London NFB logo image:![Logo

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Dear London Members

Welcome to issue 31 of your London Life. Again a huge thanks to everyone who has contributed to this publication. We love hearing from our members as to how you are or not enjoying this bulletin. Additionally we would be interested to publish articles from you enjoying activities again or trying a new experience. London NFB UK is keen to promote peer support amongst its members so please ping us over your story.

This edition includes:

* Date of next branch meeting
* Join in the fun at our Sunday Socials
* Membership Renewal
* Croydon Vision guidance on using a support worker in education and work
* Exclusive access from Royal Collections Trust for an audio description of our Queens tapestries
* News from Middlesex Association of the Blind
* Extant survey on accessibility of theatres etc.
* News from Disability Benefits Consortium
* British Blind Sport “Join our Advisory Group and Have Your Say!”
* Invitation: Early Community Engagement Guidance – Hybrid Launch Event & Panel Discussion (21 February)
* Transport - proposed changes to Bus 145 and N145

# Date of next branch meeting

Wednesday 23 February live from 5pm.

Use the usual London Zoom link. We have now added the waiting room to our zoom meetings for added security so please do join 5-10mins before the meeting starts so you can be admitted and we can start promptly.

Here is a chance to meet the new Committee line up and go through branch matters.

We will also be joined by Ishan Jha from Travel Hands.

<https://zoom.us/j/9876541948?pwd=SDlKOHRLMmtWbVlCaGNIbnNHYjQ5dz09>

Phone: 0203 481 5240

Meeting ID: 987 654 1948

Passcode: 010203

# Join in the fun at our Sunday Socials

Every second Sunday of the month, the London branch host a specially designed Sunday Social live on Zoom for members. Last Sunday we enjoyed music from our talented members Terry White and Mark Pampel, on the piano, with his own composition. Through a quiz we learnt the truth behind Valentine’s Day and attempted a new game called Chain Letters.



Above. Is a photo of two heart shaped ginger biscuits baked by our multi-talented Chair Jess for Valentine’s Day.

Our next Sunday Social will be on Sunday 14 March live on zoom from 4pm.

# Membership Renewal

A huge thanks to everyone who has already paid their 2022 membership fee. Over the next few weeks we will be contacting all members to complete our new online registration form. This does not apply to members who. Joined after February 2021. It does, however, include associate and life members.

If you require any assistance in completing this form please contact us and a member of the team will contact you.

The reason for this is to streamline operations and comply with GDPR requirements that we are continuing to review our data management.

# Croydon Vision guidance on using a support worker in education and work

For those who use or are interested in using a support worker, there is a fantastic opportunity for you next week in Croydon. Please see below the invitation from Odette of Croydon Vision and if you are interested in the event, please contact her directly.

On Wednesday 23 February from 4.45 to 7.00 pm in the Refectory at Croydon College

College Rd, Croydon CR9 1DX

There will be an event all about how to use a support worker in Education and in the Work environment.

How to get a grant, recruit and use a support worker. What the DWP expects of you and much more!

There will be speakers from Croydon College, Access to Work DWP and Croydon Vision with students and visually impaired people talking about their experiences, and there will be time to ask questions.

If you are interested let me know we can meet at Croydon Vision earlier and walk there.

Let me know if you would like to attend so we can put you on the register.

Best regards

Odette Battarel

Croydon Vision

odette.battarel@croydonvision.org.uk

# Exclusive access from Royal Collections Trust for an audio description of our Queens tapestries

I am delighted to confirm that our next Descriptive Zoom, on the 1 March, from 2pm, will examine some of the wonderful, historic tapestries on display at the Palace of Holyrood house – The Queen’s Official Residence in Scotland.

The Description will cover the remarkable detail and characters shown in two tapestries, one from the 17th century, and the second from the 18th century. This will be followed by a short talk on the myths, legends and stories shown, and why these tapestried are so important to the Palace of Holyrood house.

To register your free place and be sent the audio overview please do email me - [amy.stocker@rct.uk](mailto:amy.stocker@rct.uk)

The joining details, as always, are:

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9044769010?pwd=ZmwwdVZKdjFMVnNJWlMvbXRzOUpSdz09

Meeting ID: 904 476 9010

Passcode: 624813

With very best wishes,

Amy

# News from Middlesex Association of the Blind

London Life is keen to share information on other groups supporting our members. Thanks to Roy for sharing the attached newsletter.

# Extant survey on accessibility of theatres etc.

Here at Extant we are conducting some research into the effects of the pandemic on the accessibility of theatre (live and online) and taking an audit of the current barriers to accessing theatre performances for visually impaired people. This research is fundamental to the development of our work increasing the range and spread of accessible work within the arts sector, and as valued participants, members, artists, and theatre-makers, we would love to hear your thoughts.

We would really appreciate it if you could spare us some time to take the short survey featured on Survey Monkey at the link below, please.

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/J7SMD33

If you would like to take part in the survey but would prefer to answer the questions over the phone, please email [projects@extant.org.uk](mailto:projects@extant.org.uk) to let us know and we will organise this with you.

Thanks in advance and very best wishes,

Rhianne

# News from Disability Benefits Consortium

You may be aware that yesterday the Work and Pensions Select Committee used their parliamentary powers to publish the report The Uses of Health and Disability Benefits commissioned by the Government into disabled people’s experiences of the benefits system that the DWP had consistently refused to make public.

The DBC, along with others have been campaigning hard to get the government to publish this report so we’re really pleased that it is now finally available to read and share. I’m sure it will come as no surprise to anyone that it contains some shocking accounts of disabled people struggling to pay for day-to-day essentials.

We have put a news story on our website and have issued a comment to the media which was picked up by Patrick Butler of the Guardian, and Dan Bloom in the Mirror. We know it’s a busy time in the news at the moment but this story is an opportunity to highlight the impact the cost of living crisis will have on some disabled people if the government don’t do more and increase current rates of social security.

Also yesterday, CPAG, along with DBC, and 30+ organisations have published a joint letter, calling on the government to increase benefits by 6% in line with current inflation, instead of the 3.1% planned.

We would love it if you could share with your networks the work above to make people aware of the report, and the joint letter, and get everyone to start calling for benefits to be increased by 6% in April.

We plan to work with these organisations and members to continue to campaign for this ahead of the planned increase in April. After we all came together for the Keep the Lifeline campaign last year, we showed that there is strength in numbers, so do keep an eye out for more activity in the future. We’re sure many of you will already be involved and planning actions. Please share them with us so we can tell other members and wherever you can push the message - Increase benefits by 6% in April (just in case you didn’t catch that)!

Thanks,

The DBC Steering Group

Anastasia Berry

Policy Manager (Welfare & Technology) | MS Society

# British Blind Sport “Join our Advisory Group and Have Your Say!”

Join our Advisory Group to Shape New Research!

Join our Advisory Group and Have Your Say!

British Blind Sport is working with Traverse, an independent social purpose research organisation, to better understand cultural barriers to physical activity among blind and partially sighted people from ethnically diverse communities.

What is the Advisory Group?

The Advisory Group's purpose is to help guide the focus of this research project and ensure that the research project is designed and delivered in a way that is fully inclusive of blind and partially sighted people. Members of the Advisory Group will be asked to:

sense check the overall aims of the research project.

inform the way that research materials such as interview questions are designed.

inform the way that research participants are recruited to this project and who we speak to.

review the findings from the research and comment on key messages.

help publicise the findings from this project to maximise potential impact.

Who Can Join?

We are looking for up to 8 members with a mix of relevant experiences to join the Advisory Group. We would be interested in hearing from you if you:

have lived experience of being blind or partially sighted.

identify as belonging to an ethnically diverse community.

are passionate about improving access to sport and physical activity.

Members of the Advisory Group will meet online 3 times for 2 hours over the course of 10 months, from February to November 2022. Members will be asked to review documents and materials in order to prepare for each meeting. British Blind Sport will help and support you every step of the way. We don't expect you to be "experts," we would like to hear about your personal experiences!

If you are interested in participating, please fill out the following short form: https://research.typeform.com/to/IYzremaI

If you have any questions, you can contact BBS National Partnerships Manager, Alexandra Pitts by using the following email address: alex@britishblindsport.org.uk or phoning 07929 356428

# Invitation: Early Community Engagement Guidance – Hybrid Launch Event & Panel Discussion (21 February)

A while ago we invited Sandy from our Scotland branch to talk about creating an inclusive environment. Here is now a chance for London members to become involved in discussions at a local level.

Westminster City Council invites you to join us on Monday 21 February for a hybrid breakfast launch event and panel discussion to mark the publication of the council’s new Early Community Engagement guidance for applicants and developers.

https://www.westminster.gov.uk/planning-building-and-environmental-regulations/early-community-engagement-guidance

Date: 21 February 2022

Time: 08:00–09:30 (online event begins at 08:30)

Register for the event

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/early-community-engagement-guidance-launch-event-tickets-260129834337

The Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning, Cllr Matthew Green, will introduce the session and launch the new guidance. The event will assist developers, their agents and community representatives to more clearly understand the council's expectations for pre-application engagement, will identify the key principles of the new guidance and explore how these will support developers to deliver earlier, more inclusive and more transparent and responsive community engagement in Westminster.

Following the introduction on the new guidance, a panel will discuss the benefits of early community engagement and how best to develop and adopt best practice community engagement.

Panellists:

Councillor Robert Rigby (Chair), Chairman of Planning, Westminster City Council

Deirdra Armsby, Director of Place Shaping and Town Planning, Westminster City Council

Simon Birkett, Chair, Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum

Nicola Rochfort, Senior Community Engagement Manager, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland

To attend the event in person please email planningconsultation@westminster.gov.uk in addition to registering for the online event at the link above (note that places for in person attendance are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis with priority for community representatives).

If you are able to attend this meeting we would appreciate a short report for one of our future London Life bulletins

# Transport - proposed changes to Bus 145 and N145

Transport for London regularly review the day and night bus networks so that we can ensure that we are directing our limited resources to the places and routes where they are most needed. We are proposing to permanently withdraw the night service on route 145 (or N145 for the purposes of this consultation). There are no plans to make any changes to day services on route 145 and these will continue as they do now.

The night service on route 145 (again, referred to for the purposes of this consultation as N145) was introduced in 2016 as a two buses per hour service between the hours of 00:30 and 05:00 on Friday night to Saturday morning and Saturday night to Sunday morning. The N145 has been suspended as part of our response to the coronavirus pandemic since the spring of 2020.

Before the pandemic, our data showed that the number of passengers using the N145 was consistently less than half the expected number, and this had remained the case for the previous three years. In order to ensure our limited resources are being used where they are most needed, we are therefore proposing to withdraw this weekend only night service on the 145.

We would like to hear your views on this proposal so that we can understand and take into account any issues or concerns before a decision is made.

You can have your say by visiting our dedicated consultation website at: https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/bus-route-n145 and completing a short online survey. You will need to register with your email address in order to access the survey - your information will be kept securely and only used, with your permission to keep you updated on the proposal. If you would prefer not to complete the survey you can also email your comments to haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk or write to us at FREEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (no stamp needed).

Please let us have your views by Thursday 24 March 2022.

Wow another jammed pack edition on activities available to you in our region. We look forward to catching up with you again soon.

Keep “Walking on Sunshine”!

Kind regards

Fiona

London NFB UK