

proud recipients of The Queens Award for Voluntary Service

Vol. 2 Issue 74 Winter 2026

Christmas 2025 – A record-breaking year

Thank you to everyone who supported our 2025 Christmas Raffle, which raised an incredible £4,623 overall – a remarkable 49% increase on last year's total of £3,105. Our charity shops played a huge part in this success, with four of our newest shops taking part for the first time. We are also hugely grateful to the many local businesses who generously donated such brilliant prizes, helping make the raffle so exciting.

December also brought outstanding generosity from local shoppers during our venue collections.

At Haskins Garden Centre, their customers helped raise an incredible £691 – the highest total we have ever collected in one day.

Just days later, our Asda collection raised over £500, setting a new record there too.

These fantastic results show the true power of community kindness. Every ticket purchased or pound dropped in our collection buckets helps Dorset Blind Association continue providing vital services for blind and partially sighted people across the county. Thank you to everyone who bought a raffle ticket, donated, volunteered, or stopped to chat. The photo shows the fundraising team on duty at Asda.



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Spring Fashion Exchange!



Join Dorset Blind Association for an evening of sustainable style and community spirit at our Blandford Charity Shop.

Bring your choice of outfit to swap and browse a curated selection of pre-loved:

- Clothes
- Shoes
- Handbags
- Accessories

Enjoy refreshments while you hunt for that perfect Spring outfit!

All proceeds support Dorset Blind Association and our work with people living with sight loss.



Wednesday 16 April



6.00 – 8.00pm



**DBA Charity Shop,
2 Market place, Blandford
DT11 7EB**



£5 entry - includes one outfit & refreshments



For more info:

Pop in the shop: Unit 1, Greyhound House
2 Market Place, Blandford Forum,
Call Carol on 07849 641 090
Email: blandfordshop@dorsetblind.org.uk

Hello and a warm welcome to our latest Link newsletter.

Time is, as always, flying past. One minute we were celebrating Christmas and the New Year, blink and it's now the spring and we are already into the 3rd month of 2026! Also, as always, there has been plenty going on in your charity and I hope you will enjoy catching up on all the news.



I mentioned in my piece last time that our latest shop, at Sherborne, was about to open. I'm pleased to say that the shop is now several months old and also that finally it has a sign up, to identify it with Dorset Blind Association. The shop building in Sherborne is grade one listed, which meant, (to my slight horror!) that we couldn't put a sign up outside without first getting planning permission for that. As with all things where form filling and red tape are involved, the process always takes far longer than you expect it to, but we got there in the end!

We will be holding an official launch and opening event for the shop soon, which hopefully some local members will attend, and there will no doubt be a report on that in the next Link.

In my last couple of messages to you now I have been reflecting a little on my more than 20 years now running Dorset Blind Association, and the changes and developments in the time.

A vital part of that development has been with our services for you, which I feel I am on reasonably safe ground to say have got a lot better and more extensive, and through that much more useful for you.

Our current community support service is a really good example of how things have developed and it's hard to compare what was in place 20 years ago now to what we have today.

The service 20 years ago was a pale shadow of today's, with an extremely limited remit, both geographically and the nature of the service provided. Back then we called it the Home Visiting Service, with the service simply and only existing to recruit volunteers to place with members for a regular home visit, and it extended to only two areas of Dorset, with nothing offered in Bournemouth and Poole, nor in north, west and mid Dorset or the Purbecks.

/Welcome from Jonathan contd:

Leah, who many of you will know, started her Dorset Blind Association career as a Home Visiting Coordinator, when the service first extended geographically into north and mid Dorset, and she has played a vital part in the steady growth and development since, helping to extend and shape the service up to and including it's current format, which gives total, full county wide coverage and our community support workers and wonderful volunteers providing a range of help and support for members far, far greater than the modest extent of the original home visiting service.

Our Community Support Service is something I think we can all be proud of; I know from feedback that members really value and appreciate it and we will work hard to make sure that it continues to be that for you.

Next time I'll reflect a little on another service which I introduced as part of developing the charity, and which I know is a real game changer for so many of you; our mobile equipment service.

Until then, I send you all my very best wishes, as always

Jonathan

Leaving a lasting gift – Remembering DBA in your Will

Some supporters choose to leave a gift to Dorset Blind Association in their Will – a deeply personal way to help future generations of people living with sight loss. After remembering loved ones, even a small legacy can make a meaningful difference, supporting practical help, social connection, and independence across Dorset.

If you do decide to leave a gift, it can be helpful to ensure your family are aware of your wishes and that the charity is clearly named as Dorset Blind Association, so your kindness reaches the place you intend. A legacy gift is never expected, but it is always received with heartfelt gratitude.



Our 2024/2025 Financial results

Our Annual Accounts for the financial year 2024/2025 were completed last year just too late for me to be able to share with you the headline figures in the last Link, so giving you this information is a little later than usual.

I'm pleased to report that the year was very positive, again, with another new record level of income, at just over £1,290,100.

This new record income was achieved partly by the growth of our charity shops chain, and income from these, but also a good level of legacy income and other donations.

After all expenditure on charitable activities and the running of the charity generally, and all other accounting adjustments, the year ended with a surplus of £171,031.

This was an excellent result and those excess funds partly paid for the final development of our charity shop chain, and then also boosted the Association's reserves.

It is unlikely that we will be able to match this final result during the current financial year, as expenditure for the Dorset Blind Association has risen significantly, mainly with increased staff costs, partly resulting from an increase in staff numbers, but also from the impact of government policies and legislation. I hope that we will still, however, generate another new record income amount for the year, and from that still end the year in surplus, albeit at a much lower level than in 2024/2025.

Our ability to keep operating our services for you at their current level is threatened by increasing costs, with government policies and legislation again being a significant factor in this, and is always dependent, to some extent, on the level of legacy income and other donations which people are kind enough to give.

Jonathan

Don't forget to pass me on!

If you receive a printed copy of the Link, this is just to remind you to try and pass it on when you have finished with it yourself. Offer it to a friend, neighbour or work colleague to read. It helps to spread the word about our work and how we help people throughout Dorset and it might encourage someone else to join us as a volunteer or to make a financial donation or other offer of help.

Introducing our new DBA Equipment Van!

Thanks to the generous support of the Ulverscroft Foundation, we are delighted to unveil our new mobile equipment service vehicle — helping us reach visually impaired people across Dorset.

This new van is a replacement for one of our older vehicles, ensuring Duncan, our mobile equipment coordinator can continue travelling across the county to provide advice, demonstrations, and access to essential daily living equipment. We are very grateful to the Ulverscroft Foundation for making this possible. As Robert Gent, Chair of the Foundation, says:

“The Ulverscroft Foundation is keen to play its part in supporting visually impaired people across Dorset by helping to fund Dorset Blind Association's new mobile equipment service vehicle, thus ensuring they have fast and easy access to essential equipment, and support in maintaining independent living.”

**RNLI Stories of Courage 1939-1945 Exhibition**

Members were incredibly lucky to take part in a tailored tactile talk on the 11th February at the Lighthouse Poole. The RNLI shared how lifeboat crews saved lives at sea in the extraordinary conditions during the Second World War. Joanna from the RNLI, ably aided by two volunteers, shared their knowledge of events and the artefacts.

Members were able to touch, smell and try on various items of historical significance including a lifejacket made from kapok, a sou'wester, a bright yellow waterproof oilskin coat, a launchers arm-band, collection containers and medals. There was an audio described section, a film, photos, paintings, information boards plus items to try on and view.

Thanks to the RNLI for this sensory session, the Lighthouse and our amazing volunteers.



Volunteer recognition – Congratulations Suzanne!

We're absolutely delighted to celebrate Suzanne, one of our wonderful volunteers, who has received a Room to Reward award — a national recognition for inspirational volunteers who quietly make a huge difference.

Suzanne has volunteered with Dorset Blind Association since 2023, and in that time has become a valued and much-loved part of our charity family. From supporting members at our Arts & Crafts Group and Coffee Mornings, which help reduce social isolation, boost confidence, and ensure members feel welcomed and supported.



She's also an active fundraiser at our annual Motor Show and has even taken to local radio to promote volunteering with DBA! Thank you, Suzanne, for everything you do. This award is so well deserved.

Keeping our team prepared!



Towards the end of last year, some of our Community Support Workers and club volunteers took part in a first aid course with ABC Worksafe Ltd to make sure our team are up to speed with the latest procedures and best practices. Safety and care are always at the heart of what we do, and don't worry, no staff were harmed during the role play!

A big thank you to the trainers for delivering such an engaging course — the role play examples were a fantastic way to practice skills and keep everyone involved!

Card Payments A reminder that we now have the facility to take payments by debit or credit card and it helps reduce our administration costs if payments are made in this way. Please use this facility, where possible, for any purchases from the Resource Centre, as well as for any other payments you want or need to make to us.

Poole Museum visit

We were invited to **Poole Museum** as part of their soft opening to feedback on VI accessibility. Hazel and Davie tried out the new interactive displays and exhibits with Braille. They were able to feel the tiles that our Art and Crafts Group had made last year in conjunction with the Museum and @creativeclayforall

We heard a member's voice on an audio-described selection of real-life stories based around Poole Harbour. Davie and Hazel tried on sailor hats from the hands-on sea-themed outfit display as can be seen in the photo.



The Museum officially reopened on 5th November.

Thanks to Poole Museum for working with the VI community.

Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum trip!



Members visited the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum with family and friends recently as part of a project around VI accessibility. One of our members, Davie took photos of a selection of sculptures and artefacts one of which can be seen here. It's a picture of Samurai armour.

Members had an interesting time exploring, and some participated in the amazing tactile talk. We

also met as a group and answered questions around accessibility . Our thanks to the staff and volunteers for supporting the visually impaired community!

Can we send you the Link by e-mail ?

A growing number of members and volunteers chose now to receive their copy of the Link by e-mail. This not only means that they receive this more quickly, but it saves on printing and postage costs, so if you are someone who uses e-mail and you are happy to receive future editions of the Link in this way, please contact Jo at the office on 01202 712869 or e-mail jo@dorsetblind.org.uk to let her know.

Club News Round Up

Sharp Shooters!

Our members that attend the Acoustic shooting sessions at Canford school have been improving their scores. We had a new member Mike last time who instantly scored 94 and 97 - is it beginners luck? Only time will tell!

Another member scoring a personal best was Alexis who scored 96 & 91 .

If you are interested in trying acoustic shooting, please contact Leah on 07789997620



New Blandford Book Club



We're delighted to announce the Blandford Book Club for visually impaired people, it meets on the 2nd Wednesday each month between 11:00am – 12:00 noon at the Blandford Museum, Beres Yard, Blandford, DT11 7HQ

This will be a monthly group, and new members are always welcome. If transport is needed, please let us know — we may be able to help.

Something extra to look forward to:

From March, we'll be hosting a live online chat with an author, joining us via Zoom for a short session during the club to talk about their books and answer questions.

For more information, contact velleta@dorsetblind.org.uk or ring her on 07761 459997

Our Poole/Bournemouth Book Club also continues to meet regularly at the Lighthouse Poole. For more information about this group, please contact Heather at heather@dorsetblind.org.uk.

Moving with the times We are now able to send you the Link on a USB stick. If you want to receive the Link in this format in future please contact Jo on **01202 712865** or email her on **jo@dorsetblind.org.uk**

Christmas at Dorset Blind Association Clubs

We know Christmas seems such a long time ago but here are a few photos of some of our club members enjoying their club's festivities.



Our **Shaftesbury Club** ended last year on a real high with a wonderful festive get-together. We were delighted to be joined by the Shaftesbury Community Choir, whose carol singing brought plenty of cheer and made the afternoon feel extra special.

Our **Blandford Group** enjoyed a lovely get-together over a festive lunch at The Worlds End, Almer. Everyone enjoyed great food, welcoming surroundings, and a relaxed afternoon finished off with crackers and mince pies — a real treat for all involved.



Our **Wimborne Club** enjoyed a fantastic Christmas celebration, with members voting for a classic fish and chip lunch, kindly provided by Long John's in Wimborne — a firm favourite all round.



Our **Bridport Club** had an early Christmas party with games and carols, then sandwiches followed by bowls of jelly and cream made by Jane, a delicious Christmas cake made by Alison, a huge plate of mince pies made by Sheila and chocolate logs brought by Jacqui. And finally cards and gift bags for all, made up by Ann.



Our **Lighthouse Social** working-age group enjoyed a lovely lunch together at the Brewhouse & Kitchen in Poole. A big thank you to the team there for looking after us so well and helping make it such a relaxed and enjoyable get-together.

Festive fun at the **Wareham group**

Our Wareham group had a wonderful time enjoying a live performance from a Ukulele band, who filled the room with festive Christmas songs.



Our **Bowls Club** enjoyed a brilliant final session before Christmas — made even more special by a surprise visit from Santa himself... also known as Darrel!

There were delicious homemade mince pies, kindly baked by the wife of our fantastic volunteer, Chris, which went down a treat with everyone.

Our **Highcliffe Club** enjoyed a wonderful Christmas lunch at The Potting Shed, Redcliffe Garden Centre in Bashley, and what a lovely afternoon it was. Everyone tucked into a delicious festive meal, and the staff were absolutely incredible.



Festive Fun at the **The Grasshopper, Parkstone!**

They had a wonderful time at their Christmas coffee morning, where everyone caught up over mince pies, shortbread and a hot drink.

Dorset Blind Association Motor Show 2026 - Celebrating 10 Years of the event! - Save the date: Sunday 17th May 2026.



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Dorset Blind Association Motor Show – a milestone celebration at the stunning Lulworth Castle that promises to be our biggest and most memorable event yet.

Over the past decade, the Motor Show has grown into one of Dorset's best loved community fundraising events, bringing together classic and modern vehicles, local businesses, volunteers, families, and supporters – all united in raising funds to support people living with sight loss across the county.

Planning is already well underway for a special anniversary atmosphere, with expanded displays, entertainment, and opportunities to celebrate everyone who has helped the show succeed over the years. As always, the event's success depends on the dedication of our incredible volunteers.

We are now recruiting volunteers to help on the day – from event support and marshalling, to welcoming visitors and assisting exhibitors.

If you can spare some time and would like to be part of this landmark celebration, we would love to hear from you: sam@dorsetblind.org.uk

Join us in making the 10th anniversary Motor Show a truly unforgettable day for Dorset Blind Association.

The DBA 70s, 80s & 90s Night – A huge success!

Back in November on a Saturday night in Weymouth, our 70s/80s/90s night was an absolute hit, raising a record-breaking £1,411 for us!

A HUGE thank you to our incredible member, Sam Cole, who organises this event every year — it's become a much-loved highlight for our community. Thanks also to DJs 'Vinyl Revival' for keeping everyone dancing all night, and to everyone who got into the spirit with amazing fancy dress!

Special thanks to Sam and her incredible team for the fab buffet and all their hard work — the feedback has been wonderful



Thank you to: Alice, one of our fab members (seen in the photo), has raised £200 in her Christmas raffle. Over the last few months, Alice has organised her own raffle and sold tickets at various events. Thanks to everyone who donated prizes or bought tickets. Massive thank you to Alice, your efforts are much appreciated!



Donations Needed – Supporting our 12 charity shops

Our network of 12 charity shops across Dorset plays a vital role in funding services for visually impaired people – and your donations keep them going. We welcome clean, good-quality items including clothing, footwear, books, CDs, DVDs, vinyl, homeware, and bric-a-brac.

To make donating easy, we can even arrange home collections:

- BCP & East Dorset: 07849 641149 - thehub@dorsetblind.org.uk
- Sherborne, Weymouth, Portland & Bridport: 07570 425900 - weymouthshop@dorsetblind.org.uk

You can also drop items at any of our shops in Blandford, Bridport, Broadstone, Christchurch, Ferndown, Parkstone, Portland, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton and Weymouth.

Full details can be found on our website [**www.dorsetblind.org.uk**](http://www.dorsetblind.org.uk)

Every donated item helps fund our support. Thank you for your generosity.

Word Search - Gardening and Plants

BLOOMS

GARDEN

POTTING

STEMS

BULBS

HARVEST

PRUNING

SUNLIGHT

CACTUS

HERB

ROOTS

THORNS

COMPOST

MULCH

SEEDS

TULIPS

DAISIES

PERENNIAL

SHADE

VINES

FERNS

PESTICIDE

SOIL

WATER

FLOWER

POLLINATE

SPROUT

WEEDS

Contact Details:**Jonathan Holyhead, CEO**

jonathan@dorsetblind.org.uk
Direct Line: 01202 712861

Office and Services Manager

Jo Randall—Tel: 01202 712865

Equipment & Advice Centre -

Erica Renton - 01202 712869

Resources Co-ordinator

Duncan – 07534 865491

Community Support Workers

Leah Cross - 07789 997620

Hayley Langley - 07483 191881

Heather McCracken -07936 749502

Gemma Smith - 07729 618303

Grainne Barry - 07555 057060

Vellea Cracknell - 07761 459997

Community Relations Officer

Sam Baker - 07594 651955

Charity Shops

Ferndown 07849 641086

Christchurch 07570 425690

Southbourne 07849 641063

Parkstone 07471 540336

Broadstone 07849 641062

Weymouth 07570 425900

Portland 07570 498090

Bridport 07849 641070

Blandford 07849 641090

Shaftesbury 07849 641153

Sherborne 07484 515071

Sturminster N. 07849 641073

Useful Numbers:

BCP Adult Social Care
01202 123654

Dorset Social Services: Helpline
01305 221016

Sight and Hearing Service for
Dorset Council residents
033 300 300 10

Bournemouth Eye Unit:
01202 704181

Dorset County Hospital:
01305 251150

Dept Works & Pensions:
01202 858555 or 01202 858556

AGE UK Dorchester
01305 269444
AGE UK Bournemouth
01202 530530

Blind Veterans UK
0800 389 7979

RNIB: 0303 1239999

NHS Direct: 111

Macular Society
Helpline: 0300 3030111

Nystagmus Network
0845 634 2630/ 07493324218

sedcat (the BAT Bus and
Community Cars) 01202 534027

Ability Net - 0800 048 7642

Ocular Melanoma Helpline,
0161 821 5657



Please help us to keep our services going

Dorset Blind Association provides practical help and support, delivered directly into the community, to help people with sight or hearing loss lead full, independent, healthy and socially active lives.

We work hard to fill the increasingly large gap left by the reduction in local health and social care services and for many people we are a valuable lifeline as they struggle to come to terms with their sight loss and learn how to remain independent.

It costs over £400,000 each year to run the Dorset Blind Association and make everything we now do possible.

Any amount you are able to donate will help us to maintain all of our services.

Here are just a few examples of what a donation could fund;

- **£20** Will pay for 5 vulnerable people to be visited in their own homes
- **£50** Will pay to keep our mobile equipment vehicle on the road for a week
- **£100** Will pay for staff to run 3 Socialeyes sessions
- **£325** Will support 1 visually impaired individual for a year
- **£500** Will pay for our equipment and advice centre to be open for 2 weeks

Thank you