



Middlesex Association for the Blind

Working locally with people who are blind & partially
sighted

OUTLOOK

**AUTUMN-WINTER
EDITION 2021/2022**

**Barnet/Brent/Ealing/Enfield/Haringey
Harrow/Hillingdon/Hounslow/Richmond**

This free MAB Outlook magazine is produced in
print, Braille, CD and email

Mission Statement

The Middlesex Association for the Blind aims to support people who are blind, partially sighted and deaf-blind, to lead independent lives. The Association achieves this through the local provision and delivery of a range of high-quality services, advice and information to people across nine London boroughs

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Message from our CEO Sahib Singh



It is with great sadness that I start this edition of Outlook having to announce the passing of our Barnet Coordinator, Carmel McBennett.

Carmel passed away on Thursday the 9th of December 2021 after having undergone a routine operation. Carmel passed away a day before her 60th Birthday.

My condolences to Carmel's family.

Carmel was an amazing, hard working, bubbly person who brought joy to people around her. Carmel was full of life and she was dedicated to helping people. Even when she was in hospital, days before her passing, Carmel called MAB expressing her concern for her Barnet clients and the running of our Barnet VIP Club in December despite being unwell.

It was an honour and a privilege to work alongside you Carmel. I will miss you dearly and I will never forget how you used to swim in Ruislip Lido, come rain or shine.

My memories of you Carmel are one of a beautiful and exemplary member of the team. We are all so saddened and shocked that you left us so soon.

I pray that you are at peace and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your years of service to MAB. Carmel worked 13 years and 3 months at MAB supporting people with a visual impairment.

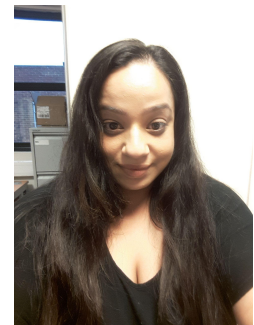
MAB Services and News

*We are pleased to introduce new members of the MAB team:



Parule Basu-Barua joined in October 2021 as our new Richmond and Hounslow support worker. We wish her continued success in her new role.

Ruby Miyah joined MAB in early January 2022 as our new Enfield support worker. All the best in your new role, Ruby!



We also want to give our heartfelt thanks to **Beata Lisowska** for her ongoing support in Barnet, Brent, Enfield and Haringey as part of her work placement. Best of luck with your studies, Beata!

*Leavers

We said farewell to **Daisy Jajh** and **Allyson Snook** in August and December 2021 respectively. We wish them both all the very best for the future.

***MAB Board of Trustees:**

Chair - Mr Raj Mehta

Vice Chair - Mr Bharat Hindocha

Treasurer - Mr Kambiz Daneshyar

Secretary - Mr Pushpinder Wadha

Trustee - Ms Ola Macauley

Trustee - Mr Jagdish Shingadia

Trustee- Mr Terry Mills

Trustee- Mrs Rachelle Goldberg

Trustee- Mr Jeremy Brown

***The story of Joseph...**

Joseph is a 46-year old Software Engineer. In February 2020, his life was turned upside down and unlike the rest of us, it wasn't due to the COVID pandemic. Joseph had been living with Type 1 diabetes for many years and he was always aware that he could one day end up visually impaired. But neither he nor the doctors expected that his eyes would haemorrhage as quickly as they did last year. Worst of all, it wasn't just one eye. Both of Joseph's eyes experienced major bleeds within hours. Joseph literally became blind in one day. And no number of operations can turn that situation around.

Thankfully, Joseph knew about us as the Middlesex Association for the Blind, and he contacted us immediately. Firstly, we sent him our Rapid Response Counsellor. This service is aimed at people who are in a crisis about losing their sight, and the point about "Rapid" is that it is exactly that. Without having to wait for months on the NHS counselling waiting list, we ensure that our Rapid Response Counsellor visits people within 2 weeks. What's more, the visits take place in the person's home. Joseph was able to make use of this service and Raheel's weekly visits have helped him to cope emotionally with his situation. Valerie, our Operations Manager was also able to visit him and when Joseph was struggling to get a proper assessment regarding his living space from the local council, Valerie went out of her way hammering at doors, to make sure that happened.

Once Joseph was out of crisis, we matched him with a volunteer, who now visits him on a weekly basis. “I need someone to help me keep on top of the basics in my home,” Joseph explains. “I need help ordering shopping online. I want to make sure my living space is acceptable in terms of cleanliness – I need someone to come in and tell me for example, that the kitchen counter is looking a bit grubby, and that I need to wipe it more studiously ... These and other seemingly small tasks, are all the things that I struggle to do without my sight.”

Losing his sight was a traumatic event for Joseph. I am sure that many of you will relate to his situation. But thanks to MAB, Joseph is able to see that he has a future ahead of him, and that given the right support, he will be able to cope with life going forward.

If you would like us to share your story in the next Outlook, please feel free to phone us and we will put you in touch with an MAB staff member who will interview you to hear your story. Our head office number is **020 8423 5141**.

***VIP clubs**

With the end of lockdown came a new resolve to reconnect with the community and resurrect our VIP clubs. We know how much our clients value the opportunity to get together and our support workers have worked tirelessly to make this happen.

Please see below for an update on our clubs per borough:

- **Barnet:**



The VIP club gets together every last Thursday of the month at **St Margaret's United Reform Church, Victoria Road, Finchley, N3 1BD**. Upcoming dates as follows: Thursday 27th January, Thursday 24th February and Thursday 31st March 2022, 11am till 1pm. For more details, please contact Bina on **07594 625 215**

- **Ealing:**



Our **Trike Club** resumed for an October session in Walpole Park, and will restart in the Spring of 2022. For more details, please contact Kamila on **07387 101 631**.

Kamila also ran the VIP club in Ealing on Thursday 25th November and Thursday 16th December at **the William Hobbayne Centre, 1 St Dunstan's Rd, London W7 2EY**.



The next VIP club will take place on Thursday 20th January 2022 and on the third Thursday of each month thereafter. For more details, please contact Kamila on **07387 101 631**.

- **Hounslow:**



Our support worker Parule held a “post-pandemic” lunch at the **Royal British Legion, Legion Hall, Whitton Road, Hounslow TW3 2DB** in early December.

Hounslow’s next VIP club will take place on **Thursday 27th January 2022**. For more information, please contact Parule on **07521 927 970**.

Our support workers in Harrow, Brent, Hillingdon and Enfield will finalise their VIP clubs plans in the New Year.

***Telephone Befriending-a volunteer's account**



Our telephone befriender Rae wanted to share the following:

"I have been a volunteer for the Middlesex Association for the Blind (MAB) for more than two years.

I have always done voluntary work (with various charities) all through my life, but when I met a blind person through a sighted friend about three years ago, I came to understand the many challenges that people with visual impairment have to face every day of their life. I then looked for a charity for the Blind on the Internet, and contacted MAB.

I went to meet my first client on the 3rd December 2019. She was a lovely, elderly lady and I visited her once or twice a week, until the onset of Covid-19. A few months later, I was contacted by the MAB and went to the office to help with the mailings. This, happily, led to me going

to the MAB once a week, in my new role as a Phone Befriender. I would like to share with you a few of my experiences in working within this role...

First and foremost, I can honestly say that this has been an extremely rewarding experience for me, and I very much value the friendships I have made in the last two years. I would therefore like to use the term "friend" in this article, instead of "client".

I have learned a great deal from talking to my friends about their day to day life, and how they navigate their way to dealing with various issues. I have a great deal of respect and admiration for them and how they deal with their disability, and the great majority are extremely positive about life.

Of course, everyone's needs are different and very varied...

But, if I find that despite numerous calls to housing associations, etc. their requests for work needed to be done in their homes are put on the back burner, I then intervene and make repeated (and nagging) calls to make sure that the work is done.

I have also contacted several churches for my friends, with a view to them joining and being a part of the church activities.

One of my friends was sharing a very lovely story about her past, and asked if I could try and find a long lost friend. I went to the place where she last saw this friend but sadly, as more than 20 years had passed, the company was no longer there, and the building was now a block of flats.

Some of my friends have quite worrying health problems as well and, on one occasion, when I spoke to a friend on the phone and realised how ill she was, as she was alone, I emailed the authorities where she lived and asked them to knock on her door to help her. I left my contact details and the ambulance service phoned me and also my friend, to see if she needed to go to hospital.

Of course, every individual who volunteers with charities, will bring to their role their own unique and valuable input into people's lives, and every effort, I am sure, is greatly appreciated by all concerned.

On a personal note, I am now in my 70s, a mother of three children (in their 50s), and a grandma of six. I have always been very spiritual (not to be confused with religious) in my outlook on life, and I am very grateful that I have been given the opportunity to be of some help to my partially sighted and blind friends at the MAB".

If you wish to become a Telephone Befriending volunteer like Rae, contact us on **020 8423 5141**.

Should you be unable to volunteer with MAB at this time, consider setting up a direct debit, or leaving MAB a bequest in your Will. With your support MAB can help support even more clients in your area and beyond.

***Mela 2021**



Our Barnet support worker Bina represented MAB at the Mela in Hayes last August, to great success. She got the opportunity to talk to many, including Councillor Roy

Chamdal, the Mayor of Hillingdon, about the work of our charity. The event was such a success that Bina has already booked her stall for 2022!

Thank you Bina for making this happen and helping raise awareness about MAB.



Other News

***Have you heard of the VIP Pod?**



On the VIP Pod they talk to a range of fascinating guests from all walks of life with one thing in common: being visually impaired. Through this series, they hope to raise awareness of the many different conditions that can affect VI people and the amazing ways people adapt and thrive.

The VIP Pod Team is made up of Emma Martins, Michael Wordingham, Warren Wilson and Rupert Mountjoy.

Do feel free to get in touch with feedback or future guest suggestions by emailing thevippod@gmail.com

***Talking Newspapers**



Two leading blind charities have teamed up to provide free, easy access to local news.

National charity British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) and The Talking News Federation (TNF) have joined forces once again to bring together local Talking Newspapers from across the UK. Their new app features over 200 regional Talking Newspapers, making it easier than ever to keep up with what's going on in your own community or in areas where you may have friends or family.

***Calibre Audio**



“What was the last book you read? How much do you enjoy reading? And yet how easy do you find reading printed books? Calibre Audio is a charity that believes everyone deserves to experience the extraordinary benefits of reading, including education, escapism, enjoyment and fulfilment. For example, one study showed that adults who read for just 30 minutes a day are 20% more likely to report greater life satisfaction. Calibre aims to provide all our members with the incredible value of reading with a vast and eclectic selection of current and classic audiobooks, freely available for anyone who is prevented from reading printed books due to Visual Impairment, Dyslexia or any other reason outlined in our eligibility criteria. If this sounds like something that would benefit either you or someone you know, then here’s all the details you need to get started!

Calibre Audio was established in 1974 by three North London mothers who resolved to ensure James, one of their sons who was sight-impaired, had the ability to access the books that his friends and classmates were reading. Initially recorded on cassette tapes, almost fifty years on Calibre’s books have evolved alongside technological developments. We now offer over 12,500

audiobooks and serve over 15,000 members of all ages who have been diagnosed with Visual Impairment, Dyslexia, MND or any other condition that impairs the reading of print.

So Who Can Join?

Calibre Audio is free for anyone who has a print disability, which is defined as: “a difficulty or inability to read printed material where someone is unable to see, read, manipulate or comprehend the text”. Further examples of eligibility include cognitive impairments such as a stroke or brain trauma and issues with physical dexterity including Parkinsons and arthritis. When signing up you will be asked to select the box that most closely matches your condition. Our service operates based on trust so you will not require paperwork from a doctor. However, we ask for honesty so that our audiobooks are available for those who need them.

And if you became a member, how could you listen to our books?

There are several ways you can enjoy our content and all are extremely convenient and user-friendly. Play Calibre is our streaming service, enabling you to listen to our audiobooks instantly and intuitively, through your mobile phone, tablet, or computer using an internet connection. Members can find specific books by entering the title or author into the search bar or discover their next favourite by browsing categories, authors or narrators. You can even create a playlist of titles you plan on listening to

later. Our collection is also available through the Dolphin EasyReader app, another convenient option that can be downloaded for free to your Apple or Android device. Both digital methods have been tested extensively with screen readers and other accessibility tools, ensuring the optimal experience for all.

But we know that not all our members will be comfortable listening digitally. If that is the case, you can also opt to receive your books via our postal service. In this instance, we will send each chosen audiobook on a USB memory stick. All you need to do is insert it into a computer, laptop or memory stick player and press play! Our membership services team will be able to help you set this up if required. We'll send you several books at a time, so once you're finished, just return the audiobook using the prepaid wallet provided and enjoy the next one.

And we are constantly seeking new and innovative ways to increase our accessibility. One example is our partnership with RealSAM, enabling subscribers to access our content on smart speakers including Alexa and Google Home. This means that all you need is your voice to select and start playing your Calibre audiobooks.

One thing that truly sets us apart from other audiobook providers is our Membership Services team who offer outstanding personalised support to help you get started in their always friendly manner, handling any queries swiftly and with care. Over 88% of our members believe

their service to be either 'Excellent' or 'Above Average', meaning you can rely on them to answer any questions you have before, during or after the sign-up process, ensuring that your ongoing Calibre Audio experience is as easy as possible. We also offer additional content including podcasts and articles to keep you up to date with the latest hot new releases, author interviews, wellbeing resources and much more.

We hope you have enjoyed learning more about our service.

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***Wellbeing Corner**

We were contacted by Dr Anna Philippou, a medical doctor and retired homoeopathic/naturopathic practitioner, who wanted to share some healthy tips as regards protecting one's eyesight.

She said: "Salty food and drinks are not good for the eyes 🙄. Sweet food and drinks 🍷 are not either.

They can make our eyes prone to infection and also lead to problems like blurry vision, glaucoma and cataract".

***London Vision**



**LONDON
VISION**

London Vision works across London's 32 boroughs to campaign and advocate for blind and partially sighted people living, working, and studying in the capital. We campaign on issues of access, transport and health, and facilitate two networks – the Working Age Forum and the London Visual Impairment Forum.

The Working Age Forum is a professional network for blind and partially sighted people either in work or looking to find employment. The London Visual Impairment Forum is a network made up of sight loss sector professionals, including rehab officers, ECLOs, academics, researchers and more. It meets quarterly to discuss new research and key developments in the sight loss sector.

London Vision's campaigns arm works independently and in collaboration with other sight loss organisations on issues that impact blind and partially sighted people in the capital. Recent work has focussed on cashless travel on the Transport for London network; the London e-scooters rental trial; the London mayoral election; Moorfields Eye Hospital's ORIEL project and more.

A key strand of London Vision's work is the Managing Sight Loss course. London Vision has run the in-person

Living Well with Sight Loss course since 2019, but the COVID19 pandemic in 2020 meant that the traditional face-to-face course was unfeasible. The team moved the course online in July 2020 and began offering aspects of the longer Living Well with Sight Loss course in bitesize formats.

Renamed Managing Sight Loss, the team delivered these bitesize sessions several times a month. The topics covered included registration and rights, sport and hobbies, scam awareness, reading and audiobooks, getting out and about safely, and a variety of blind life hack sessions. Family and friends of people living with sight loss were also welcome at the sessions, and everyone present was welcome to share their experiences and give advice.

The team was also on hand to explain to attendees where to get professional help and advice, such as how to contact your local sensory team, alongside exploring simple solutions to everyday living with sight loss. Some sessions – such as those on assistive technology – were so popular that the Managing Sight Loss team offered them as part of an informal lunchtime drop in. This was a more relaxed way for attendees to share their tech knowledge and socialise.

The Managing Sight Loss course has been a great success, and since moving to the bitesize online course, the team has delivered over 75 sessions. Taking the course online meant that London Vision was able to help many more people on their sight loss journeys – welcoming over 700 attendees. And now, more than two years since first planned, the Managing Sight Loss team will be bringing the in-person course to Middlesex Association for the Blind.

Like the online course, this course is for blind and partially sighted people, along with their friends and family. It will be relaxed and informal and allow all attendees the opportunity to learn from others who have sight loss. The sessions will be supported from input from expert speakers and people with local knowledge, along with appropriate accessible materials. The London Vision team is committed to answering any questions you may have prior to or following the course.

Our next Sight Loss course will take place on the 12th and 19th of May 2022. If you would like to attend, get in touch with Middlesex Association for the Blind on **020 8423 5141**.

For more information about London Vision and its work, visit www.londonvision.org

Donations, Wills and Legacies

***A big thank you for your donations at Christmas time...**

A big thank you to all of you, for the financial gifts you gave us at Christmas time.

As you may remember, I sent you a letter just before Christmas asking you to consider giving a donation to us at MAB, so that we could continue to help Evelyn into 2022. As you may remember, Evelyn's circumstances were particularly challenging. I am delighted to say that as usual, so many of you dug deep into your pockets and gave generously. With your help, I can now guarantee that Evelyn and people like her will continue to get the support they need every week in 2022.

I also want to take this opportunity to clarify something about the costs of giving Home Based Support to people. Many of you have quite rightly come back to us saying that you were surprised to see that it cost £600 to get a volunteer matched with a client, as you were under the impression that volunteers weren't paid anything for the visits they do on behalf of MAB. I want to assure you that you are quite right in your assumptions. Our volunteers are not paid, and all that they do for us is based on a love for the job and an appreciation of the relationship they can establish with our clients. So where, I can hear you asking, does the £600 fit in?

The £600 pounds is what it costs us at MAB in staff costs, to find volunteers, to train them, to ensure that they are DBS checked and to match them with the right client. Once they are matched, we still need to keep in touch

with our volunteers, checking in with them to find out if things are going well. All of this takes a lot of people-power, and we need to pay staff to do this. There are 2 crucial staff members for this process - the first is the borough Support Worker, and the second is the Operations Manager at Head Office. Then on top of these two positions, we also need to pay an office administrator to take calls, a bookkeeper to manage our finances and a grant writer to bring in funding from Trusts and Foundations. I can assure you that we don't pay our staff exorbitant salaries at all. But without these crucial paid staff members, we would not have any volunteers to send to our clients' homes.

So the £600 is not what the volunteer earns (they do it for free), but what it costs us to pay for all the work needed to get a volunteer trained and actively visiting a client for a year.

Thank you once again, to all of you who gave funding so that we can keep visiting Evelyn on a weekly basis in 2022.

***A Gift in your Will...**

Thank you to everyone who has responded so positively to our Gift in your Will campaign. Some of you have come forward saying you have already left a Gift in your Will to MAB. Others have said that they are actively considering doing so. A big thank you to you all! Without gifts like these, MAB would not be able to offer support to people who have visual impairments in the boroughs in which we operate.

For those of you who are still considering, here follows some more information:

Once you have taken care of your loved ones, you have several options for what to leave us as the Middlesex Association for the Blind. Your gift may be:

- * A fixed amount of money
- * A specific asset
- * A share of your residuary estate (this is what is left after tax, costs, and other gifts have been distributed as requested in your will).

Any gift left to the Middlesex Association for the Blind is exempt from inheritance tax. Not only that, leaving money to the Middlesex Association for the Blind in your will can help you reduce the inheritance tax liability on your estate so that your family gets the most out of their inheritance. When you leave at least 10% of your estate to charity, the inheritance tax liability of the rest of your estate reduces from 40% to 36%.

To find out more about how to leave a Gift in your Will to the Middlesex Association for the Blind, feel free to phone Sahib or Nasreen on **020 8423 5141**.

We would like to say a big thank you to all the individuals who have kindly made donations to the Association.

Contact Numbers

Borough Coordinators' contact numbers

Borough	Name	Telephone Number
Barnet	Bina Padia	07594 625 215
Brent	Rita Shah	07510 127 893
Ealing	Kamila Reynolds	07387 101 631
Enfield	Ruby Miyah	07598 880 244
Harrow	Alison Bicknell	07387 101 632
Hillingdon	TBC	020 8423 5141
Hounslow	Parule Basu-Barua	07521 927 970
Richmond	Parule Basu-Barua	07521 927 970

Sensory Services Team contact numbers

Borough	Telephone Number
Barnet	020 8359 5000
Brent	020 8937 4300
Ealing	020 8825 6230
Enfield	020 8379 1001
Haringey	020 8489 8900
Harrow	020 8901 2680
Hillingdon	01895 556 633
Hounslow	020 8583 3100
Richmond	020 8891 7971

Contributing to Outlook

We welcome contributions to the newsletter. Please send your articles to Valerie Hill (valerie@aftb.org.uk)

This edition of Outlook is produced by:

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Are you receiving this newsletter in your preferred format?

Outlook is produced in large print, Braille, on USB and email. It is also available online in print and audio formats at www.aftb.org.uk/outlook-magazine/

So that we can keep our records up to date, please telephone us if you move address or would like to receive Outlook in a different format.

Tel: 020 8423 5141

Alternatively, please email Nasreen at:
nasreen@aftb.org.uk

Thank you

Our thanks to the following for allowing us to put MAB collection boxes in their premises:

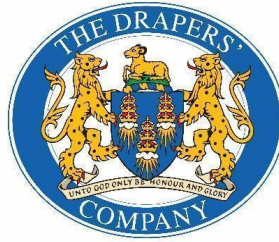
Bath Road Pharmacy, Bath Road, Hounslow

Seven Oaks Court, Copsewood Way, Northwood

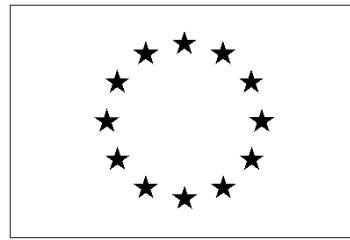
Harris and Hoole, King Street, Twickenham

Special thanks also to our volunteers for their continued support .

And to all our Trust, Foundation, Borough and Corporate donors – without you we would not exist. Thank you for your support!



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