# Monthly What’s On E-Newsletter January 2025

Welcome to your monthly update of accessible services and events in Wiltshire and Swindon, covering January 2025.

We’d like to wish you a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year! We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events, hubs, or social groups in 2025 and continuing to support you in the year ahead.

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# Wiltshire Sight Events and Notices

## Connect online with our Virtual Hubs

Are you looking to meet others who truly understand the challenges and experiences of living with sight loss? Our Virtual Hubs offer a welcoming and supportive space to connect, share, and chat with people who "get it."

These online groups, run in partnership between Sight Support West of England, Wiltshire Sight, and Insight Gloucestershire, are open to anyone affected by sight loss across the regions we serve. Facilitated by volunteers with lived experience, the groups meet regularly on Microsoft Teams – and if you’re new to Teams, don’t worry, training is available to help you get started.

**Groups You Can Join:**

* **Parent Support Group**: For parents of visually impaired children up to age 25. Already running – meets fortnightly on Thursdays at 7:30 pm.
* **University Students Group**: For over-18s studying at Level 4 or above. Starts 15th January – meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at 7 pm.
* **Working Age Group (25–65)**: Starts 16th January – meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 pm.
* **Young Adults Group (18–30)**: *S*tart date to be confirmed – let us know if you’re interested!

Once signed up, there’s no need to book for each session – simply join when it suits you. Whether you want to meet new people, share experiences, or simply have a chat, our Virtual Hubs offer a flexible and friendly way to build connections from the comfort of your home.

**To sign up or find out more**, contact us and let us know which group you’re interested in – we’d love to welcome you!

## Christmas Mice Competition in Full Swing at Devizes

Wiltshire Sight’s much-loved Christmas Mice Celebration is underway at the Devizes charity shop! The festive window display features 15 handmade mice, each dressed as a favourite character, spreading cheer in the marketplace.

Visitors can still take part in the free Christmas competition by identifying who each mouse is dressed as. Entry forms are available in-store, with Giant Print and audio versions of the clues available upon request – the audio version even includes extra hints. The prize is an amazing hamper full of goodies.

The Christmas mice and other elements of the stunning display will soon be up for auction, offering you the chance to take home one of these charming creations. Full details will be shared in our next newsletter and on our website.

The competition runs until **12th January**, so don’t miss your chance to join in the fun. Visit Wiltshire Sight at 36 The Market Place, Devizes, SN10 1JG.

# Wiltshire Sight Community Hubs & Socials

Our sight loss advice hubs provide a local space for consultations with your advisor, offering information, guidance, and advice on equipment and technology. You can explore a selection of helpful aids and discover how technology can help you. Additionally, most hubs host social groups where you can meet others, share tips and tricks, and enjoy a chat.

For full details of our sight loss advice hubs and social groups, see our website which has the latest information, or you can call our office on 01380 723682. [Click here for our website hub and social group listings.](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/events/) You can put your postcode in the search bar to find your nearest hub.

## Changes To Note for Upcoming Hubs

Our offices will be closed from 4.30pm on the 24th December and will reopen 2nd January 2025.

* **Pewsey and Calne Community Hubs**: Not running in December.
* **Devizes, Salisbury, and Trowbridge Resource Centres**: Closed from 24th December to 2nd January.
* **Wroughton Hub**: Cancelled on 1st January.
* **Bradford on Avon Hub**: Cancelled on 1st January.
* **Trowbridge Resource Centre and Social**:

The Resource Centre will be closed from 20th December and will reopen for appointments on 3rd January 2025.

The Trowbridge social is cancelled in December.

* Swindon Audiobook Reading group

Mon 6th Jan 10.15 – 11.30 at Swindon Central Library we will be discussing Broken Light by Joanne Harris. We Welcome new members, please come along on the day or call 01380 723682

# Events & Notices From Other Organisations

These events and notices are from other organisations. Please check with the contact given that the event is going ahead as planned. Sometimes changes need to be made to dates and times at short notice, so it is best to check with the organisation before the event takes place.

## Young Creators Launch Audiobook on Life with Vision Impairment

Twenty-one young people with vision impairments have collaborated with the University of Bath and Audiobook Productions to create “Today and Tomorrow; Living with Vision Impairment in the UK.” This inspiring audiobook shares personal stories and practical advice on navigating key life transitions, including education, advocacy, and sport. Designed to support others living with vision loss, it’s available for free on Spotify from 29th November 2024, with further releases on Audible and Amazon.

**Link to Audiobook**: [Transitions for Young People with Vision Impairments](https://open.spotify.com/show/4zbZatSInal85jmRqQse6f)

## RNIB Autumn Survey

RNIB is seeking feedback from adults with sight loss on a range of important topics, including getting around, personal safety, employment, family, and relationships.

This feedback will help RNIB improve the support available to blind and partially sighted people across the UK and ensure it focuses on what matters most.

To take part, complete the Autumn 2024 survey by visiting the link below before the closing date on 20 December 2024:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LWJFYHP>

For those unable to complete the survey online and who have not yet registered to participate, RNIB invites you to call their Helpline on 0303 123 9999. Advisors will assist by completing a registration form and arranging a follow-up call to ask survey questions on future topics.

## Shape the Future of Assistive Technology with Hope Tech Plus

Hope Tech Plus is an assistive technology company dedicated to creating innovative solutions that empower blind and partially sighted individuals. Their products are designed with input from real users through research and testing – and they need your voice to make a difference.

By taking part in a **short, confidential survey**, you can share your experiences of accessing assistive technology. Your feedback will help improve access to these tools and provide greater support for the visually impaired community.

**Take the survey here:** [**Hope Tech Survey**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeczuzRDLv5yWHjYCrnUS99CBieCxOsEHzhtPy4WbClNasjew/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Would you like to contribute even further? Hope Tech Plus is also inviting individuals to share their personal stories and experiences with assistive technology. If you’re interested in helping shape the future of these vital tools, contact Laura directly at [**Laura@HopeTech.Vision**](mailto:Laura@HopeTech.Vision)

Your input is invaluable, and Hope Tech Plus will share the survey results soon – thank you for supporting this important work!

## Free Alexa Device from British Wireless for the Blind Fund

People living with sight loss can apply for a free Echo Show or Echo Dot device from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund. To qualify, they need to receive certain disability or income-related benefits and have an internet connection at home. Apply for a free Alexa device here: [Referrals - British Wireless for the Blind Fund](https://blind.org.uk/referrals/)

# Leisure and Sporting Activities

## Wiltshire Sight - Swindon Audiobook Reading group

Mon 6th Jan 10.15 – 11.30am at Swindon Central Library

We will be discussing Broken Light by Joanne Harris.

We welcome new members, please come along on the day or call us on 01380 723682 for more information.

## Westlecot Indoor Bowling sessions

Westlecot Bowls Club, Bowling Green Lane, Swindon SN1 4EU

Try out a new hobby in the new year with the support of the friendly Westlecot Bowls club. The session is run by volunteers and Wiltshire Sight have been consulted to ensure it is accessible for people living with sight loss.

Pay £5 per session (including refreshments) from 12 – 2pm on the following Tuesdays:

14th January, 4th February, 25th February.

Meet at 11.45 to change shoes and collect bowls. Carers welcome. Turn up on the day to play. See [Westlecot Bowls Club webpage](https://www.westlecot.co.uk/contact-us) or for more info email [contact@westlecot.co.uk](mailto:contact@westlecot.co.uk)

## Salisbury Museum would like to create resources for visually impaired people

Following the opening of their new galleries in July 2024, they would like to work with a group of visually impaired people to devise audio described tours and object handling. Are you interested in history and making museums more accessible? If so they would love to hear from you! The work will take place during 2025 and participants will need to be able to attend workshops at Salisbury Museum – all expenses will be covered. Please contact Bridget Telfer, the Community Curator, for more information:

Email: [bridgettelfer@salisburymuseum.org.uk](mailto:bridgettelfer@salisburymuseum.org.uk)

Telephone: 01722 332151

## Join Age UK Wiltshire's Fitness and Friendship Clubs

Age UK Wiltshire's **Fitness and Friendship Clubs** provide a welcoming space for older adults to enjoy gentle exercise, socialise, and relax. Sessions are sight-loss friendly, and Community Sight Loss Advisors can help with accessibility by calling ahead (let us know if this would be helpful).

**What to Expect:**

* 45 minutes of chair-based exercises with bands and balls
* 30-minute break with tea and biscuits
* 45 minutes of meditation and tai chi

**Details:**

* Cost: £5 per session (first session free; some locations are free)
* No booking required; contact the trainer for accessibility needs

**Locations:** Clubs run across Wiltshire, including Swindon, Salisbury, Chippenham, and Devizes. Visit Age UK Wiltshire’s website for full details.

**Contact Tracey**: 07754 612 569 | [fitnessandfriendship@ageukwiltshire.org.uk](mailto:fitnessandfriendship@ageukwiltshire.org.uk)

## All Abilities Bowls Wiltshire

Join All Abilities Bowls Wiltshire, where you’ll receive guaranteed, top-quality coaching from day one! Our internationally qualified coaches are dedicated to helping players of all abilities improve their game. With adaptive equipment, expert guidance, and a welcoming community, everyone can enjoy this inclusive sport. Join us Saturdays, 10 am to 12 pm, at Swindon Manor Indoor Bowls Club. Equipment provided—just bring flat-soled shoes. Contact Richard Ball at 07703893166 or email [richardb290@gmail.com](mailto:richardb290@gmail.com) for details.

## Swindon Blind Craft Club

Swindon Blind Craft Club meets every Tuesday between 10 am and 1 pm and is run by Lou Curtis at Swindon Blind Association, Craven House, 145 Victoria Road, Swindon, SN1 3BU. Parking available and bus stop opposite. Bring your own lunch. Carers welcome.

You can enjoy a wide variety of activities, including creating baskets, painting, and tile decoration! Get in touch with Lou if you want to come along and find out more: 07703 306 403.

## **Swindon Bats Sports & Social Club**

Swindon Bats have a variety of groups:

Contact them at: [info@swindonbats.org](mailto:info@swindonbats.org) or call their Secretary Sue Mead on 07788150487

### Swindon Bats Monday Club

Takes place at Craven House, Swindon on the 2nd Monday of the month from 1pm-3pm a chance for you to meet and socialise with other VIPs. This month they will be learning about and having a go at VIP Chess!

### Swindon Bats Weekly Tenpin Bowling

Meets at Tenpin West Swindon:

Wednesdays-12:15pm-2:30pm

Mondays- 18:45pm-21:00pm

## Bowls Club in Chippenham

The Bowls Club in Chippenham are running a weekly indoor bowls club for people with sight loss and other disabilities.  Taking place at North Wilts Bowls Club in Chippenham (near Sainsburys) each Friday 4-5pm, September - Easter.  Coaching is given.  The contact for this club is Maureen on 01249 657228.

## Devizes PHAB Group

(Physically disabled and Able bodied) an organisation which brings people with and without disabilities together. See their program of events at [Devizes PHAB meetings and events](https://www.devizesphab.co.uk/uploads/1/2/3/4/123478387/phabprogramme16apr2023.pdf)

# Support Groups and Courses

## Swindon Chat group

Last Tuesday of the month 5.15pm

Contact [communityconnectionsouthwest@rnib.org.uk](mailto:communityconnectionsouthwest@rnib.org.uk)

## RNIB Swindon Chat group

Fourth Thursday in the month from 10am to 12 noon.

General chat with advice from ECLO / ROVI at Craven House, Swindon. Contact: Bernice Cocking

[Bernice.Cocking@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Bernice.Cocking@rnib.org.uk) 07761 328571

# Audio Described Arts Events

## Salisbury Playhouse

Malthouse Ln, Salisbury, SP2 7RA

**Wiltshire Creative’s ‘Sleeping Beauty’ Panto**

Audio described performances:

* The 39 Steps - Thursday March 6th at 2.15 and 7.30pm.

Experience the hilarity and suspense of *The 39 Steps*, Patrick Barlow’s award-winning stage adaptation of Hitchcock’s classic spy thriller. Four actors play over 150 characters in this fast-paced comedy full of daring antics, romance, and mystery. A whirlwind adventure not to be missed!

There will be touch tours for both shows. Tickets can be booked online at [Wiltshire Creative Accessible Performances webpage](https://www.wiltshirecreative.co.uk/whats-on/access) , by phone on 01722 320333 or in person at The Playhouse.

Please remember to book your Touch Tour as well as your tickets. Touch tours are free but do need to be booked!

## Wyvern Theatre

Wyvern Theatre, Theatre Square, Swindon SN1 1QN

**‘Cinderella The Magical Pantomime!’**

Audio described performance: Mon 23 Dec 2024 at 1.00pm

To book tickets: [Wyvern Theatre Cinderlla Webpage](https://trafalgartickets.com/wyvern-theatre-swindon/en-GB/event/pantomime/cinderella-tickets) or call the box office on 0343 310 0040.

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Tel: 01380 723682, Email: info@wiltshiresight.org

Wiltshire Sight is a registered charity no 1119462. Registered Office: St Lucy’s Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AT