



Hello again from all of us at Vision Support! We wanted to send an extra news sheet this month in partnership with Chester Lions to celebrate World Sight Day and White Cane Day. If you need any support with digital skills, equipment, or have any general enquiries please get in touch by calling 01244 381515 or emailing us at Information@visionsupport.org.uk

World Sight Day falls on the 8th October this year and is an annual day of awareness held on the second Thursday of October, to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment. So let's take some time to celebrate any achievements big or small and let's continue to raise awareness of vision impairment, the importance of eye care and regular eye tests.

Did you know: One of the most common eye conditions in the western world is Age Related Macular Degeneration also known as AMD.

White Cane Day is arriving on the 15th October. The white cane has become internationally recognized as an important instrument to the independence and safety of many people who are blind or vision impaired but did you know about the various different types of canes that exist?

Not all canes are for mobility; there are also symbol canes which indicate to other people that you have a vision impairment. These can be folded away when not in use.

Did you know: Have you ever come across a cane that is red and white? A red and white cane means that the person using it has both a sight and hearing impairment.

Accessibility Apps: Out and About

Three navigation apps to use alongside your white cane

Right now, going out may feel like a stressful challenge for many of those of you who are in a position to do so. With that in mind, we've taken a moment here to talk about three apps you can use that might make getting out and about feel easier...

1

Soundscape

Designed by Microsoft, **Soundscape** is available on all Apple devices. Making travel a more proactive experience for people with a vision impairment, the app describes the world around you as you use it, letting you know which landmarks are coming up on your left and right. With Soundscape, when you are out and about doing your shopping, you can make decisions on a whim about where to go next rather than simply following the instructions on your GPS.

2

BeMyEyes

Powered by volunteers across the world, **BeMyEyes** is one of those accessibility apps that seems to be a long standing staple for tech users with low vision. The app links you to a volunteer who will be able to see your surroundings through your camera and describe them to you. This can be great for things like finding exits in large and busy train stations, or quickly locating a specific place or landmark you are searching for.

3

GPS Apps

You may have heard of GPS apps designed specifically for individuals with low vision, such as **BlindSquare**. While BlindSquare remains a great way to get around, mainstream GPS apps such as **Google Maps** and **Apple Maps** are making great strides in terms of their accessibility, and we think Google Maps in particular is well worth a look if you are searching for a GPS app that is both free and accessible.



We are happy to report that during the lockdown of COVID 19, the Chester Vision Centre and the popular Open Line has remained operational remotely.

These services have been funded by Chester Lions through Vision Support.

Open Line is run by volunteers to offer low level emotional support and advise on services both internal and external to Vision Support. This service has continued to run throughout COVID 19, although it has been carried out differently due to social distancing and lockdown measures.

The Open Line telephone service has still been accessible remotely with volunteers making regular phone calls to our most vulnerable service users to ensure their well being and to see if they need any additional support. Service users have also been able to call us as normal, with our staff answering calls in the office and even from home. We are still able to order items to be delivered to service users homes and give support over the phone as needed.

Our Digital Skills team have continued to provide a service remotely through telephone support and training on equipment such as smart phones, iPads and text to speech software.

They also provide support with talking book downloads, Amazon Echo and any other piece of technology that people are using to keep in touch with family and friends.

If you would like a 'Save your eyes' information sheet on eye conditions from the Lions, or to recycle your old glasses please get in touch with the Lions by calling 0345 833 9502 or email enquiries@lionsclubs.co for more information.

Tech Tips with Keith - Amazon Echo Skills

There are many different features that you can use if you have an Amazon Echo at home, Here are a few of my favourites but if you'd like to know more about Amazon Echo Skills just call **01244 381515** I usually work from the Chester Vision Centre in the Bluecoat building, where we demonstrate equipment for people with sight loss. We also provide Digital Skills training, which is being provided over the phone during COVID-19.



1

My Talking Newspaper Skill

This runs on any of the Amazon devices, just ask your device to enable the My Talking Newspaper Skill. Your device will ask a couple of questions and then allow you to listen to any one of the subscribed talking news providers. Unfortunately, Chester talking news isn't subscribed to the service as yet but Liverpool, Ellesmere Port and Neston to name a few are up and running.



2

Amazon Echo Pop Quiz Skill

Pop Quiz will test your knowledge of UK pop music across four decades - from 1970s to 2000s. Select your decade and answer questions about chart topping hits, then go in depth with special quizzes that focus on subjects like Classic Hits, One Hit Wonders and Novelty Hits. Relive your youth, remember some long forgotten great songs and some terrible tunes you'd rather forget!



3

What's on T.V Skill

Just ask and your Echo will tell you all there is to watch on TV. What's on TV offers the day's highlights on all the main channels, plus satellite and cable. The results are relevant to the time of day you ask. The app will prompt you to make specific types of search i.e. comedy sports etc. Just enable the "TV guide" skill using the Amazon Echo app.