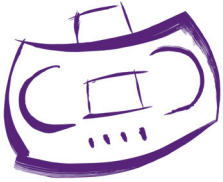


Impact Report 2015-2016



BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD



FOREWORD

From our CEO, Margaret Grainger



"It's great to know we're moving in the right direction with our technology and we're always humbled to hear about the difference our sets make to the daily lives of our recipients."

It's been another busy year at BWBF as we continue to work hard to support blind and partially sighted people across the country.

We've issued 3,022 radios, which is even more than in previous years.

Over the last 12 months we've been replacing our Sonata internet radios with the new Sonata plus+. This was possible thanks to a generous grant from the Freemasons' Grand Charity, smaller grants from trusts and specific supporter donations.

Feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive. It's great to know we're moving in the right direction with our technology and we're always humbled to hear about the difference our sets make to the daily lives of our recipients.

This is largely thanks to the guidance we receive from the visually impaired people we support telling us what they would like.

We're always looking at changing technologies and coming up with new ways to bring a huge variety of content to our radio users - our team is currently researching and developing an exciting project which will diversify our service and equipment.

Unfortunately, the last year has been a challenging one for the charity sector, with negative publicity around the fundraising practices of some organisations.

As we report on pages eight and nine, we have worked hard to ensure our reputation isn't damaged by the actions of a few and to show exactly how donations we receive are used to directly benefit the people we are here to help.

We are lucky to have a fantastic army of volunteers, which is continuing to grow. We couldn't be without these wonderful people who give up their time to help us across all areas of the charity – so I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them.

Thank you also to those who have donated – both the individuals and groups who support us and the trusts and foundations which give us grants.

Praise also should go to our agents who work tirelessly on our behalf to distribute sets to those in need in their areas.

Lastly, a big thank you to the blind and partially sighted people we work with for all the ways you contribute to what we do.

We hope you enjoy reading this report and look forward to working with you all over the coming year.

Margaret Grainger

ABOUT BWBF

What we do

BWBF exists to provide specially adapted radio and audio equipment to visually impaired people. Many blind and partially sighted people cannot read a newspaper, book or magazine or watch the television – so a radio is their lifeline to the world. The loneliness felt by people with sight loss can be greatly eased by the companionship of a radio – but often the cost of an adapted set can be too much. BWBF helps those who cannot afford their own. We have a variety of modified equipment which meets the differing needs of visually impaired listeners, including a multimedia player, an internet radio and a simple DAB set.

Our aim and commitment

To provide a choice of high quality, specially modified audio equipment to every UK registered blind or partially sighted person, over the age of eight who is in receipt of a means-tested benefit.

To give the equipment on a free loan basis for as long as the recipient meets our requirements.

To maintain, repair or replace equipment at no cost to our free loan recipients.

To continue to monitor new developments in audio technology and endeavour to adapt our equipment to the needs of our recipients.

How your money helps us

As BWBF receives no government funding, we are entirely reliant on the generosity of donations. We couldn't provide the vital service we do to visually impaired people without the help of our donors. We need to raise £650,000 a year to carry on supplying our specially adapted sets to those in need. All the money we receive helps us as a charity continue to do this.



Here are some examples of how your generous donations help visually impaired people across the UK:

£325

could pay for one of our Sonata plus+ internet radios to be provided and installed

£180

could pay for one of our Concerto 2 multimedia radio sets to be provided and installed

£130

could pay for one of our Duet 2 digital radios to be provided and installed

£100

could contribute towards the running of our dedicated in-house technical support line

£50

could cover one of our volunteer's expenses to provide sets to visually impaired people

£35

could pay for a service or repair to one of our sets

£10

could provide a set of personal headphones for one of our specially adapted radios

£5

could pay for a follow up call to one of our recipients to see how they are getting on with their set

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED IN THE LAST YEAR

Our main focus for the last year has been updating our recipients' Sonata internet audio players with our new Sonata plus+ model. (You can read more about this project on page six and seven). We have also:

- Issued **3,022** radios on free loan – **147** Sonatas; **2,496** Concerto 2s, **332** Duets and **47** other sets. This is a **13.7% (364)** increase in the number of sets compared to the previous year.
- Refurbished and recycled **900** of the issued sets.
- Recruited **six** new agents to distribute our equipment nationally.
- Taken on new volunteers – with **51** now supporting us at head office and out in the field.
- Continued to grow the number of local Talking Newspaper publications on offer, which currently stands at **120**. These have now been split into regions, making it easier for the user to navigate.
- Enabled **398** Sonata users to access Seeing Ear's library of more than **6,500** books.
- Continued to improve the Sonata by developing a new user experience for adding new radio stations. It's been well received and more than **20,000** radio station requests have now been processed.
- Added further capability to the Sonata Plus+. We now have full access to BBC On Demand last seven days catch up on all radio shows. The set can now stop, rewind and bookmark.
- Updated the text-to-speech engine on the Sonata Plus+ which provides a clearer voice.

Financial income

Consolidated statement of financial activities for the year ending October 31st, 2015.

Income	2015	2014	
Donations and gifts	333,123	326,959	
Legacies	696,942	490,572	
Grants received	67,529	26,691	
Marketing sales	157,170	256,595	
Investment and other income	124,510	97,024	
Total incoming resources	1,379,274	1,197,841	
Expenditure			
Grants	16,026	22,994	
Cost of furthering charity objectives	662,340	463,306	
Support costs	227,031	207,960	
Fundraising & publicity	220,228	193,615	
Marketing expenditure	171,746	261,205	
Investment management costs	24,455	20,535	
Governance costs	33,308	30,725	
Total expenditure	1,355,134	1,200,340	
Excess of income after expenditure	24,140	-2,499	
Gains in investments	67,717	-10,109	
Total surplus of the year	91,857	-12,608	

BWBF's full financial report is available to view on the Charity Commission website.



Hans Farley has one of BWBF's Duet 2 radios and says he really relies on it, listening to various sports programmes as well as enjoying music.

"I have my radio in the kitchen and I use it every day," he said.

"I've got five pre-sets which I use a lot and it's great. It's lasted well.

"I think it's a brilliant role that has been taken on by British Wireless and it would be a great loss to me if there weren't the radios. I really appreciate it."

40,000

people who currently have one of our sets across the UK

3,022

radios issued on free loan by BWBF in the year to October 31st, 2015

28

volunteers who deliver and install our radios to recipients around the country

187

agents kindly distributing sets on our behalf around the UK

OUR AIMS FOR THE COMING YEAR

British Wireless wants to increase the number of sets issued to people in need each year and we are conscious we need to take steps to make this happen.

Over the next year, we intend to give out 3,500 radios and then aim to increase this to 4,000 the year after.

Thanks to a generous donation from the ED Charitable Trust, we have launched a project called Reaching Out which will help us achieve this target.

The funding will be used to find more people who can benefit from our sets by gathering the most up-to-date numbers of visually impaired residents and also data on means-tested benefit provision across the UK.

This information will then be analysed against where we have already issued radios and once the areas with the highest numbers of people in need have been identified, we will deliver a targeted campaign to raise awareness of our work.

This project will enable us to change the lives of hundreds more visually impaired people.

BWBF works closely with local blind societies around the country to distribute our equipment and we will also increase our interaction with these agents.

This year, we are continuing our on-going research into the needs of visually impaired people and how ever changing technology can affect this.

This research will be put towards the development of new equipment in future.

We will be growing our relationship and working more closely with Seeing Ear to increase the content we offer through its library. We will also be asking our recipients which content they would like added.

We will continue to update our new website, www.blind.org.uk, which was launched in March, with news and information.

ROLLING OUT OUR SONATA PLUS+ SETS



Throughout the last 12 months, we have been focusing on replacing our recipients' Sonata internet audio players with our new Sonata plus+ model.

Thanks to generous donations from our supporters, as well as grants from trusts including the Freemasons' Grand Charity and the Wolfson Foundation, we have so far issued 74.

The radio is an updated version of our popular Sonata set, which was launched in 2007, and gives visually impaired people access to thousands of worldwide radio stations, podcasts, Talking Newspapers and audio catalogues.

Our new model supports the latest wireless internet connections and its text to speech engine can also navigate and

read live web pages. Wikipedia, for example, is available and the National Lottery results, which are not published audibly anywhere else.

It has automatic wireless setup support, meaning the user doesn't need to manually enter long and complicated passwords as linking to a router is now an automated process.

New software helps us keep the device updated with changing and evolving technology. The new Sonata will always be able to support changing content

links which the old model would not have adapted to.

The Sonata plus+ is easy to use with a single volume dial and five buttons. It also has a USB and SD memory card socket so users can play their own media files and any audio content they receive in the post, such as audio books and Talking Newspapers. There is also a bookmark facility, adjustable speed and pitch and a remote control.

We have received hugely positive feedback from those who have already received sets.

Roy Williams, from Somerset, mainly uses his to listen to podcasts and radio stations.

He said: "The old Sonata was a fantastic tool and this is even better – the world is now my oyster."





Keith Clancy has one of our Sonata plus+ sets.

He said: "I hated TV from being a young kid so I was always looking for ways of using my brain. When radio became internet that was really interesting for me – the new Sonata has a much more powerful wireless connection which allows me to use it in any room in my home. It boosts up very quickly and the remote control is slick and fast."

"I can listen to radio stations all over the planet in a very accessible way and the other thing which is absolutely brilliant is all the podcasts – I can flick through all of them much more rapidly than using a laptop. It's extremely useful."

1,803

largest amount of worldwide radio stations a user has on their Sonata

£650K

amount we need to raise this year to keep providing our service

6,983

worldwide radio stations on our database which Sonata users can access

There's a whole lot more on the web I can now explore."

DJ Paul Johnson and his mother Barbara (pictured left), from Swansea, have also both received Sonata plus+ sets from us.

Paul, who has been completely blind since birth, presents a show on his local radio station and says he felt like he'd won the lottery when he was given his set.

He said: "The Sonata has made a real difference to me as it means I don't have to leave the computer on overnight and can listen to the radio in bed."

When Barbara was given her set, she said she was lost for words as it means she can now listen to her son's show.

She said: "I never thought I



"The old Sonata was a fantastic tool and this is even better – the world is now my oyster." Roy Williams

would go back to listening to the radio – I used to just listen to the television - but I'm really enjoying it."

As well as making a big difference to our recipients, the Sonata replacement has also improved things for us as a service provider, as our Technical Assistant Suresh Kuwar explains:

"The Sonata plus+ brings users up to date with the latest technology and enhances the experience they already have by increasing access to a lot more content.

"The wireless connection is much more stable compared to the original.

"The reading function is now built into the Sonata plus+ meaning it does not need an internet connection to work.

"This therefore means it's much easier for us to support our visually impaired listeners remotely."

CHARITY FUNDRAISING PRACTICES



The last few years have been difficult for charities, with endless negative press surrounding the fundraising practices of some organisations.

A report by MPs, which was made public in early 2016, found that the fundraising activities of UK charities could be subject to statutory legislation unless the sector is 'cleaned up'.

The report was prompted by news in 2015 that elderly and vulnerable givers were being targeted and donors' information sold on by some causes.

MPs said while they know most charities do not engage in these practices, the bad publicity can still damage the reputation of many organisations working hard in their communities to make a difference to people who need them – like BWBF.

We would like to assure all our supporters we do not, and never have, engaged in any form of unscrupulous fundraising.

In fact, we are proud to be members of the Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB) self-regulatory scheme.

The FRSB works to ensure that organisations raising money from the public do so honestly and properly. As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and ensure all our activity complies with its key principles.

We do not use fundraising agencies or undertake telephone marketing.

We have never sold any details onto a third party, nor do we bombard donors with constant demands for money.

We take every effort to ensure we do not make contact with any donors who are deemed vulnerable.

Last year, we conducted our own research with our supporters to ensure they are happy with how we make contact with them and our Deputy Chief Executive Julie Tobin also sat on an Institute of Fundraising taskforce about how charities interact with their donors.

We conducted a survey with 3,559 of our current donors, asking what their preferred method of communication is and how often they would like to hear from us.

Of the questionnaires sent out, 452 were returned and the data showed us the majority of those (92% - 414) preferred to receive their communication by post.



Carol Winyard works for the charity BlindAid.

She said: "We have been agents for BWBF for many years, delivering radio equipment to visually people in the 12 inner London boroughs and currently have around 5,000 people on our client list."

"Many people we deliver to can be quite isolated so the equipment is their link to the radio and talking book service."

"The equipment provided makes a huge difference to visually impaired people with the big buttons and superb sound quality, which is in direct contrast to modern equipment which can be small and complicated to use."

23

volunteers helping us out behind the scenes at our head office

47.8M

adults who listen to radio every week in the UK (*RAJAR May 2016)

1928

the year BWBF was founded

Less than 10% (43) of respondents were happy to take a phone call while 21% (93) wished to receive email correspondence.

Of those who replied, 77% (350) preferred to get no more than one to two fundraising appeals or donation requests a year, while 15% (69) were happy with three or four communications.

Some of our supporters who replied also wrote comments and many of them were very positive about BWBF and the way we conduct ourselves.

In 2018, new EU legislation will mean charities have to ask donors to opt-in to receive communications, rather than the current opt-out option.

By making contact with our supporters in an effort to

"We are a small charity which relies on the generosity of our supporters."

understand their preferences, we feel we have already started to address this.

Chief Executive Margaret Grainger said: "We were disappointed to see the news that, despite warnings, some charities are still engaging in these invasive fundraising practices."

"Unfortunately things like this can tar all organisations with the same brush."

"We are a small charity which relies on the generosity of our supporters and negative publicity like this can be very damaging."

"We're grateful to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey and return it to us and we were pleased with the response."

"If you haven't returned your questionnaire to us, I would encourage you to do so to make sure your voice is heard."

"We hope those who do support us will continue to do so and we would like to take this opportunity to thank every single one of you."

"Without your help, we wouldn't be able to continue providing our vital service to visually impaired people."



give with confidence

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Message from Daniel Smith, Chairman of BWBF's Board of Trustees



"My heartfelt thanks to all our donors, volunteers, partner organisations, patrons, staff, the Chief Executive and our Board of Trustees - all whose commitment and hard work have brought the organisation through another successful year."

Technical innovation is proceeding at an unprecedented rate. Last year's novelty which became this year's normality will become next year's necessity. The world at large is now receiving media, communicating and using information and services via a range of touch-screen portable devices which are intensely visual and tactile. Not good news if you are visually impaired or have limited dexterity.

As usual, in such forward progress, mainstream development seems to side-step any specific responsibility towards those with sight loss, leading to an ever-widening access gap. We are challenged, therefore, to find ways in which 'pathways' can be protected, so far as possible. Without being reckless, in a measured way, we have decided to devote resources towards researching solutions which will offer the opportunity to participate. This is not a straightforward task and it is likely that, when noticed, our potential success will stimulate commercial developers to compete. In particular, we want to provide a gateway to our unique and growing library of audio media which is already enhancing the life experience of some of our beneficiaries.

Naturally, we intend to continue to provide user-friendly audio equipment with press-button and rotary controls for those who need conventional

wireless sets and the facility to record and play media (cassettes, CDs and memory sticks) for as long as manufacturing capability permits.

This year we lost two much-valued Board members - Charlie Lucas through retirement and Ross Macfadyen due to time pressures in his other roles. I would like to underline my thanks to both for their contributions and commitment to the work of BWBF. I am pleased Charlie has agreed to remain on our Technical Committee where his understanding of issues and ability to present the real challenges of being blind are so helpful.

The loss of our patron Ed Stewart in February was a shock to us all. I was pleased our Chief Executive and my deputy were able to represent the fund at his send-off ceremony and to convey our condolences to his family.

My heartfelt thanks to all our donors, volunteers, partner organisations, patrons, staff, the Chief Executive and our Board of Trustees - all whose commitment and hard work have brought the organisation through another successful year.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Make a donation

We are an annual venture. Every year we need to raise every penny that we are going to spend to sustain our existing work and to extend the reach of our services to everyone who needs us. Donations can be made by cheque, PayPal, credit or debit card. (Please make cheques payable to BWBF)

Leave us a gift in your Will

We understand that ensuring your loved ones are taken care of must come first. After this if you are also able to leave BWBF a gift in your will, no matter the size, you will enable us to provide future generations a lifeline to the world.

Get involved in some fundraising activities

Why not have some fun raising money for us? Host a cake sale, organise a pub quiz with your friends, enjoy a sponsored golfing day or even run the marathon. No matter how much you raise, or how you do it, your support will have such a positive impact.

Volunteer

British Wireless for the Blind Fund would not be able to continue to help people with sight loss if it wasn't for the fantastic support of our army of volunteers. We are always looking for volunteers, and even if you can't give up much time you may still be able to help us.

Trusts and foundations

Grants from trusts and foundations are a vital source of support for us. If you are involved with, or know of, a trust or foundation that would be interested to hear about our work please recommend us or let us know how to apply.

Corporate

Is your company looking for a new Charity of the Year to support? Or would you like to develop or review your corporate social responsibility policy? Please get in contact to find out how a Charity Partnership with BWBF would be mutually beneficial.

**For more information contact our Fundraising Officer, Julie Hocking
Telephone 01622 754757 or email julieh@blind.org.uk**

A BIT OF HISTORY

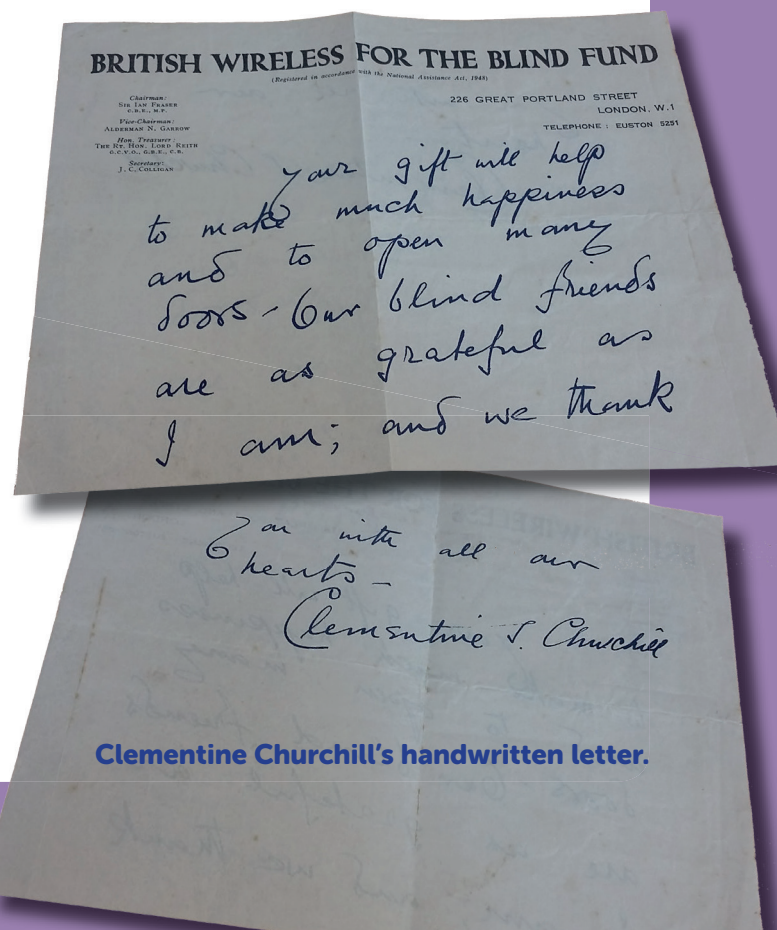
Our long-time supporters may well be aware of our connection to Winston Churchill, who broadcast an appeal for funds for the newly formed charity on Christmas Day 1929.

So we were delighted to stumble across a piece of our history on eBay – a thank you note written by his wife Clementine on a piece of our headed paper.

The undated note is now in our archives along with other precious items from our past.

It is to an unnamed recipient and reads:

Your gift will help to make much happiness and to open many doors. Our blind friends are as grateful as I am; and we thank you with all our hearts. Clementine Churchill.



Clementine Churchill's handwritten letter.



**BRITISH WIRELESS
FOR THE BLIND FUND**

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

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