

Vol. 2 Issue 75 Spring/Summer 2026

What a fantastic four weeks with The Friendly Food Club!

Several of our members were lucky enough to take part in a cooking course, and what a brilliant experience it's been!

Our members thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills, building confidence in the kitchen and, of course, creating some delicious dishes along the way. To help them continue their cooking journey at home, each participant also received a free cooking appliance!

A huge thank you to Andrea and the whole Friendly Food Club team for their support, guidance and for making every session so enjoyable.

We're also incredibly grateful to our members, whose valuable feedback will help make future cooking sessions even more accessible for others.

The photo below shows our members at their last session.



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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. Nothing broken or damaged please. Every item donated helps raise vital funds for our services.

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

If you live in the BCP & East Dorset area:

Ring: 07849 641149 or email: [**thehub@dorsetblind.org.uk**](mailto:thehub@dorsetblind.org.uk)

If you live in the Sherborne, Weymouth, Portland & Bridport area:

Ring: 07570 425900 or email: [**weymouthshop@dorsetblind.org.uk**](mailto:weymouthshop@dorsetblind.org.uk)

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

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

Every donated item helps fund our support.

Thank you for your generosity.

Hello and a warm welcome to our latest Link newsletter.

Time and tide waits for no man, as the old saying goes, and it certainly applies to life at Dorset Blind Association.

One half of 2026 has already disappeared into the rear-view mirror and the next thing you know, we will be putting Christmas cards out in our shops!



I hope you will enjoy catching up on all the news from your charity, including the huge success of our annual Motor Show at Lulworth Castle, in late May.

My use of the term “rear view mirror” is particularly apt when thinking about that, with the vast number of vehicles on display that day! That event, and all it achieves, is only possible because of the very kind support we continue to receive from our President, James Weld, who so generously allows us use of Lulworth, and it really is the most magnificent setting for the Show.

The event also encapsulates so much of what Dorset Blind Association stands for and reflects the development journey we have gone through during my time here.

This year was the 10th anniversary of the Show and if you had witnessed the first version, and compared it to what it has now become, you couldn't fail to be impressed. As I described it to one person, for me it has been like watching something that started life as the village fete slowly morph into being the County Show! All, also, only made possible by hard work, a real team effort and everyone here pulling together for a common cause. Which is how I feel it reflects the development journey for Dorset Blind Association as a whole in my time as CEO. At the beginning, a charity not really doing a great deal, if we are nicely honest about it, but over time, we have developed and refined a range of services and support which help so many and make a positive difference. And again, all of that only made possible by teamwork, dedication and the energy and commitment of staff and volunteers united by the shared desire to make Dorset Blind Association a charity which we can all feel proud to be part of, where togetherness and kindness are key components. Thank you to everyone who supports what we do, however you give or show that support.

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With that support we can continue to thrive and provide help for as many people needing that as possible, which will always continue to be my aim and goal. I hope everyone enjoys the summer and we have what I like to call “Goldilocks weather” – not too hot, not too cold, just nicely in the middle!

With my best wishes to you all, as always, Jonathan

Leave a lasting Legacy

A gift in your Will can help ensure that Dorset Blind Association continues supporting visually impaired people across Dorset for generations to come.

After providing for family and loved ones, many supporters choose to leave a gift to a cause that has made a real difference in their lives. Even a small percentage of an estate can have a lasting impact, helping fund practical support, social activities, equipment, advice services and companionship for people living with sight loss. Legacy gifts have helped charities like ours continue our work for decades. If you would like to learn more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact us for a copy of our legacy giving leaflet. Every gift, no matter the size, helps build a brighter future. Thank you



What's been happening in your association

Meet Dot Jen Newman—100 years young.

Dot celebrated her 100th birthday on 22nd April. From cooking in the NAFFI where she met her husband Ron, and serving as a wartime fire warden, to rescuing stray cats, working in a Bulgarian orphanage and travelling to Dubai and Egypt, Dot has lived an incredible life.

She is a proud mother, grandmother and great grandmother and now enjoys bingo and games at West haven house. In the photo you can see her with Sheila, her DBA home visitor for the past 10 years. Join us in wishing her a belated happy 100th birthday.



A sell-out success for our first DBA Blandford fashion show!

What an incredible evening. Our very first DBA Blandford Fashion Show at the Blandford Constitutional Club was a complete sell-out, with a fantastic atmosphere from start to finish.

Thanks to everyone's generosity, including our successful raffle, our DBA Blandford shop raised an amazing £654!

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the evening such a success, especially our wonderful volunteer models Flo, Ellie, Sandy, Richard, Lin and Arthur, and to Jo, Ian, Dave and Baz for setting up the displays and event space.

Special thanks also to Carol, our brilliant Blandford shop manager and Velleeta, our wonderful Community Support worker for organising such a brilliant event.

Huge thanks to Blandford Constitutional Club for hosting such a great evening for us! Pop into our shop to find these and many more fabulous items: DBA Blandford shop: Unit 1, Greyhound House, 2 Market Place, Blandford Forum DT11 7EB



Volunteer Long Service Awards



Two of our volunteers, Michael Sloss and Philip Chitty received their certificate for 10 years service recently. They volunteer at the Weymouth club and we really do appreciate their help. Without volunteers like them we would not be able to provide the service we do. Thank you.



Another great day out on MV Freedom!

Last week, some of our DBA members enjoyed another fantastic trip aboard the MV Freedom in Weymouth. There were plenty of smiles, laughter and fresh sea air as everyone took in the beautiful Dorset coastline and enjoyed spending the day together.



A huge thank you to everyone involved in making the day possible, including our amazing volunteers and supporters who help us continue providing experiences like this for people living with sight loss across Dorset.

Sharing support and raising awareness in Blandford



We were delighted to be invited by Delia Nicholson, House Manager at Stourgate McCarthy Stone in Blandford, to give a talk about Dorset Blind Association and the support we provide.

It was a great turnout, with residents and some of our members joining us. Velleeta, our Community Support Worker, spoke about DBA's services, while Duncan, our Mobile Equipment Resource Coordinator, showcased a range of assistive equipment to help people live more independently.

There were plenty of questions afterwards, with attendees enjoying the chance to explore the equipment and take away information.

A big thank you to Delia for the invitation and for hosting us so warmly. We love opportunities like these to connect with our local communities and help ensure that anyone living with sight loss knows that support is available. The photo shows Duncan and Velleeta with Delia.

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.

DBA Brownsea Island outing

We were lucky to visit National Trust Brownsea Island when the sun was shining, and a refreshing breeze was blowing.

Everyone enjoyed being on the top deck of the orange and white Greenslade boats.

First stop on the island was the cafe for refreshments which were consumed sitting in the shady gardens next to the water.

Some members had a walk while others were treated to a guided tour on the Squirrel Shuttle Bus. It was great to meet new people and learn interesting facts in an environment that one member described as a wonderful outdoor museum.

Thanks to National Trust Brownsea Island and Greenslade Pleasure Boats Limited for making the trip as accessible as possible for those with sight loss. The photo shows our members on Brownsea Island.



Do you have sight loss and live in Sturminster Newton? Come along for a coffee and a chat!

If you're living with sight loss in the Sturminster Newton area, why not join Dorset Blind Association for our friendly monthly coffee morning?

It's a relaxed, informal get-together where you can meet others with similar experiences, share a chat over a coffee and find out more about the support and activities available through DBA.

 2nd Thursday of every month

 10:00am – 12:00pm

 The Exchange, Sturminster Newton (upstairs café)

For more information, please contact Leah on 07789 997620 or leah@dorsetblind.org.uk

Please share with anyone who may benefit from coming along.

DBA Coffee Morning
Sturminster Newton



Low Vision Assessment changes

Sadly, Parkstone Eyecare have discontinued their low vision assessment service. However, Low Vision Assessments can still be booked at the following opticians:

Julian May (Southbourne) 01202 432435

Parley Optometrists (Ferndown) 01202 575759

Howie and Tickner (Highcliffe) 01425 272382

C H Webster (Wareham) 01929 556062

If you are unable to attend a low vision assessment at these opticians but require advice with your magnification needs, contact Duncan on 07534 865491 or Erica on 01202 712869.

My experience with Ocutech Bioptics by Vicky

I was born with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia and I am registered partially sighted.

In November I went to try Ocutech Bioptics. It's a small black box on top of your glasses and is like a monocular. They can be adjusted for near or distance. I had been warned they aren't suitable for everyone, but nothing ventured nothing gained!

I was excited how much of a difference they made. Despite the cost it was something that would help and change my daily life.

I collected them at the end of January and have used them regularly ever since. The ability to see things I've never been able to see before has given me more confidence and independence.



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.

Club News

A lovely day out in Weymouth!



Earlier in June, our Weymouth DBA members enjoyed a wonderful outing to Bennetts Water Gardens, where they enjoyed a delicious cream tea and a stroll around the beautiful gardens. The flowers were looking stunning, the company was excellent, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed spending time together in such a peaceful setting. Days like these are a fantastic opportunity for members to socialise, make new friends and enjoy some of Dorset's wonderful attractions. A big thank you to everyone who helped make the day so enjoyable!

A wonderful afternoon tea!

Our Wareham Club, run by the fantastic Rhonda Walker, recently enjoyed their annual afternoon tea at The Pines Hotel in Swanage.



Despite the blustery weather outside, our members had a wonderful afternoon, taking in the beautiful sea views while enjoying a delicious afternoon tea in great company.

A huge thank you to The Pines Hotel for looking after us so well and for their warm hospitality. We'd also like to thank our amazing volunteers, whose support helps make special days like this possible.

News from our Blandford Group

Our members enjoyed an afternoon of skittles, tea and cake with our winner from last year, Rosie, defending her title! Great fun was had by all and you're never too old to throw a ball down an alley, our winner was Rosie again this year, our eldest member of the club. It was lovely to see everyone having fun. Huge thanks to the Old Powerhouse, in Bryanston for the use of their alley and keeping us going with refreshments.



A great afternoon of music & fun at the DBA Ferndown club!

We had a fantastic afternoon filled with singing, dancing and plenty of smiles at our recent club session. A big thank you to Mike Sidaway for the wonderful entertainment, and to our incredible volunteers for their continued hard work and support, we couldn't do it without you.



Margaret (pictured) was again selling her beautiful handmade jewellery, with all profits generously donated to Dorset Blind Association.

The Ferndown club meets fortnightly on Tuesdays between 2-4pm at the King George Pavilion, Peter Grant Way. There is currently some availability for new members, so if you'd like to come along, we'd love to hear from you.

If you or someone you know could benefit from our services, or if you're interested in volunteering, please contact gemma@dorsetblind.org.uk

A fascinating visit to Bridport Museum



Earlier in June, members of our Bridport group enjoyed a wonderful visit to Bridport Museum, where they learned more about the town's rich history and took part in a fascinating rope-making demonstration. The museum team helped make the visit accessible, providing a more hands-on experience of the exhibits so that our visually impaired members could fully engage with the displays and artefacts. A huge thank you to the team at Bridport Museum for their warm welcome and support, and to our fantastic volunteers who help make outings like these possible.

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.

Fundraising Update

Portland's DBA Darts challenge



DBA's second charity darts challenge, held on Portland on 11 April, was another fantastic success, raising £278.50 for Dorset Blind Association.

The event brought together players, supporters and volunteers for a fun and friendly day with a brilliant atmosphere. A huge thank you goes to Andrew, our Portland Assistant Shop Manager, for organising another successful fundraiser.

A particularly special moment saw Andrew's stepdaughter, Ebonie, take part in the darts. Born with bilateral congenital cataracts, Ebonie sometimes struggles with confidence, making her involvement on the day especially meaningful. The moment was captured in a photograph taken exactly eight years after her first eye surgery!

The event was a great example of community spirit, with participants of all ages getting involved and supporting the charity.

GMS Lions Club Donates £1,150

We were delighted to receive a donation of £1,150 from the Gillingham, Mere and Shaftesbury Lions Club.

Representatives from the club visited our Shaftesbury Social Club to present the cheque, which was raised through their Christmas fundraising activities.

This generous support will help Dorset Blind Association continue providing vital services for people living with sight loss across the local area.

We are extremely grateful to GMS Lions for choosing to support us and thank all members involved in their fundraising efforts.



Celebrating 10 years of the Dorset Blind Association Motor Show!

Record crowds mark a special milestone



Motor Show at a glance
10th anniversary event
8k+ visitors
300+ display vehicles
£42k+ raised
Biggest event in the
show's history
More than £110,000 raised
in the last three years
alone!

The Dorset Blind Association Motor Show celebrated its 10th anniversary in spectacular style on Sunday 17th May, becoming the most successful event in the show's history.

Held at the beautiful Lulworth Castle, the event welcomed more than 8,000 visitors and featured over 300 display vehicles, alongside live entertainment, family activities, exhibitors, traders and attractions throughout the day.

Thanks to the incredible support of our sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers and visitors, the event raised more than £42,000 to help fund Dorset Blind Association's services for people living with sight loss across the county.

The Motor Show has grown significantly since its launch ten years ago and continues to go from strength to strength. This year's event saw record attendance, record fundraising and extensive media coverage,

including interviews on BBC Radio Solent, promotion on Bournemouth One radio station, coverage in the Bournemouth Echo and a photograph featured in the *Daily Telegraph* the day after the event!



We would like to thank everyone who helped make this milestone event such a success, including our sponsors, volunteers, exhibitors, traders, entertainers and the team at Lulworth Estate.

We are especially grateful to James Weld, Patron of Dorset Blind

Association, whose generosity allows us to host the event at the magnificent Lulworth Estate each year. We would also like to thank our headline sponsors, Blue Sky Financial Planning and Daizun Investments, whose support helps make the event possible.

Special thanks must also go to DBA Trustee, Jamie Perry and Dorset Catering Services, who once again generously provided breakfasts for our vehicle exhibitors and lunches for staff and volunteers, helping to keep everyone fuelled throughout the day!

The feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive, with many visitors describing it as the best Motor Show yet.

Most importantly, the funds raised will help Dorset Blind Association continue supporting more than 1,000 visually impaired people across Dorset to remain independent, connected and confident.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Motor Show over the past ten years and helped make this anniversary event such a memorable success.



Watch this space for the 2027 Motor Show date announcement!

Haskins customers help raise over £500.

A huge thank you to customers and supporters who donated to Dorset Blind Association during our recent collection at Haskins Garden Centre. Thanks to your generosity, an impressive **£531** was raised to support local people living with sight loss across Dorset.

Marquis of Granby in Weymouth continues strong support

A huge thank you to Sheila Manton and the team at the Marquis of Granby in Weymouth for their continued support of Dorset Blind Association.

Their regular quiz nights and collection tins continue to raise valuable funds, with their latest donation totalling **£325.84**.



Da Vinci's Restaurant Raises £600



Our latest fundraising partnership with Da Vinci's Restaurant has raised an excellent £600 for Dorset Blind Association.

Long-standing supporters of the charity, Gennaro and his team generously donated proceeds from every 'Tagliatelle Crazy Alfredo' sold between January and April. Thank you

Barclays Pensioners club doubles donation to £1,420!

Dorset Blind Association was delighted to receive a donation of £1,420 from the Barclays Bank (Bournemouth & District) Pensioners Club.

The funds were raised through the club's Christmas raffle, which generated £710. Thanks to Barclays' matched funding scheme, the total was doubled to £1,420.

We are very grateful to everyone who took part in the raffle and to Barclays for their matched funding contribution. If your workplace offers matched funding, we'd love to hear from you. It's an amazing way to make fundraising go even further!



**We are extremely grateful for the continued support
of the Dorset Community,**

**Community collections such as these provide valuable funds for our
services and also help raise awareness of the challenges faced by
people with visual impairments. Thank You**

Contact Details:**Jonathan Holyhead, CEO**

jonathan@dorsetblind.org.uk

Direct Line: 01202 712861

Office and Services Manager

Jo Randall—Tel: 01202 712865

Resource Co-Ordinators -

Erica Renton - 01202 712869

Duncan Lane - 07534 865491

Community Support Workers

Leah Cross - 07789 997620

Hayley Langley - 07483 191881

Heather McCracken -07936 749502

Gemma Smith - 07729 618303

Grainne Curry - 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

Sturminster N. 07849 641073

Sherborne 07484 515071

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 858555/01202 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****08456 342630/ 07493324218****sedcat (the BAT Bus and
Com. 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 £800,000 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 Social-eyes 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