

Sight
SUPPORT



Working in partnership:
Sight Support West of England,
Wiltshire Sight and
Insight Gloucestershire



Winter / Spring
2026

Keeping you informed of local sight loss news

Welcome

We're delighted to share the Winter and Spring 2026 edition of Visible, created together by Insight Gloucestershire, Sight Support West of England and Wiltshire Sight. This issue focuses on practical support and real experiences from across our communities. You'll meet our Digital Skills team and learn how they can help, discover tips on staying safe from scams, find everyday items that can make life easier at home, and read advice for anyone supporting a friend or family member with sight loss. You'll also find an article on how make-up can still be enjoyable and achievable with a few simple adaptations and a bit of practice, plus local news and updates from each charity.



We hope you enjoy reading. If you'd like Visible in a different format, we offer large print, PDF and Word versions by email, and an audio version on USB stick – just get in touch using the details on the back page.

Best wishes

Mike Silvey

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Meet the Volunteer

Name: Beverley Graham-Jones

Volunteer Role: Social Group Facilitator

Date Started: September 2023



I've lived in Cheltenham for over 45 years but only heard about Insight Gloucestershire through a bridge friend who worked there at the time. She introduced me to volunteering and I've not looked back.

I help at the monthly coffee mornings and it's lovely to meet new people, some of whom find it a big step to come along for the first time. It's always friendly and sometimes lively, and I try to chat with everyone and signpost them if they need advice or support. I also encourage people to join our monthly lunch at the Albion, which has grown in numbers and is great to see. Some come with partners, and it's a treat for many to enjoy a good meal they haven't had to cook themselves. I often end up having a pudding too – all in the spirit of joining in!

I've been lucky to help at several theatre trips to the Everyman. We meet and greet attendees, take part in touch tours with props, and sometimes hear from the actors themselves. I even tried the new headsets to experience the audio description first-hand, it really helped me imagine how others follow the performance.

More recently, I've been making calls; to either help people complete the survey or pass on information about the theatre trips. It's lovely hearing how much difference a simple chat can make, or how much someone looks forward to their next outing – for some, it might be the first time they've been out all week.

Outside of volunteering I still work part time in education, play bridge, love cooking for friends, and enjoy swimming, Pilates, yoga, and crafting with my granddaughter.

Give volunteering a go – just a friendly face and a chat can make all the difference to someone's day.

News and events

Collaboration Agreement

At the end of September 2025 our three Boards of Trustees met up to officially sign our collaboration agreement. It's really important to us to remain three independent charities and we know that matters to many of you too. Working together helps us do more and be more cost effective. We have a shared aim to ensure that blind and partially sighted people in our areas have access to high quality, in-person support. We're really grateful to our funder Fight for Sight, who helped cover the professional legal and financial costs of ensuring we can work together in a sustainable way.



Our 2025 Raffle

Our summer raffle was our biggest ever, raising more than £6,200! Thank you so much to everyone who bought a ticket, and congratulations to our winners. This money is split evenly between our three charities, so you can be very sure your money is supporting blind and partially sighted people local to you.



Digital courses

Our Autumn digital training courses – beginners and improvers – were busier than ever. More and more people want to learn about how to access the possibilities offered by “smart” technology. We'll be continuing to offer courses and “have a go” sessions, so do contact us if you're interested in finding out more.



Stroud shop and resource centre

Our first Insight Gloucestershire charity shop opened in Stroud last summer. We're excited to have a high-street presence where people can support our work and learn about our services. Behind the shop is our new resource centre, where our Sight Loss Advisor Bev is available every Thursday for appointments. The centre has lots of demonstration equipment to try out. We're very grateful to the Morrisons Foundation and Ulverscroft Foundation for funding the new centre and its resources.



Calling the office

If you've called the office recently, you've probably spoken to Jordon, our Customer Service Representative. His role is to answer queries and arrange for a Sight Loss Advisor to call you for a more in-depth conversation if needed. As our advisors are now out at hubs across the county more often, we know it could sometimes be difficult to reach someone directly. Jordon is now on hand to answer your calls from 9.30am to 4.30pm on weekdays.

Introducing Amanda!

We're delighted to welcome Amanda to Insight Gloucestershire as our new Digital Skills Advisor. She'll be leading the launch of our new Digital Skills Support Service across the county, offering one-to-one support, beginners and improvers courses, and taster sessions where you can try the latest smart technology.



Thank you to the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire

We were so pleased to welcome Michael Jones, Trustee and Warden to our office to present Joni, our Relationship Fundraiser, with a cheque for £500. Their donation is to support our community hubs – making sure we are there for blind and partially sighted people across Gloucestershire.

Pilning Flower Show

Thank you to everyone who attended the Pilning Flower Show and bought coffee and cake, or a raffle ticket or entered one of the competitions. The organisers donated £2,000 to us after the event.



Bristol Arrows Bowls Club

Bristol Arrows Bowls Club presented a cheque for £2,063 at the end of the 2025 season. This big donation is the most they've ever raised for a local charity, and we're hugely grateful to all club members that made this possible.



They're a really welcoming club and keen to recruit new members. They have an active group of blind bowlers. If you're interested in joining, please do contact them directly – or ask your local Sight Loss Advisor for suggestions of clubs near you.

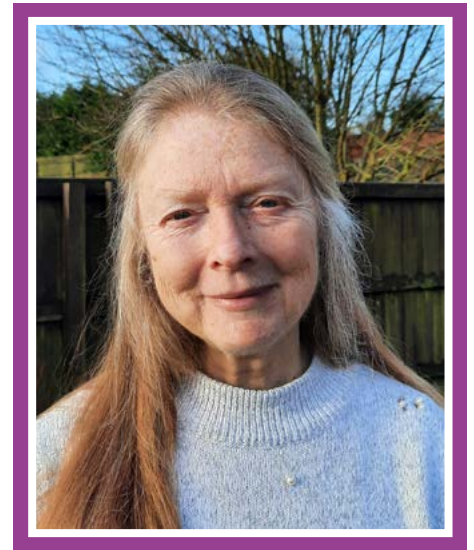
Showdown – coming soon!

We're delighted to be supporting the development of a new Showdown club in Bristol, working in partnership with Showdown UK. Showdown is a fast-paced, inclusive table sport designed for blind and partially sighted players, but sighted people can join in too by wearing blindfolds. Players use a paddle to hit a rattling ball into their opponent's goal, relying on sound to track the ball. A Have-A-Go Day will be held soon to introduce people to the game.

If you'd like to register your interest in taking part, please contact us.

Welcome to Anne

As many of you know, Sarah is on maternity leave at the moment. Huge congratulations to her and her very happy baby boy! We are very pleased to welcome Anne to the team to cover the West Wiltshire area. Many of you will have met her at hubs over the last few months and we know she's been enjoying meeting you all. You can make appointments to see Anne (or any of our advisors) by calling the office.



New Swindon social

Our new social group in Swindon is thriving at the Pilgrim Centre, Regent Circus, on the third Thursday of every month. Social groups are a welcoming chance to meet other blind and partially sighted people – sharing tips, offering reassurance or the chance to laugh with others who really understand.

Salisbury museum

We ran visual awareness training for the team at Salisbury Museum recently to support them to run a course for blind and partially sighted people. The courses had brilliant feedback from our service users. They learnt about the work of Elizabeth Frink and had the chance to do a touch-tour with works from the exhibition and try skills themselves. Each participant left with a sculpture they had created.

“I never thought I’d be able to engage with art!” “It’s given me so much joy”.



Seeing differently: simple ideas that help

Being blind, partially sighted or losing your sight unexpectedly can bring challenges, but help sometimes comes from the most ordinary places. While technology and specialist equipment can be really useful, many everyday items can also make daily life easier, safer and more comfortable. Here are some practical ideas that can make a surprising difference.

1. Elastic bands – a simple tactile tool

Cheap and easy to find, elastic bands can make a great labelling system. Wrap them around items such as bottles or jars to tell them apart by touch. If you often mix up your shampoo and conditioner, try putting one band on your shampoo and two on your conditioner for an easy tactile cue. You can also use them around toothbrush handles to identify family members' brushes or stretch one around a specific milk carton to distinguish semi-skimmed from whole milk.

2. Tacti-Mark – DIY tactile markings

In addition to being bright orange in colour, this paint dries raised and can be felt easily. Use it to mark appliance settings, remote control buttons or oven dials. You can make dots or lines in different shapes and positions to create your own tactile system, a simple and cost-effective way to label things around your home.

3. Velcro strips – stick, feel, know

Velcro isn't just for fastening shoes – it's great for organising and identifying items around the home. You can use ordinary Velcro strips or dots, available from most supermarkets or online retailers. Try attaching the soft and rough sides to different objects to tell them apart by touch. For example, put soft Velcro on frequently used keys or plugs to find the right one easily. Velcro dots can also help you position items on a table or stop them sliding about and might even mean you never lose your remote control again.

4. Drawer liners – keeping things steady

Rubberised drawer or shelf liners, usually used to stop cutlery sliding, can also be handy on tables or worktops. They help keep chopping boards or

kitchen items from moving about while you're using them or make good place mats. For something longer lasting, purpose-made non-slip mats such as Dycem are also available and work brilliantly in kitchens and dining areas.

5. Cutting guides – safer cooking

Preparing vegetables, fruit or bread can be tricky with limited or no sight. Cutting guides or tactile rulers can help you keep slices even and your fingers safe. Many are adjustable and fit around what you're cutting, giving you more confidence and control in the kitchen.

6. Food thermometers – confidence when cooking

Cooking safely can be daunting when you can't see whether food is done, especially when checking if meat or leftovers are properly heated. Talking or vibrating thermometers give a clear way to check temperatures, so you can be sure food is cooked through.

Living with sight loss doesn't mean giving up independence – it's about adapting and finding what works for you. And while specialist tools are helpful, sometimes the best solutions are already in your home. A little creativity and confidence can go a long way.



If you'd like more ideas, your local Sight Loss Advisor can help you find practical solutions and products that suit you. Social groups are also a great place to share hints and tips with others.

Smart glasses bring art into focus for people with low vision

This article has been written by Paul Goddard, researcher at Cardiff University, who is part of the team developing the ARtSee smart glasses.

Museums and galleries are full of colour and detail, but they are not always easy to see if you have low vision. ARtSee, a new headset, is helping to change that by giving live visual tools that make paintings clearer and let visitors choose how to view art.



What is ARtSee? ARtSee is a research headset developed at Cardiff University. It has a clear visor with a small digital screen that you can wear over prescription glasses. The visor shows a live view with helpful tools: magnification, extra contrast and added sharpness. Magnification brings the view closer, extra contrast makes light and dark areas stand out, and added sharpness helps edges and brushstrokes look clearer.

ARtSee can also add outlines to shapes in paintings or display a high-quality digital image of the artwork. It is also possible to adjust the brightness and settings to suit individual eyes and preferences.

During testing at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery this summer, ARtSee helped people with low vision see parts of paintings that were high on the wall or difficult to view up close. Feedback was positive, with people reporting they could make out colours, brushstrokes, and small details that had previously been hard to see. One participant commented:

“ Without the technology, I’d be able to see nothing.
I enjoyed the experience. It’s welcoming. ”

Why the research matters. Projects like ARtSee are more than research trials. They show what really helps in a busy gallery, and that insight feeds into mainstream smart glasses. Companies such as Meta, the maker of the Ray-Ban AI glasses, have research scientists who keep up to date with the latest developments and factor them into new products, which are released regularly.



The latest of these is the Meta Ray-Ban Display, a new model with a small translucent screen in one lens. It sits within the same family as the current Meta Ray-Ban glasses, which can describe what you're looking at or connect to Be My Eyes, but this new version adds a small visual display that can show information such as messages, captions, and directions while keeping the world in view.

The Meta Ray-Ban Display is expected in the UK next year and gives a sense of where mainstream products are heading – which is useful when thinking about accessibility in the years ahead.

What you can try now. ARtSee is a research prototype available to try by appointment with the research team. There are also headsets you can purchase that offer similar visual enhancements for everyday tasks. For example, eSight Go and IrisVision Inspire are designed to help people with low vision read, watch TV, recognise faces or get around.

eSight Go is a purpose-built device that offers magnification, colour filtering and contrast boosting. IrisVision Inspire repurposes a smartphone, which clips into the headset, to provide magnification, edge outlining, text-to-speech and contrast adjustment.

Want to try ARtSee? Back in the gallery, ARtSee is focused on one simple aim: making art feel more reachable. The team will continue testing with people who have low vision.

If you enjoy museums but find it hard to see the art clearly, you can register your interest to try ARtSee with Paul Goddard at Cardiff University by emailing goddardpm@cardiff.ac.uk or calling **029 2251 0051**. The team would love to hear from anyone interested in taking part.

Supporting someone with sight loss

If someone close to you is blind or partially sighted, it can be hard to know how best to help. The most meaningful support often comes from listening, learning, and giving space for the person to lead the way. This article explores what that can look like in everyday life.

Because every situation is unique, it's best to ask rather than assume. Some people may feel isolated, while others are more frustrated by practical challenges or the emotional impact of sight loss. Open, honest conversations can help you both understand each other's needs and feelings.

Learn together

Learning more about sight loss is often a good place to start. It can help you understand what your friend or relative might be experiencing and how daily life can be affected. Everyone's sight loss is different, it can vary depending on the eye condition, lighting, or tiredness.

The best approach is to ask open-ended questions that invite discussion, such as **“How can I best help you?”** or **“What would make this easier for you?”** This encourages shared problem-solving rather than yes-or-no decisions. Remember, the same person may respond differently from one day to the next, sometimes help is welcome, other times they may prefer to try something independently.

Helpful tips

When someone's sight changes, it's natural to want to step in, but real support is about following their lead and respecting what they feel ready for. Blind and partially sighted people can do most things, just differently, using adaptations or technology. Visiting one of our hubs can be a helpful way to explore this together.

You could try some of these ideas:

- If guiding someone, offer your arm rather than taking theirs, and walk slightly ahead so they can follow your movement.
- Remember that your loved one may rely on memory for moving

around at home. Keep walkways clear, avoid moving items from familiar places, and close cupboard doors.

- Help set up a smart speaker or other device if they'd like support as many accessibility settings can be tricky to locate at first.



Our Community Sight Loss Advisors can share practical advice and connect you with others who have lived experience. They can also introduce you to local activities, from technology sessions and support groups to arts, cultural, and accessible sport opportunities, which can make a real difference in adjusting to sight loss and enjoying life.

Understanding emotions

Losing sight can be emotional for everyone involved. It may affect confidence, independence, and daily routines. Listening and patience can be just as valuable as practical help. You don't always need to have answers, being there to listen can make a real difference.

Encouraging your loved one to keep up with hobbies and friendships, or to explore new ways of doing things, can help maintain confidence and wellbeing. For some people, counselling or peer support can also be helpful – there's no right or wrong way to adjust and asking for help is never a sign of weakness.

Supporting someone can bring mixed emotions for family and friends too. Talking with others in similar situations can be reassuring, and our hubs are welcoming places to share experiences and ask questions. We're also setting up a virtual hub specifically for carers of blind and partially sighted people so look out for details or contact us to register your interest.

For further support, you can also contact Carers UK at **www.carersuk.org**

Have you supported someone who's blind or partially sighted, or received support from a friend or family member? We'd love to hear your story to help others adjusting to sight loss. Please do get in touch.

Making digital technology work for you

Digital technology is part of everyday life, from checking bus times and paying bills to keeping in touch with friends and family. If you haven't used it much before, it can feel daunting, but it isn't just for the tech-savvy. For blind and partially sighted people, it can make a real difference to daily life.

Our Digital Skills Advisors can help you get started or build confidence with apps, devices and accessibility features. Voice assistants like Alexa or Siri can read the news, tell you the weather or remind you about appointments. Screen readers and magnifiers make it easier to read emails or browse the internet, while simple smartphone apps can identify what's around you or read labels aloud. Many of these tools are already built into your phone or tablet, and with friendly one-to-one support from our team you don't have to figure it out alone. We're here to help whenever you're ready.

Meet your Digital Skills Team

Amanda Read – Insight Gloucestershire

Our Digital Skills service is now available across all three charities and we're delighted to welcome Amanda, who has recently joined Insight Gloucestershire to launch this service in the county.

Amanda joined the team in October 2025, having worked in the sight loss sector for 12 years. In her previous role, she supported volunteers across the West Midlands for a national charity. Amanda lives in Stroud with her partner, daughter, and retired guide dog Darcy.



“My favourite app right now is Seeing AI. This is a free app for Apple and Android devices which can read printed documents out loud, as well as many other functions. It works alongside the accessibility functions in your device to make it more accessible and easy to use, and means for me I don't have to ask someone else to read the letters coming through the post anymore. With a few taps on my screen, my phone does it for me!”

Mark Durnford – Wiltshire Sight

Mark spent over 20 years working in education, supporting young people with learning and communication difficulties. It was rewarding work that shaped his perspective and reinforced the importance of recognising people as individuals. In his spare time, he enjoys gaming, football, crafting, and listening to music and podcasts.



“My favourite tech right now is the Meta AI glasses. I can make hands-free phone calls, send messages using my voice and have messages read out to me. I can ask the glasses to describe what’s in front of me – whether it’s reading signs, identifying objects, or navigating unfamiliar spaces. What makes them stand out is how natural the interaction feels. I just speak normally and the glasses respond like a real assistant, without needing to pull out my phone or type anything.”

Sam Edwards – Sight Support West of England

Before joining Sight Support, Sam worked as a college art tutor and has lots of experience helping others reach their goals. She loves exploring exhibitions, festivals, and cultural events at the weekend.

“My favourite feature on a smartphone is Gemini Live. As a partially sighted person, it’s incredibly helpful because I can talk to it naturally, like a real assistant, instead of having to type.



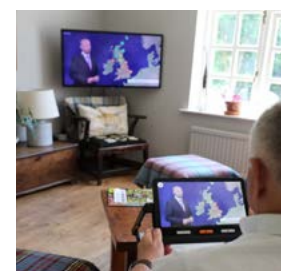
I can ask it to read text on food packaging, especially good for knowing use-by dates, it has also helped me find my keys or other objects. What I like most is that you can keep asking follow-up questions, just like chatting with a friend, until you get the help or info you need.”

If you are experiencing macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or cataracts; regain your independence with the help of HumanWare's simple and easy-to-use assistive technology.

Hark Ai scans and reads barcodes; simply place a tin or packet under Hark Ai and it will read out the product name and contents.

Hark Ai reads handwriting, now you can listen to hand-written letters and greeting cards.

Don't struggle with Low Vision - you can still enjoy reading again with our range of Explore low vision magnifiers. From pocket size to enjoying watching TV from the comfort of your favourite armchair.



Call us on **Freephone 0800 587 2589** to arrange a free no-obligation demonstration with your local Representative, Stuart Ling.

Highlights from Eye Can Bath 2025

Eye Can Bath 2025 brought Bath Pavilion to life on Thursday 16 October, as visitors explored a fantastic range of technology, equipment and services designed to support blind and partially sighted people. The day was filled with conversation, demonstrations and new ideas to try.

The talks were a real highlight, covering technology tips from our Digital Skills Advisors, eye health and care with Amar Shah, and BT's guidance on the digital switchover. Exhibitors shared their expertise with enthusiasm, and our volunteers were on hand throughout the day to offer a warm welcome and practical support.

Thank you to everyone who joined us – and to our event sponsor, HumanWare, whose support helps make Eye Can possible. We're already looking forward to Eye Can Swindon on 23 April 2026.



Diabetic eye screening – protecting your sight

Written by the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme to explain how screening works and why attending is so important.

Diabetic eye screening is an important part of diabetes care, helping to save people's sight every day. When blood sugar levels are high, it can damage the small blood vessels in the retina – the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye. This damage, known as diabetic retinopathy, often develops without symptoms but, if left untreated, can cause permanent sight loss. Everyone aged 12 or over with diabetes is invited to a free NHS diabetic eye screening appointment as part of their regular care. Screening looks for early signs of eye damage before you notice any changes to your vision, giving the best chance of treatment to protect sight.



What happens at your appointment: Once diagnosed with diabetes, you'll automatically be added to the screening programme and invited to your nearest clinic. Your appointment begins with a quick sight test. Eye drops are then used to widen your pupils – they may sting a little, and your eyes will be sensitive to light afterwards, so bringing sunglasses is helpful. After around 15 minutes, when the drops have taken effect, a screener will take photographs of the back of your eyes using specialist equipment. The whole appointment usually takes less than an hour. Your images are graded by clinical staff and results normally arrive within one to three weeks. There are many treatments available to reduce the risk of sight loss, so early detection and referral make a real difference.

For more information or to make an appointment:

BaNES, Swindon & Wiltshire – 01225 582300
miul.administration@nhs.net

Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire – 0117 405 5000
enquiries.bnssgdesp@nhs.net

Gloucestershire – 0300 422 4419 | ghn-tr.despadmin@nhs.net

Stay safe from scams

Fraudsters are finding new ways to trick people every day, whether through phone calls, text messages or online. These scams can feel convincing, but remembering a few simple rules can help protect your money and personal information.

Staying safe on the phone

One of the most common ways scammers target people is by phone. If you receive a call from a number you don't recognise, it's safest to let it go to voicemail. Most phones now have caller display, which can help you screen calls. Add trusted friends and family to your contacts so their names appear clearly and let unfamiliar numbers ring out.

Criminals can disguise their identity to look like a genuine business, the police or even a family member, so do be careful even with Caller ID. Genuine organisations will never ask you to share bank details, PINs or passwords, or request gift cards as payment.

If you're unsure, hang up straight away. To check, call your bank using the number on your card or statement, ideally on a different phone line, as scammers can sometimes keep a call open briefly.

Scammers may pretend to be a loved one in distress, even using AI to imitate voices. If something feels unusual or someone doesn't "sound right", check by contacting them another way or having a family password.

Above all, don't let anyone rush you. A genuine caller will always give you time to think.

Staying safe online

The internet offers many opportunities but also risks. A common tactic is to send emails or texts that look as though they're from a trusted organisation, asking you to click a link or open an attachment. Always pause before taking action. Banks and other official bodies won't ask you to share personal details by email.

Fraudsters can also fake the "from" address to make messages look genuine.

Check the sender's full email address and if it looks odd or unfamiliar, delete it. If you receive suspicious emails, delete them without clicking anything.

Software updates often include important security fixes, so it's important to keep your devices up to date.



When shopping online, check that the web address begins with “https” and that a padlock symbol appears near the address bar. If the padlock is missing, don't enter your personal details. Always check the web address, as it's easy to make a website look like the official version. Use public Wi-Fi only for browsing – not for banking or entering payments.

On social media, think carefully about what you share. Scammers can use details such as your date of birth or pet's name to guess passwords. Review your privacy settings regularly and only share what you're comfortable making public.

These tips are covered in our digital courses, and your local Sight Loss Advisor can also run through them at a hub session or over the phone.

Reporting and support

If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040** or visit **actionfraud.police.uk**

Visit our website for trusted links to information on recognising and avoiding scams, protecting your personal data, and finding reliable advice from organisations such as Take Five, Friends Against Scams, the National Cyber Security Centre, the Metropolitan Police and Which?

www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/resources/scam-advice

Remember: if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. And if you ever feel unsure, it's always safer to stop, think, and check before acting.

Ready to face the day

Make-up can be an important part of feeling like yourself and ready to face the world. But because it's such a visual thing, it might feel like something that's no longer possible after your vision changes. It's easy to feel self-conscious, wondering if your make-up looks uneven or messy. Yet avoiding it completely can take away a simple pleasure and that feeling of being more like yourself. As with many things, it's about finding new ways to do what matters to you. With time and practice, applying make-up can become familiar as you build up muscle memory.



Simple make-up can make a big difference – a tinted moisturiser, mascara and a lip tint can instantly make you feel more polished and confident. But dramatic looks are possible too. Lucy Edwards has great tips on social media, like using tape to get a neat, winged eyeliner edge. You could ask a friend for feedback, use a magnifying mirror or take a selfie and zoom in to check. Don't be discouraged: if it's not perfect at first, keep practising. Some people find it helps to practise one area at a time, such as eyes or lips, until you build confidence before putting a whole look together.

You can also experiment with different brands, formulas and types of make-up to find what works best for you.

Make-up tips

- Stick and cream products, like foundation or blusher, are often easier to control and blend than powders.
- Chilling an ink eyeliner briefly can make it easier to feel the tip as you trace along the lash line.
- Eyeshadow sticks blend easily, or try an eyeshadow trio palette of light, medium and dark shades. Apply with your fingers for placement, then buff with a brush.

- Do your eye make-up first and wipe away smudges with micellar water before foundation, or leave eyes until last and use cotton buds to tidy up.
- A soft kabuki brush helps you feel where the product is and achieve an even blend.
- Eyebrows can be tricky, so consider getting them shaped and tinted professionally.

Identifying make-up

Tactile dots, elastic bands or raised stickers can help identify items. Some brands include braille, and others have distinctive packaging that's easy to recognise by touch. Some people use small 'NFC tags' – stickers that your smartphone can scan to identify things like eye shadow colours.

Apps like Be My Eyes, Seeing AI or Meta glasses can also help, and some people use Be My Eyes to ask a volunteer to check their make-up.

Buying make-up

It can be easier to compare products online before buying but visiting a beauty counter at least once is really useful. Beauty advisors can show you how products feel on your skin, where to apply them, and which shades suit you. Combining online research with an in-store visit can help you choose what's right for you.



Find out more

Visit our website for this article and useful links on accessible make-up tips and tutorials, including resources from Guide Dogs, RNIB, Retina UK and creators like Lucy Edwards and Claire Sisk.

www.sightsupportwest.org.uk/resources/makeup-tips

Of course, make-up isn't for everyone. But it's a great example of finding new ways of doing things. Whatever your interests or passions, we can help you continue to enjoy them. Please contact us to find out more.

Practical tools that make a difference

For this article, we talked to Ms Jana – someone who's been using our services. Find out more about her experiences, and if anything sounds like it might be useful for you, please do get in touch.

When Ms Jana from Bristol first noticed her sight changing in 2005, everyday life began to feel different. She had hoped to learn to drive but realised she couldn't see far enough to meet the vision requirement. After visiting her doctor, she was referred to the hospital eye clinic, where she was told that her sight would continue to deteriorate.

As a mother of five, this was difficult news to take in. Ms Jana worried about how she would cope, whether she'd get to see her future grandkids, and if she'd still be able to enjoy the things she loved most, like reading and spending time with her family. Over time she found that, with the right advice and information, there were practical ways to adapt and continue the activities that mattered to her.



Her first contact with Sight Support West of England came after hearing about our local community hubs. These monthly sessions offer blind and partially sighted people the chance to try equipment, speak with advisors and meet others living locally. At one of these sessions, she met Digital Skills Advisor Sam, who demonstrated a range of equipment designed to make reading easier. One of

these was a CCTV magnifier – a video magnifier that uses a camera to display enlarged text and images on a screen. It allows users to adjust magnification, brightness and contrast, making it easier to read letters, books and other

printed material. Trying it out with some letters and her copy of the Qur'an, Ms Jana was delighted to find she could read clearly and comfortably again.

Encouraged by this, she decided to explore more ways that technology could help her at home and in future work. As she hoped to return to employment, she joined one of our Digital Skills courses to build her confidence with technology. The sessions are designed for people who may be new to technology, or have lost confidence using it, and focus on building skills step by step. During the sessions, she discovered weZoom, a free Android magnifier app that allows users to enlarge text and adjust colour contrast. Ms Jana explains that it makes reading much easier and less tiring than traditional magnifiers, and she didn't experience headaches due to the effort. After the course, she bought her own tablet and has continued using the app ever since to make everyday reading easier.

“ It's great that every time I speak to someone, they find another way to help me ”

Ms Jana has since visited the Easton Community Hub, where she met her local Sight Loss Advisor, Lucy, and took part in the social group. Meeting others at the hub offers the chance to share experiences and can help people feel more supported and less alone.

Technology has now become part of Ms Jana's everyday life. From reading her post and the Qur'an to exploring ways of returning to work, she continues to find practical solutions that help her stay independent and involved.

Stories like Ms Jana's show how access to the right information, equipment and advice can open up new possibilities for blind and partially sighted people.



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