

BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

**KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD**

**Providing comfort
and companionship
through the joy
of radio.**



Foreword

Margaret Grainger
CEO



Looking back 2021 feels like quite a mixed year. The easing of Covid-19 restrictions in the later months helped us to end the year feeling

perhaps more hopeful than we have done for a while. However, we must not forget that during large parts of the year many of us were still isolated and feeling detached, not only from the wider world but also from our closer communities and support networks.

I have no doubt the last couple of years will have changed our outlook on life - how much we appreciate our freedoms, how we cherish our loved ones and where we find our enjoyment. For many it would be difficult to imagine facing another lockdown without the distraction of a book or endless hours of television. However for those living with sight loss this was their daily reality. More than ever our beneficiaries relied on their radios and, crucially, they needed them to be easy to use independently.

For someone who is visually impaired radio is a window on the world. A means of entertainment, music and conversation. That familiar voice in the room giving you updated news and weather or playing your favourite tune. From feedback we know that radio can brighten someone's day and provide an escape from challenging times.

"I am 88, shielding from Covid and living in the countryside in South Wales. I listen to my 'Wireless from the Blind' everyday as a constant and welcome companion." *Donald Graham, Beneficiary*

On behalf of all our beneficiaries who have felt comforted and less alone because of their British Wireless radio I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who made our work possible. It is thanks to you we are able to continue helping thousands of people across the UK who need us.

Margaret Grainger

From our Chairman

Daniel Smith

Chairman of BWBF's Board of Trustees



Research conducted by the Charity Commission in 2021 has shown some startling results showing the impact which the pandemic had, and may

well continue to have, on many worthwhile charitable causes across Great Britain. Tragically, 1 in 100 charities reported that they had to fold as a result of Covid-19. The gap in crucial services which this regrettable statistic will create is, I am sure, being sorely felt by many people continuing to battle with their own difficult situations – whatever they may be.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund counts itself very fortunate to have survived as a viable organisation following such a tumultuous time in the charity sector.

British Wireless currently supports nearly 30,000 people living with sight loss. Each year we give approximately 3,000 radios to those visually impaired people who apply to us for help. Since we are the only

UK charity providing free adapted radio sets, without us, who would these people be able to turn to to meet their specific need? It is a worrying thought, clearly demonstrating just how vitally important you are to so many visually impaired people across the UK. It is your generous support which keeps us working as a going concern and providing this life-enhancing service to them.

As always, when writing these reports, I am immensely grateful to you all. Without a doubt, your steadfast loyalty and strong belief in what we are doing ensures that British Wireless will go on to help thousands more people who struggle with the extreme disadvantage of sight loss. Our service is one we are extremely proud of and we are more determined than ever to keep on doing what we do best.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

About Us

“My radio means everything to me. It is my window on the world.”

Nina Aberdein

For 93 years, British Wireless (BWBF) has been supporting people living with sight loss. We provide free adapted radios and audio equipment on lifelong free loan to people experiencing financial hardship, supporting those who are registered and registerable blind or partially sighted who receive a means-tested benefit. Our ultimate goal: to provide life-changing radios to those who would otherwise not be able to afford them, bringing real joy to the lives of thousands of people living with sight loss across the UK.

BWBF knows that isolation is a real problem for many blind and partially sighted people. So many of those we work with are vulnerable, struggling with additional health concerns, segregated from the outside world or living alone with no additional support. Our radios are a lifeline offering entertainment, information, and company where there would otherwise be a disconnect from society.

“I live alone, but with a radio you are never alone. It keeps your brain active.” Monica Willis

2021 saw the demand for our support continue apace as we faced the pressures

“I live on my own and I am 80 years old in November. The wireless radio means a lot to me - it helps me put my mind in far better places. My wireless is my lifeline.”

Brian Reardon

“I love listening to the radio, playing tapes and CDs. It is a great way of relaxing. I really appreciate radio. I think you do brilliant work.”

Michael Anderson

and difficulties presented by ongoing lockdowns, constant changes and often unnerving steps back towards 'normality'. For many of those more vulnerable individuals reaching out to us, additional challenges presented by disability and social isolation meant increased loneliness. A lack of support amplified the need for our service. Our courier delivery and telephone support service, BWBFconnect, ensured that all blind and partially sighted people who needed our help continued to receive appropriate support and devices to meet their needs.

"My radio is a lifeline. It connects me to the world, especially during lockdown and also because I have a mobility problem. Going out is a challenge and my radio helps me so much."

Althea Smith

The demand for our support will continue to grow, as the number of people living with sight loss is predicted to increase

by 22% by 2030. Currently, there are 2,190,000 people across the UK living with sight loss, and every day 250 people start to lose their sight. The estimated cost of sight loss each year is £27,996,000,000. With BWBF providing easy to use radios for free to blind and partially sighted people, improving mental health and offering companionship to those struggling with loneliness and the effects of disability, our work is helping to alleviate that burden.

"It keeps me in touch with what is going on around me - plus what is happening worldwide."

Lawrence Reynolds

It is only because of our supporters and donors that we are able to keep changing lives and impacting loneliness across the UK. We hope to be able to continue doing so for another 93 years - and beyond.

Thank you.

"I can listen to music and understand what is happening outside. I listen every day."

Susana Rodriguez

"Listening to music and stories brings me great pleasure and enables me to relax. The radio is compact and with the bright yellow buttons makes it easier for me to use."

Catherine Haigh

Derek's Story

The quality of adapted radio provided by British Wireless for the Blind Fund has made a real difference to Derek's life.

Derek, from Kent, has had problems with his eyesight for over 40 years due to a hereditary condition called cone dystrophy.

An avid user of radio, even taking it along when on camping holidays, Derek was first supplied with a Roberts Play radio during the pandemic.

Having previously used an old-fashioned radio with a dial for tuning radio stations, Derek was delighted with his new DAB digital device.

"We love this radio and I like the bright yellow surround," he said.

"It is easy to find stations and the raised buttons are so easy to use."

Derek first came across British Wireless after returning from a camping trip, when his wife decided to search the internet to find a better radio to use on their trips with friends.

British Wireless was delighted to provide Derek with a radio on lifelong loan. Though radios would usually be delivered and installed by our wonderful army of volunteers, due to safety concerns and Covid-19 restrictions in

place British Wireless provided Derek with his new radio through our doorstep delivery and remote support service BWBFconnect.

Derek says he was thrilled with the service he received – and he is now a real fan of Roberts Radios.

"The radio is so robust you can knock it, drop it and all the stations are still there and it works just fine," he said.

"We aren't very technical. You can set up to 20 stations but when I have my favourite 5 set that is perfect."

Derek loves to listen to football, cricket, talking books, Gold Radio and Radio Kent.

He says his new radio also helps him when he is travelling.

"It helps me on the train," he said.

"I can cut out all the background noise and it makes my life much more pleasant."

Derek says he is so happy to have his radio by his side and says he can't imagine life without it.

After receiving his radio Derek sent a donation to British Wireless for the Blind Fund because, as he puts it:

"After the service you gave us, it is good to give something back."

**“It makes
such a
difference.
Brilliant!”**



Photo: Jools Hart Photography

Diane & Rosemarie

Making Contact

British Wireless would not be able to deliver its personal service without wonderful volunteers like Diane and Rosemarie. Kent Head Office volunteers for four and a half years, the vital pair deliver BWBF's 'Making Contact' project.

Headed up by Regional Development Manager for the South Simon Parsons, 'Making Contact' ensures radios issued to long-term recipients are still appropriate for their needs; offering an upgrade to those whose old analogue sets are more than 10 years old.

But more than this, 'Making Contact' is exactly that – human contact for so many often isolated recipients who may not have regular contact with the outside world.

Now close friends, Diane and Rosemarie - both 75 - began volunteering on the project at the same time.

Diane said: *"I had just moved into the area and didn't know anybody. I thought this could be interesting.*

"We started in August 2017 and have become good friends. We discovered after meeting that our husbands knew one another through playing cricket! We've been out together as a foursome."

And Diane says that volunteering brings a real sense of fulfilment.

"It's nice to get out and do something useful and talk to people.

"I also had an old friend years ago who lost their sight. Her radio was so important



to her - it was important it was always maintained.

"I didn't realise there was a charity who did this sort of thing."

After working on Making Contact for nearly five years, Diane says she feels she and Rosemarie make a real difference to the people BWBF support.

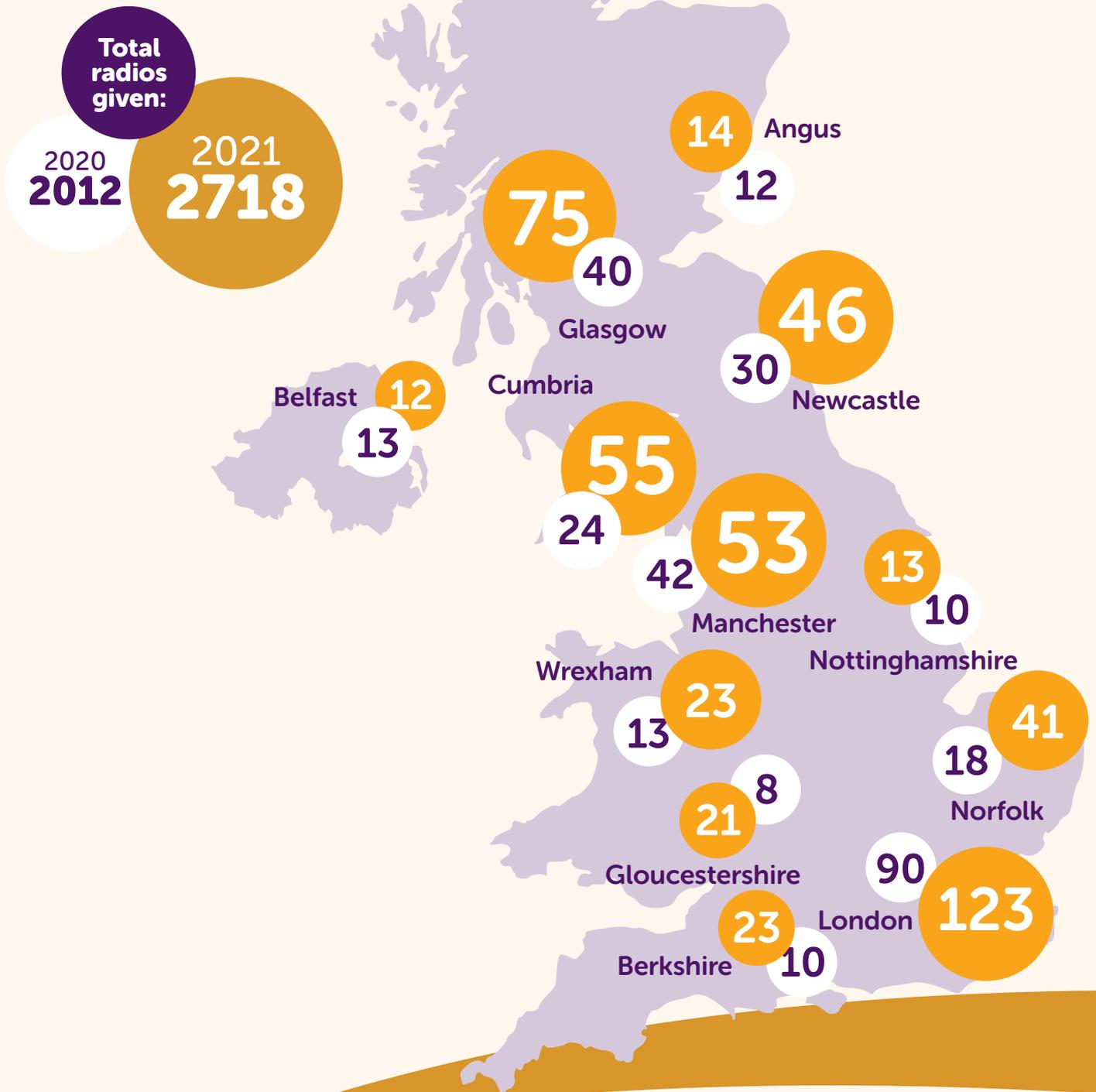
"Part of it is talking to them - part is they like getting something for nothing. They also like that we can signpost to other places for them," she said.

"Chatting to them is one of the most important parts, and it's good to know it's ok to do it. Simon told us: as volunteers it's one of the most important aspects of our work – whatever they want to talk about, he said you need to listen."

"A radio is no good if you've not got the ongoing service. You've got to know that people care. BWBF does both."

A Regional Snapshot

Despite being a small charity with a team of just 13 people the British Wireless service is available across the whole of the UK. We are proud to be a national charity with a local feel – here are just some of the areas where the need for our work continues to grow.



BWBF Technology

Here at British Wireless we are committed to providing simple access to audio entertainment and have a clear focus: to provide free-to-download smartphone apps to as many of those living with sight loss in the UK as possible. We aim to level the playing field with digital inclusion therefore reducing loneliness and isolation.

This simplicity of access is delivered through our streamed service, which covers content in many forms from radio to podcasts, books, Talking Newspapers and much more.

Imagine being new to the internet and then losing your sight, or never having seen the internet before. This is the challenge facing tens of thousands of people in the UK and leads to frustration that reduces the digital inclusion we believe is so important.

Our streamed service unlocks the internet, makes content simple to find, removes complicated graphics and even removes the need to type to find what you want. It provides suggestions and even allows the user to control it with their voice.

We currently provide access through our devices, but are now moving this service onto free-to-download apps that any one of the 2 million people living with sight loss in the UK can access.



"I like the ease and simplicity of these apps and how quick it is to do everything; it supports my listening needs."

Wayne Busbridge

We have already released our flagship app, Speech Radio, giving access to thousands of stations. However, we want to go much further and move all our content across to free-to-download speech apps, which we will be working on over the next 2 years.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund and Talking News Federation

British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) and the Talking News Federation (TNF) have enjoyed a successful working relationship for a number of years. Back in 2009 we focused on our joint aim of getting the audio delivery service online, initially via the Sonata player. This web player enabled audiences to stream their audio, and remained a hugely popular service.

Then in 2019, two years after bringing Talking Newspapers to BWBF's first ever smart device (Bumblebee), our two charities collaborated again and we launched the Talking News app. Accessible independently from any specialist BWBF equipment the app is available to download to users' own smart devices for free from both Apple and Android stores and has so far been downloaded over 3,000 times.

Last year our joint ventures continued to grow with our new initiative - smart speaker delivery via Alexa and Google - and now over 325,000 individual TNF tracks have been listened to across the various platforms.

Throughout all our work together both BWBF and TNF have been driven by the same goals – to reduce the isolation and loneliness so often felt when someone is unable to access entertainment in a standard format. Collectively our two organisations have been extremely successful.

Our joint ventures have helped expand peoples' listening parameters and habits - increasing the geographical area that they can, and that they want to, listen to.

What's more our collaborative work is now available to such a wide range of people in need – not just those who are blind or partially sighted. Thanks to our joined-up approach we have been able to develop solutions to improve the lives of people with a variety of print disability, such as dyslexia or a number of physical difficulties.

BWBF would like to take this opportunity to thank not only TNF, for helping us drive the direction of our work, but most importantly the family of British Wireless supporters and funders, without whom none of these project or improvements would be possible.



Joy's Story

For more than 50 years Joy has been keeping connected to the world around her with a little bit of help from British Wireless.

The Reverend Joy Croft, 79, first came across British Wireless in 1968, aged 25, when she came over to England from Buffalo, New York, to study for her PhD.

"I thought I'd go to England where the poets live," she said.

"I made the decision very casually, but I fell in love with England."

One of the first things Joy, from Norfolk, did when she arrived in England was to get in touch with the RNIB for support.

"The director said 'I would love to meet you' - then he and his wife invited me to tea," she said.

"I assumed Brits always had cucumber sandwiches and tea!

"I asked, 'what should I know?' and he asked did I know about BWBF? I was delighted to find that, although I was just a student, BWBF was happy to support me."

Joy currently has one of our Concerto 2 radio CD/cassette players and says that, over the 54 years she has been supported by BWBF, she has continued to be impressed by the high quality of radio she has received.

"I asked, 'what should I know?' and he asked did I know about BWBF? I was delighted to find that, although I was just a student, BWBF was happy to support me." Joy Croft

"My first BWBF radio was an excellent radio – whatever the modern radio was at the time, I had."

"It was so life-enhancing."

"I don't know how to use a smartphone - but your radios have always been so easy to use."

"It's all in the same unit. I have Talking Newspapers on a memory stick and audio books on CD – and that one unit isn't complicated in the way a smartphone is. It's astonishing the variety of things it will do."

"When I'm lying in bed and I'm not able to sleep all I have to do is push a button and I can be connected."

For Joy, BWBF's radios represent a connection to the wider world.

"It keeps me in touch with what's going on in the world," she said.

"I can't do much with my TV set, and I can't record anything. But I can listen to as much radio as I want – FM and all the digital stations.

"Also, it provides relaxation. I love classical music, and the sound is very good. I enjoy drama and quiz programmes on Radio 3 and Radio 4 Extra."

The pandemic presented a variety of challenges for us all, not least for so many people living with sight loss. For Joy, her radio provided a means of accessing vital information during an unsettling time.

"Radio 4 and the World Service were very thorough at a time when we were all so cut off. It was all there at the press of a button," she said.

And she says that British Wireless' BWBFconnect service was also a great help to her during the pandemic, as she needed additional support with her much-loved radio.

"I had problems with my radio in the middle of it all. But a new radio came out in the post and you let me hang on to the old one and said to get it back to you when I could, and I so appreciated that," she said.

"It was very straightforward.

"The service really kept us safe and connected."

Registered blind since childhood, Joy was born with glaucoma. She says:

"I was told I would be completely blind by the age of six. My parents found a surgeon in Chicago who did four operations on me at the age of three or four and, whatever magic he did held on to a little bit of sight."

Joy has now lost her sight, but says that she is grateful for the support that she receives from the network around her as well as for the radios she has received from BWBF.

"I have had an immense amount of help and have had a good and adventurous life," she says.

"The radio is a delight and has been all the way back to 1968.

"I remember the excitement when you started sending out radios with double cassette decks – I could make my own playlists! It was a revolution!"

"It is a companion and life-enhancer, and it is much appreciated."

"I don't know how to use a smartphone - but your radios have always been so easy to use." Joy Croft

How can you help us?

British Wireless is extremely grateful to all our supporters for their generosity. It is only thanks to their kindness that we can keep helping people across the UK who are living with the challenges of sight loss.

Here are a few of the ways you can support our work so that we can continue to provide comfort and companionship through the joy of radio.

Make a donation

On page 15 you will find a donation form. Simply fill it out and return it to us at the address below.

Give when you shop

When you shop online there are a number of ways to make sure you are also supporting us – at no extra cost to you! Have a look at the following website giving schemes we are involved with:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bwbf/
www.smile.amazon.co.uk
www.giveasyoulive.com

Donate your shares

If you hold shares which are uneconomic to sell you can donate them to ShareGift, the share donation charity, mentioning you support British Wireless. ShareGift works by collecting together small lots of shares until there are enough to sell – then donating proceeds to a wide range of charities. For more information visit www.sharegift.org

In memory gifts

Making a donation in memory of a loved one is a special way to celebrate their life and to help someone with sight loss receive a lifeline to the world.

Some families choose to ask for charitable donations in lieu of flowers at a funeral service. Should you wish, you can suggest contributions are sent to us at the address below or, if appropriate, you could include our website on the order of service.

We also recommend www.muchloved.com if you would like to build an online tribute fund in memory of your loved one.

Our address -
10 Albion Place
Maidstone
Kent ME14 5DZ
www.blind.org.uk/donate

Please make cheques payable to British Wireless for the Blind Fund and do let us know the name of the person the donation is in memory of.

**However you
choose to support
us please accept our
heartfelt thanks.**

“Being blind for the last 9 years has been a trial. With your wonderful radio I can keep up to date with current events. I am not computer literate, and at 88 years old I never will be. Thank God for radio.” John McGovern

Please help us to keep providing our ‘wonderful radios’ by making a donation to British Wireless.

I enclose a cheque for £

(made payable to British Wireless for the Blind Fund)

or

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa CAF Charity Card (Please tick)

For the amount of £

Card number

Start date / Expiry date /

ACCOUNT HOLDER DETAILS

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Telephone

If you would prefer to make a regular gift

- request a Direct Debit form from Julie Hocking on **01622 754757** or by emailing **julieh@blind.org.uk**
- download the form from our website – **www.blind.org.uk/support-us**
- set up a Direct Debit via the following webpage – **www.blind.org.uk/donate**

Please turn over >

Make your gift worth even more

giftaid it

If you would like to make your donation go **25% further** through allowing us to claim Gift Aid, simply sign the declaration below. Using Gift Aid means that **for every pound you give, we get an extra 25 pence** from HM Revenue & Customs.

Simply complete and return this form and we'll do the rest!

I am a UK tax payer and would like to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in future or have made in the past four years.

I understand if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify BWBF if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay income tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Signature

Date

Our promise to you

BWBF values its supporters.

We would not be able to continue our work without you.

It's important to us that you feel informed about our news, future developments and fundraising. We want to share with you how your amazing support helps to change the lives of visually impaired people across the UK.

If you do not wish to be contacted, or you would like to change how we contact you, let us know at any time using the following details –

mydata@blind.org.uk, 01622 754757, 10 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5DZ, www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy/

We respect your privacy and remain committed to ethical and responsible fundraising and communications. Your details will be stored securely and we will never sell them. However, from time to time we may need to share your details with trusted partners authorised to work on our behalf such as our printers or agents (e.g. your local blind association).

For further information please refer to our privacy policy – www.blind.org.uk/privacy-policy/

A legacy that is listened to for a lifetime.

In the UK today there are more than two million people living with sight loss, and over the coming years this number is set to rise considerably. Research suggests that by 2050 the amount of people living with a visual impairment could be as high as four million – double today's estimate.

British Wireless must ensure that we are here to help the growing number of people who need us, now and in the future - but we can't do this alone.

In 2021 gifts in wills accounted for 88% of our charitable income and we are always truly touched by such thoughtful donations.

We completely understand that ensuring loved ones are taken care of must come first. After this a legacy gift is a special way to help us provide future generations with a lifetime of enjoyment and companionship.

As a crucial part of our income legacy donations also form a substantial part of our charitable expenditure. Without these gifts we simply would not be able to support the thousands of people who benefit from our service.

Types of gifts to consider

- **A share of your estate (residuary bequest)**
- **A cash gift (pecuniary bequest)**
- **A specific item**

Gifts to charities in your will are also tax-free. If the value of your estate exceeds the tax threshold it could reduce the amount of inheritance tax you pay.

We understand your will is very personal to you. However, if you have pledged to support us we would very much like to know, so that we can thank you for your generosity in your lifetime.

If you would rather not advise us of your decision we hope you know how grateful we are for your gift and, on behalf of everyone who will benefit from your kindness, please accept our heartfelt thanks.

If you would like a full legacy information pack, or would like to discuss making a gift to us in your will, please contact **Kirsty Grainger** on **01622 754757** or via email – **kirsty@blind.org.uk**

Please rest assured any legacy information you share with us will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Our Finances



Income

Legacies	656,564	635,980
Marketing Sales	101,734	130,193
Trusts & Foundations	191,889	165,128
Investments & other income	77,806	80,227
Donations	129,169	117,715
Total Income	1,157,162	1,129,243

Expenditure

Delivering charitable objectives	802,307	821,049
Support costs	467,621	456,703
Fundraising	188,374	197,391
Governance costs	14,640	23,208
Total Expenditure	1,472,942	1,498,351
Reserves	4,124,575	4,302,099

“It is a great radio with excellent sound and enables me to easily enjoy some of my favourite sports like cricket.”

Eric Peters

“It’s my lifeline since my vision has deteriorated.”

Mrs F M Gostlow

To all our valued supporters - thank you so much!

KIND.



ROBERTS



Waitrose



The Mrs F E Hinton Charitable Trust

The Tyche Charitable Trust

The Dorothy Hay-Bolton Charitable Trust

And to all of our dedicated volunteers across the country.

"It is one of my most valued items."

Maureen George

"I like listening to the radio as it provides me with company and many hours of enjoyment."

Frank Smith

BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND FUND

KEEPING BLIND PEOPLE IN
TOUCH WITH THE WORLD

How to contact us:

British Wireless for the Blind Fund
10 Albion Place
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 5DZ

Tel: **01622 754757**

Email: **info@blind.org.uk**

Web: **www.blind.org.uk**

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 **Like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/BWBF0**

 **Follow us on Instagram @bwbfund**

 **Connect with us on LinkedIn**

[Linkedin.com/company/british-wireless-for-the-blind-fund](https://www.linkedin.com/company/british-wireless-for-the-blind-fund)

This Impact Report is available in other formats.
Statistics sourced from RNIB.

Registered charity number: 1078287

Scottish charity number: SCO41582

