

## **Usher Social Life Workshop**

- **Introduction**

**Talk will include:**

- **What is the aim of the workshop?**
- **What does “Social” mean**
- **Why is it important?**
- **Identifying the challenges that Usher / Visually Impaired People face in social settings and in their daily lives.**
- **What barriers exist within society?**
- **Leisure Time for Usher People**
- **How to overcome the barriers to do with mobility, communication and the environment.**
- **Information on the ‘Usher life’ group web site / e-group and others.**
  
- **Discussions will be included in this workshop.**

**Please feel free to ask questions at any time.**

## **What is the aim of the workshop?**

**The aim of the workshop is to recognise the barriers and find ways to overcome them to make social life more accessible and enjoyable for Usher People.**

## What does “Social” mean

**‘Social’ means:-**

- Meeting new people and old friends.
- Shopping for pleasure and business
- Theatre, Cinema & Concerts
- Nightlife – restaurants, bars & nightclubs.
- Attending Evening Classes
- Dinner Parties, Weddings etc
- Business Lunches
- Business Galas
- Sport Clubs
- Travel
- Health Clubs
- Special Interest Groups

## **Why is it important?**

- **Make new friends**
- **Get know old friends better.**
- **Increase Interest in hobbies**
- **Gain Confidence**
- **New adventure**
- **Subjects to talk about**
- **Politics,**
- **New Opportunity i.e. job opportunity**
- **Special Interest i.e. music,**

## Identifying the challenges that Usher / Visually Impaired People face in social settings and in their daily lives

I would like you to be involved in the discussion group about 'identifying the challenges'. I would like us to share and learn from each other.

### Environment

- Unfamiliar Places
- Not know how to guide Usher friends.

### Travel

- Driving
- Difficulty finding the place at night.

### Shopping

- People
- Not exploring different shops ie clothes.
- Difficulty finding food from shelf ie sugar.
- Low objects and clothes rails.

## **Theatre / Cinema / Gallery**

- Too dark to see when walking to the seating.
- Can't find seat numbers.
- Steps with no handrails provided.
- Gallery – difficulty walking around and look at the pictures at the same time.
- Cinema – sometimes subtitles with no black background – difficult to read them.

## **Communication**

- Usher people have difficulty in following the conversation in a group identifying who is talking.
- Example one Usher person in a deaf group
- Usher Type 2/3 in a hearing group.
- Too low to see sign language users – most Usher rely on lipreading. (Visual Frame).
- Sign Language users wear wrong colour clothes i.e. stripes.

- Very few people know how to use varying sign languages i.e. deafblind manual alphabet.
- Lack of information

### **Nightlife – restaurant / bar / nightclub**

- Some local shops / restaurants do not accept guide dog as they are not aware.
- Menu – small prints
- Too dark to see
- Too loud to hear the conversation.

### **Mobility**

- People are not aware that people might have hidden sensory impairment.
- A lot of obstacles.

## **What barriers exist within society?**

- **Lack of Awareness on Usher, Deaf & Visually Impaired.**
- **No policy introduced for bars / restaurants etc (i.e. health and safety).**
- **“Fashionable” & “Romantic” to be in dim light.**
- **People no longer support each other as they lead busy lives within society and families used to live close together.**
- **Attitudes**
- **Less sense of Community.**
- **Do not know how to approach Usher people**
- **Do not know how to communicate**
- **Afraid to learn deafblind manual, hands on signing.**
- **Not Interested**
- **Some friends may decide not to invite an Usher person because they do not want the responsibility.**

## **Why is Leisure Time Important?**

**Leisure Time is important for deafblind people. They can take a break from responsibility, routines, lipreading, switch off and can enjoy the same as everyone else. It is important not to feel isolated. It is important to mix with friends and feel relaxed. It is healthy to have some fun, laughing and positive attitude.**

## **How to overcome the barriers to do with mobility, communication and the environment.**

- **Ask Usher Person what s/he wants**
- **Ask bar Manager to turn lighting up to maximum or provide small area lighting to meet people's choices.**
- **Colour Contrast**
- **Provide Navigator**
- **Provide Floor Plan**
- **Large Print Menu**
- **Provide a volunteer if s/he wants**

### **Mobility**

- **Put visibility tape on steps**
- **Guide the Person**
- **Move Objects – describe the environment to the person.**
- **Offer varying choices of support such as holding arm, touching shoulder.**
- **Do not grab an Usher person.**

### **Communication**

- **Stand 4-5 feet distance**
- **Wait for Usher person to see you before starting to talk.**

- **Do not move about whilst talking.**
- **Your face should be in the light, not in shadow.**
- **Ask Usher person how s/he wants to communicate.**

## **Environment**

- **Point out hazardous objects**
- **Furniture need to be different colour from the floor.**

**Information on the 'Usher life' group web site / e-group  
and others.**

- Usherlife is run by Usher people. All information about Usher is provided. Events where people can socialize are on the website.

[www.usherlife.org.uk](http://www.usherlife.org.uk)

- HSI UK – this organization is run by Usher Type 2 and Visually Impaired / blind people but under the umbrella of Sense. Their first language is English. They organise at least three social events per year.

If you want more information, please contact Margaret Pickess or Colin Bennett.

- How to guide / communicate, please see sense website

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- [www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)

- [www.deafblind.org.uk](http://www.deafblind.org.uk)

- If you want more information, please email me –

[emma.hancock@sense.org.uk](mailto:emma.hancock@sense.org.uk)

## **CONCLUSION**

**So far I have talked about the experience of Usher Social Life, the barriers and identifying the challenges.**

### **Questions**

**Do you want anything to add to the workshop from your experience or someone?**

**If you want to communicate with Usher people, do not give up!**

**Try different ways of communicating.**

**Thank you for sharing your experience / information with others.**

**Emma Hancock**