# Monthly What’s On Guide March 2025

Welcome to your monthly update of accessible services and events in Bristol, Bath & NE Somerset, and South Gloucestershire covering March 2025.

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# Sight Support Events and Notices

## Connect Online with Virtual Hubs

We’re excited to announce the launch date for our **Young Adults Virtual Hub** – starting 5th March, running fortnightly at 7 pm. If you’d like to meet new people, chat, and connect with others living with sight loss, sign up today!

Our Virtual Hubs are open to anyone affected by sight loss. Hosted on Microsoft Teams, training is available for newcomers.

**Join one of our hubs:**

* **Parent Support Group:** Fortnightly, Thursdays at 7:30 pm.
* **University Students Group:** Fortnightly, Wednesdays at 7 pm.
* **Working Age Group (25–65):** Third Thursday of the month at 7 pm.
* **Young Adults Group (18–30):** Launching **5th March**, fortnightly at 7 pm.

Would you like to join? **Contact us –** 0117 322 4885 / info@sightsupportwest.org.uk.

## Smartphone and Tablet Training

If you already use a smartphone or tablet and want to practice skills and gaining new ones. Our 4-week training will take place:

* Wednesday 5,12 & 19 March at Broadmead Baptist Church 10-12pm
* Thursday 6,13, 20 & 27 March at Yate Library 10-12pm

Please contact Sam Edwards to book your place on 0117 322 4885 or email sam.edwards@sightsupportwest.org.uk

## Eye Can Salisbury

Our partner charity, Wiltshire Sight, invites you to Eye Can Salisbury. It will be held on Wednesday 2nd April 2025, 10 am–3 pm at Salisbury Guildhall. The exhibitors will have the latest in technology and equipment on display and you will find local and national organisations offering services for blind and partially sighted individuals. Talks will also be held throughout the day. To pre-register either call us or you can book on Eventbrite: [Eye Can Salisbury 2025](https://EyeCanSalisbury2025.eventbrite.co.uk).

# Sight Support Hubs and Social Groups

Our monthly advice hubs offer consultations with local advisors across the region. At a hub you can get tailored information and guidance and explore accessible aids. Most hubs also host social groups where you can meet others living with sight loss. Full listings are available on our website or by calling us on 0117 322 4885.[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.

# Events & Notices From Other Organisations

## Accessible Voting – Bristol Mayoral Elections

RNIB’s Turned Out Report showed that at the 2024 UK General Election only a quarter of blind voters could vote independently and in secret. However, accessible voting solutions do exist and one is available this year in Bristol for the upcoming Mayoral Elections.on Thursday, 1 May 2025.

Recognising the challenges faced by blind and partially sighted voters, RNIB and Sight Support want to highlight the availability of the McGonagle Reader, an audio-tactile device designed to facilitate independent and confidential voting. This device enables users to navigate the ballot paper through tactile guidance combined with audio prompts.

In a 2023 trial, RNIB found the McGonagle Reader to be the most effective accessible voting device. Approximately 75% of participants preferred it for reviewing ballots, and 92% chose it as their top method for marking choices. The device achieved a 93% success rate in accurate voting. Additionally, 85% of users reported a significantly improved voting experience saying it was “a lot better”.

To use the McGonagle Reader, voters have two options:

* Appointment: Schedule a specific time to vote at your polling station by contacting Bristol Electoral Services. Appointments are available after 10 am.
* Walk-in: Arrive at your polling station on election day and request the device. Please note, as devices are limited, there may be a short wait while it is brought to your location.

For appointments or further information, contact Bristol Electoral Services via email at electoral.services@bristol.gov.uk or by phone at 0117 922 3400.

If you would like to try out the device before you vote, look out for news of a demonstration day and accessible voting workshop in Bristol ahead of the 1 May election. Moreover, from mid-March, Sight Support West of England will also have devices at their Bristol hubs for ad-hoc demonstrations

## Casting for Bupa Healthcare Campaign – Paid Opportunity

Raw Research Casting is collaborating with Bupa Healthcare on a campaign directed by Dorothy Allen-Pickard, aiming to destigmatise health discussions by featuring stories from individuals with disabilities. Filming is scheduled in London from 3rd to 10th April 2025, requiring a 1–3 day commitment. Selected participants will receive £350 per filming day, plus £1,600 for their appearance in the final campaign materials; travel expenses are also covered. The campaign will be showcased online, on social media, and in print across the UK, Spain, and Australia. Interested individuals are invited to complete a casting questionnaire at <https://forms.gle/cGx1qzA7XuxUzaGD7>.

## RNIB Voice of the Customer Survey

In RNIB’s latest Voice of the Customer Tracker survey, they want to hear from blind and partially sighted people about their experiences on things like eye health, skills and tools for modern life, getting around, employment and financial inclusion, education and habitation, leisure, relationships and social networks, and shaping society.

This research will help them to understand the areas that most impact blind and partially sighted people and to inform their work and campaigns.

Make your voice heard, complete their survey which will take 20 to 30 minutes: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XWS9G2M](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.surveymonkey.com%2Fr%2FXWS9G2M&data=05%7C02%7CNicola.Stanley-Dickinson%40rnib.org.uk%7C8fd4ff15b1194fe977f408dd501008e6%7C5d45337cd19243fcaa5805557c9171bc%7C0%7C0%7C638754751971340357%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1vZBJ6Pgm1wYWDFlHTDYmC9t5XCYML6Qj85Wf9mjVrE%3D&reserved=0)

## Supported Housing Questionnaire South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire Council is preparing a supported housing delivery plan for the next 15 years and is seeking feedback from those living in or considering supported housing. The council invites individuals and families to share their views on what future supported housing should offer by completing a survey. Responses should be returned by Monday, 17th March. For a form, more information or to submit feedback by email, please contact specialistteam@southglos.gov.uk The council values all perspectives and thanks participants for their time and insight.

## RNIB – World Book Day Free Accessible Children’s Book

In celebration of World Book Day on 6 March 2025, RNIB is offering a selection of free accessible books in braille, audio, and other formats, supporting the mission to provide every child and young person with a book of their own. The available titles include The Magic Balloon, Bluey's Little Book, Who's in Acorn Wood?, Barbara's Very Useful Guide to Moods, and The Soccer Diaries: Rocky Takes the Lead. Families and young people with vision impairments can order their copies by contacting the RNIB Helpline at 0303 123 9999. Additionally, author Tom Palmer will discuss The Soccer Diaries: Rocky Takes the Lead and his collaboration with RNIB on RNIB Connect Radio on 28 February 2025

## VICTA Science Fair

VICTA’s 2025 Online Science Fair is now live. Participants can explore a range of activities, including giveaways such as Amazon Echo Dots, Echo Show Kids, and Hot Wheels Braille Racers. Competitions and challenges are open in four categories, with £50 vouchers to be won. Families visiting a science centre can benefit from VICTA’s facilitated ticket offer. Full terms and conditions are available on the VICTA website [VICTA Science Fair 2025 - VICTA](https://www.victa.org.uk/victa-science-fair/) For more information, contact the Activities Team at sciencefair@victa.org.uk

# Local Leisure and Sporting Activities / Events

## Regular Groups

For a list of regular sport and leisure groups that don’t change each month and offered by other organisations, please see our [Regular sport and leisure groups webpage](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/sport-and-leisure-groups/)

## Free Drama Workshops

Kilter Theatre is offering six free creative drama workshops in Bath, designed for people living with sight loss and their friends, families, and carers.

**Dates:** Mondays, 2pm–3.30pm, from 3rd March to 7th April 2025
**Venue:** The Egg, Theatre Royal Bath

Participants will explore themes of hope and new beginnings through drama games, spoken word, and sonic experiments, culminating in a collaborative audio performance. Sessions are led by Kilter’s Caroline Garland and sound artist Dinah Mullen.

Booking is essential. Contact **kiltercaroline@gmail.com** for details or to reserve your place. Spaces are limited!

## All Aboard Watersports

All Aboard Watersports are running watersports taster days for 8 – 25 year olds.  There will be rowing, paddle and sailing taster days throughout the summer.

They are holding a coffee morning for you to meet the instructors and find out more on Saturday March 15th 10.30am – 12.30am.  Parents and carers are welcome.

To register your interest and find out more get in touch with Jemma on centremanager@allaboardwatersports.co.uk or call 01173 018 158  Likewise, if you are unable to make this date, we are looking to hold another later on in March, so do get in touch

## You're invited: Sonic Body workshop

Saturday 12 April, 2pm - 3.30pm at Bristol Beacon (Lantern Hall)

Experience a collision of music, dance, art and technology in a one-off movement workshop from Neon Dance. It's your chance to experience and feedback on some fascinating technology - a set of brand new wearable sound sculptures that we're developing for performance.
Facilitated by Neon Artistic Director, Adrienne Hart, these sessions have been designed for visually impaired communities, the general public and people interested in dance.
Timings and booking will be available via [bristolbeacon.org](http://bristolbeacon.org) very soon. Any questions please get in touch at info@neondance.org.

## Gloucestershire Growlers

The group aim to give visually impaired people in and around the county the opportunity to take part in sport and create an environment where they can socialise with people who truly understand the daily impact of having a visual impairment. Although the group aim play to win, team spirit is more important than results and the group pride themselves on their unique “Growler camaraderie!

They are organising two indoor sessions at Gloucestershire’s Nevil Road ground on 6th of April.  If you would like any more information contact Phil Gingell at bristolbluephil@googlemail.com

## VIP Reading Group – Bristol Central Library, College Green

Takes place on the last Thursday of every month from 10.30am till 12pm. New members welcome. Audio books are chosen from RNIB’s talking book service so it’s helpful to be signed up before joining. The next books are:

* 27 March - Annie Bot by Sierra Greer. A tale of what happens when a female robot rebels against her male, human owner.
* 24 April - Prima Facie by Suzie Miller. Drawn from the play about a barrister who specialises in defending men accused of sexual assault.

Further information email vibookgroup.bristol@gmail.com or Katharine Seymour, Central Library on 07880 069877

## Bowling Trials and Coffee Mornings

The City and County of Bristol Indoor Bowling Club, in partnership with the Blind Veterans Association, is hosting coffee mornings and bowling trials on Friday 14th March from 10am to noon. These events provide an opportunity to try bowling with the guidance of qualified coaches and meet representatives from Visually Impaired Bowls England, who may bring along an international player.

Takes place at: Bristol indoor bowling club Ltd, 198 South Liberty Lane, Ashton Vale, Bristol BS3 2TY

For more details or to express interest, please contact Danny Kite on **0117 922 3571**.

## Inclusive Multi-Sport Afternoon from Ignite Bristol

For d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent females and non-binary children, young people and adults.

Saturday 15th March, 2025, 12:30-3pm at Hengrove Leisure Centre. An afternoon of different sports and activities, all delivered by local clubs and organisations.

Sign-ups will open soon. If you have any questions or would like to express an interest please email Katie at Katie.Crook@AccessSport.org.uk.

## Goalball UK Bristol Taster Session

Following a successful taster session in Bristol in January, Goalball UK are planning another session. This will again be for people of any age and ability. No previous experience of goalball is required and sighted family and friends are welcome to join in too.

For anyone unfamiliar with goalball, it is an indoor Paralympic team sport for blind and partially sighted people. However, below international level, anyone can play because everyone wears eyeshades so that no one can see. It is then all about listening for the audible ball and feeling for the tactile court.

For more information, or to register your interest, please contact Kathryn Fielding. Tel. 07795 263642 or email Kathryn.Fielding@goalballuk.com.

## Track Day Opportunities at Llandow Circuit

Llandow Circuit in the Vale of Glamorgan offers accessible driving experiences for individuals of all abilities, including those with sight loss. Speed of Sight provides the opportunity to drive custom-built, dual-controlled cars on this well-known track.

One place is still available for the 3rd of June.

For more details or to book, visit [Speed of Sight’s website](https://speedofsight.org/book-now) or contact them at info@speedofsight.org.

# Support Groups and Courses

## Working Well with Sight Loss – Residential Course

**April 23–25 / Thomas Pocklington Hub, London / President Hotel**

Looking for work? Want to boost your confidence with job searching, applications, and interviews? Thomas Pocklington’s new residential course offers practical support in a relaxed, friendly environment. Learn essential tech skills, job search strategies, and interview techniques, plus explore the latest assistive technology.

Completely free – including accommodation, meals, and travel.

How to apply: Email employment@pocklington.org.uk with up to 300 words about yourself and why you’d benefit. For an informal chat, get in touch at the same address.

## Regular Support Groups

For a list of regular support groups offered by other organisations that take place locally and online, see our website: [Webpage for regular support groups and services](https://www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/support-groups-and-services/)

## Bath Macular Group

The next meeting for the Bath Macular Support Group will be on 19th March at 2.0 pm at The Good Living Centre (The Bubble) St Johns Foundation in Bath. Their speaker will be jo Fishwick, the area manager for the Southwest Area of the Macular Society. All welcome.

Contact Jo Fishwick on 07947 373 244 or Jo.Fishwick@macularsociety.org to find out more information or find other local groups.

## Torch Trust Online Lent Course

Torch Trust, a Christian sight loss charity, is offering a weekly online Lent course starting Tuesday, 4th March 2025, at 2 pm. The sessions will continue weekly until Easter. For more details, visit the [Torch Trust Online Lent Course webpage](https://www.torchtrust.org/news/online-lent-course-2/)

## Retina UK Peer Support Groups and Webinar

Retina UK is launching several new peer support groups:

* [New Women’s Peer Support Group](https://retinauk.org.uk/event/womens-peer-support-group/) First meeting on Thursday, 6th March 2025, at 7 pm via Zoom.
* ['Talking Home and Garden' Peer Support Group](https://retinauk.org.uk/event/talking-home-garden-peer-support-group/) Inaugural session on Wednesday, 2nd April 2025, at 7 pm via Zoom.

Additionally, [Retina UK’s next webinar](https://retinauk.org.uk/event/coming-soon-genetic-testing-what-can-i-expect/)  is titled "Genetic Testing: What Can I Expect?" on Thursday, 20th March 2025. For more information, visit their events page.

## Deafblind UK 'Talk Tech' Webinar

[Deafblind UK Talk Tech webinar](https://deafblind.org.uk/calendar/)  in collaboration with HumanWare on Thursday, 20th March 2025. This session will explore the latest technological advancements for individuals with dual sensory loss.

On Thursday 17th April - A demonstration of VisionAid’s most interesting products.

# Local Audio Described Arts Events

## Galleries and Museums

### Arnolfini Gallery

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA

19 April and 10 May from 10 -11 – An exhibition by British artist Barbara Walker, whose compelling figurative work – spotlights black British, history, immigration and life.

Sighted guides will be there to assist you and complimentary tea and coffee will be served in the café bar, afterwards. Free event - but please email to book a space community@arnolfini.org.uk

### Bristol Museum: When Planets Collide

Monday 3rd March, 10.00–12.00 - Feel the impact! How collisions between planets shaped our world.

The event features two parts:

* Planets Collide – Led by Dr Simon Lock and Dr Kirill Vlasov (University of Bristol).
* Here on Earth – Led by Deborah Hutchinson, Geology Curator, and museum colleagues.

You will be able to handle and engage with 3D printed models designed illustrating the processes of interplanetary collisions. Geological specimens will also be available to help bring to life how Earth, and what lies beyond, have interacted over millions of years.

For details or to book, contact Debbie.hutchinson@bristol.gov.uk call 0117 922 3571, or on Bristol Museums website. Refreshments will be provided. Sighted companions are welcome. Volunteers will be arranged as needed.

### Royal West of England Academy

Royal West of England Academy, Queens Rd, Bristol BS8 1PX

Saturday 1 March - 10:30 to 12:00 - Described tour of work by modernist artist Paule Vézelay together with others in the Paper Works exhibition. As always, there will be an opportunity to handle some of the exhibits. The session concludes with refreshments.

If you would like to join, please email Connie Ngan connie.ngan@rwa.org.uk and say whether you will bring a sighted companion or need a volunteer guide.

### Bath, Victoria Art Gallery

Art on Mondays talks for VI Visitors

* 24 March – Perry Harris, Artist – Essence of Bath: Cartoons and Watercolours

Sessions run from 10–11.30 am. But as the gallery is closed to the public on those days ring 01225 477232 for access information or email Kersti Haabjoern - Kersti\_Haabjoern@bathnes.gov.uk

## Theatres - Upcoming Audio Described Shows

### Bristol Hippodrome

* 8 March – Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake
* 16 April – Tina: The Tina Turner Musical
* 12 June – War Horse
* 16 July - Moulin Rouge

Book touch tours separately. Contact Access for All bristoladmin@theambassadors.com or call the access booking line 0333 009 5399 for tickets

### Bristol Old Vic

* 1 March - A Good House – a new comedic work by South African writer Amy Jephta about a couple who discover the limits of good neighbourliness and what is required to fit in.
* 29 March – Romeo and Juliet – the original text but with some of it in rap and R&B
* 31 May – The Beautiful Future is Coming - a fast-paced, inventive look at 250 years of history through the eyes of three couples.
* 5 July – How to Win against History – A Comedy Musical telling the riches to rags story of the 5th Marquis of Anglesey - one of the world’s wealthiest men - until he lost it all by being too damn *fabulous*.

For more details and to book - ring the Box office – 0117 987 7877

### Bath - Theatre Royal

* 21 May – The Midnight Bell – Performed by Matthew Bourne’s dance company. It’s set in the pubs and fog-bound streets of Soho and Fitzrovia during the 1930s
* 12 June – By Royal Appointment – starring Anne Reid as the Queen and Caroline Quentin as her dresser.

Both shows have touch tours. For more details and tickets phone 01225 448844. Make sure you subscribe to the Theatre’s Access List.

You will receive a link emailed, beforehand, with pre-show audio notes. Hearing devices can be collected from all bars when the house opens - half an hour before the show.

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Sight Support is a registered charity no 1178384. Registered Office: St Lucy’s Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AT