

Volunteer Voice

Summer 2024

Macular Society
Beating Macular Disease



Members enjoying the Lurgan art therapy support group

With sunny weather back on the agenda, it's great to see so many brilliant volunteers like you springing into action.

Whether it's organising fun day trips for your support group, calling up someone in need of a friendly ear or sharing your tips and tricks for using technology; your energy is remarkable.

Thank you for brightening up the days of people affected by macular disease and sharing your time, wisdom and care with those who need it.

Sadly, I will soon be retiring, but before I go, please know how incredibly proud I am of each and every one of our amazing volunteers. Thank you for

everything you do, it is always a pleasure to highlight your wonderful work.

Inside this issue, I'm pleased to share some fantastic ways support groups around the UK are trying new things to engage their members and how, as volunteers, you can access more support from us.

I hope you enjoy your magazine and have a splendid summer,



Cathy Yelf,
Chief executive



Pass me on!

Please read and share with other volunteers.

We're here for you...

We are very grateful for everything you do to support people affected by macular disease and want to help you grow your skills and confidence in your role.

How can I learn from other volunteers?

Ask your volunteer manager if there are regular volunteer calls or opportunities in your area where you can share tips, ideas and support.



How can I grow my group numbers?

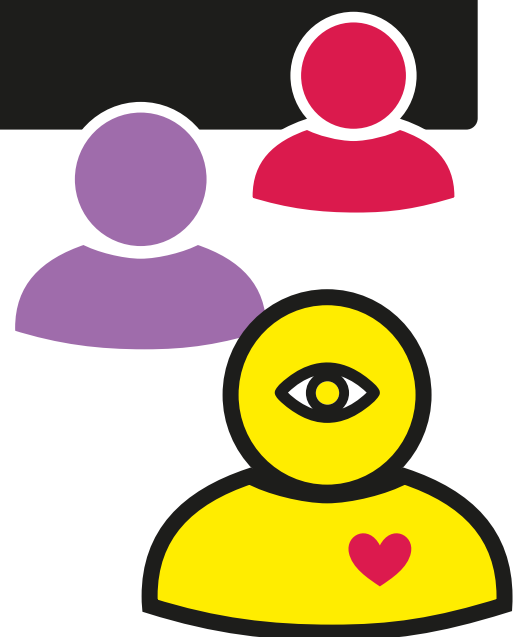
Do you help run a local support group? You can reach out to your regional manager for suggestions or visit nearby groups to swap ideas.



Where can I find support if I need it?

On the back page of this magazine you will find a list of handy contact details for teams and individuals that can help you and answer any questions you may have.

Don't forget, if you are affected personally by macular disease, you can also access our services like befriending, connect by tech and counselling. Call the helpline on **0300 3030 111** to find out more.



“I try to make sure everyone feels listened to”



Joyce, 97 is the dedicated group leader of our Bearsden and Milngavie support group in Scotland. Since taking on her role only two years ago, group numbers have grown steadily and Joyce has been praised for taking members’ feedback onboard to create a varied schedule of meetups.

We asked Joyce for her advice on how to keep group members engaged.

“We meet nine times in the year and I try to have seven speakers on totally different subjects,” Joyce explained.

“I try to get them together to tell me what they really would

like to do and what things have been of interest to them over the past year, and what things were not interesting for them. I try to make sure everyone feels welcome and listened to. That’s really important,” she added.

In recent months, activities have included a representative from DeafBlind Scotland talking about the challenges of dual sensory loss, a gadget guide demonstrating handy equipment for the visually impaired and a professor from Edinburgh University sharing the latest research findings.

In June, Joyce has planned her first group day trip, hiring a coach to Loch Lomond (pictured below). Here’s to a dry day with plenty of sunshine for you all!



Over to you...

Across the UK, dedicated volunteers like you are going the extra mile to keep our support groups going strong. Here are some great examples you've shared.

Phone friends



During the pandemic many support groups switched from face-to-face to telephone meetings. The Hastings and Rother group in East Sussex were one of these groups, and they have continued to meet on the phone due to difficulties in arranging transport and other issues.

However, group members love meeting over the phone and have regular speakers from local and national organisations, and they all say how much they enjoy their monthly catch-ups!

Teamwork makes the dream work!

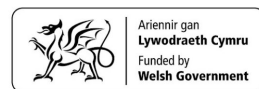
In Wales, many of our group members have been taking on smaller volunteer roles to put less pressure on volunteers and get more people involved in the running of groups.

Senior regional manager for south Wales, Adele explained: "It seems to have worked really well. Most people are happy to do something, but they might not want a big role. Maybe somebody keeps the money, somebody else would buy the tea and coffee. There are lots of different roles.



"That was the idea, to get people out of the house, give them a purpose and make them feel more involved," she added.

Our services in Wales are kindly supported by funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, the Welsh Government Connected Communities: Loneliness and Social Isolation Grant Fund and Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations.



Express your creativity

In Northern Ireland, a new group has developed after the Lurgan support group members revealed to senior regional manager for NI, Emma that they were missing taking part in creative hobbies such as art and sewing.

Led by Emma, together they have launched the Lurgan art therapy support group, to allow people to enjoy some of the skills they used to take part in before their sight loss.

At the first session, members made pictures using air-dry clay, and they are looking forward to the next meeting where they have suggested creating Christmas ornaments. Emma has also run a session at the Newtownards support group and is happy to set up more local hobby groups in the area if there is a demand.

If you're based in Northern Ireland and would like to start a hobby group, get in touch with Emma on emma.baxter@macularsociety.org or contact your local regional manager to discuss any opportunities in your area.



Tell us more

Do you have a story to share or an individual you'd like us to celebrate in Volunteer Voice?

Speak to your regional manager or email editor@macularsociety.org

Volunteer updates

Join our training sessions

We're here to support you so you can have the best volunteering experience, and we're now updating our mandatory training for all volunteers to make it easier for you to attend.

There are two training sessions we're legally required to provide to both staff and volunteers; data protection and safeguarding.

The sessions will take place predominantly on Zoom, where you can join on video call or be dialled in via conference call. You will be sent details and a selection of dates and times for you to choose from.

If you have any questions, please chat to Aishah, the volunteer manager, on **01264 601 041** or email aaishah.khan@macularsociety.org



Understanding your privacy



We've recently made some changes to our privacy policy, which sets out what information we gather and keep about our members and supporters.

You can read the updated policy at macularsociety.org/privacy and change how you hear from us at any time by calling **01264 350 551**, or emailing info@macularsociety.org

Macular Disease Conference 2024 **Hope for the Future**

Save the date!

This year's Macular Disease Conference will take place on Saturday 14 September online.

To find out more, visit macularsociety.org/conference

“Help is out there”

Caroline Noall (pictured right), Newport support group leader, has recently been presented with a platinum volunteer award for training over 100 people in Skills for Seeing. We caught up with Caroline to learn more about her volunteering highlights.

What do you enjoy most about delivering Skills for Seeing training?

“My first guinea pig was my dad, who had macular disease, and I helped him tell the time on the clock in this care home when he was in his mid-90s. I didn’t expect it to work, but it did.

“There are so many things you can do, not necessarily to the same ability or standard, but there are techniques and adaptations you can try.

“Eccentric viewing won’t work for everybody but I hope people can gain something from the sessions. I can signpost them to other services like counselling or the helpline. There’s so much out there and I like encouraging people to take the help, because help is out there.”



Why do you like volunteering for the Macular Society?

“It’s great because the Macular Society supports volunteers so well. You’ve got a regional manager, head office and individuals specialising in different aspects. There’s always somebody you can talk something over with, lots of support, training and rewards.”

To make a referral to Skills for Seeing, please call our Macular Society Helpline on 0300 3030 111.

Support for you

Making the most of your Macular Society volunteering

From role-specific development and training to updates and refreshers, we run volunteer sessions across the UK and encourage you to attend. These are a great way to get together with fellow volunteers to ask questions, share experiences and make new friends.

“I learn something new every time and it’s reassuring to know that I am doing things right. The hints and tips are a good way to learn and share with others.”

Caroline, Skills for Seeing volunteer



Please contact your volunteer manager for details of upcoming sessions.

Your key contacts

- For all services and support-related enquiries:
Helpline 0300 3030 111
- For regional support or contact details for your regional manager:
Groups admin 01264 560 259
- For volunteering support:
Volunteer manager 01264 601 041
- For information about fundraising and membership:
Supporter care 01264 350 551
- For befriending queries:
Befriending 01264 326 622

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