


# BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN  
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD



**Embracing  
change,  
empowering  
lives.**

**Our impact  
in 2024**

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# Welcome

Every day, people with sight loss tell us how access to audio has transformed their lives.

Last year, the number of people we supported shot up by 65 per cent. That's hundreds more people who've felt connected, independent, mentally healthy and empowered through our services.



**Mike Brace, CBE, DL**  
Chair

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This growth is down to our revitalised offer for our community. For the first time, we gave Alexa devices to people who need help accessing this technology. More than 1,700 people used our Alexa services in the first six months.

Because we believe the benefits of audio technology begin in the formative years, we also removed the age limit preventing younger children from accessing our support.

No two people living with sight loss are the same—these new services were offered alongside our existing audio devices and apps, giving those we support more choice than ever.

Our transformation has been enormous, but we still have work to do. Next year will be about building a deeper understanding of what people need from us, and shaping our service for the future.

As demand grows, your support is more important than ever. Thank you for standing with us—and with the thousands of people living with sight loss across the UK.



**Sophie Jones**  
Chief Executive Officer

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# Who we are

We believe easy access to audio can be life-changing for someone living with sight loss.

Our free audio devices unlock a world of audio content for blind and partially sighted people in the greatest financial need.

Sight loss shouldn't close the door to the experiences most people take for granted. We provide comfort and companionship, and keep people connected with their communities, their passions and the wider world.

## Our audio devices

Our audio devices help people with sight loss feel independent, safe, connected, informed, and in touch with their pleasures and passions.

Driven by our new Alexa service, last year we gave out more audio devices than in any other year in the last decade. From speech-powered smart speakers to USB players designed for people with sight loss, and easy-to-use radios, our range of support suits different needs and tastes.

We worked more closely than ever with other charities to target our support towards those that need it most. By pairing up with AbilityNet, we've been able to offer support to people adapting to new technology.

We gave out  
**4,237**  
audio devices to  
people living with  
sight loss



We gave  
**1,728 Alexa**  
devices under our  
new scheme



We gave  
**27 Concerto**  
devices to groups run  
by partner charities  
Macular Society and  
Retina UK

## Doreen's story

After losing much of her vision to age-related macular degeneration, Doreen was one of hundreds who benefitted from our free Amazon Echo smart speaker scheme, launched last year.

"I can listen to so many more stations, so many programmes," she says. "And I can replace the reading, which I can't do anymore, with listening to audiobooks. I love it."

At 95, Doreen lives alone in her second-floor flat in London. Since her husband passed away, and without family living locally, Alexa has become a key to maintaining her independence.

Beyond entertainment, she also uses Alexa to check the time and date, set reminders for medical appointments, and even get cooking instructions.



**"I often think, what would my grandmother make of it—me talking to a tennis ball on the shelf. It's amazing!"**



# New services for children and young people

The benefits of technology for a child with sight loss begin in the formative years. But meeting a child's technological needs can be hard for families already facing the extra expenses that come with caring for a disabled child.

In 2024, we removed the lower age limit for people accessing our audio devices, unlocking a world of learning and entertainment for young people. We also teamed up with schools and young people's sight loss charity VICTA to ensure our support reaches the broadest possible community of children and young people.



We gave out more than **100** devices in the first three months of offering our new children's services



Pupils at St Vincent's school for children with sensory impairments now benefit from **10 Alexa** devices supplied by BWBF



We gave **10 iPads** to children and young people as part of our pilot project

## Ryder's story

Ryder was born with severe sight loss. The iPad we gave him as part of our pilot project has helped Ryder with schoolwork, reading, drawing, photography, and practical tasks.

"It's been a game-changer," his mum, Kirsty, says. "Now he can enjoy the same books as his friends. If he has a schoolbook in standard print, he can use the magnifier app to read it."

When Ryder's diagnosis was first confirmed, the family was devastated. But, Kirsty explains, "we want all our children to have the opportunity to develop interests and live a full life. Different does not mean less."

According to Kirsty, technology has given Ryder access to the same experiences as his peers. "Technology is crucial for every child," she says, "but even more so for those with disabilities."



**"With the cost of living today, everything for children with additional needs comes at a hefty price. That's why BWBF's support is so vital."**

## Our audio apps

Our apps and Alexa skill open up a whole world of radio and news. Designed for people with sight loss, they remove adverts, pop-ups, and platform-specific challenges that can make other platforms so inaccessible to people living with sight loss.

Thanks to our partnership with audio content aggregators airable, last year the number of radio stations on our Speech Radio app grew sevenfold. And, by securing pro bono support from software developers VOID, we were able to deliver a better experience for all our app users.

We grew our Speech Radio app to offer more than **70,000** radio stations



## Janet's story

Janet lives with a hereditary sight loss condition called Best disease. Over the years, her world has become smaller as her central vision has progressively deteriorated. The Relish radio we gave her has helped her find entertainment and mental stimulation.

**"Radio has become more important. It's my entertainment and it helps me stay connected to the world."**



"With so many things no longer available to me, radio has become more important," she says. "It's my entertainment and it helps me stay connected to the world."

Janet's BWBF radio plays an increasingly central role in her life as her vision has worsened and since she has been caring for her husband, who has Alzheimer's disease. She is particularly pleased with the simple controls and station presets. "It felt like receiving a Christmas present," she says.

Although her vision is limited, Janet values what she has. "I'm grateful for nature. Birdsong is beautiful. I think a lot of people miss these things because they spend so much time looking at screens."



# The life changing impact of audio

We provide more than access to audio. We touch people's lives in countless ways. These might seem like simple things—things many of us might take for granted. But, for those we support, they can be transformative.

## We open up a world of reading and learning

"The best part is seeing her face light up when she talks about the books she's listening to. It's like a whole new world has opened up."

## We unleash joy

"It has brought so much joy to her life, we have lots of impromptu dance parties now!"

## We unlock language skills

"My Little Morphée is great for Harry's development in terms of vocabulary."

## We ease financial pressures on families

"Everything for children with additional needs comes at a hefty price. That's why BWBF's support is so vital."

## We take the anxiety out of parenting

"She finds mealtimes quite stressful because of her visual impairment. We put on her favourite songs and we dance and sing and it just makes it more fun and relaxing."

## We keep hobbies alive

"I can replace the reading, which I can't do anymore, with listening to audiobooks. I love it."

## We bring families together

"To sit down as a family and listen to the radio together is a wonderful, healing, beautiful thing."

## We keep minds active

"Mentally she's fine but physically her options are so limited. But with this radio she can keep her mind occupied"

## We help people stay safe

"A couple of years ago Mum fell. It was a concern. How could we give Mum the ability to contact me easily? I thought if I could get her an Alexa device I could get it set up so she can call us through that."

## We help young people feel 'normal'

"It takes away the feeling of isolation or feeling different."

## We provide practical information

"I use it for reminders, to turn my lights on and off with the smart plugs, I use it to listen to music, I've even made phone calls through it!"

## We provide independence

"I spend my life having to ask people to help me to do things. But I can use the radio myself."

## We give companionship

"Alexa has made all the difference to my mother. She even says goodnight to her and likes the way it replies."

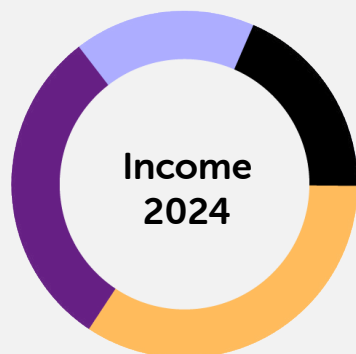
## We support people to feel less alone

"It has absolutely made a big difference to Dad's life. It has really reduced the loneliness he was feeling."

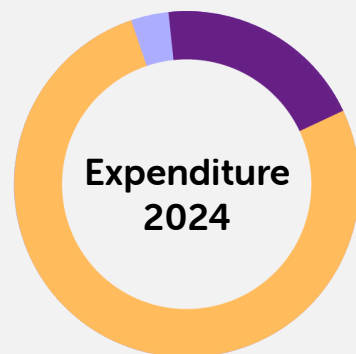
## Our finances

We receive no government funding.

Our work relies entirely on the generosity of the people and organisations that support us.



- Donations: £101,176
- Gifts in Wills: £396,247
- Trusts & Foundations: £270,149
- Investments & other: £104,703



- Charitable activities\* £1,174,079
- Raising funds\* £417,491
- Other £26,952

\*Including apportioned support costs

Our total charitable funds as at 31 December 2024 were **£3,168,954**

## Your support changes lives

Our work is only possible thanks to you. With your continued support, we can do more to transform the lives of people living with sight loss.

### Make a donation

Donate and help unlock the power of audio.

[blind.org.uk/donate](https://blind.org.uk/donate)

### Leave a gift in your Will

A gift in your Will could secure our service for the future.

[blind.org.uk/gifts-in-wills](https://blind.org.uk/gifts-in-wills)

### Get your company involved

Your company's energy and expertise could change lives.

[blind.org.uk/partnerships](https://blind.org.uk/partnerships)

## Thank you

The stories and work highlighted in this report are only possible thanks to all our supporters, including:

- Loppylugs & Barbara Morrison Charitable Trust
- The R S MacDonald Charitable Trust
- Loseley & Guildway Charitable Trust
- Kathleen Beryl Sleigh Charitable Trust
- AbilityNet
- VICTA
- Retina UK
- Macular Society
- St Vincent's School
- Talking News Federation



# Your data

Our 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 [blind.org.uk/privacy-policy](https://blind.org.uk/privacy-policy)

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**BRITISH WIRELESS  
FOR THE BLIND FUND**

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN  
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

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