



Support and Social Activities for People with Sight Loss in Reading



Newsletter Winter 2021

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Cover picture: Gabrielle Watts

Coronavirus vaccine: who gets it and when?

By Gabrielle Watts, RAB Outreach Manager

The vaccine is being offered first to those at highest risk of catching the virus and suffering serious complications if they do.

These are:

Older adults, starting with the over-80s and working down to 65, care home residents and staff, and frontline health and social care workers. Adults living in or working in a care home for the elderly.

Younger adults with long-term clinical conditions. All those who are classed as being in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group, though this may depend on the severity of your condition: your GP can advise.

Once all these groups have received the first dose of the vaccine all other adults (i.e. over 18) will be offered their vaccine. It is not being considered at this time to vaccinate children.

After you have received the first dose you will be offered an appointment for the second dose; this will take place between 3 and 12 weeks after the first one.

A small number of people cannot have the vaccine, including those with severe allergies who may have a reaction; check with your GP if unsure.

HAVING THE VACCINE

You will receive a letter, phone call, email or text inviting you to book your vaccination appointment. This may be at a Hospital, GP Surgery, Pharmacy or Vaccination Centre.

There are many scams around at the moment unfortunately – Remember you will only hear from the NHS re your appointment and you will never need to provide bank details to either book or receive the vaccination. If anyone tries to offer you a private vaccination that you can pay for they are not *bona fide*.

When you attend you should wear a face covering unless exempt. The appointment should last 30–45 minutes. You will be asked questions about your medical history. It is very important that you let them know if you are pregnant or have ever suffered a severe allergic reaction. You will be asked for your Booking Reference Number and NHS number if you know it.

You will receive the injection in your upper arm so remember to wear something that can be easily pulled up. After the injection they will ask you to wait 15 minutes. They have to do this in case anyone has a reaction: this is apparently very rare and happens within minutes.

IF YOU REQUIRE TRANSPORT

NHS Volunteer Responders can help with getting you to and from your appointment: this needs to be arranged with your GP. If you have no friends or relatives who can safely take you to the appointment, contact your GP immediately. If you have any problems with this, please contact your RAB Outreach Worker and we will help you to sort out transport.

AFTER YOU HAVE HAD THE VACCINE

You may experience soreness in your arm where you have received the jab. You may experience headaches. If you feel afterwards that you have unusual side effects please contact your GP.

The vaccine does not stop you getting Covid 19 and there is no information yet that it stops you passing it to others. The health advice is that if you do come into contact with the virus after being vaccinated you should only experience mild effects.

The vaccine is not a magic cure for this epidemic so it is vitally important that you still stick to the rules regarding staying home, maintaining social distance, only mixing with those you are with before the vaccine, and keep washing your hands.

We will have to wait for more guidelines before that changes.

For all up-to-date information on this topic please go to www.gov.uk/coronavirus

RAB Outreach Team contact details:

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We all work part-time: if we do not answer we will respond ASAP.

No Walford, but Hall At Home is flourishing

Walford Hall has been closed to service users since the first lockdown in March last year. But many of the activities that went on there are still accessible from the safety of your own home.

“Hall At Home” is a programme of these activities that you can access via the internet or a telephone. The association sends out to members a leaflet listing each month’s programme and providing details of how to join in.

If you use the internet you can join using Microsoft Teams, which enables visual and audio participation. Alternatively, you can just dial a phone number to participate in the session.

The programme of activities varies month by month, but some sessions are regular fixtures. On Tuesdays at 10.00 am there is always a coffee and chat session — you can bring your own cake as well, if you like!

Chatting has been going on since the start of lockdown, and has proved to be a valuable way of keeping in touch. It is especially useful for new members of RAB — to get to know other people and learn about the association’s pre-Covid activities. Some people like to call in just to listen.

On Fridays there is generally a “Fond Memories” session. The idea for this came from an RAB service user, and one participant describes it as “free-range reminiscence”. It covers recollections of people, places, TV shows and favourite anythings. “How Reading Used To Be” is often a

popular topic. People find it rewarding to hear others' reminiscences and share their own.

Long-serving volunteer Julia Canham offers a quiz each month, while the RAB Outreach team provide a session where people can bring their queries and problems.

There is a monthly craft session. The association sends out to you a parcel of raw materials and instructions, and a volunteer helps you put it together into the finished article.

Another regular is Story Hour — a 40-minute podcast followed by a group chat. Currently murder mysteries are popular. This session also enables people to find out where to get their own talking books.

There are currently about four Hall At Home sessions per week, depending on how many volunteers are available. You can choose which you would like — whether there are two people or ten on a call, you can still get something out of it.

Feedback from users of Hall At Home has been universally positive — once users have mastered the basic technology involved. Some feared it might be too hard to join in, but the association has been able to help them and many are now regulars. If you would like to give it a try but are uncertain about how it works, just ask any member of RAB staff.



Try these exercises to stay flexible

By Julia Pattenden, RAB Outreach Support Officer

During the lockdowns it has been difficult for many of you to leave your homes, simply take a walk or pop to the shops. Exercise benefits our mental and physical health, and we thought we could inspire you to try some simple exercises to maintain flexibility which can be done sitting in a chair at home.

Important: If you have any health issues which would make these exercises difficult, please consult your GP first. Listen to your body: if it hurts or is uncomfortable, stop.

Put some music on if you like to help with rhythm. Try these movements 1-2 times and increase as you feel able to, up to 5 times.

For your head and neck:

Facing forwards, slowly move your head and look to your right. Bring your head to face front and then look to your left. Look up to the ceiling and look down to the floor.

Shoulders:

Lift your shoulders as if shrugging, and release.

With your left shoulder, rotate it gently forward and then backwards. Repeat with your right shoulder.

Place your hands on your shoulders and then straighten your arms out to the front and return to your shoulder, then outwards to your sides.

Place your hand on your shoulders and raise your hands to the ceiling.

Hand exercises:

Clench your hands and then open your hand with fingers spread out. Then wiggle your fingers. With each hand at a time, spread out your fingers. Touch your thumb with each finger spreading it out each time. Then wiggle your fingers. With each hand – open your hand wide and imagine you are waving to someone as if you are the queen. Do this again and wave your hands up and down.

Legs and Feet:

If you can, raise your legs at the knee as if you are marching.

With each leg, straighten them with pointed feet one at a time to your front and circle your feet to the left and to the right.

With each leg point your toes, then turn your toes to the ceiling.

If you are chair-bound and unable to do any housework, you might like to try these other ideas which can be done in a chair.

Imagine you are hanging out your washing on the line. Lift the washing from a laundry basket next to you and raise your hands up to peg it on the line.

Hoover the carpet in front of you. Push and pull your arms forwards and backwards.

Pretend to clean your windows.

Conduct an orchestra to music using both hands.

Tap an imaginary person sitting on your left with your right hand. Now do this with your left hand tapping someone on your right.

Whisk some eggs in a bowl, roll out pastry.

Dry the dishes with a tea towel.

Pretend to walk up the stairs lifting each leg at the knee.

Imagine doing the breast stroke.

Row a boat.

Imagine punching a punch bag

Working to improve service - once we can resume

Hi everyone,

It seems so long since we last met each other in March and we are missing your faces so much here at the hall! A lot has changed since the last newsletter and continues to do so, but we are working hard to find things we can do in line with the latest guidance. As hard as it is to be apart, we can look forward to the day when we will be together again.

RAB is still running virtual activities every week and sending out a Hall At Home mailing to all members each month with all the details you need to join in. We would love to hear from you if there is a virtual activity you would like us to provide. We have had some new volunteers join us on running the activities. We hope you have enjoyed hearing some new voices and getting to know them.

We have also been speaking to you about activities you might like to do in person when safe to do so. If no one has spoken to you yet and you have ideas then please get in touch with us at the hall or on a virtual activity.

You will by now be aware that Reading Talking News has had to pause recording again, but we hope you enjoyed listening to their familiar voices while they were able to be operational. Since the end of the first lockdown they have been using the hall as a temporary recording studio and copying space because their upstairs room was too small for social distancing and we look forward to welcoming them back once they are able to resume recording and sending out the news. If you don't receive Reading Talking News and would like to then please get in contact with your Outreach officer.

While the hall remains closed we are working hard making plans to provide you with an even better service than we had before – for example, we now have a dedicated resource library waiting for your return, we can't wait to show it off to you all.

Wishing you all good health and hoping to talk to you all soon.

Abby Knowles
Operations Manager



William (Bill) Kennedy 1943 – 2020



Bill Kennedy, RAB's Treasurer until very recently and a stalwart friend of the charity, sadly passed away over Christmas.

Bill served as RAB's Treasurer from 2013 - 2019 and was a regular visitor to Walford Hall who always had time to stop and chat

to members, and if that chat was at coffee time when he could snaffle a few biscuits then all the better!

Bill would often pop over to Sweeney & Todd's to buy pies to take home and would come back from those trips with more biscuits, which he would hand out when he got back to the hall.

He took a genuine interest in everyone at RAB and brightened everyone's days with his great sense of humour. He was a keen golfer and a proud husband, father, and grandfather.

Bill gave a great deal of time to RAB and his wife, Val, was also a good friend to the charity, attending our fundraising sales.

Everyone at RAB sends our sincerest condolences to Val, and all of Bill's family. The charity benefited hugely from the time, expertise, advice and friendship Bill so generously gave us, and we shall miss him very much.

Royal Mail offers free postage for blind people

Royal Mail runs a scheme that offers free postage for blind and visually impaired people in certain circumstances. To qualify you must be Registered Blind or Severely Sight Impaired.

The free postage applies only if the letter/parcel is being sent to another visually impaired person or is returning items/aids relating to sight loss.

Additionally if a blind or visually impaired person is housebound and cannot get to the post box and has no-one to go for them, or has a parcel that conforms to the above and is too heavy to carry Royal Mail offers a free collection service. You can call Royal Mail on 0345 774 0740 to arrange a collection.

To send Freepost that conforms to the above, simply write "ARTICLES FOR THE BLIND" above the address and write the sender's name and address on the back.

As the Royal Mail wants to be able to check the contents occasionally, they ask that you do not seal the envelope. If the contents are such that they may fall out, you can request to seal it by calling 0345 607 6140.

RNIB sell Articles for the Blind Freepost labels if you would like to buy them.

For further information go to
www.royalmail.com/sending/articles-blind

Focus on Fundraising

The end of 2020 and into 2021 was a rewarding and positive one with grant applications being successful to various funders. Screwfix agreed to contribute towards building renovations to improve Walford Hall for members, and to increase its ability to be hired to local community groups when it is not being used by RAB. This should help us to replace lost hall hire income over the past year.

United Way Grants – UK have not only supported the Telephone Befriending Service, along with Berkshire Community Foundation, but they have also sponsored some of the Hall At Home activities. I am delighted to say that they have provided towards creating the Charity's new Resource Room, which will be available to members when it is possible to re-open the Walford Hall.

Considerable work has been undertaken with Workday over the past few years, and I am sure many of you will remember the excellent presentation they provided on information security. They are currently working with the Charity to help set up a new website to run in tandem with the existing members' website. We are so grateful for their continued support.

Our association with Secure Cloud+ continues into 2021, and I hope that they will support RAB this year.

I would like to thank everyone, including members, for their kind donations over the festive period.

Three new volunteers have been recruited to help with fundraising research and promotion, and I am delighted to have their support. However, if you have any ideas or contacts then please do not hesitate to pass these on to me via email on: marionh@rabsightloss.org

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 also happy to receive your comments about any of the articles appearing in the Newsletter, and suggestions of what you would like to see in future issues.

Henry Cooke 07530 883 092 Email: news@raftb.org

AND — if you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please let us have your email address. We promise we won't use it for anything other than the RAB Newsletter.

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