Contents

Chair Welcome and Thanks 3
Message from our Chief Executive Officer 4
Contact Us 5
Sutton Vision Services 6
Activities and Events for May to August 8
Gus: life after sight loss 12
Would you like to have your say? 13
Changes to groups notifications 13
Trip Highlights: 14
Meta Glasses: a game changer? 14
Sutton Vision Code of Conduct 16
Fundraising News 17
My Introduction to Lawn Green Bowling 18
Leisure News 19
Vicky's App Recommendations 20
Dates for closures over May-August 21
Volunteer News 22
Regular Social and Peer Support Groups 23

Chair Welcome and Thanks

Welcome to the May to August edition of CONTACT.

It's lovely to see the change in seasons and the days getting lighter, which allows us to once again go on trips, with (fingers crossed!) the weather in our favour. This year, we will be visiting RHS Garden Wisley and the Horniman Museum. More details of which you can find on page 8.

We are now undertaking a change in the way we communicate with our members, which we believe will be much simpler both for us to communicate and you to receive. We are aiming to use WhatsApp messaging service to replace our calls to you about groups and activities.

This will mean we can update you on any changes to groups as well as you being able to tell us of your attendance quickly and easily. If you still need a call, you can request this but we hope this will be more efficient, meaning staff and volunteers can use this time for other areas of the charity's work. We will still continue to send out CONTACT and our e-newsletter as usual.

As ever, CONTACT is your magazine and we'd love to hear from you if you'd like to contribute about your experiences as Gus, Sue and Jules have in this issue. You don't have to be a writer, if you have something you want to share you can just email notes or bullet points and we can do the rest!

Finally, we'd love to hear all your thoughts and feedback on our magazine; you can email comments and suggestions to info@suttonvision.org.uk or call us on 020 8409 7166.

Michael

Message from our Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the May to August edition of CONTACT. As ever it will keep you up to date with the activities and events that we have planned. I'm still struck by the huge diversity of what we have on offer and, as someone who personally loves trying my hand at new activities, I would encourage everyone to try something new. You never know, you may discover a new passion, whether it's for one of the crafts we do (Creative Corner) or for outdoor walking (Walks for Wellbeing) or games such as bridge and chess, where our volunteers can teach absolute beginners.

Many of you will have helped us recently by answering some survey questions about the support you have received from Sutton Vision. Gathering this information is so helpful for us, enabling us to see which aspects of our service are most valued and beneficial to you. It is also really powerful to be able to report that information to funders and potential funders, helping us to gain the support we need to keep delivering our services. I'd like to thank everyone who took part. To ensure that we always have up-to-date information we'll be coming back to you on a quarterly basis and I hope that we'll be able to gather feedback from most of you over time.

I'd also like to tell you about something we're currently planning, which is to restart the Service User Advisory Group (I'm still hoping we can find a nicer name!). The idea of this group is that it should offer our clients an opportunity to support our work by feeding in ideas, commenting on proposals and having a real dialogue with management and through them with the board of trustees. I know that this group provided valuable insight that helped frame our strategy and it met a few times but hasn't met for a while, so we need a proper restart.

We're looking for a few people who use our services to commit to one meeting a quarter to comment, advise and give feedback.

If you might be interested, please let me know. My contact information is on page 5 or, of course, you can just pop in and let me know, next time you are in Sutton Vision.

Sherine

Contact Us

Call 020 8409 7166, email info@suttonvision.org.uk or contact individual staff:

Chief Executive Officer
Sherine Krause
sherinekrause@suttonvision.org.uk

Eye Care Liaison Officer
Lindsey Bidston
lindseybidston@suttonvision.org.uk

Outreach Officer
Terry Rocks
terryrocks@suttonvision.org.uk

Voluntary Services Manager
Amanda Larter
amandalarter@suttonvision.org.uk

Assistive Technology Coordinator
Vicky Blencowe
vicky.blencowe@suttonvision.org.uk

Project and Communications Officer
Caroline Dommett
carolinedommett@suttonvision.org.uk

Advocacy and Benefit Advice

Navigating the support available to visually impaired people can be complex, but our Outreach Officer Terry Rocks is here to assist with:

- Blue Badge Applications
- Access to Work
- Universal Credit
- Capability for Work Assessments
- Employment Support
- Benefits

He is here to guide you through each step and has helped several users of the service including Kevin: “I couldn’t have done it without him. His pointers were such a help.” Please email or call using the details on the Contact Us page.

Low Vision Clinic

Our Low Vision Clinic offers appointments for you to be assessed by our optometrist and see a specialist rehabilitation officer from Sutton Council’s Sensory Impairment Team. Depending on your needs, we may be able to offer you low vision aids such as magnifiers and other equipment to make life easier.

To be eligible for this service, you need to have been diagnosed with low vision (a sight problem which is not correctable by spectacles) and be living in the London Borough of Sutton.

If you would like to find out more, email info@suttonvision.org.uk or call 020 8409 7166. You can also speak to our eye Clinic Liaison Officer, Lindsey.

Do you need help to get your mobile and laptop working for you?

Assistive Technology helps you to continue to use your mobile phone, tablet or laptop when you’re living with sight loss. Our Assistive Technology Coordinator can walk you through your options including magnification, speech software and more.

You can book a one-to-one appointment or attend a Tech Talk or Tech Social session. Please contact Vicky.

Our Befriending service

Would you, or someone you know, benefit from a walking buddy, telephone or face-to-face befriender? We run a befriending service to support people with a vision impairment to get out in their local area to the shops, parks and cafes. For example, a befriender could meet and accompany you on a walk and a cuppa, to a garden centre, or help you with buying an item e.g. a birthday card. If you would like to find out more, please speak to Amanda.

Contact details for all staff are on page 5.

Sight Loss Awareness Training

Did you know that we deliver Sight Loss Awareness training in our area to raise awareness in a range of organisations about sight loss, it's impact on people's lives and how to welcome VI people into these organisations? These sessions include using Simi Specs to allow participants to experience a variety of sight loss conditions. We also demonstrate Meta glasses, built with technology to support people with sight loss to navigate their surroundings.

We can offer different levels of training, tailored to the needs of companies, community groups, or charities. It's an excellent introduction to understanding sight loss. For more information, please contact Terry.

Activities and Events for May to August

Wisley and Horniman trips

We are planning to visit RHS Garden Wisley and the Horniman Museum this summer. Both trips will have transport and will be all day trips, leaving around 10am and returning around 4pm.

The trip to RHS Garden Wisley will include a tour specifically for those with a visual impairment, as well as a visit to the gardens, café and gift shop.

The Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South East London, is known for its eclectic collections of anthropology, natural history, and musical instruments**.** The visit will include their gardens, aquarium and a session with their handling collection.

If you would like to book a space on these trips, please call 020 8409 7166 or email info@suttonvision.org.uk

Please note: Trips must be paid for in advance and are non-refundable. As capacity is limited, clients may only go on one of the two trips, if transport spaces are full.

Living Well with Sight Loss Workshop

Learning that you have sight loss can be a confusing and emotional time for you and your loved ones. Connecting with others who share similar experiences can make a real difference. Our free Living Well with Sight Loss workshops are designed to support people adjusting to life with visual impairment. Each session explores ways to overcome barriers, develop coping strategies, make the most of assistive technology and find practical solutions for everyday living.

Our next workshop will be on **Thursday 14th May, from 10am to 1pm** and a sandwich lunch is included. For more information or to book a place, contact Terry Rocks 020 8409 7166 or email info@suttonvision.org.uk

Walks for Wellbeing

It's been great to have a return to our FREE Walks for Wellbeing, particularly after such a wet winter!

They're now taking place up to and including August on Fridays at venues around the London Borough of Sutton.

Guided by our group leader, Ben, they are designed for people living with visual impairment to support you feeling more confident in navigating the walk.

The walks will take place on the:

- 1st Friday of the month in Nonsuch Park
- 2nd Friday of the month in The Grove, Carshalton
- 3rd Friday of the month in Beddington Park

BOOKING IS REQUIRED FOR THE WALKS

Please contact 020 8409 7166 or email info@suttonvision.org.uk

Glaucoma Support Group

Join others who understand the challenges of living with glaucoma. These friendly support group sessions are a great way to share experiences, exchange practical advice, and learn from one another. Healthcare professionals also attend, offering you the chance to ask questions and gain insights in a relaxed, supportive setting.

This event is hosted by Glaucoma UK and St Helier Hospital at Sutton Vision. Please note, we are not able to give personal clinical advice. The next support group will be on **Monday 11th May, 10:30am-12pm** at Sutton Vision. To find out more, contact Terry on 020 8409 7166 or email info@suttonvision.org.uk

Audio Book Club

Books don't have to be just about the written word! Sutton Vision's Audio Book Club allows you to continue to access literature regardless of visual impairment. Club members take turns to select a book.

Sheila, a member of the group, told us: "**I am so pleased Vicky started the Audio Book Club. I always enjoyed reading but when I started to lose my vision to macular degeneration, it was a great loss. Meeting the club group introduced me to different authors, not always to my taste, but it made me experiment**."

Another member, Kevin, said: "**I joined as I had no experience of audio books and thought it would be a good way to find out about what was available and where.**

There was also the issue of what to listen to, as it's not quite the same as wandering round a bookshop. The club has overcome that for me. As well as the book of the month, many other books get discussed, so I'm building a collection of possible things to listen to.

I get to try new books that I would never have picked up normally.

It's very useful to hear other people's take on the books, making them more interesting."

You can find out for yourself, every 2nd Thursday of the month, 1.30pm-2.30pm. Just contact Vicky to get involved.

Cooking with Confidence

Join us as we dive into the world of appliances, gadgets and techniques to help you around the kitchen. We'll talk about everything from the growing number of smart machines such as Alexa to very low-tech aids that can help you cook safely and confidently.

This session is Wednesday 24th June, 1.30pm-2.30pm. To register your interest, email info@suttonvision.org.uk or call 020 8409 7166

Sutton Vision Technology Demo Day

Find out more about tech to help you with your day-to-day life including Meta glasses, smart canes and more. Come and try the tech before you buy and find out how it works. You can book for your one to one session, **Thursday 13th August between 9am-2pm**. Email terryrocks@suttonvision.org.uk or call 020 8409 7166

Dance workshops

Due to the popularity of last year's dance taster workshops, we're offering more this summer!

You will have the opportunity to try out different styles, including relaxed and energetic.

These will be offered in blocks of 3-4 weeks and are tailored to those with visual impairment.

To register your interest, email info@suttonvision.org.uk or call 020 8409 7166.

Our full list of activities is at the back of the magazine

Gus: life after sight loss

Sutton Vision member Gus Votzakis writes for CONTACT about his experiences of living with sight loss

Hey, I'm Gus and I've been completely blind for just over two years. Sight loss can be an extremely isolating experience. However, with the help of charities like Sutton Vision, I've managed to reconnect with the world, whether it's through new forms of technology or making new friends.

During my time with the team, I've shared lots of laughs and experiences. If this has been having a chat at the pub or going on a trip to Hastings together, I've always felt welcome. This has encouraged me to try new things like learning to play the guitar or even becoming a radio DJ.

While life can initially feel quite limiting when you lose your sight, I've found that I've become much more adventurous, and I've attended various musicals and gigs that have livened things up and I've decided to share some of these good times on my YouTube channel.

The important thing to always keep in mind is that you're not alone and there will always be people who are eager to help whether you need it or not.

You can find Gus's YouTube channel by searching 'DJG Blind Life' on YouTube.

Would you like to have your say?

The Service User Advisory Group is your opportunity to contribute and find out more about what is happening within Sutton Vision.

The group will meet every three months and for no longer than an hour so offer a way to be heard without a big commitment.

If you use our services and would like to make a meaningful contribution to the charity's future then please email Sherine, our CEO, at sherinekrause@suttonvision.org.uk

Changes to groups notifications

As some of you may already be aware, we are aiming to make some changes to the way we contact you about upcoming activities.

This means a switch from phone calls to remind you about groups to messaging through WhatsApp. The app is a simple text messaging service and will stop the need for several calls a week.

As part of this move, Vicky, our assistive technology co-ordinator, is available to help anyone who needs help downloading WhatsApp or using it. She will also be able to introduce you to its benefits including free messaging and calls.

If you have a landline or are unable to use a smartphone, we can still make calls to you.

We will be in touch to check your preference or if you would like to sign up, please call the office on 020 8409 7166.

Meta Glasses: a game changer?

Sue Christie, a Sutton Vision client and volunteer trustee and her husband Colin tell CONTACT about their experiences of using Meta Glasses following attending an intro session by Vicky at Sutton Vision

Sue: On Friday 6th March, my husband Colin and I were in the Turbine Hall at Battersea Power Station. The reason? We're looking for the Ray Ban shop to find out more about Meta glasses. Once inside, we were approached by Paul, the manager, who asked if he could help and he most certainly did.

Having ascertained what would be a good choice for me, he produced the specs, set them up with my iPhone and started to demonstrate what they can do. He gave me a print to hold and told me to ask Meta what I was holding. Meta then told me I was holding a print of The Birth of Venus by Botticelli and proceeded to describe it in plenty of detail.

Having seen this picture in the flesh, as it were some years ago, it made me feel very emotional and I said "I am about to cry". I could picture myself in galleries and museums again, something we haven't done for years. Paul responded that he also felt emotional as well and said 'Let me give you a hug!".

Next, Colin and I had a go at Meta's version of Be My Eyes (an app to assist visually impaired users navigate in real time). The scenario was "Imagine you are out and lost so calling Colin". Through the specs, he was able to see

on his phone what the Meta specs were seeing. This meant he was able to guide me around the store and out into the street and back. At this point everyone in the store, customers and staff, had fallen silent and were watching with amazement.

So, are Meta Specs a game changer? Definitely! Every day, there is something new they help me with. Thanks to the Sutton Vision workshop on Meta Specs, I was able to take full advantage of Paul's advice at the Ray Ban shop.

Colin: Meta Glasses are also a game changer for me. When we got home from the Ray Ban shop, Sue was able to find her ready meal in the freezer, just by asking Meta what she was looking at. When asked, the glasses read the cooking instructions. This meant that Sue did not have to keep asking me to find anything and read instructions.

This has given us both more freedom as Sue can now do much more than she could before. Sue now gets on with things on her own and I can also do things without having to worry what she is doing. The Meta glasses have been a game changer for both of us, but Sue still can't ride her unicycle!

If you'd like to find out more about Meta Glasses and try them out for yourself, please get in contact with our Assistive Technology Coordinator, Vicky.

Sutton Vision Code of Conduct

At Sutton Vision, we are an inclusive organisation welcoming all visually impaired people in Sutton, with the aim of providing a first-rate service. To maintain that service, it is important to us that everyone who engages with us experiences a friendly, safe and respectful environment.

To achieve this, we have created a Code of Conduct, which we expect everyone to adhere to.

We expect that everyone, clients, volunteers and staff, behave in a **tolerant**, **patient**, **respectful** and **kind** manner to those around them at all times.

This involves:

- Treating everyone with dignity and respect
- Using inclusive language and not making assumptions about others' beliefs, preferences or views
- Maintaining strict confidentiality regarding any personal information
- Respecting personal boundaries, including seeking consent before providing assistance or guidance
- Keeping your own personal boundaries. Think carefully before sharing your personal details with others and forming friendships

Failure to abide by these standards could result in exclusion from Sutton Vision.

If you witness any instances of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour, please speak to our Chief Executive, Sherine, in confidence.

Thank you for respecting this code of conduct.

Fundraising News

A couple of great pieces of fundraising news to share with you this time around.

As a charity, we are totally dependent on fundraising for the continued delivery of our services and some of you may be aware that the bulk of that comes through charitable trusts and foundations.

I'm pleased to be able to tell you that we recently received a substantial donation from The Mercers Company, one of the UK's historic livery companies, with a long tradition of philanthropy. They will be supporting us over the next three years.

We have also had an ongoing relationship with the Sanderstead branch of Waitrose who at the beginning of the year selected us to be one of the three green token charities in branch.

With the support of the local community they have raised £1,000 for us and will have helped to raise local awareness too.

Could you support us by donating a prize for our Bingo group?

We're always looking for donations of unwanted gifts that would make prizes for our bingo sessions.

Thank you to everyone who has already supported us in this way. If you have anything that would be suitable, then please contact Amanda.

My Introduction to Lawn Green Bowling

Last summer, Sutton Vision user Jules Lee hadn't set foot on a bowling green. Today, he tells CONTACT about how he's found the world of lawn green bowling.

Up until 18 months ago, I had never contemplated bowling outdoors on a large bit of grass. It sounded too boring and sedate for me, plus I couldn't see what I was doing!

Sutton Vision had arranged an Open Day at our local venue, Rosehill Bowling Club. I decided to go there with an open mind and was amazed how much I enjoyed it.

I visited with a few others from the charity and the members of the club were so welcoming and they couldn't do enough to help us. We were shown the basic principles of bowling and then let loose on the green. The great support of the club members meant that they offered the right level of assistance, according to each person's level of sight loss.

The time flew by, and I couldn't wait for the next chance to try. Again, I thoroughly enjoyed it and after my second session, I signed up as a member of the club.

The club now has three visually impaired members. They accept our sight loss and offer any assistance we might need. This allows us to bowl as equals and take part in competitions as well as the regular daily 'roll-ups'.

Rosehill Bowling Club welcomes any prospective new members, including those with visual impairments. It has given me a new lease of life, a great circle of friends and somewhere I can go every day of the week to play, practice or just socialise.

If you are interested, please ring 07944 458903 or email outdoor.sdba@outlook.com

Leisure News

London Zoo audio described tours

Audio-described tours allow people who are blind or partially sighted to enjoy the zoo and get up close and personal with our animals.

The tours will be led by our knowledgeable presenters to experience our incredible wildlife! The tour will include tactile models of animals, immersive exhibits, and audio-descriptions of the animals' activities.

Audio Described Tours will run on Sunday 14 June 2026 and Wednesday 19 August 2026 at 10.45am

To book and to find out more, visit www.londonzoo.org/plan-your-visit/events/audio-described-tours

VI Leisure Group (VILG)

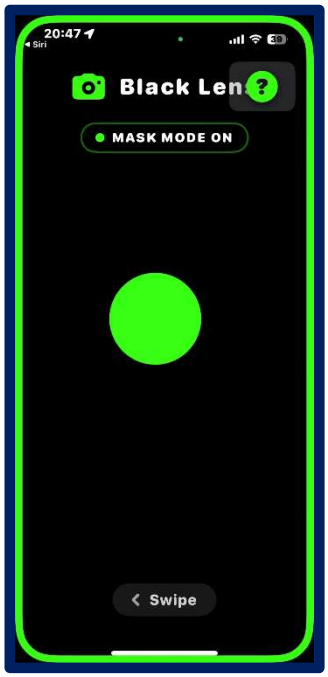
The VILG is a peer-led independent group which organises its own programme of activities. To find out more please contact Sue Christie on 07891 783291 or email susanannchristie@gmail.com.

Event	Date	Venue
VI Leisure Group Coffee Morning	1st Friday of each month from 10.30am	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Group Book Club	4th Monday of each month from 10.30am.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Group	1st Monday of each month from 12.30pm	The Hope Pub, 48 West Street, Carshalton

Vicky's App Recommendations

Our Assistive Technology Coordinator, Vicky, rounds up her recommendations for apps for this edition of CONTACT

iPhone Selfie app – Black Lens - £1.99



Black Lens is a photo app to support selfies. Designed by a blind man, you are guided with vibration, voice guidance and bright green blobs when faces are detected on a black screen, which are very visible even in bright light conditions.

The selfie photo can also take automatically, so no need to find the shutter button and take a photo of your forehead or feet by mistake! This is a one-time payment at the moment, so well worth supporting creator Steve Johnson. This app should be coming to Android users soon.

Copyright © 2025 Steve Johnson

Magnifier app on iPhone

This is an in-built app within iPhone. Just open using "Hey Siri, open Magnifier".
This is basically a free digital magnifier in the camera function on the screen.
Just point the camera in the direction of text etc and zoom to the best level using two fingers on the screen or the slider. You can then freeze the image using the large central shutter and zoom and scroll around the image in full screen, similar to photos. Tap the screen to get the menu back and touch the shutter button to unfreeze.

Copyright © Apple

For Android Samsung mobiles

Copyright © Samsung

The in-built digital magnifier has to be activated in the Accessibility settings with a shortcut to activate it.

Go to Settings – Accessibility – Vision Enhancements – Magnifier. Toggle this on and select your preferred shortcut from three choices.

Now, you simply use your selected shortcut, and the camera magnifier will appear. Zoom in using your fingers on the screen or the slider or + button to your required zoom level, tap the round shutter button to freeze the image. You can then use two fingers to zoom in or use the slider + button to enlarge the image further and one finger to move around the screen.

Tap the shutter button again to start over.

Dates for closures over May-August

Sutton Vision offices will be closed on the following dates due to bank holidays:

Monday 4th May
Monday 25th May
Monday 31st August

Please note: usual groups will not run on these dates

Volunteer News

We welcome new volunteer Darren, who is kindly getting our garden and surrounding areas summer ready!

As you may remember from our last issue of CONTACT, we have been honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK.

As part of the award, the charity has been invited to a special Royal Garden Party in Buckingham Palace in May. Our two representatives at the event will be trustee and volunteer Sue Christie (accompanied by guide and husband, Colin) and volunteer Michael Fox.

It promises to be a memorable day and fingers crossed for sunshine for the occasion! We are looking forward to updating you on how the day went.

Volunteers Week is between 1st-7th June this year and as usual, we want to honour our lovely volunteers, without whom we couldn't do all our work! We're asking volunteers to save the date in your calendar for Thursday 4th June with details to follow of the celebration.

We've now updated our volunteer handbook and policies, and these are available on the website or from Amanda, if you need a paper copy.

We need volunteers for outings again this summer. Please let me Amanda know if you would like to support with our trips and if you would like a sight guiding refresher training.

Finally, we are keen to post your volunteer story to raise awareness to the experience of volunteering and supporting people with sight loss.

If you would like to share your experience or give us a quote that we can use for funders this would be much appreciated. Please email these to Amanda.

Regular Social and Peer Support Groups

We have a varied and interesting programme of activities here at our building at 3 Robin Hood Lane and in the community around the London Borough of Sutton.

We now send a monthly date list of our activities. To join the list, please contact info@suttonvision.org.uk or call 020 8409 7166. We can email or post this.

Audio Book Club– Delve into the wonderful world of audiobooks! Books are selected from RNIB Reading Services Library, and we can help you download and install this app.

Bingo - Play to get a line or a full house and you might even win a prize! Join us for our lively game and a biscuit or two.

Indoor Bowls Sessions– No experience needed, and instructions will be given to make it accessible for visually impaired players.

Bridge - This game of skill uses large cards and holders based on four players who form two partnerships, sessions for both new and more experienced players.

Chair Based Yoga - A gentle form of yoga practised while seated or using a chair for balance, promoting energy and a good, safe workout for beginners.

Cinema Group – Come and watch the latest film with a friendly group.

Creative Corner - Let your creative side run free with our Creative Corner. No artistic experience needed. A lovely space to chat and craft.

Coffee Morning - An opportunity to come, relax and have a chat about...whatever you'd like, with a friendly group. As the name suggests, coffee, tea and even a biscuit is thrown in.

Community Cuppa - Our Coffee Mornings in the Community run in Cheam, Wallington, and Worcester Park, offering a space to meet others, chat and get a cuppa or two.

VI Crossword - Challenge yourself to do a crossword as a group with a sighted volunteer, with a chat and cup of tea and coffee included!

Games Morning – Come and play a selection of games including Pool, Darts, Scrabble, Cluedo, Quattro, or even Draughts! Also, Indoor Bowls is available.

Glaucoma UK Group - The group meets once a quarter, with speakers and the opportunity to ask questions and meet other people affected by glaucoma.

Knit and Natter - A lively social group for beginners to experts. Bring a project with you or start one at our group, with large print instructions.

Lunchtime Quiz -Test your grey matter with our quiz, with rounds on different subjects and even some general knowledge.

VI Scrabble - Come and enjoy a game of Scrabble! Our large print and braille boards make the game more accessible, so a great opportunity to pit your wits.

Tech Groups - Want to make your smartphone, laptop or tablet work better for you? Tech Talk is specific subjects, whereas Tech Social is for a chat and whatever you need help with.

Zumba Gold - Adapted for active older adults with easy-to-follow music and lower-intensity choreography, focusing on coordination, flexibility and balance.