

# Local Support Groups

[audio:http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/01\_local\_support\_groups.mp3|titles=[ Newsletter Mailing List ]



There are a number of other groups and societies for people with a visual impairment across Oxfordshire. Most of them run as a place to meet, share a coffee, tea, and a chat. Others are craft based, while a few organise regular activities or outings.

There is a meeting group specifically for younger people with a visual impairment, and another that exists for children with a visual impairment and their parents and guardians.

OAB works to support each of these groups as best we can; some of these groups are run directly by OAB. We would welcome any calls from people who would like to volunteer to help with an existing group, or even to set up a new one.

Below is a list of local groups:

**Abingdon & District Macular Group** – 01235 531857.

**ActivEyes** – a group for active visually impaired people from across Oxfordshire. The group would be pleased to meet anyone who wishes to attend and suggestions for future activities are always welcome. Contact [Guylawfull@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:Guylawfull@oxeyes.org.uk) for more details.

**Banbury Macular Group** – meet on the second Thursday of every month from 2-4pm at Banbury Methodist Church, Marlborough Road, Banbury OX16 5BZ. Please contact 01608 685293.

**Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired** – 01295 269568.

**Carterton Group** – 01865 725595.

**Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind** – 01608 810899.

**Didcot / Wallingford Visually Impaired Group** – 01235 813391.

**Goring Macular Group** – 01865 725595.

**Henley Visually Impaired Group** – 01491 628284.

**Kidlington Macular Group** – 01865 376482 or 01865 373104.

**LOOK Oxfordshire** – support for families of visually impaired children. 01189 722322.

**Oxford Macular Group** – 01993 811084.

**'OXVIC'** – Oxford Visually Impaired Club – 01865 725595.

[The Oxfordshire Sports Partnership](#) – Sports for people with disabilities. 01865 252661.

**Thame & District Society for the Visually Impaired** – 01844 212983.

**'VIBNO'** – Visually Impaired But Not Old! A group for the 18 – 50 age group in Oxfordshire to meet socially and have fun. Call 01869 331778.

**Witney Area Visually Impaired Group** – 01865 725595.

**Witney Macular Group** – 01993 771828.

**Wantage Blind Social Club** – Meet on the second Saturday of each month from February to December at the Wantage Day Centre from 3 – 5pm. Transport is available. For more information please call 01235 765849.

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# Visual Impairment Awareness Training

[audio:[http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/02\\_visual\\_impairment\\_awareness\\_training.mp3](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/02_visual_impairment_awareness_training.mp3)|titles=[ Visual Impairment Awareness Training ]

OAB runs training courses that help people to understand how it may affect someone to live with sight loss. These sessions give sighted participants the knowledge and confidence to offer effective assistance to those with visual impairments.

We have provided awareness training to organisations across Oxfordshire, from the NHS and large care providers to small voluntary sector groups. Our workshops are highly regarded. Recent comments include:

‘We have several clients who will benefit immensely from the heightened awareness.’

‘(Participants) all brought something away from this and will probably be talking about it for some time to come.’

‘... a good insight into understanding the needs of people with a visual impairment.’

Workshops are tailored to individual requirements but often include: insight into how different eye conditions may impact on people’s everyday lives; practical tips on assisting someone with a visual impairment and helping them be as independent as possible; a practical introduction to sighted guiding; some of the adaptations, equipment and daily living aids that facilitate independence.

These are practical workshops, with a mixture of information

and activities. The sessions can take place at your premises, in which case your own work environment can be incorporated into the training, or at OAB.

For more information, please download the leaflet OAB Awareness Training using the link below, phone **01865 725595** or email: [director@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:director@oxeyes.org.uk)

[OAB awareness training](#)

[OAB awareness training PDF](#)

[Awareness training price list](#)

[Awareness training price list PDF](#)

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## Tour d'Oxon Cycle Ride

**'Tour d'Oxon' – A sponsored cycle ride around Oxfordshire**

OAB's Director, Colin Cure, and his partner Diane Evans braved the wind and rain during a 3 day cycle tour around Oxfordshire in a bid to raise £2,000 in support of the local groups for the county's blind and partially sighted people.



The couple set themselves the challenge of cycling a roughly circular route around the county – an estimated distance of 160 miles – over 3 days from 13th to 15th September.

Despite difficult weather conditions, they travelled through

Thame, Henley, East Hagbourne, Didcot, Harwell, Wantage, Carterton, Witney, Ascot-under-Wychwood, Chipping Norton, Banbury and back to Oxford. On their way round they were able to link up on the way with many of the groups for visually impaired people across the county. The image below shows Colin and Diane with members of the Chipping Norton group.



Oxfordshire Association for the Blind supports 11 local groups around the county, where people with a visual impairment can meet on a regular basis, share experiences and receive support and friendship.

By touring the county Colin and Diane are hoping to raise essential funds to help towards the costs of transporting the visually impaired group members to OAB's Resource Centre in Oxford where they will be able to receive specialist advice, have access to our counselling service and try out a range of equipment that can help them to retain their independence.

Colin states: "OAB's Resource Centre offers a wealth of ways that we can help people with limited, or loss of, vision. We want to ensure that as many people as possible across the county can benefit from a visit to the centre and not be restricted by being unable to get here easily".

You can sponsor Colin and Diane via their online fundraising page at <http://www.justgiving.com/Colin-Cure>

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# Skydive for the Blind

## Skydive for the Blind

Teresa Burnage from Drayton, near Abingdon, and her daughter, Jasmine, undertook a Tandem Skydive on 24 July to raise funds for OAB.

Teresa and Jasmine did their jumps at Hinton airfield, near Banbury, jumping from 13,000 ft and reaching speeds of up to 130 mph on descent!

Teresa, who has a visual impairment, was pleased to have done the jump, but took a full 24 hours to recover. Jasmine, meanwhile, upon landing immediately asked if she could do it again!

Teresa takes up the story:



“We had perfect weather on the day and all our nervousness disappeared as soon as we donned our jumpsuits. The instructors were fantastic and kept us calm throughout. The flight, jump and landing went without a hitch and the views were amazing!

Unfortunately, although my daughter came away wanting to do it again, I was rather ill afterwards – it was all in a good cause though, and worth the suffering!



On behalf of myself and my daughter I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated towards our skydive, raising funds for OAB”.

At OAB we are delighted that Teresa and Jasmine have gone to such lengths to support us. They raised a magnificent £1,250, plus Gift Aid, which is a wonderful contribution to help our work with blind and partially sighted people across Oxfordshire. The money will be used to support the work we do with our groups for visually impaired people across the county.

It also demonstrates that visual impairment need not be a barrier to a very active (and adventurous) life.

To find out more about taking part in a Skydive for OAB, contact our Fundraising Team on **01865 725595** or at [fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk)

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## Volunteer

[audio:http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/03\_volunteering\_with\_OAB.mp3|titles=[ Volunteering with OAB ]



OAB has over 100 volunteers, who are vital to our work. They help in the office, send out our newsletter, run our groups and staff the [OAB Sight Desk](#) at the Oxford Eye Hospital. Many are part of the [Volunteer Home Visiting Scheme](#), giving around an hour a week to visit a visually impaired person at home.

There is no 'typical' OAB volunteer. Some are in their teens (18+), others retired years ago. Some have personal experience of visual impairment, most have none. But between them, their contribution enables us to offer an array of services that would be impossible without their help.

The organisation is committed to good practice in all aspects of our involvement with volunteers. Volunteers are given clear role descriptions and appropriate training. They are covered by our insurance policy and their out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed. Each volunteer has a named member of staff who is responsible for their work and for ensuring that their experience of volunteering is as positive as possible.

Through volunteering with OAB, you can help to make a real difference to people's lives. Below you will find more information on some of the specific roles carried out by our volunteers.

### **Home Visiting Scheme**

Many of OAB's volunteers are Home Visitors. This scheme partners a volunteer with a visually-impaired person who they visit at home, to spend some social time together and to help with everyday tasks that become difficult with impaired sight.

Depending on the individual's needs, this may include dealing

with correspondence and personal finance. Some volunteers go out with the person they visit, perhaps to the local park or shops. Others help with things like writing cards, wrapping presents or sorting a CD collection, while for some people, a visitor for a chat and a cup of tea is a weekly pleasure and can help to relieve social isolation.

Key facts:

- Volunteer Home Visitors need to be literate and numerate. Most important, you should be patient, reliable and honest.
- Most volunteers visit once a week for about an hour.
- All volunteers are police checked and OAB will take up two references.
- At the moment, this scheme operates in Oxford, Abingdon and Kidlington.

Please email our Volunteering Coordinator, at [volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk) for an information pack.

### **Group Volunteer: OXVIC**

OXVIC is OAB's social group in Oxford. About 20, mostly elderly, people get together for a chat and an afternoon tea. There may be activities such as a crossword, and recent meetings have included a talk from the Guide Dogs Association about training a puppy, and a visit from a raconteur who played, sang and told stories. The group is run by volunteers, who set up the room, serve refreshments, help members in and out of the building, and run the activities.

Key facts:

- We are looking for people who are friendly, sociable and patient. You also need to be reliable and honest.
- The group meets twice a month on Tuesday afternoons.
- The group meets at our Bradbury Lodge premises.
- All volunteers are police checked and OAB will take up

two references.

Please email our Volunteering Coordinator at [volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk) for more information.

### **Other volunteering roles**

In addition to the volunteering opportunities described on this page, volunteers work with OAB in: administrative support at OAB's offices; helping with tasks such as sending out newsletters; supporting social groups in various towns throughout the County; managing collecting boxes around the county; staffing the OAB Sight Desk at the Oxford Eye Hospital and fundraising. Please keep an eye on these pages if you are interested.

We also have a team of volunteers who are highly computer-literate and provide an IT support service to visually-impaired people at home. If you are suitably qualified and would like to know more, please email our Volunteering Coordinator at [volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk) or call **01865 725595**.

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## **Our History**

[audio:http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/01\_our\_history.mp3|titles=[ Our History ]

Here we chart our journey from our humble beginnings in 1877 right through to the present day with our recently opened annexe to Bradbury Lodge. We hope you find it of interest.

### **1877**

Foundation of "Oxfordshire Association for the Home Teaching of the Blind". The group's aims were to provide instruction in

reading and writing, and to assist in obtaining work for blind people.

### **1896**

Name changed to "The Oxford Society for Visiting and Providing Books for the Blind". However, it appears that this name was soon shortened to "The Oxford Society for the Blind". The books and magazines provided by the Society were in Braille and Moon. The teacher's salary was 30 shillings (£1.50) a month.

### **1903**

It was agreed for the next year "to provide for visiting, at their own homes, the blind throughout the county".

### **1904**

"The Oxford Society for the Blind" amalgamated with "The Oxfordshire and Midland Home Teaching Society". In that year a County Visitor was employed, but only from January to the end of August as: "it seemed to the Sub-Committee that this was as long a period as the subscriptions would allow them to employ his services". A total of 122 people were helped during the year, with annual subscriptions totalling £76 – 0s -2d.

### **1913**

"The Oxford Society for the Blind" opened a shop at 4 Little Clarendon Street, Oxford, where blind people were employed to sell their own work and orders taken for piano-tuning and chair-caning. The shop also contained a library of books in Braille. The Society's register contained 145 names of blind people, of which 53 were in the city.

### **1920**

"The Oxford Society for the Blind" was registered under the Blind Persons' Act (1920).

## **1922**

Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council accepted the assistance of Oxford Society for the Blind in providing teaching to blind people in the county.

## **1929**

Shops employing blind people to sell their own work were opened by the charity in Banbury and Bicester.

## **1948**

The name of the charity was changed to "Oxford (City and County) Society for the Blind".

## **1962**

The Rt Hon. the 8th Countess of Macclesfield became vice-president.

## **1974**

Offices at 3 Enstone Road, Charlbury, were purchased.

## **1975**

Changes to local government boundaries led to an extension of the area covered by the charity to include Abingdon, Didcot and Wallingford.

## **1977**

In its centenary year, the charity's name was changed to "Oxfordshire Association for the Blind" (OAB). This was also the year in which OAB registered with the Charity Commission.

## **1994**

The Rt Hon. the 9th Countess of Macclesfield became patron, following the death of the 8th Countess.

## **1996**

OAB sold its Charlbury property and relocated to rented property at The White House, Rivermead Rehabilitation Hospital, in Oxford City.

## **1997**

A "Sight Advisory Service", providing on the spot information, advice, counselling and emotional support for newly registered blind or partially sighted people, was established by OAB at Oxford Eye Hospital.

## **2002**

Moved temporarily to 9 Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford, following the sale of Rivermead Hospital by the NHS.

## **2005**

Purchased property in Gordon Woodward Way, Oxford, on the site of the old Rivermead hospital. The building was purchased thanks to a grant from the Bradbury Foundation.

## **2006**

Moved into Bradbury Lodge in August. The new centre was officially opened by The Rt Hon. the 9th Countess of Macclesfield.

Equipment and visual aid demonstration services were provided from a temporary building in the car park.

Over the course of the year more than 2,000 visually impaired people and their carers were supported by OAB in some way. The charity also worked with 11 local self-help groups for visually impaired people.

## **2010**

In February, OAB teamed up with Banbury Museum to host

BlindArt's "Touching Art Touching You" exhibition. The exhibition had more than 25,000 visitors, helping to promote the needs and abilities of local blind and partially sighted people.

OAB's volunteer home visiting scheme awarded accreditation by the Mentoring and Befriending Association.

North Oxfordshire project helped to form two new societies for sight impaired people in the area.

## **2011**

Major fundraising campaign to build an annexe to our existing building. Our appeal champion was Colin Dexter, famous local author of the "Morse" mysteries and visually impaired himself.

OAB becomes registered as a company limited by guarantee.

## **2012**

The Campoli Centre opens to offer Oxfordshire's largest, best-equipped and only specialist visual impairment drop-in resource centre.