



Reading Association for the Blind
Charity number 1062433

Supporting sight-impaired people in Reading since 1883

OUTLOOK NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2019



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Meet Adele, RAB's Manager



Adele Barnett-Ward has been Manager of the RAB since May this year. After just a few months in the post, she says her basic principle for forward planning is “what works well and what members would like to see more of”. She aims to develop and improve the service, while putting the association on a more even keel financially.

Adele is not a Reading native. Her parents originated in Manchester and she attended London University, reading drama and theatre studies before going into the theatre as a lighting designer, actor and stage manager. Day jobs included costuming as a maid for the Sherlock Holmes Museum, and working at Madame Tussaud's.

She then joined MORI, the market and opinion research company, where she became a Research Executive. After leaving MORI she and her husband set up a company producing three-dimensional design prototypes, notably for toys such as Peppa Pig, Harry Potter and Doctor Who.

That was while her children — three sons and a daughter — were still small: once the youngest reached pre-school age that gave Adele the opportunity to resume an independent career. She wanted it to be something that involved contributing to the greater good, which is why she moved into the charitable sector.

Adele had moved to Reading in 2003. She had always done some voluntary work — on the committee of a pre-school, for example. She now began mentoring prison leavers, a job which she says gave her an insight into safeguarding.

Later she joined Home-Start, the national charity which helps families with young children get through difficult times. She then switched to RAB when the Manager's job arose.

As well as managing RAB, Adele has been a member of Reading Borough Council since May 2018, representing Caversham ward. She chairs the council's Strategic, Environment, Planning and Transport committee. In this role she has launched Reading's largest ever consultation on transport, asking people what should be done to encourage them to leave their car at home, with the aim of making the town carbon-neutral by 2030.

Adele says that what she enjoys most about working at RAB is the opportunity to be part of such a supportive and lively community. It is a privilege to contribute to an organisation that brings so much help and enjoyment to its members and to play her part in ensuring RAB continues and thrives.

Who are the association's Visiting Officers and what do they do?

Once someone is registered with a sight loss they are referred to RAB; we then go out to do an assessment. At this point a very small percentage of people decide not to become a member.

The Visiting Officers (VOs) are responsible for holding the caseload of all the members of RAB in order to ensure that all receive the service they require. We currently hold 200 members between the team of three, broken down into areas. Gabrielle Watts is senior VO covering Whitley, Julia Pattenden covers Tilehurst, Wendy Whitehead is VO for Caversham and between them the three cover the other parts of Reading.

Our aim is to ensure all members have access to aids that may assist them, financial support they may be entitled to, and that they can have as active a life as possible and participate in the community.

We hold a huge amount of local knowledge as to what is available for people and we make many referrals, for example to befriending agencies, to Berkshire Vision for their activities and outings, and to charities that provide a monthly Sunday tea in a volunteer's house.

If it becomes apparent that Social Services' involvement is necessary we will advocate for the member to get this. We often refer people to the RNIB for Talking Books and to Reading Talking News; we also get the players for them and go out and set them up.

We refer members for assistance with benefits, where they can have home visits. We complete grant applications for members in need who cannot afford certain items, such as white goods or computers. We ensure they are getting any

reductions in their utility bills and council tax which they are entitled to.

We never know what may come up as we are often the only workers visiting someone. We also build a professional and supportive relationship with them. Reading Borough Council supports us to do some of this work on their behalf.

Some members simply want a telephone call a few times a year. Some only want to keep in contact with us when they come to the hall. Other members who only attend the bowls club or rambling pay their membership and we have no contact with them.

Some of the members do not wish to come to the hall for various reasons: they may have a lot of support and an active life, or they may not be very social but would benefit from a one-to-one befriender, or they may not be capable of managing and require more intensive support.

We also have to do all of our own administrative support — all visits and contacts have to be recorded on the database.

The work is extremely rewarding and we receive some lovely feedback. It can also be very challenging, but there is never a dull moment. As a team we work closely together and are constantly looking at ways to improve the service.

A medal for Frank Mallett



A RAB member, Frank Mallett recently joined Blind Veterans UK, the organisation which supports ex-service people suffering impaired vision.

Frank served in the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers for some years as a Corporal. As a result, he attended the Reading Armed Forces Day in June, and was proud to be awarded a medal for his services.

The picture above shows Frank (centre) at the Armed Forces Day event in front of the Maiwand Lion statue in Forbury Gardens. The badge on his tie is the insignia of Blind Veterans UK.

How to stay safe online: Cyber Security Tips from Workday



Workday, a global computer software company with an office in Reading, is supporting the RAB.

On October 4 they gave a presentation for members and their families, staff, volunteers and trustees on computer security and “phishing” — the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information such as passwords and credit card details by pretending to be trustworthy in electronic communications.

Two Workday staffers — Gavin and Doug — came all the way from the company’s Dublin office to make the presentation which was warmly received by a large audience at Walford Hall.

Workday Security's top priority is to ensure the security and integrity of their customers' data, so they know all about the importance of security when it comes to personal information.

Gavin noted that in 2018 there was a surge in reported breaches of data security, proving that there are people out there who are willing to do bad things for money. That is why it is vital to learn how to navigate the internet safely.

Some 91% of cyber attacks start with a “phishing” email. This will urge the recipient to click through to a website where he or she will be pressed to disclose personal information such as passwords or bank details. So Workday’s first Cyber Security Tip is — if you get a suspicious email, stop and think before you click on the link to the website.

What is “suspicious”? The message could be from a sender you do not recognise, or direct you to a website whose address does not start with “HTTPS” — the S indicates the website is secure. Website addresses starting “HTTP” without the S could be insecure.

Doug offered tips to do with passwords. He said it is a common mistake to use passwords which are weak and easy for fraudsters to crack. Examples could be short words, simple words, or words associated with the user. Strong passwords, on the other hand, should contain 12-15 characters and use a mix of character types.

Alternatively, use a “passphrase” — a series of words (maybe a quotation or a song lyric) which is easy for you to remember but hard for a villain to crack.

The more a password is used, the less secure it becomes, so it’s important to use a unique password for each account you create, and never write down or share passwords. You can make them secure by using either a password manager

which will create passwords for you, or a 2-factor authentication system.

If you receive a suspicious email, you should report it to your email provider who has ways of responding.

Doug also said it is important to back up the data on your computer or phone as this is the best defence against data loss. Two separate back-ups in different locations would provide extra security. They could be on a USB stick, an external hard drive or a cloud system.

He also warned of the pitfalls of using public WiFi, where security can be non-existent. Doug recommended that people should not use public WiFi for banking or other sensitive matters. You can get around these problems by using a VPN (virtual private network) which keeps private any information that sent over a public WiFi connection.

The presentation was not only informative, but interactive too! Doug and Gavin answered many questions from the audience — and were not floored by any of them! They reassured questioners that website “cookies” are not likely to be malicious, and that reputable banks’ voice recognition systems — particularly useful for blind people — are generally reliable.

They concluded: “We can’t let the bad guys win — embrace technology, but be aware there are scammers out there.”

RAB thanks Workday for this presentation and for their further support during the year.

The association has three volunteers who can help with computer queries and are able to give IT lessons. Members

need to request this to their Visiting Officer or Claire Piercy, and we can arrange this at Walford Hall on a Tuesday or Friday.

Fundraising Focus

RAB NEEDS YOUR HELP!

There are many ways you can help — and have fun at the same time!

- Fundraising
- Corporate sponsorship
- Volunteering
- Run or walk a marathon
- Dress-down day
- Event management
- Quiz charity night
- Tombola or raffle
- Cake stall
- Taking a collecting tin
- Just giving your time

**For more information contact Marion Haynes,
Community Fundraiser at RAB: telephone 0118 957
2960 or email funder1@raftb.org.**

Marion is particularly interested in establishing a team of volunteers who would host a fundraising event at a fair, music festival etc, thus making them a fundraising group. Fundraising groups are excellent and can host a ball or charity event. They will get support from Marion, but do most of the organising themselves.

She would also would love to have a Collecting Tin Volunteer who has the confidence to visit shops, businesses and pubs, and be able to promote the charity (and cope with rejection!).

**Legacies and how you can enhance the future of
Reading Association for the Blind**

A legacy is a joyful act, and can be arranged for the future with no impact on you now!

Can you help **RAB** by leaving a legacy in your Will?

Legacies can be one of the following:

- Specific = an item
- Pecuniary = cash
- Residuary = share or percentage or fraction of an estate

How a typical Will with a legacy works

Specific and Pecuniary legacies tend to be distributed first. After these, 100% of residue is distributed and any share or percentage or fraction can be left to anyone or any charity (e.g 1% to Reading Association for the Blind)

Please consider the following:

Several thousand pounds is left to RAB in Wills in a typical year. This is a minute sum compared to the Donkey Sanctuary which receives millions a year. Just imagine the impact your legacy would have on the families we help!

If or when the time is right for you to remember a charity in your will, please remember Reading Association for the Blind.

Legacies sound big – but they need not be. £50 is welcome and so is £5,000 even though larger legacies would be more than welcome.

- Every gift in every Will makes a difference
- However large or small
- Just 1% of your estate can make a difference

Please feel free to speak to me in confidence if you are interested in supporting the Charity in this way.

Marion Haynes

A message of thanks to all our Volunteers



From Claire Piercy, Volunteer Co-ordinator

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our wonderful Volunteers for your continued support for Reading Association for the Blind.

You very kindly give your time to assist our members and to help in the running of the association so that the members receive the help they need, also helping many to enjoy themselves either at Walford Hall, bowling, rambling or on our Out and About trips.

There is also a lot of work done behind the scenes that is less obvious, e.g. making lunches, washing up, clearing away, driving and assisting on the minibuses, and administration which are also all needed and valued. Thank you all. It is so nice to once again have the Outlook Newsletter available and I would like to thank Henry and Cynthia for their work in producing this.

You are all pivotal in the running of these many activities and without your kindness it just couldn't happen. I feel very fortunate to have such a wonderful, fun and helpful group of people who are always willing to give their time, help and personality for the enjoyment of our 200 members.

We are so lucky to have you — it is you who make this organisation a success and a very welcoming place to come. The management, staff and trustees and I greatly appreciate all that you do.

There are a variety of volunteering opportunities available — see the listing on page 17. If you or someone you know would like to join our team, please get in touch. I would be very happy to meet and discuss the position in more detail. No matter how much or how little time you are able to give to us, it really can make a difference.

RAB Volunteering Opportunities

Please send expressions of interest to Claire Piercy, Volunteer Co-ordinator, by phone on 0118 957 2960, or by email to vc1@raftb.org

Passenger Assistants for our minibuses escorting our members to Walford Hall and home again on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Food Handling Making rolls for lunch and serving soup to our members. Currently someone is required to cover holidays and illness, but this could become more frequent.

Craft Volunteer working with our craft team in a small group or one-to-one helping members to paint, sew, pottery etc, making items to sell and raise funds. Tidy up after.

Room Set-up required Tuesday and/or Friday mornings from 8.30am. Laying the tables ready for our members to arrive. Welcome them and serve tea and coffee, refreshments and washing up afterwards.

Grant Admin Assistant Working with our Visiting Officers and members to try and secure funds for personal items, e.g. IT tablets, holidays, specialist equipment.

Social History Project Leader To take charge of a small group of members interested in local social history, talking and documenting their life stories and also discuss the history of Reading from the 1900s onwards.

Fundraising helping at events, leaflet dropping etc. Also be responsible for co-ordinating our collection tins in the local area.

Driving Our Minibuses To help cover days off, holidays and sickness.

Gardener Someone to plan the garden and the work to involve our members and then supervise the planting and watering of the flowers, shrubs and herbs.

Bowling Group To help and assist our members and using walkie-talkies to provide the bowler with a quick summary of their shot and finishing distance from the jack. In winter this is played indoors at Rivermead Leisure Centre and during the summer in Caversham. Help also needed at away matches.

Rambling Guide Our Ramblers walk twice a month on a Monday covering approx 5km. You will guide one of our sight impaired and blind members, helping them on and off the minibus and walking with them, describing the scenery etc during the walk.

General Assistant Can include any of the above, plus be on hand during our club sessions on a Tuesday and/or Friday for various activities, filling in for absentees, and doing those little jobs that crop up.

Useful phone numbers and email addresses

Reading Association for the Blind

Walford Hall

Carey Street

Reading RG1 7JS

Telephone: 0118 957 2960

Email: rab@raftb.org

Berkshire Vision

T: 0118 987 2803

E: info@berkshirevision.org.uk

RNIB Helpline

0303 123 9999

Macular Society advice and information service

T: 0300 3030 111

E: help@macularsociety.org

Diabetes UK, Reading & District branch

T: 0118 944 2228

E: berksdiab@gmail.com

Age UK Reading branch

T: 0118 950 2480

E: info@ageukreading.org.uk

Optalis Visual Impairment Service

T: 0118 974 6896

E: info@optalis.org

Guide Dogs

T: 0345 143 0224
E: reading@guidedogs.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline

T: 0300 222 1122

Deafblind UK

T: 01733 358356 (also Textphone)

E: info@deafblind.org.uk

The Partially Sighted Society

T: 01302 965195

E: reception@partsight.org.uk

Blind Veterans UK

T: 0800 389 7979

British Blind Sport

T: 01926 424247

E: info@britishblindsport.org.uk

National Federation of the Blind of the UK (NFBUK)

T: 01924 291313

E: admin@nfbuk.org

Reading Borough Council

Adults and Carers Support Services

T: 0118 937 3747

E: CSAAAdvice.Signposting@reading.gov.uk

General Enquiries

T: 0118 937 3787

Welfare Rights

T: 01387 266888

E: info@welfare-rights.net

Dates for your Diary/Forthcoming Events

11 November – Ramble

12 November – Social Club – Helen and Terry Pearce singers and entertainers

25 November – Ramble

6 December – Christmas Fair

9 December – Ramble

10 December – Christmas Party followed by Social Club with Mitchell Walmsley a singer and entertainer

13 & 17 December – visits to Museum of English Rural Life

20 December – collecting at Tesco (volunteers needed)

20 December – RAB Club closes for Christmas holiday

7 January 2020 – Club reopens

Contact the Editor - I need your news!

Please send me your news, and anything you think might be of interest for inclusion in a forthcoming edition of the RAB Outlook Newsletter.

I'm a new volunteer at RAB, so I have a lot to learn!

My name: Henry Cooke

Phone: 075 30 88 30 92

Email: news@raftb.org

READING ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

Walford Hall
Carey Street
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RG1 7JS

Telephone No: 0118 957 2960

(Outside office hours please leave a message)

Main email: rab@raftb.org

Website: www.readingassociationfortheblind.org

Office Opening

Tuesday - 8.30am - 3.00pm

Wednesday – 9.00am - 3.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 3.00pm

Clubs Days

Tuesday - 10am - 2pm

Friday - 10am - 2pm