

BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

**Keeping people
connected**

**Our impact
in 2023**



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Welcome

What a privilege it is to welcome you to our Impact Report for 2023 as our charity's new CEO and Chair.

Leading British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) as we enter our next chapter comes with profound responsibility. Too many people living with sight loss still face barriers accessing audio content easily and independently. We intend to change that.

With more than 20 years' combined experience with this special charity, we know that we can achieve great things when we work together - as a team, as a sight loss community, and as a network of supporters.

In the coming years we will reach more people with audio solutions and services that they want, need and choose. We will offer truly personal support. We will change more lives.

Together, we can achieve more

Our ambition for the future is rooted in our knowledge of what's possible with your support. Your response to our first-ever emergency appeal last year paid for the deposit on a final order of 2,000 Concerto 3 radios, before production of this much-loved adapted radio ended. At the same time, we offered our greatest-ever choice of audio devices and made improvements to our apps. For more than 30,000 people across the UK, BWBF remains a sight loss friendly gateway to a world of audio.

These pages reveal the scale and human impact of what we do. We hope you are moved by the stories of families brought together, minds kept active, and the simple companionship of audio. It's these stories that inspire us to reach more people every day.

"For more than 30,000 people across the UK, BWBF remains a sight loss friendly gateway to a world of audio."

Transforming to meet new needs

In 2024 we embark on a new transformational strategy for the charity. Our vision is to become the go-to place for 'all things audio' for people with sight loss. We will undertake our deepest-ever research to understand the barriers people with sight loss face when accessing audio content. This research will ensure our service is designed with the needs of our users at its heart.

Our legacy and our future

On behalf of our community, we would like to thank our outgoing CEO, Margaret Grainger, and Chair, Daniel Smith. Under their leadership our service has evolved in tandem with a changing technological landscape.

Over the coming years this pace of technological change will only accelerate, with the rise of artificial intelligence and new innovations. Meanwhile, the number of people living with sight loss is expected to

double by 2050*. We know that, together with supporters like you, we can pioneer new audio services and solutions to meet the changing needs of this fast-growing community.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us to bring the joy of audio to so many lives.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Brace'.

Mike Brace,
CBE DL
Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophie Jones'.

Sophie Jones
Chief Executive
Officer

"Our vision is to become the go-to place for 'all things audio' for people with sight loss."

*RNIB. September 2021. Key statistics about sight loss.

Our year in numbers

33,363

BWBF radios now in
homes across the UK



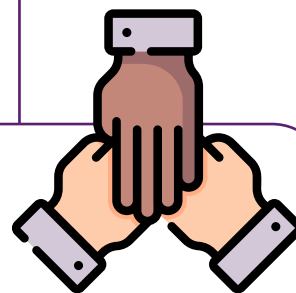
1,758

people received a
Concerto 3 radio
last year



140

partner agencies
helped get our radios
to more people



104 years

the age of our eldest
radio recipient



5,352

app downloads
by the end of 2023



Our ambition

Who we are

We believe access to audio can be life-changing for someone living with sight loss. We give radios for free and for life to people living with sight loss in the greatest financial need. Our easy-to-use apps and skills unlock a world of audio content on the internet for people who might otherwise struggle to access it.

Where we're going

We will be the 'go-to' organisation for all things audio for people living with sight loss. We will deliver innovative, inclusive and trustworthy audio solutions and information services.

How we'll get there

By embracing our sight loss community

We will undertake our deepest-ever research to get a detailed understanding of the barriers and opportunities facing people living with sight loss when they access audio content. We will deliver the service people truly want and need.

By evolving and innovating

We will launch a transformation strategy to ensure everything we do is delivering the greatest impact for our beneficiaries. We will evolve our service in line with emerging technology to meet the needs of people living with sight loss today.

By fostering support

We will grow our network of donors, volunteers, trusts, foundations and companies who share our values and can help us make a real difference to people living with sight loss. We will find new ways to work together with our network of supporters to achieve more for our beneficiaries.

What drives us

Our values drive all we do.

Inclusivity

Innovation

Integrity

Support

Empathy

Ambition

Our radios

Nearly a century after BWBF was born, today's beneficiaries range from young people who have grown up as smartphone users, to those who are more comfortable with tactile, adapted or sight loss friendly devices. Our ethos is to service all those needs, by offering a choice and avoiding assumptions about our beneficiaries' wants and habits.

No 'one-size-fits-all' solution

We know there is no one-size-fits-all audio solution for people living with sight loss. That's why our range of radios and headphones in 2023 represented our biggest-ever choice of equipment.

For someone who wants a simple radio they can operate independently without having to familiarise themselves with lots of buttons or dials, our popular Relish radio might be the ideal choice. Meanwhile, someone with a treasured CD collection might be more likely to benefit from our Concerto 3 or Sound 48 devices.

Saving our sets

When we know something is working for people living with sight loss we will strive to ensure the maximum number of people can benefit. Last summer our supporters, trusts and other partners rallied behind our 'Save Our Sets' (SOS) campaign.



Thanks to our first-ever emergency fundraising appeal, thousands who would otherwise have missed out will enjoy a Concerto 3 radio from BWBF, as the factory that produces this device closes.

The Concerto line of radios has been popular with our beneficiaries for many years, and we are committed to ensuring our future range of radios continues to offer the best of what the Concerto gave people with sight loss.

More choice in the year ahead

We will continue to evolve our radio service based on feedback from our beneficiaries and partner organisations who work with people living with sight loss. In 2024 our range will grow again, with the addition of Alexa devices, USB players and more.



12 radios
1 headphone set
our biggest ever range



2,491
radios given to
people living with
sight loss



7,970
personal interactions
with beneficiaries
by phone, email
or in person

Thomas and Yvonne's story

"He had all the injections, but eventually they couldn't really do much more," says Yvonne, whose father, Thomas, has macular degeneration.

"Although he's 101, mentally he's still very alert," she explains. "Dad's always tried to maintain as much independence as he can. It's difficult because he's obviously blind and his hearing isn't good, and he's a little bit unsteady now. The radio is something he feels he can control."

Yvonne stumbled across BWBF when looking for a radio her dad would be able to use independently. His new radio has been transformative.

"The biggest thing about this radio is he can control it himself," says Yvonne. "I did get an ordinary radio, and I had taped things down so you couldn't change them by mistake. But having the Relish radio has been great because it's got an on/off button which makes a noise and big buttons and pre-set choices. It's made a big difference."

According to Yvonne, being able to listen to the news has helped her dad stay in touch with world events. But it's also kept him connected with his loved ones.

"Dad didn't feel he was able to keep up with current affairs," reflects Yvonne. "Now that he can listen to the news, he can have a more relevant conversation with somebody. It makes him feel more part of what's going on. He can talk about what's happening in Ukraine or what's happening in America, whereas it was quite isolating before because he couldn't really access the news."

For her dad, the radio has been a vital connection to the world. "Even if you're not talking to somebody," she explains, "if you're listening to the radio and you're listening to the news, then you're still feeling part of things."

"Sitting listening to the radio is sort of Dad's natural pose now," laughs Yvonne. "He has it on all the time."

"If you're listening to the radio and you're listening to the news, then you're still feeling part of things."





Our apps and skills

Nowhere else on the internet can someone living with sight loss access more than 10,000 radio stations or hundreds of newspapers for free, all in one place, all via simple commands or gestures.

Our mobile phone apps and Alexa skill* bring together a world of audio content, while stripping out the endless adverts, pop-ups, and platform-specific user interfaces that can be so frustrating to navigate if you're living with sight loss.

App membership launched

2023 saw us launch a new mobile phone app registration process. Users are now able to sign in to all our apps via one simple registration form. The change gives us the insights we need to be more responsive to our users' needs in our app improvements. It also enables us to market our apps more widely, so that more people living with sight loss can benefit from their unique functionality.

Powering our newspaper app through speech

Last year also saw us take strides in transforming our Talking Newspaper

app to be fully speech-powered. The new Speech Talking Newspaper app, which allows users to navigate hundreds of publications with simple voice commands, is available to anyone living with sight loss in 2024.

The future

Smartphones and voice technology have revolutionised the technological landscape, and the potential benefits for someone living with sight loss can't be understated. But, still, people we work with tell us about the barriers they face in taking full advantage of emerging technologies.

Over the next year, our apps and skills team will be undertaking research with people living with sight loss of all ages and right across the country. The research will delve into their digital habits, how they use our apps, and what they want and need from us. These insights will underpin the next phase of developments from BWBF.



* A skill is an application specific to Alexa devices which enables the smart speaker to find what you are asking for.

180

new radio stations added to our Speech Radio app



22

new publications added to our Talking Newspaper app



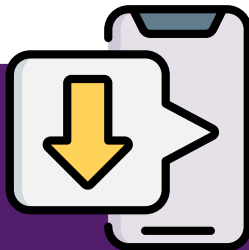
105,654

times our Talking Newspaper Alexa skill was used



1,280

Talking Newspaper app downloads in 2023



650

Speech Radio app downloads in 2023



Brian's story

"We're a visual society, so anyone who has partial vision or total loss of vision is always fighting an uphill battle," reflects Brian, who was born with congenital glaucoma. "If accessibility is built in from the ground upwards, it makes life easier and everyone benefits."

Brian has always been a fan of technology, even after losing the last of his vision in 2018. "My sight has been up and down like a rollercoaster over the years," he says, "but that doesn't stop me still playing around with technology."

"When you first lose your vision, even the most basic things like pouring a cup of tea become a big challenge," explains Brian. "Likewise, navigating inaccessible websites and technology can get very frustrating."

After a lifetime of encountering obstacles and frustrations navigating the real and online worlds, accessible technology became a passion. For Brian, BWBF's Talking Newspaper and Speech Radio apps provided just the sight loss friendly experience he was looking for.

"I was impressed with the nice, straightforward layout," he says. "The lovely radio app is really nice because it's not overcomplicated. With a lot of services now you have to have an account to be able to listen to the radio. For someone who's new to sight loss, that's yet another hoop they've got to try and jump through before they can even listen to the radio. Having all the stations in one place makes life much easier. Once you put your favourites in there, you haven't got to keep going back and doing a search. You can just go and hit play and listen!"

"Radio is such a big thing for my generation," reflects Brian. "We've grown up with it and having access to radio is always going to be priority."

"I like finding stations I listened to on holiday," says Brian, for whom audio can evoke powerful memories. "You can't beat that. It's a bit like having photos or videos to look back on. You've got that audio reference of good times."

"Radio is such a big thing for my generation. We've grown up with it and having access to the radio is always going to be a priority."





Your support changes lives

Everything we do relies on our supporters. Last year we saw what we can achieve together, when we launched our first-ever emergency fundraising appeal.

What happened?

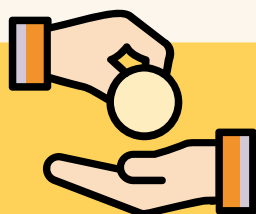
In spring 2023 we learnt that, due to reasons beyond anyone's control, the factory that made our popular Concerto 3 radio would be closing at very short notice. While we looked for alternative solutions, it quickly became clear to us that we needed to ensure that these devices are available to people living with sight loss.

What we did

Determined that as many people as possible would benefit from our Concerto 3 radio, we urgently needed to raise funds for a final, additional order. We quickly mobilised to launch our Save Our Sets (SOS) campaign - BWBF's first-ever emergency appeal. We were absolutely astounded by the response, with hundreds of people, organisations and trusts rallying to ensure the maximum number of people would be able to enjoy this radio, which has been such a lifeline to so many over the years.



£123,490
raised



£68,990
from members
of the public

£54,500
from trusts
& foundations

The difference you made

Thank you to all our supporters who helped to make our vital campaign a success. This life-changing radio will continue to bring joy to so many because of your generous donations.



Your donations paid for a deposit for **2,000** Concerto 3 radios



We bought **890** Concerto 3 radios entirely out of SOS appeal funds



474 people gave to our appeal



20 trusts and foundations gave to our appeal

Our finances

2023

2022

Income	£	£
Legacies	492,131	1,210,947
Marketing sales	155,525	142,864
Trusts & foundations	188,940	117,390
Investments & other income	101,631	74,877
Donations	150,406	96,329
Total income	1,088,633	1,642,407
Expenditure	£	£
Delivering charitable objectives	1,040,860	953,405
Support	344,018	336,036
Fundraising	265,074	245,094
Governance	33,523	15,967
Total Expenditure	1,683,475	1,550,502
Reserves	3,687,534	4,079,163

**Thank you to all our partners
and supporters**



Talking News Federation



The Plum Trust

The Loppylugs and Barbara Morrison Charitable Trust

Dyfrig's story

Dyfrig grew up partially sighted. In 2017, at the age of 45, he lost his sight entirely.

"I think I had a relatively delayed emotional reaction to losing my sight," he reflects, "and one of the things that manifested was that I was just very annoyed with the lack of tactile devices. Everything seemed to depend on seeing a little touch screen."

A lifelong radio lover, Dyfrig came across BWBF when searching for a device that would work for him. "I grew up listening to the radio," he explains. "I'm a speech radio type of person - primarily Radio 4 and Radio 3. So having access to radio is very important to me."

One call to BWBF was all it took. Not expecting to find something free, Dyfrig was pleasantly surprised to receive a Concerto 3 under BWBF's free lifetime loan scheme.

"Being able to play my CDs again was fantastic," Dyfrig reflects. "I wanted the quality of a proper piece of kit. We're in this transitional period of technologies. I was a person who was still buying CDs up until about 10 years ago. So it's still got to be able to play that stuff in a way I want to play it."

Using the radio was easy enough to pick up for Dyfrig. "Once I got the hang of it, I was able to navigate it," he says. "Having the sound signals to help with tuning was very good."

For Dyfrig, the benefits of something tactile were significant. "There's an element of technology at the moment which is potentially leaving out people with some disabilities," he explains. "You don't need to make everything flat! It's a sort of thoughtlessness. Whereas this radio is great, because you have some level of control over it."

"There's an element of technology at the moment which is potentially leaving out people with some disabilities."





Our reach

Thanks to you, we're changing lives in every corner of the UK.

"The radio helps me to relax. I'm so grateful to get it. Thank you to everyone who does the work to get the radio to us."

Colin, Alloa

"BWBF keeps people connected with the world and connected with their interests."

Barry, County Antrim

"My radio and music help me to try to get through life."

Vera, Caldicott

"I can do without my television, but not my radio. I can't thank BWBF enough."

Joyce, Bristol

"I'm lost for words at how responsive BWBF has been."

Michael, Bedford

"I don't know what I'd do without it. Radio is my thing." Betty, Greenock

"It's company in the house. I'd be lost without the radio." Brenda, Birmingham

"It makes a tremendous difference. It keeps you up to date. It's an essential lifeline."

Beneficiary, Grimsby

"I'd be lost without it, quite frankly."

Sheila, Chelmsford

"The apps are simple. You just ask for what you want."

Wayne, London

Support us

With your support, we can help even more people.



Donate

Whatever you can give, know that your support will help us provide comfort, companionship and connection for people living with sight loss, via our radios and apps.

Visit www.blind.org.uk/donate



Remember us in your will

Leaving a gift in your will is a wonderful way to ensure we can be there for the next generation of people living with sight loss. Once you've considered your loved ones, any gift you can give will make the world of difference.

Visit www.blind.org.uk/support-us



Get your company involved

Could your company help us deliver our next big project? We've got big ambitions to reach more people living with sight loss via our apps, skills, and radios.

Visit www.blind.org.uk/corporate-partnerships



Other ways to give

From giving in memory of a loved one, to donating shares or giving as you shop, there are lots more ways you can support us.

Visit www.blind.org.uk/support-us

Your data

Our new privacy policy sets out how we will use your information.

To read our updated privacy policy or update your preferences about how we contact you, please visit
➤ [**www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy**](http://www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy)

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