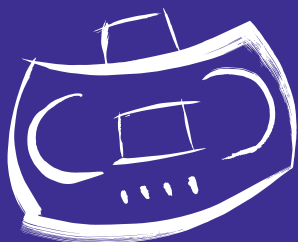


BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

IMPACT REPORT **2014 15**

Bringing a world of music,
entertainment and news
to those with sight loss.

British Wireless
for the
Blind Fund



Foreword from the C.E.O. – A year of consolidation and moving forward

Welcome to our new Impact Report which we hope will give you a much clearer picture of the difference the work of the British Wireless makes to the daily lives of blind people. So often we think we are just giving a piece of uniquely designed equipment, but the reality to the person that receives the service is that we are opening their lives to many different kinds of audio content. In this ever changing world, technology is moving at a fast pace and we must move at the same speed to continue to bring high quality listening through the most suitable audio equipment.

Over the last year we have reviewed and improved the efficiency of our operations to ensure that when a blind person needs our help they can get quicker access to our service. We have also taken major steps forward in the provision of content to Sonata Plus users. There have been several firmware updates throughout the year which have improved the effectiveness of the set itself and made connecting to a router a simpler operation. The range and amount of content has increased dramatically and this will continue.

Over the next year we shall be looking at what equipment and services the British Wireless should be providing in the next five years and will be talking to manufacturers as well as undertaking research to find out from the people that receive our service what their requirements will be.

Sadly, we have lost two people associated with British Wireless this year. Firstly our former Chair Peter McDonagh who was key in transforming the organisation as we knew it and personally pushed through many of the advances which have been a benefit to our recipients. Secondly Luke Williams, who has worked on the conception of Sonata since it first came into the UK. Luke had an incredible vision about the way that Sonata could transform someone's life and through his hard work and dedication his legacy is now coming to fruition.

Many people will have heard the radio campaigns to advertise digital radio switchover. This is particularly significant for British Wireless as we still have many people using analogue only sets. Currently, however, we have still not reached the 50% switch to digital listening that the government has stated must be reached before the switchover is considered. Current estimations are that it will happen in 2020.

Many thanks to all our current supporters who enable us to offer such a wonderful lifeline to people that are in need. Without our key stakeholders, our donors, volunteers and faithful agents we would not be able to continue to provide our high standard of service. We look forward to their continued commitment in moving forward together.



“Technology is moving at a fast pace and we must move at the same speed.”

Margaret Grainger has been C.E.O. of British Wireless for the Blind Fund for 29 years. Moving from a background in personnel management, she has built up the charity from a staff of three in the London office, to four with the move to Chatham, to twelve at the current Maidstone office. During that time she has been instrumental in selecting and incorporating new technology into the radios issued from the first plastic cased, the first with pre-set station buttons and the first radio cassette players to the wireless internet audio player issued today. Margaret has been a Director of Wavelength and sat on the Board of Age Concern representing the views of elderly people needing audio equipment. She sat on the now disbanded Consumer Expert group, set up by the Government Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and is currently on the Consumer Forum for Communication working alongside Ofcom to ensure the needs of blind people are heard. She is also actively involved in The Digital Switchover debate.

Why are we here? For people living with sight loss, life becomes a challenge; not just the difficulty of getting out and about, but also the everyday tasks that we take for granted, like turning on the radio in the morning to listen to the news.

“ Just shut your eyes for a moment and keep them closed. Fancy that you can never open them again. Never see the faces that you know so well, never see the sunshine and the sky and fields and flowers, always alone, always in the dark. Always to be dependent upon other people to tell you what was going on, finding it hard to get your living and harder still to get to any place of amusement, a concert or lecture or anything like that. And then supposing someone came and put a little instrument in your hands which you could hold to your ear and suddenly listen for hours at a time to music, songs, and dances far away, to dramas and comic turns and news of the day. Why you wouldn't feel half so lonely or shut out, you would feel yourself back in the world with all its movement and hope and some of its fun ”

Extract from Sir Winston Churchill's Christmas Day Appeal 1928

British Wireless for the Blind Fund exists to help improve the daily lives of visually impaired people, who are unable to afford a specially adapted radio, by providing the equipment on free loan.



A Magnum 20138 with braille dials issued around 1943

1941. Appeal for funds. Mr Constable wrote “A heavy blitz on London last April destroyed my home – and my sight. I was a draftsman and so it destroyed my job too. When I came out of hospital I went to a Home of Recovery in Torquay where there were quite a number of war-blinded civilians like myself. We learned a lot of things together – how to listen to sounds that we had not noticed before – how to get the full meaning out of a sound. To us, wireless is more than just an amusement; it is almost a way of life. It's our church; it's our library and our theatre. During wartime it is the blind man's newspaper and his guardian against rumour and false news. Think what wireless must mean to the blind people who have been evacuated and are living in surroundings that they don't know and can't even visualise. Providing a good wireless set for every blind man and woman in the United Kingdom who needs one is the simple aim of the Fund”.

Are our sets and services needed? In one word: Yes. Losing one's sight is life changing. For people who have been diagnosed with a visual impairment that cannot be treated, the next step is to access advice and support. This frequently includes finding equipment that can help with everyday living. Having access to radio and everything that radio can offer is as important now as it was in 1928, when British Wireless was first launched. We are the only charity providing specially adapted radios on free loan to registered blind and partially sighted people in need. Our equipment is not available through the NHS. Radios that are adapted are inevitably more expensive than standard models so this often puts the cost out of reach of someone on a low income. British Wireless is there to help; providing sets on a free loan basis to people with sight loss who receive a means-tested benefit.

Why is there a need to provide specially adapted sets?

As technology advances, devices have become more compact and sleeker, making it harder for some people with sight loss to access and use independently. Nearly all modern radios require sight to operate the scan or menu functions and have buttons that are similar in shape and size, making it very difficult to identify controls by touch alone. The very earliest crystal radios issued in the 1930's by the newly set up British Wireless for the Blind Fund took this into account and used large dials with braille markings. Our current specially adapted sets utilise strong colour contrast, with yellow control buttons set against a charcoal grey background to help those with residual vision to distinguish the controls. The controls are buttons or sliders with raised markings that can easily be differentiated by feel and the sets themselves are robust. As tone and clarity of sound becomes more important to people who have lost their sight, all sets have high quality sound. All of these features contribute to easy, independent, daily use, making a real tangible difference to the lives of those who receive our radios.



“ I love the Concerto – it has a beautiful clear tone ”
Margaret from Middlesbrough

To be eligible to receive a radio or combined radio/ audio player the person needs to:-

- Be registered blind or partially-sighted
- Be a U.K. resident
- Be aged over 8
- Be in receipt of a means-tested benefit
- Not already be in receipt of a set suited to their needs.

“ My radio is a godsend I listen to it all the time, when I'm not out - it has opened up such a lot for me. I used to love reading, but as I can't do that now I have my talking books on C.D. It's really made a difference to my daily life ”
Betty from Margate

“ I am so pleased to have a Concerto, I don't really know what I would do without it ”

Elizabeth from Kilburn

What we provide

Over the years British Wireless has worked with different manufacturers to produce radios and combined radio/audio players with features that make them easy to operate by someone who has lost their sight. The three specially adapted sets currently available meet differing listening needs. The 'Duet 2' is an FM/DAB radio with station pre-sets and a facility for headphones. The 'Concerto 2' is an FM/DAB radio with facilities to play audio files from tape, CD's, SD cards and USB memory sticks. The 'Sonata Plus' audio player accesses radio stations and web-based audio content through the internet, and it's new ability to read text web-pages through its internal text to speech engine takes it to the forefront of audio technology.

How we operate

British Wireless is a small team of eight full-time staff based at Head Office in Maidstone, and four Regional Development Managers. To enable us to provide our service throughout the U.K., British Wireless work with a network of local agents who are either local blind societies or local authority sensory teams. In addition we have around 40 of our own trained volunteers who work under the direction of the Regional Development Managers. Each newly registered blind or partially sighted person will have their needs assessed and where a referral is made for one of our adapted radios, the agent or a trained volunteer will take the most suitable set out to the home of the new recipient, install it and provide one-to-one instruction on its use. If a set develops a problem, British Wireless will repair or replace it. Telephone help for operational problems is also available, with a volunteer at head office dedicated to providing this service.



An agent's perspective: Emily Havercroft, Outreach and Development Officer, Selby District Vision

The BWBF radio service is an important part of the work that we deliver to blind and partially sighted people in Selby. Reducing isolation and loneliness for our clients is very, very important to us and we work closely with local networks to help with this issue. BWBF's radios fit in nicely alongside our telephone befriending scheme, audio book club and outreach work – the radios form part of the 'kit' that we take out when visiting people in their homes to see how we can help.

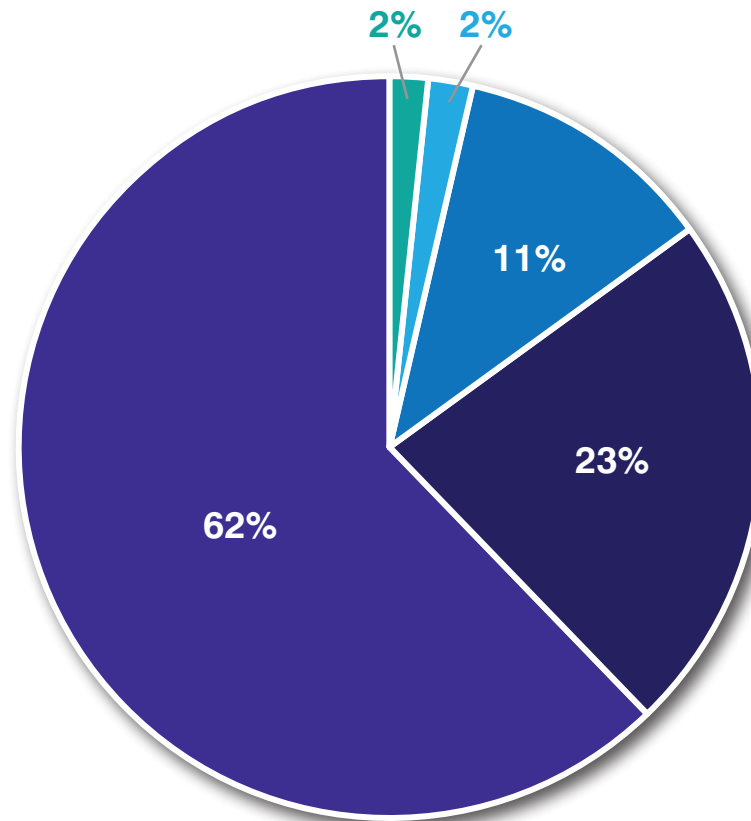
I recently visited a lady and provided her with a Concerto 2. She loves it because it means she can listen to the local talking newspaper, radio and music CDs completely independently all at the touch of a few buttons. What was great was that this lady said she could now play children's books on memory stick, which enables her to read with her two year old son. It's lovely to see specialised equipment making a real difference to people's lives.

The 'Concerto 2' is the most frequently requested of the sets available as it also has functions that allow the user to listen to talking books, newspapers and music recorded on CD or memory sticks.

Overall, 240 fewer sets were issued in the 2013/4 financial year than in the previous year. The decrease in numbers of sets issued partly reflects the currently declining numbers of newly registered blind and partially-sighted people, particularly in the over 75 age category, who constitute the majority of our set recipients.

11% more Concerto 2 sets were issued in 2013/4 than in the previous year, with a corresponding decline in issue of the original Concerto set which is being phased out. The Duet 2 and Sonata Plus component remained constant at 11% and 2% respectively.

2013/14 set issue Figures



Sonata Plus	48
Other	54
Duet 2	300
Concerto	606
Concerto 2	1650
Total	2658



A Concerto 2 set



A volunteer's perspective: John Capewell - field volunteer Staffordshire.

"I've been volunteering with BWBF for about a year now. I'd recently been made redundant from my job as an engineer, so I had a bit of time on my hands and the idea of helping someone in a practical way really appealed to me. Providing the radio and allowing the recipient to have a great piece of accessible equipment is the main part of the role but the one-to-one interaction is very rewarding. I often come away after a cup of tea and a chat, feeling that not only have I provided practical help, but have also cheered someone up a little bit".

Aim of the charity

British Wireless for the Blind Fund's aim is to provide registered blind or partially sighted people in the U.K. with specially adapted radio or combined radio/audio equipment where there is clear benefit to the individual.

To ensure that it is only the neediest who receive sets on free loan, the prospective recipient must be in receipt of a means tested benefit as indicative of financial hardship.

Activities, outcomes and impacts

Summary: During 2013/4 we have continued to make progress towards improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the service to our set recipients and agents and towards incorporating new technology into our sets. Specifically we have:-

- Improved the daily lives of 2,658 visually impaired people in the UK who will receive 5 years of high quality listening from their new sets. In addition users of our Sonata Plus internet audio players will have greatly benefitted from our increased and improved personal playlist service.
- From talking to our set recipients we **know** that having specially adapted equipment can:-
 - ▶ help retain independence in the home through them having a set that can be operated without help.
 - ▶ help combat loneliness, depression and social isolation through having access to all that broadcast radio offers as well as the means to listen to music, talking books and newspapers - 24 hrs a day - completely independently at the touch of the buttons.
 - ▶ keep people up-to-date with what is going on locally and throughout the world – a real lifeline.

- Made changes to our Memorandum of Association and Articles to give us wider scope for exploring new opportunities in audio technology.
- Made major improvements to the set issuing process. This has included improved communication with our agents over orders and stock levels, moving to e-mail to provide update information and the agent handbook and moving to a new courier company offering better rates for set delivery.
- Integrated our recipient and customer databases to give improved user access and enhanced reporting and analysis.
- Taken a big step forward in the programming code and data that provides the control programme for the Sonata Plus resulting in a significant increase in the availability and format of content for the user. In particular it now allows navigation through live web-pages which can be read using the text to speech facility.
- Continued to recycle and reissue the Concerto and Duet models. During the year 1372 sets were refurbished and 1580 sets reissued with help from our volunteer John at Head Office.
- Continued to recruit and train volunteers both for the Maidstone office and to assist the Regional Development Managers. Our 48 volunteers help with everything from delivering and installing sets, fundraising, research, database maintenance, supporting set users with telephone help, to checking and fixing radio station links and adding to station lists for the Sonata service.



A recipient's perspective: Mary from Stafford

My husband died a few years ago, and one of the things I noticed was how quiet and still the house became. I struggled to use a standard radio and as I can't really watch much TV anymore I needed a radio that I could use easily and independently. BWBF's volunteer John brought me my new Concerto 2 which he unpacked and set up. He was patient and courteous as he explained all of the different functions of the radio and set up my favourite stations on the pre-sets. I was pleased to discover that the Concerto 2 also had a USB facility meaning that I could also play my audiobooks. My Concerto 2 is excellent, I can listen to CDs, radio, audiobooks, tapes, talking newspapers and more! Having everything in one unit is convenient, and the layout and colour contrast of the controls make it easy for me to switch between functions and make full use of the set. It's lovely to have sound throughout the house again as the radio keeps me company when I am home. It's such a help that I received this excellent service and great piece of equipment free of charge.

- Recruited 17 new agents to either replace agents who have withdrawn from providing our service or to cover parts of the UK where we have been underrepresented. Some of the new agents, for example, in Cumbria, are from the library services.
- Given a presentation to the Talking Newspaper Federation which has resulted in the number of members uploading content for the Sonata service growing by over 30%.
- Begun exploring whether it is feasible to incorporate spoken radio station identification into the Roberts Radio sets.
- Increased the amount of money donated by our trading arm (BWBF Direct) into the charity, through the increased sales, widening of the product base and selling to Amazon and into new markets in Europe.
- Worked with Infosound to raise awareness of our sets and services to their visually impaired audience.

- Undertaken questionnaire research with 150 of our new set recipients to find out about their listening habits before and after receiving a British Wireless set, their future listening needs and the impact that the radio had on their daily life. Findings included:-
 - ▶ The number of respondents who said they listened to the radio for between 4 and 10 + hours a day rose by up to 10%
 - ▶ The majority of respondents' comments confirmed that their BWBF set had made a positive impact on their life. They found the quality of the sound superior to that of other radios and found the yellow and black contrast buttons much easier to use than buttons on radios not specially adapted for partially sighted people. Where recipients had relied on someone else to tune a standard radio for them previously, they were now able to access and tune the specially adapted set themselves.

“ It really has made a difference to my daily life. I can join in conversations with friends about world news now I have an easy to use set ”

Jessica from Crawley



A Sonata Plus set

“ The new Sonata Plus feature where it can read web-pages is an excellent addition to its capabilities as I am able to listen to the weather forecast and football match results ”

Peter from Chesterfield



A Duet2 set

“ It's certainly made listening to the radio much easier. It's made me more independent. It's made a lot of difference. ”

Comments from our 2014 survey with set users

Evaluating outcomes and moving forward

Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of how we operate has been one of the major drivers of the changes that have taken place over the last few years. Putting this together with the current and future requirements of our set recipients is shaping our future direction.

Going forward we will be:-

- Continuing to improve the efficiency of set distribution, stock control and interaction with our agents.
- Looking to find new agents (for example, in Northern Ireland) and recruiting more volunteers to distribute and install sets, particularly in areas where set issue has fallen.
- Adding further capability to *Sonata Plus+* and working with Seeing Ear to add a library of around 5,000 books which can be 'read' by the text to speech engine.
- Seeking funding to replace remaining old Sonata sets which, due to advances in technology, will become unsupportable.
- Based on the findings of the questionnaire research with recipients, we will be looking into adding an internet radio to the range of sets issued and undertaking further research into future listening needs to provide the evidence base required for seeking funding.
- Initiating additional Sonata service telephone support using trained volunteers
- Continuing to refurbish and reissue Concerto 2 sets for a further 18 months.
- Working for a further year with Infosound to advise visually impaired people of the changes taking place in audio technology.
- Making further improvements to our client database to provide better analytical information.

Vision for the future

With 48 million people listening to radio every week, the future of broadcast radio is assured, and its importance as a source of news and entertainment to the visually impaired community, undiminished. Although progress in medical science is resulting in more treatments for a variety of causes of blindness, sadly, there are many people whose sight loss cannot be reversed and who will turn to British Wireless for a specially adapted set. We want to always be able to say "yes" to those in need and we aim to continue to provide accessible radio and audio, using the most suitable technologies to fulfil listening needs.

Financial summary

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st October 2014

INCOME	2014	2013
Donations and Gifts	326,959	269,347
Legacies	490,572	883,795
Grants received	26,691	32,861
Marketing Sales	256,595	129,790
Investment Income	97,024	115,231
Total Incoming Resources	1,197,841	1,431,024
EXPENDITURE		
Grants	22,994	27,714
Cost of furthering Charity objectives	463,306	595,006
Support Costs	207,960	320,161
Fundraising & Publicity	193,615	197,271
Marketing Expenditure	261,205	120,808
Investment Management Costs	20,535	27,265
Governance Costs	30,725	34,023
Total Expenditure	1,200,340	1,322,248
Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources before Other recognised Gains	-2,499	108,776
Net realised and unrealised gains (losses) on Investments	-10,109	491,116
Net movement in funds	-12,608	599,892

British Wireless for the Blind Fund relies entirely on the generosity of individual donors, both during and after their lifetime to provide the income to maintain our operations. Other income comes from grants from Trusts and Foundations, interest on investments and profits from our trading arm, BWBF Direct. We would like to thank the 4,226 individual donors and 201 Trusts and Foundations who supported our work during the year to bring 'Lifelines to the World' to over 2,600 people.

160 newly registered blind or partially sighted people received a set from the Christmas Appeal which raised just over £28,000.



“ One of the principle objectives of The Prince Philip Trust Fund for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is to improve conditions of life for residents of the Royal Borough. The Trustees, under the Chairmanship of His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex, considered the service provided by British Wireless for the Blind Fund eminently worthy of support ”
A funder's perspective

“ Imogen loves her set; she's great now using the bookmark. In fact as we speak she is in her bedroom with the microphone plugged in and she and Declan are doing a pretend “radio show”, interviewing each other. Whilst they interview each other they have now got their totally blind friend Sophie who is 13 talking on loudspeaker on Declan's phone, so that she can join in on the recording. They are all having lots of fun doing it. I can hear them whilst I am typing this. The sets are a godsend for both of them.....don't know what they'd do without them ”
Jacqui (Declan & Imogen's Mum)

Let's celebrate another successful year for BWBF. As always we are indebted to our staff, volunteers and partner organisations for their dedication and enthusiasm which ensures that our service to people with visual impairment is prompt, effective and relevant.

Wherever I go, people in all walks of life are passionately devoted to the use of personal, wirelessly connected, electronic equipment which is capable of delivering information, education, entertainment and social inter-connection and enables almost every administrative and business function from any location. Be they phones, tablets, phablets, pads, notebooks or laptops, there is increasing convergence in the 'smartness' of these devices; the differences mainly relating to the size of screen and quirks of available apps.

Joining in this activity demands intense visual alacrity to read and interpret, and a high degree of manual dexterity to tap, swipe and scrunch relevant parts of the active screen. I and other members of the Board are acutely aware that what is popular becomes mainstream, essential and then mandatory in rapid succession. To date, little consideration has been given to those who are unable to participate. Nothing new there!

A revision has been made to the Articles of British Wireless for the Blind Fund (the legal framework within which we operate) so that we shall be able to provide a wider range of appropriate equipment. The usefulness of such items will very much depend on providing application packages which feature audible interpretation and respond reliably to voiced instructions. Whilst the cost of development and delivery of such facilities is well beyond our resources we shall be monitoring the situation and aiming to test possibilities.

Across my numerous activities I do meet a wide range of people. Very few of my contacts seem to have heard of BWBF or realise the extent of our valuable work. Raising the profile of the charity is something we can all take part in. Without British Wireless thousands of people every year would not be 'rescued from the silence' that Winston Churchill sought funds to relieve over 80 years ago.

Daniel Smith – Chair of Trustees

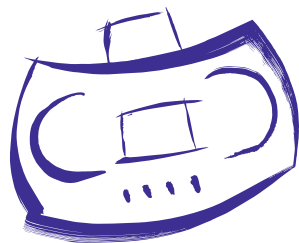


We are extremely grateful to all the individuals, organisations and trusts whose generosity enables British Wireless to remain active and plan for the future so that we can continue to help people like Imogen and Declan by developing and incorporating new technology that can enrich their daily lives with all that radio and audio can offer. Hopefully together we can ensure that no-one who becomes eligible to receive our equipment misses the opportunity to benefit

Daniel Smith – Chair.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund is committed to providing a choice of high quality, specially adapted radio and audio sets on a free loan basis, undertaking to repair or replace equipment free of charge if necessary. British Wireless is also committed to monitoring new developments in radio technology and endeavouring to adapt these to the needs of recipients where possible.

British Wireless
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