London NFB logo image:

Hello London NFB Members,

Welcome to London Life #30, your fortnightly newsletter from London NFB. In store for you this edition is:

* London NFB AGM update
* Congratulations to Ted Herbert winner of the new annual Teddy award
* Join the Sunday social on 13th Feb
* Especially for guide dog owners: NFB UK meeting with The European Guide Dogs Federation (EGDF) Mon 7th Feb
* Meet the characters:  Trigger Point audio description of characters from ITV
* Travel Hands review by Kate Portal
* Understanding tactile paving contributed from Alan
* RNIB - Urgent: Join us in the fight to keep the right to a secret vote
* Netball – Free access to watch the London Pulse Superleague Games
* Metro Blind Sports - Climbing – Free sessions on Friday morning's and now on a Saturday afternoon as well
* Use your voice to turn on lights
* Enjoy Fed News anywhere, anytime
* Join the Support for Sight campaign
* I'm blind and had Covid symptoms but my local testing centre turned me away
* News from Inclusion London

**London NFB AGM update**

It was great to see many of you at our AGM and social on Saturday. The minutes will soon be circulated but just to say that our new committee was elected with a few changes from last year. Welcome to Jane Sellers joining us as Secretary and Rashid who has joined the social committee. Please do keep emailing any suggestions for the Eastbourne weekend or ideas for guest speakers at our branch meetings and campaign issues. We'll be looking at returning to in-person meetings in April but keeping the option for members to join in on zoom.

We were joined by friends from Nottingham branch for the social which included fantastic songs from Sarah, Kate and after some mix and mingling in break out rooms, finishing with a few songs from our friend Jorgen.

**Congratulations to Ted Herbert winner of the new annual Teddy award**

The photo below is of a very smiley Ted with his Teddy Trophy



We were delighted that Ted Herbert could join the AGM to be presented with a silver teddy moneybox engraved with his name as the first winner to our annual Teddy award. This is to recognize Ted's dedication and long-standing commitment to London NFB all done voluntarily and of course special recognition for setting up the annual Eastbourne weekends which have brought so many of us a lot of joy and friendships made.

Congratulations Ted, this award is richly deserved.

The prize will be awarded each year at our AGM with a special prize for each winner to keep. Next year we will open up the award for nominations and the winner will be chosen by an independent panel.

**Join the Sunday social on 13th Feb**

Don't forget our next social on 13th Feb liv on zoom from 4pm. Fiona will be hosting and amongst all the fun there'll be a performance from our member Mark Pampell.

**Especially for guide dog owners: NFB UK meeting with The European Guide Dogs Federation (EGDF)**

Please see the message and zoom link below from Devaki regarding a meeting on Monday evening.

One of our EC member Karina Gregory Chair of Nottingham branch who is currently representing NFBUK in EGDF as a Trustee has organized a meeting with the CEO and another trustee from EGDF on Monday the 7th of February starting at 7pm.

Topic: EGDF Meeting
Time: Feb 7, 2022, 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9876541947?pwd=Zm5sUUhNSEgyNmhlaGJ1RUp1ZEF2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 987 654 1947
Passcode: 010203

**Meet the characters:  Trigger Point audio description of characters from ITV**

As you may know I am part of a visual impairment forum audio description on ITV.

They have come up with an idea in conjunction with us, of launching videos before programs are aired so that people can get an idea of the characters before the program starts, rather like they do in the theatre.

This is a video about the characters in Triggerpoint a program on ITV on Sundays.

The facilitator of the group who works for ITV has given his permission for me to share it among friends in fact he encourages me and others in the group to do so.

The video is on YouTube and the link is below.

Regards, Colin

<https://youtu.be/_oJazqxGxSA>

If you would like to send Colin your thoughts, we will pass on your messages

**Travel Hands review by Kate Portal**

As a totally blind person, I, like other visually impaired people, all find ourselves in situations where, frustratingly, we can physically walk or get public transport to a location, but simply don't know the way there so we have to decide if it's worth the journey, whether to get a cab, or just stay at home.

Over the past year or so, an organisation based in London, called Travel Hands, have started to cover this need.

They use volunteers who can assist visually impaired users in the ways I've mentioned above.  The Vi user has to register with the organisation, then arrange a trip, (if possible more than 48 hours in advance) after which the volunteer can come to a person's home or a location that the user knows such as a tube station, to be taken wherever the user has asked to go.

A trip lasting 3 hours costs £3, or for longer, (possibly 5 hours) which costs £5.  If you think that you'll be using the service very frequently, you can pay a monthly charge of £15.  (Please double-check these details with Travel Hands themselves.)

I've used them for a wide variety of trips:

  On a trip where a familiar bus -stop has become surrounded by long-term roadworks, to a regular appointment where the clinic changed addresses and became less accessible, on a one-off trip to buy a household appliance, for a walk-in booster jab and on a couple of museum trips.  There may be more that I can't think of at present!

I have also, on occasions, shared one volunteer with both my partner and myself for some outings, but always asked if they are prepared to guide both of us beforehand.

The organisation runs on a skeleton staff, but seem to be in the office a lot of the time.  Weekends are less easy to cover I think, and there's a cut off time on weekday evenings.

From what I understand, volunteers are asked to complete up-to-date paperwork regarding police checks etc and undergo a short training.

It is harder to cover less central areas and the organisation is constantly looking for more volunteers, but if someone can travel to a more central location, this can help.

A wide variety of people have signed up to assist, and it often works out that you meet someone a second time.  They also run a monthly social somewhere in town.

Travel Hands seems to be a branch of an organisation called VIP World, and there are one or 2 online meetings a week on various platforms.

I think Travel Hands is a really good initiative, and it's surprising that organisations such as the RNIB, Guide-Dogs or the Pocklington Trust haven't worked out how to run such a useful service.

Never mind, Travel Hands got there first.

Find out more about the Travel Hands service and sign up on their website:

<https://www.travelhands.co.uk/vip>

**Understanding tactile paving contributed from Alan**

Thanks to Alan for sharing this government page on the many variations of tactile paving we may all encounter. If you are unhappy with any paving issues you have the right to contact your local council to make a complaint or suggestion. In a future edition we will hear how to contact Living Streets by our member Karl .... look out in the next few weeks.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1046126/guidance-on-the-use-of-tactile-paving-surfaces.pdf>

If you want to learn more about tactile paving check out this helpful page from Henshaws

<https://www.henshaws.org.uk/tactile-pavements-tell-us/>

**RNIB - Urgent: Join us in the fight to keep the right to a secret vote**

We need your help. As I write to you now, Michael Gove's Levelling Up department is making changes to the law on how we vote which threaten the future of an independent vote for blind and partially sighted people.

The Elections Bill, just voted through by MPs, removes part of the law spelling out the irrefutable right of blind and partially sighted people to vote "without any assistance". Instead, polling station staff will only need to do what's "reasonable" to ensure a secret vote, substantially weakening our legal rights.

Blind voters count. If enough people sign our new petition we can show just how outrageous the decision is, raise the profile of this issue, increase public awareness of this change in law, and place the decision under more scrutiny. At the same time, we'll be speaking out in the media and working with Members of the Lords to encourage them to change the Bill to keep existing legal protections.

Sign the petition

<https://rnibenews.org.uk/4UA0-MOFN-14SSMV-JFZF0-0/c.aspx>

Even with the current protections in law, last year 91 per cent of blind voters at polling stations had to get someone else to help them vote. It's time to move this issue forward, not remove the protection we have.

Thank you so much for your support,

Amy Craddock

Policy Lead for Accessible Voting

**Netball – Free access to watch the London Pulse Superleague Games**

Following London Pulse Netball's successful visually impaired netball sessions with Metro Blind Sport, they are delighted to offer free tickets to blind and partially sighted people to any of their Superleague Netball games at the Copperbox Arena. A friend or family member can also attend without cost too.

For tickets for this fantastic opportunity, email raphael.bird@londonpulsenetball.com
The list of Netball games can be found here: <http://blindsport.uk/LPNetballGames>

  Netball is starting again this month

**Netball sessions start from the 22 Feb with London Pulse at the Copperbox Arena. Great opportunity to play netball in a 2012 Olympic venue.

If you are interested in playing for the first time, female and male newcomers are very much welcome to come along and try netball. Please contact Martin** **martin.symcox@metroblindsport.org** **07508958927.
Climbing – Free sessions on Friday morning's and now on a Saturday afternoon as well**

The sessions occur on Friday from 10.30 am – 12 pm at Westway Climbing Centre, and new in 2022 is a session from 2.3 pm – 4 pm. A maximum of four people can climb on Friday and two on a Saturday. Booking is essential for these popular activities.

These sessions will give you a great experience of learning how to use the ropes and gain increased confidence in climbing and navigating different types of walls within the centre. They are FREE too.

If any member wants to book a series of 4 or 5 sessions, they can contact Martin.

For those interested in climbing for the first time, please contact Martin Symcox to register your interest please contact Martin martin.symcox@metroblindsport.org **07508958927**.

**Use your voice to turn on lights**

Several members attending our AGM expressed an interest in Smart plugs.

Colin and other members were asking about the smart plugs to switch the light on and off with Alexa – and these are the ones that we use.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/TP-LINK-Tapo-Wireless-Required-P100/dp/B07Z942YWS?th=1>

They were £7.99 each a few days ago but they've gone up in price now to £9.78 so whoever buys them just keep an eye on the price.

Stephen

Many of these Smart plugs can also be used on Google. They can also be used to switch on electric fires and can be linked into heating systems. Through your phone you can remotely control lighting.

**Enjoy Fed News anywhere, anytime**

*Below is an image of the NFB logo*



The NFB are in the process of updating their website and have uploaded past Fed News for you to enjoy on your devices anywhere, anytime

<https://www.nfbuk.org/fed-news/>

Also check out their exclusive members section <https://www.nfbuk.org/wp-login.php> where you can also find past editions of London Life and learn how other branches are operating.

If you need any assistance with this please contact Devaki

**Join the Support for Sight campaign**

Fred Reid was President of NFB from 1972 to 1975. He represented NFB on the Council of RNIB from 1972 to 1987, and was a Trustee of the reformed charity from 1999 to 2007.

He is Honorary Professor of History at the University of Warwick, where he taught the subject from 1966 to 1997.

He has been blind since age fourteen, and his wife, Etta, also, from age six. Etta was employed as an NHS Physiotherapist. Together they raised three sighted children.

Fred says: "I think I can claim to know, both from personal experience and from study why rehabilitation is so important for people with serious sight loss. That is why I felt compelled to write my Guide to a Campaign for a National rehabilitation Framework, entitled 'Support for Sight Loss. I went into the history of vision rehabilitation since 1920, when The Blind Persons Act was passed. I was shocked to find that the service has never been anything else but a post code lottery since that date. It must now be made universal and I am so glad that our President and London member, Mr. Andrew Hodgson, has taken the campaign up with a strong team of members experienced in the field, professionally and otherwise."

Here is the link taken from our web site

<https://www.nfbuk.org/campaign/support-for-sight-loss/>

The Support for Sight team are looking to create a forum for members to discuss examples of good and bad rehabilitation. From these sessions we aim to create individual case studies to present as evidence for rehabilitation to become universal rather than environmental.

Please contact Fiona if you are interested.

**I'm blind and had Covid symptoms but my local testing centre turned me away**

'I'm blind and had Covid symptoms but my local testing centre turned me away' -

ttps://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/im-blind-covid-symptoms-local-22618221?utm\_source=whatsapp&utm\_medium=social&utm\_campaign=sharebar

Have you experienced similar problems during the pandemic or at the moment? Please contact Devaki or Sarah to share your story.

**News from Inclusion London**

Our upcoming Inclusion London Campaign forum on Wednesday Feb 9, 2pm to 3.30pm - will focus on the Local government elections, which will take place on 5 May 2022. All London borough councillor seats are up for election. In addition, mayoral contests are planned to be held in Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

We will also be discussing and exploring the impact of covid-19 restrictions on campaigning.

Register in advance for this meeting here

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqd-2gqDwiHtDUnplIPHgvWqqXI9c9ceHS>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Best wishes

Jon Abrams

Campaigns and Justice Coordinator

Thank you for your continued support of London NFB and the London Life newsletter. Please keep sending your articles to London@nfbuk.org and also do let us know if you no longer wish to receive the bulletin. Have a super fortnight, hopefully the weather is warming up a little and the days are getting longer.

Best wishes,

Jess

London NFB Chair