



ViewPoint

The newsletter of Eastbourne Blind Society.

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter of 2012 and Happy New Year to you all from the staff and trustees.

Thank you to you all for your Christmas cards, donations and gifts. It was heartening to receive them and to read the messages of appreciation.

2011 was a busy and successful year for Eastbourne Blind Society during which we agreed contracts with East Sussex County Council for the delivery of some key services. The very effective Low Vision Support Service has now received funding for a further 3 years and the training / rehabilitation and cookery courses have also been funded.

Significant to our service also is the fact that, as part of East Sussex Vision Care, we are now responsible for the first stage of contact with people following their registration to sight impairment by the consultant. This means that we are the first point of contact and access to support. We believe this will provide people with an improved service and we continue to work very closely with Adult Social Care in this regard.

In 2012 we will continue to do our best to support you. We offer a wide range of social activities and services. Please let us know if you have any questions or need specific advice.

Deirdre Dean Chief Executive

Sorry!!

Please note that there was a printing error on the 2012 calendar. The whole of July has been printed 1 day out. Please let us know if you need any help to adjust this. The Welfare Officers are correcting them during their rounds and we are able to help in the office also. July should start Sunday July 1 and end with Tuesday July 31.

White Cane Awareness Day

Stephen Lloyd, MP, and Mike Thompson, Deputy Mayor, supported our third White Cane Awareness Day in October and both found it a thought-provoking exercise. Stephen Lloyd, MP, said "It was a powerful and challenging experience walking round the Arndale Centre with members of Eastbourne Blind Society. I was wearing special glasses which gave me some idea of what it must be like to be visually impaired. Raising awareness of the issue is just one of the many practical areas of support provided by Eastbourne Blind Society. Well done to all!"

Charles Bonnet syndrome (CBS)

CBS is a common condition among people who have experienced vision loss and causes them to see things that aren't really there. Known as visual hallucinations or Charles Bonnet (pronounced Bonnay) syndrome, CBS can be distressing, but the hallucinations are usually not

permanent. Many people experience them for a year to eighteen months before they become a lot less frequent. The visual hallucinations can take many forms, ranging from simple shapes and patterns, to detailed pictures. The images can appear 'out of the blue', lasting for just a few minutes or in some cases, several hours.

The condition is not a mental health problem or a symptom of another disease but is due to sight loss.

There is no cure for CBS but you may find it helps to talk about it.

One way of trying to cope with CBS is to make some changes to the things around you and what you are doing. Many people experience their hallucinations when they are sitting quietly without much occupying their mind. Having the TV or radio on or moving around a little can sometimes help. Sometimes just standing up or moving slightly can help to get rid of them. Some people also find that looking directly at the image they are seeing causes it to fade. Sometimes moving your eyes or blinking rapidly can also help.

Changing lighting levels may help to stop them also.

Some people find that their CBS are worse when they're tired or stressed. Sometimes it can help to get to know your hallucinations so that you become familiar with them. Many people find that this means they become less frightening and easier to cope with.

Just knowing that CBS is quite common can be reassuring. A booklet about Understanding Charles Bonnet Syndrome is available from the office.

Useful Tip

Beware of taking “Lemsip” if you are on high blood pressure tablets as it may cause an allergic reaction. (Ulcers and swelling of the mouth and throat).

Guide dogs are to be allowed to use Tube escalators in London. The move will give visually impaired and other disabled people with trained assistance dogs much greater access to the network.

Dogs were banned by law from using escalators because of the danger of getting their paws caught where the escalator steps disappear at the grills top and bottom. Research carried out proved that dogs can be trained to use a moving escalator. Guide dog owners are also being given special training.

Debenhams launch personal shopping service for VIPs

Debenhams now offer a tailored shopping service for blind and partially sighted customers.

The chain’s personal shoppers have been trained to provide as much help as possible to customers with sight loss. They’ve been taught to describe differences in look as well as such things as different fastening methods.

We have spoken to Debenhams in Eastbourne, who confirmed they have received training. Ask for Hazel or Ruth who are the personal shoppers.

Have Fun Shopping.

Important Advice for drivers

If you are still driving a car and have been diagnosed with a registerable condition and have not informed the DVLA of this, then your insurance may be invalid if you are involved in an accident. If you drive a mobility scooter, it is recommended that you should be able to read a standard number plate at 40 feet and that you should have third party insurance.

A short poem contained in a Christmas card from EBS member Marion Gross.

My sight is fading
Yet memory bright
Glowing with an
Inner light.

Well done Marion!

Avoiding frozen pipes.

All pipework within your home boundary is your responsibility, so it really is worth protecting it properly to avoid serious problems during cold weather.

Insulate water tanks and lag pipes.

Pay special attention to water tanks and pipes in unheated areas like loft spaces and garages.

Fix dripping taps.

Find your property's internal stop tap and make sure you can turn it off if necessary. Most stop taps are fitted under the kitchen sink and close by turning clockwise.

Check your boiler has been serviced.

Leave the heating on low when you are away.

If a property is going to be unoccupied for long periods, turn off the water at the stop tap and consider draining down the system so there is no water left in the pipes.

Go to www.directgov.org.uk and you'll find a mine of practical information from essential tips to finding out what benefits and allowances you can claim to meet heating costs.

The Customer Service Centre is open:

Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm,

Saturday from 8am to 1pm

Water supply and general enquiries 0333 000 0002

Out of hours emergencies 0333 000 0365

Leak line 0333 000 3330

Reminder

Thursdays are Drop-in Day for the Resource Centre, Tuesdays and Fridays are for appointments. **The Resource Centre is NOT open on Mondays and Wednesdays.**

Disclaimer

Any items mentioned in this newsletter are for information purposes and their inclusion does not imply their suitability for anyone.

Edited by Deirdre Dean and David Dick