.

5. Turn into a lined and greased 18 cm (7 inch) square cake tin. Sprinkle a few chopped nuts over the top, if liked.

6. Bake in the oven for about 1½ hours, or until brown and firm to touch. Set aside to cool for 10 minutes.

Then all that is left to do is enjoy – I know it will be delicious, especially with a cup of tea or coffee.

## Virtual local support group meeting - London

We hope you will join Retina UK for our online and telephone local support group meeting for the London area on Saturday 16 January between 11.00am and 1.00pm.

Judith Hewitt, Senior Communications and Engagement Manager from Moorfields Eye Hospital, will give a short presentation on the latest plans for Oriel, a partnership between Moorfields Eye Hospital, UCL and Moorfields Eye Charity to build a new centre for eye care, research and education. Your views and ideas can help play a key part in helping to shape the way care will be delivered in the future. At this stage in the engagement process, feedback is being sought on the journey from local transport hubs to the new site, the design of the central reception area, lighting and acoustics.

If you would like to join us, please complete the form on our website: [www.RetinaUK.org.uk/groups#london](http://www.RetinaUK.org.uk/groups#london) or email [services@RetinaUK.org.uk](mailto:services@RetinaUK.org.uk) and instructions on how to join via your smart device, computer or telephone will be sent to you. If you have any questions about the meeting please call Jacqui at Retina UK on 07841 486008.

## VIP Singers

The VIP Singers (Visually Impaired People and Very Important People) was formed about 6 years ago by the South London Resource Centre for Visually Impaired People and St Thomas's Hospital Eye Department.

The group aims to dispel depression and provide a safe environment for some fun. We did performances in the hospital, Southwark Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament and an annual Christmas Ward Round- before Corona struck. Since then we have met on Zoom and have a very active WhatsApp

group which supports us all and keeps in touch with those who cannot access the technology.

Everyone is welcome to join in, no singing expertise required... phone Ariz, the St Thomas's ECLO on 07770381758 for details.

Please do have a look at our VIP (Visually Impaired People) Singers' Christmas video...we're rather pleased with it. [https://youtu.be/UoGV\\_fftHCo](https://youtu.be/UoGV_fftHCo)

## Fit and Fab with Croydon Vision

Dear ladies,

Make exercise part of your New Year's resolution for 2021!

Do not let the winter blues bring you down.

Come and join us for a bit of fun exercises and become Fit and Fabulous with Croydon Vision

This program of exercises is part of a national initiative to encourage girls and women to take up a physical activity and lead a more active life to improve their health and wellbeing.

We will run a series of fitness classes which will include exercises to stretch, build your strength, relax and take away any stress as well as boost your energy and make you feel good.

We will be starting on Thursday 14th January 2021 and then every Thursdays from 2pm to 3.00pm.

You can join us by Zoom or through a USB stick just like the talking news

We will make sure all the exercises are well described so you will not need to see us at all!

To register and join our free Fit and Fab programme for women register by sending us an email now:

[fitandfab@cryodonsvision.org.uk](mailto:fitandfab@cryodonsvision.org.uk)

Or phone: 02086882486

## Interested in playing bridge again?

Although playing bridge is no longer allowed under lockdown restrictions, it is still possible to play online. Clubs exist that enable you to meet with friends at a pre-arranged 'virtual' table, and sometimes talk during play as well, or you can join a table arranged for three other members. One such club is run by Matthew Beddow, a volunteer of the Kent Association for the Blind. The standard of play is social and forgiving; it is not fiercely competitive. Lessons are provided, but only to help members modernise their game.

Online play clearly can't compete with the social gatherings that the club used to organise in Bromley, but it does have the big advantage that members can participate from home, and its scope through the world wide web is unlimited. This means that you can play from anywhere in the UK providing you have a computer or iPad. And everything is still free of charge.

If you are interested please contact Matthew via email: [mbeddow@ntlworld.com](mailto:mbeddow@ntlworld.com) or by phone: 01689 813182 and 07746812246

## RNIB Reading Services

RNIB has been the home of talking books for nearly a hundred years. You can now download books and listen on computer, phone or tablet. The registration/log in URL for Reading services is:

<https://readingservices.rnib.org.uk>

To contact Reading Services: [readingservices@rnib.org.uk](mailto:readingservices@rnib.org.uk) registration and use of Reading services is free.

The Dolphin Easy Reader App is the best way to access the library on a phone or tablet. Books are also available on CD and USB stick and arrive in the post. (postage is free)

RNIB still loans physical paper braille books. RNIB Book share is a service which provides books for students and learning environments. RNIB newsagent provides a range of magazines and newspapers for more information 0303 123 9999

## Your stories of 2020 - you joined us on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of December

A huge thank you to those who openly and honestly shared their experiences of living with sight loss during a pandemic. London is a hugely diverse city

and everyone's story is unique, but during our sessions themes began to emerge. It's London Visions intention to use these common areas of concern and positivity to inform our work moving forward in 2021 and beyond.

2020 demonstrated how useful and necessary technology has become in the lives of blind and partially sighted people. Apps on smart phones bring independence by reading labels, giving direction or telling you how busy a venue is. Networking apps such as WhatsApp, MS Teams and Zoom have allowed social connections to grow and flourish. Some people now feel much more included in society through the use of electronic networks and there is definitely a desire for these to grow and develop. Using technologies as a blind or partially sighted person can require considerable perseverance and patience. You told us that through patience and perseverance you figured it out. There was no time to wait for training or advice in order to keep connected for business or pleasure. People are using technology who never thought they could. People became interested in technology who never thought they would.

You told us and we know that many blind and partially sighted people are not making the best use of technology, and remain more isolated than they need to as a result. We need to explore how to reduce the cost of digital connectivity and ensure assistive technologies are as simple and logical to use as possible. Good support needs to be available when something goes wrong or is a little tricky. Most importantly, blind and partially sighted people need to know that technology makes a difference and it's worth investing time and effort to reap the rewards. Digital inclusion will be a key element of London Vision's work in 2021

It's the attitudes you encounter that can make the difference. As the stories of 2020 unfolded it became clear it's the attitude of others in society towards you as a blind or partially sighted person that impact on everything you do and feel. There is a need for friends, family and the wider public to have a far greater understanding of the impact of living with sight loss. You told us about the difficulties you faced when out and about not being able to use queuing systems, negotiate temporary pavement or shopping centre layouts. How you walked through taped off areas on the bus and were denied access to priority shopping. You continually had to explain why you need help, why changes in layout took your independence. Simple things make a difference like someone introducing themselves to you and explaining what they are doing and why. The greater the understanding of sight loss and its impact the better services and society will become for blind and partially sighted people. So with the aid of the London Sight Loss Council, we'll be working to ensure providers are aware of your needs as a blind or partially sighted person. It's our ambition that you don't have to continuously explain your needs.

Mental wellbeing: you told us the constant need to explain your needs and fight for services impacted on your wellbeing especially when coupled with the loss of established daily routines. In the early days of lockdown it was difficult to get outside and exercise or access leisure facilities and longstanding support was disrupted or ended. Isolation was a huge issue until digital groups began to form. You've been taking advantage of online exercise opportunities, mindfulness and meditation. Apps and smart speakers have played their part. WhatsApp and social media helped you feel connected, but there is a desire to meet up with friends and family and socialise, coupled with a concern as to how it's all going to work with social distancing. For those of you with field of vision loss travel and social contact is further limited due to face masks interfering with your useful vision. It's a priority for London Vision to campaign for the reestablishment of guiding support services. We'll also be working to promote these services as they come back online to ensure the maximum take up.

Health services: For some of you, technological changes meant that independently accessing health services was possible for the first time in your life. You told us you worry about older people with sight loss being able to access the technology due to being digitally excluded. You felt that on occasion the health staff were unaware of the potential of the technology. Barriers to physically accessing GP surgeries still exist. Many of you struggled to find your way into health centres as you couldn't find door buzzers. Once inside you need help to be signed in and told when it's your turn to see the doctor. Often doctors and nurses disappear when you are trying to follow them. Still eye clinics persist in sending out appointment letters in small fonts. The pandemic meant that a number of you have had significant delays in your eye care. You told us that it's really unclear who can and who cannot access hospital transport. Due to a lack of social distancing, no 'turn up and go' services on the underground many of you resorted to using taxis or minicabs incurring additional cost on your way to medical appointments. You felt drivers need additional training on how to best support you. Ensuring blind and partially sighted people can obtain and achieve the best experience of healthcare remains a priority for London Vision

Money: The move to a cashless society has brought many benefits. Tapping your card or phone is simple, once you've identified where to tap. Unless you are using your phone with a voice most of you remain unable to check the amount. COVID changes to number pads have meant typing in numbers through a plastic wipeable screen is impossible as you can't feel the layout of the push pad. For many older people moving to a cashless society brings difficulties as many have the wrong sort of bank account or no bank account. You felt online banking brings many advantages although it's preferable to use phone banking for many of you. During the pandemic many of you report extended waiting times when you call the bank. Utility bills aren't always as

accessible as they should be and again phoning utilities during the pandemic has been problematic. We'll keep money and finances high on the agenda.

Changes in the built environment: temporary one-way systems, plastic and perspex screens have all created extra obstacle as the built environment was made COVID compliant, this left independent travellers lost and confused on familiar routes. It was felt that there are many inconsistencies in the placement of tactile paving across the capital. Many of you reported poor street lighting in your areas. Traffic calming measures often leads to pavement parking and there was some concern about electric vehicles and charging points. Maintaining a positive streetscape is a priority for London Vision and the London Sight Loss Council and we'll be working on this area with Guide Dogs and RNIB.

Older blind and partially sighted people: you told us that older members of the blind and partially sighted community felt left out during 2020. In the main, they didn't have access to digital technologies and many of their support services were suspended. It was reported that accessing social care to replace voluntary and family support systems wasn't straightforward. You told us that many older blind and partially sighted people had not left home since the instigation of lockdown one. It's clear the needs of older people with sight loss need to be thoroughly investigated. Ways of creating a more inclusive society for older people with sight loss need to be explored and implemented. Digital and practical support needs to be put in place.

Accessing social care: one of you told us a powerful story of how you pushed your local care service into providing the support you needed. It was a time consuming struggle of around four months but worth it in the end. Others reported less positive outcomes with social care and significant delays in receiving rehab and mobility support. During the pandemic the pathways between ECLOs and rehabs had become shattered in many cases. London Vision will look to complete pathway work in 2021 and work to ensure people living with sight loss in London know and understand their rights when asking for rehab support from their local sensory team.

It's very much our intention to host further storytelling sessions moving forward in 2021. Your powerful stories give us a real understanding of what it's like to live in London as a blind or partially sighted person. We can use this understanding to influence change. We will be back in touch to tell you about further storytelling sessions and to tell you about the changes we're campaigning to achieve. Thank you again for your open and honest reporting.

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Best wishes from all at London Vision.