



Middlesex Association for the Blind

Working locally with blind, partially sighted and
deaf-blind people

OUTLOOK

**AUTUMN/WINTER
EDITION 2020**

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Registered Charity No. 207007



Mission Statement

The Middlesex Association for the Blind aims to support people who are blind, partially sighted and deaf-blind, to lead independent lives. The Association achieves this through the local provision and delivery of a range of high quality services, advice and information to people across nine London boroughs

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Message from our CEO Sahib Singh



To all our MAB clients and Supporters

I need to thank you all.

I have written to you twice this year asking for financial assistance.

As you know, at MAB we are entirely dependent on donations and gifts to do the work that we do in our boroughs.

I wrote to you in June celebrating the life of a very private man who had left us a bequest, and I asked you to consider making a bequest to us yourselves.

Later in the year, in December, I wrote to you again asking for help with a financial gift, for Sarah. Sarah is a client who was waiting for support. I told you that I needed another £600 to be able to support Sarah in 2021, and to ensure that she got beyond her garden gate more than the twice she did in 2020.

I am absolutely thrilled to tell you that **I was overwhelmed by your quick and generous response** to both of my letters. A number of you came forward to hear more about how to leave a bequest to us. Thank you for this interest. Your gifts will go a long way to ensuring that our work continues far into the future.

And for Sarah... you may be pleased to hear **that thanks to you all digging deep into your pockets over**

Christmas, we have secured enough funding to make sure that Sarah gets the weekly support she needs from now on. So many of you were so generous, and I want to thank you all.

If you didn't manage to give to either of these appeals, and you would still like to make a donation for our work, or to set up a direct debit, please use any one of the channels listed below.

Until then, I wish you all a good 2021. May it be better than 2020 for all of us.

Kind regards

Sahib Singh
Chief Executive Officer

- **Text MAB 20** to 70450 to donate £20
- **Text MABM 20** to 70450 to donate £20 on a monthly basis
- Phone us on 0208 423 5141 to make a **telephonic donation** or to create a **Direct Debit**
- Online donations: visit www.aftb.org.uk/donations/ and click on the **Paypal** or **JustGiving** options.
- Create a **Standing Order** at your bank using our bank details: Middlesex Association for the Blind, HSBC, Account number 41187295, sort code 40-42-28
- **Cheque:** post a cheque to us. Our address is MAB, Suite 18, Freetrade House, Lowther Road, Stanmore, HA7 1EP.

MAB Services and News

Big Yellow

Our 2021 Large Print Calendar was sent out in October. All our thanks to Nasreen for working tirelessly to mastermind its printing and distribution. This year we teamed up again with Big Yellow Self Storage, who have provided MAB with a free storage unit at their Alperton branch for several years, to bring you The Big Yellow Calendar.



Our thanks to Big Yellow and the staff at Alperton for all their support.

We keep some spares so if you haven't received a calendar and would like your own copy then please call the office.

Jayantibala Dave, a MAB client, attends the IT training at Head Office this year.

"I used to love reading before I lost my eyesight," she explained. "Now, with this computer package that magnifies, I hope to be able to read again. And if I can learn enough about the IT, then when my eyesight goes I will be able to listen to audio books. Reading books and travelling was what gave my life meaning. My husband and I used to go to a place, then google, and explore everything around there. I won't be able to do that anymore. That will all be gone. But I will have my memories and I will have the colours in my mind."



Understanding MAB and the work that we do

To best understand our programmes, let's look at them from the point of view of one of our clients.

Losing sight is about losing more than one sensory faculty...

Umesh started losing his sight when he was 65 years old. He realised it was serious when the faces of people around him were permanently blurred. Soon after that, he could not see steps and he found himself tripping and falling repeatedly. After one too many trips to A & E, he decided to face his fears and visit the Ophthalmologist. The string of appointments that followed didn't bring him any hope. In fact, it did the opposite. He returned home after the last visit with the knowledge that his sight was going to deteriorate rapidly from then on.

Losing sight is about working through depression...

Umesh withdrew into himself as he tried to process these facts. He looked around at his home that he had lived in for the previous 30 years, and wondered what he should do with all his possessions. He had always known he would need to clear out and downscale, he just hadn't thought it would happen so soon. Determined not to be a victim of his sight loss and not wanting to leave his daughter with the responsibility of sorting through his possessions, he started working through the rooms in his house. To his horror, he found that the more he tried to sort and throw out, the more accidents he had. He knocked pictures off the wall by mistake. He struggled to clean up the broken glass, and cut himself. He forgot that he had put some files at the top of the stairs to take downstairs later for disposal, and not seeing them he

tripped and only just managed to stop himself falling



Our Mobile Resource Unit is a converted motor home that drives around the borough giving advice and support about visual impairments. We also exhibit assistive devices that help with tasks for daily living, as well as assistive computer software. Visit our website to find out when our MRU will be parked at a location near you. On the right hand photo, Alex demonstrates a magnifier for a visitor to the MRU.

down the stairs and ending up in hospital once again. Umesh started to get depressed about his situation. To cheer himself up he decided to visit his sister on the other side of the borough. On his way to the bus stop he misjudged a pavement, and found himself flat on his face in the street. People rushed to help, they steadied him, wiped the blood off his forehead, and one kind lady accompanied him home to make sure he got there safely. He phoned his sister to say that he wouldn't be coming today after all. After much thought Umesh decided that going out alone was no longer possible for him. He withdrew further into himself and within a couple of weeks he found himself deeply depressed.

And needing help...

His daughter realised that he needed help, and while she wished she could be the one to assist him, realistically she had her hands full with her young family. One day she went shopping at Morrisons at Hatch End, and there she saw the MAB Mobile Resource Unit. She had seen it parked there before, but had never imagined that anyone in her family would need the services of an organisation that helped blind people. She put the shopping in the car and knocked on the door of the Unit to hear more. Alex told her about MAB and our services and showed her a number of devices such as magnifiers and liquid level indicators that her father may find helpful as he negotiated tasks around the house.

Often, in the form of counselling...

When she got home, Umesh's daughter phoned MAB head office and had a conversation with our administrator. Before the week was finished the Support



Worker for her borough had visited her father. She assessed his needs and realised for a start that he should be given the option of Rapid Response Counselling, to help him work through his depression. Umesh agreed to this, and the next week Raheel, our Counsellor, started his weekly sessions with Umesh. Raheel visits people in their homes, so Umesh didn't have to face going out just then, when his emotional turmoil about his sight loss could have resulted in him having more physical accidents. Raheel came every week from then on, and gradually Umesh started coming to terms with his loss.

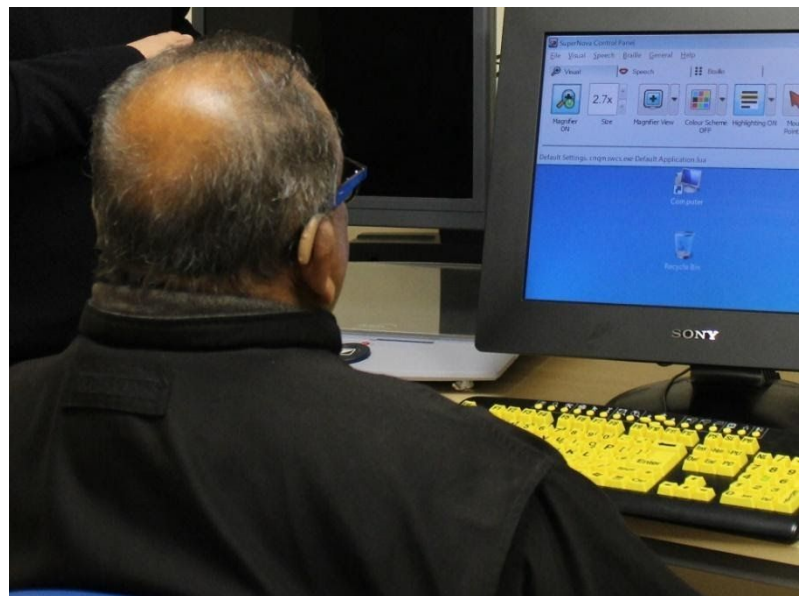
But also, physical assistance...

When our Support Worker visited him a month later, she could tell that he was getting better emotionally, but now he needed more help physically. She asked if he would like to join our Home Visiting Service. She explained that on this programme she would match him with a volunteer who would visit him once a week. The Volunteer would help him with reading his mail, paying his accounts and she would also accompany him when he needed to go shopping or to visit the doctor. Umesh agreed to give it a try and soon he was matched with a MAB volunteer.



IT training helps too...

On one of his visits to Umesh, Raheel, our counsellor, realised that one of his greatest sadness was not being able to write to his brother in Australia anymore. They used to correspond on



email regularly, and without his sight they had to resort to phone calls, which were difficult because of the time zones. There was never a good time to connect. Raheel

suggested that Umesh attend our IT training course. Once there, Umesh learnt how to use Jaws (assistive software for people with visual impairments) and after a couple of weeks of training Umesh was able to write a "Surprise! I am back!" email to his brother. This delighted both of them, as the struggles Umesh had experienced with his sight in the previous 6 months had left them both feeling that they wouldn't ever be able to correspond again.

And increasing your social network...



Umesh found himself feeling less depressed as the days went by, but he realised that on the days when neither Raheel nor the volunteer visited, he still felt very low. He had never been a very sociable person, but before he lost his sight he could at least visit his daughter and his sister whenever he chose. Now, he had to wait for them to visit him, and he understood they both had busy lives. Our Support Worker suggested he consider attending the MAB monthly coffee morning to make social contacts. After a couple of weeks of mulling it over, Umesh decided to overcome the natural shyness he always felt about group meetings. What surprised him about the coffee morning was that everyone there felt just like he did.

Everyone in the group was losing or had lost their sight, and everyone had felt as depressed and hopeless about it as he had felt. There was one person in particular he was drawn to, as he also had family in Australia, and they exchanged telephone numbers with a view to connecting in between the monthly meetings. Umesh came home from his first coffee morning determined to go to the next one, and pleased at the prospect of having new friends in his life. People who understood what he was going through.

Learning new skills...

Umesh didn't need our Braille Services, as he preferred using Jaws and a computer, but if he had wanted to learn Braille, he could have phoned our Head Office and attended our Braille Training.

All in all...

After 6 months of using our service, Umesh found himself feeling lighter. He no longer felt suicidal, as he had when he first started losing his sight. There were some days when he still struggled with all that he had lost, but for the most part, thanks to working with MAB, he had found new meaning and purpose for his life.

We also offer an Employment Service which helps those intending to start or resume a career.

MAB clients on our Employment Service learn how to use assistive software so that they can re-enter the job market. The clients photographed below did the course at Head Office this year.

If, like Umesh, you would like to make use of some of our services, please refer to our website for full details. Alternatively, please telephone us on **020 8423 5141**



Chatting with.....Our outgoing Chair of Trustees

Doreen Luff has been a Trustee since 2005. She was elected as Chair when Alan Hills stepped down due to ill-health. Now, 15 years later at our December AGM, Doreen resigned from her role on the Board of Trustees. In her time with MAB Doreen has steered us through difficult times without ever forgetting the people who we serve. Her warmth and compassion have infiltrated every level of MAB. We are going to miss her dearly.

We caught up with her at her home in Ruislip in September 2020.

You could have chosen to work with any charity... Why MAB?

I always think about what it means for people with visual impairments to be living in London. I think about how challenging everyday life is for people who cannot see, particularly in this fast paced city. I know that if it were me, I would feel overwhelmed and bewildered. If my impairment restricted my work opportunities, I would grapple for meaning and I would feel undervalued as a human being. I chose to work for MAB as a Trustee because I feel MAB is doing something to help people overcome these obstacles and to create hope on an individual level.



Looking back over the years when you have been a trustee, what are the biggest changes you have seen?

The way our organisation has been funded must be one of the biggest changes – and challenges. In the past the bulk of our money came from local authorities and from one big donor, and to a lesser extent from individual donations and bequests.

As we know, over the years local authorities have seen changes to their own funding from the Central Government. This meant that the amounts they give to organisations like ours have either been cut altogether or substantially reduced. This didn't only happen to local councils, the reductions also happened in the budget of the major donor on which we depended.

While this was obviously a hard situation to deal with, it wasn't all doom and gloom. We were forced to invest further in our fundraising efforts, and to develop a wide spread of donors rather than being dependent on a few. In the long run, this has increased the sustainability of our organisation.

Most importantly however, I need to express gratitude to our clients, many of whom stepped up to assist us. The bequests which we have been left (and the donations we receive) say a lot about what we mean to the people we support. We are so very grateful for every penny that we have been given – I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who left us money or property in their Wills or who have sent in donations – however big or small. Because of your help, we continue to assist others.

What have you been most proud of?

Up the top of this list must be the Investors in People Silver Award (IIP). In 2018 we were tested on 27 aspects of our work and we reached at least Silver standard in 25 of these. Our Assessor wrote 'achieving Investors in People Silver accreditation is a significant achievement and is something about which everyone in the organisation should feel justifiably proud'.

Another issue which has made me particularly proud is the way that we have listened to staff - at Staff Development Days and other times - and not just listened but acted on their ideas. Our wonderful Counselling Service came into being because it was suggested by a staff member.

Do you have any regrets?

Being the head of an organisation where redundancies have meant that good, hard-working people have lost their jobs is hard. Behind every statistic is an individual with their own story to tell. So of course I have regrets - I wish we had not had to make the hard decisions.

There is a possibility as we speak of a second spike in Covid-19. What particular challenges does this present to the organisation?

As before, it's the challenges which a second spike in Covid-19 presents to the people we support which concerns me. Even if the restrictions are not as severe as the summer Lockdown, to be isolated is difficult; to be isolated when you can't see must be devastating - and extremely lonely. I know that our staff will work as before, doing their utmost to keep people safe, speaking

to them a couple of times a week (or visiting if permitted).

What now for you?

I have been so proud to hold this position as Chairperson of MAB, but I have also felt that it was time for someone else to take up the reins. It's good for any organisation to have changes at the top. I feel happy that I am leaving MAB in good hands and I will always follow the organisation's progress going forward. I have loved my association with MAB and feel it is of utmost importance that it survives and thrives for at least the next 100 years!

MAB Board going forward:

Chair - Mr Raj Mehta

Vice Chair - Mr Bharat Hindocha

Treasurer - Mr Kambiz Daneshyar

Secretary - Mr Pushpinder Wadha

Trustee - Ms Ola Macauley

Trustee - Mr Jagdish Shingadia

Donations, Wills and Legacies

We would like to say a big thank you to all the individuals and the following organisations who have kindly made donations to the Association:

Waitrose Richmond
The Pelican Club
Pinner Methodist Church Harvest of Waste
Ladies Probus Club of Pinner
Foresters Friendly Society
Nadiad Nagrik Mandal

David Merkell: Chairman and Law Society Council Member for Lawyers with Disability Division. 2018 Shaw Trust Recipient, speaks very highly of MAB. “I have known MAB for a long time. I am also a Trustee for Richmond Aid ... I think MAB is brilliant. Through the MRU I received specialist, technical support. I thoroughly enjoy the Trike Club... MAB provides opportunities for nice feelings, for good feelings for people to experience in connecting to each other... MAB is a good resource for VI people in so many ways”.

Contact Numbers

Borough Coordinators' contact numbers

Borough	Name	Telephone Number
Barnet	Carmel McBennett	07599 012 045
	Paul Magee	07387 101 626
Brent	TBC	020 8423 5141
Ealing	Kamila Reynolds	07387 101 631
Enfield	Paul Magee	07387 101 626
	Carmel McBennett	07599 012 045
Harrow	Alison Bicknell	07387 101 632
Hillingdon	TBC	020 8423 5141
Hounslow	TBC	020 8423 5141
Richmond	Daisy Jajh	07387 101 627

Sensory Services Team contact numbers

Borough	Telephone Number
Barnet	020 8359 5000
Brent	020 8937 4300
Ealing	020 8825 6230
Enfield	020 8379 1001
Haringey	020 8489 8900
Harrow	020 8901 2680
Hillingdon	01895 556 633
Hounslow	020 8583 3100
Richmond	020 8891 7971

Resource Centre Contact Details – we have a Resource Centre in the borough of Enfield which unfortunately is currently closed due to Covid-19

Address	What's there
<p data-bbox="188 571 598 660">Enfield Resource Centre</p> <p data-bbox="188 672 550 929">Park Avenue Centre 65c Park Avenue Enfield EN1 2HL</p> <p data-bbox="188 1041 574 1400">Open 10.30am - 12.30pm Third Thursday of the month (no meeting in December)</p>	<p data-bbox="646 571 1388 817">This drop-in is held in partnership with Enfield Vision. Call in for refreshments and a chat. A warm welcome awaits – no appointment necessary.</p> <p data-bbox="646 884 1420 1131">There is a large range of specialised equipment on display to 'try before you buy'. A member of Enfield Sensory Services Team will be present to provide specialist advice.</p> <p data-bbox="646 1198 1380 1288">A qualified fitness instructor takes seated keep-fit classes.</p> <p data-bbox="646 1355 1412 1433">For further information, please call: Paul Magee on 020 8423 5141</p>

Contributing to Outlook

We welcome contributions to the newsletter. Please send your articles to Valerie Hill (valerie@aftb.org.uk)

This edition of Outlook is produced by:

**Middlesex Association for the Blind
Suite 18
Freetrade House
Lowther Road
Stanmore
Middlesex
HA7 1EP**

Tel: 020 8423 5141

Email: info@aftb.org.uk Website: www.aftb.org.uk



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Are you receiving this newsletter in your preferred format?

Outlook is produced in large print, Braille, CD and email. It is also available online in print and audio formats at www.aftb.org.uk/outlook-magazine/

So that we can keep our records up to date, please telephone us if you move address or would like to receive Outlook in a different format.

Tel: 020 8423 5141

Alternatively, please email Nasreen at : nasreen@aftb.org.uk

Thank you

Our thanks to the following for allowing us to put MAB collection boxes in their premises:

Bath Road Pharmacy, Bath Road, Hounslow

Seven Oaks Court, Copsewood Way, Northwood

Harris and Hoole, King Street, Twickenham

Squires Garden Centre, Twickenham for allowing us to park our Mobile Resource Unit in their premises.

Special thanks also to our volunteers for their continued support and for sharing feedback on their experience of volunteering with MAB. Your comments and suggestions will help shape meaningful communication in future.

And to all our Trust, Foundation, Borough and Corporate donors – without you we would not exist. Thank you for your support!

