

inSight

Magazine

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NCBI

Working for People
With Sight Loss

Ciaran O'Brien, Youth Ambassador



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inSight

NCBI inSight

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Sightlines

2020 is an important year for NCBI for many reasons. 2020 is often associated with vision so it's an opportunity for NCBI to further promote our work to different audiences through multiple platforms with the aim to ensure there is a greater public awareness of the breadth of our services should someone embark on an unexpected journey of sight loss or their current condition worsens.



Chantelle Smith, NCBI's mobility and independent living skills trainer, instructs service user Alistair Clews in daily living skills at the NCBI Training Centre.

Already we work with over 6,500 people annually and this is a mixture of people who've recently acquired an eye condition that affects their sight or people whose existing eye condition has deteriorated significantly.

Feel supported

We will continue to offer personalised life enhancing services throughout the country to enable people to adjust to their condition and feel supported to lead their lives confidently and independently. Through our combination of practical, emotional, social and technological supports we are there to respond and help people living with sight loss whatever stage of life they are at.

2020 will also see new developments and activities for NCBI including the merger of Vision Sports Ireland into the NCBI family, the launch of a new NCBI website with improved functionality and accessibility, development of local advocacy groups nationwide giving a louder voice to people who are blind or visually impaired, the co-hosting of the Vision2020 international conference in Dublin and the continued expansion of the NCBI retail chain.

NCBI would like to thank all our supporters, donors, volunteers, customers, sponsors etc for their continued and committed support because without it we wouldn't be able to respond to those who need us. We look forward to working with you throughout 2020.

State Funding for Disability Services

Disability services are desperately underfunded with many organisations running on a deficit. We need the next government to address this urgently. To make this happen, NCBI is now part of a new Disability Action Coalition (www.tdac.ie).

The coalition is a group of nine national disability service providers who have come together to campaign for a new and secure future for the services that we provide.

Together, the coalition's organisations employ over 9,000 people and provide services to tens of thousands of people with disabilities, in every county in Ireland. Many organisations are struggling to retain staff because staff are being paid less to work in voluntary organisations and this adds substantially to training, recruitment and agency staff costs. It also lengthens waiting lists for people with disabilities.

Negotiating with the HSE is really difficult because there is no mechanism to recognise the deficits that have been accumulating. Up to recently, the shortfall has been bridged from organisations own resources, but by now we simply don't have the resources to meet growing costs. Many of the coalition organisations have already had to close services, reduce hours or introduce redundancies. We want to prevent this from escalating any further.

In the run up to the General Election, the coalition sought a clear commitment in each



Members of the Disability Action Coalition outside Dáil Éireann.

political party's election manifesto for the following:

- An extra €20m to cover the urgent shortfall in funding currently faced by the sector.
- A complete reform of how HSE budgets for the sector are agreed.
- Ensure the workers who run our services are paid the same as HSE workers for doing the same job.

Also, as part of a suite of pre-election meetings held around the country, NCBI held a pre-election meeting where four candidates from Dublin Central and Dublin North West attended. Many constituents including service users, family members and NCBI staff had the opportunity to ask questions and to chat informally with these candidates.

All nine organisations will continue to lobby the new Government to ensure these commitments are included in the next Programme for Government.

What the next Government needs to do!

In the run up to General Election 2020, we had some asks for the next Government. Now the election is over the next Government need to be reminded of how important it is to implement these asks to enhance the lives of those living with sight loss on a daily basis. We will continue to lobby for their implementation.

In transport:

- Ensure the transport needs of people who are blind and vision impaired are central to public transport planning and development.
- Provide passenger information in accessible formats, both visual and audible, at all stages of a journey.

In education and employment:

- Ensure children who are blind and vision impaired have access to the Expanded Core Curriculum and all relevant learning materials placing them on an equal par with their sighted peers.
- Fund a national awareness campaign that proactively promotes the Employee Retention Grant Scheme and Workplace Adaptation Grant to employers.
- Extend the Workplace Adaptation Grant to those on Community Employment Schemes to allow people gain vital experience.

In terms of local Government:

- Inform local authorities of the risk associated with shared space and ensure improved consultation that provides for safety and accessibility for all.

Liz Jeffrey, our new Advocacy Officer



I have recently arrived from Australia to join NCBI in the role of Advocacy Officer. I was born in Belfast and emigrated to Australia as a teenager.

During my career in Australia, I worked extensively across the non-government and education sectors supporting people with disabilities to achieve inclusion in all areas of their lives. I was employed for seven years in advocacy and service coordination roles with Vision Australia, who are the largest provider of services to people with sight loss in Australia, and with Griffith University supporting students with a disability to achieve their academic goals.

During my time in these roles, I have seen firsthand the benefits of empowering people to use advocacy skills to speak up for themselves in a way that best serves their interests and goals.

I am excited to be joining NCBI at a time when the organisation is seeking to expand its existing National Advocacy Network through developing Local Advocacy Network groups across Ireland. I am travelling around Ireland establishing these groups, whose members are local people with sight loss. Members will collectively combine their life experience skills while learning advocacy skills to campaign on local issues to eliminate barriers to their full participation in their communities.

If you are interested in joining our National Advocacy Network and /or joining a Local Advocacy Network group, you can register your interest at campaigns@ncbi.ie. Looking forward to meeting you all.

Access All Areas

As a visually impaired person myself, who has used the NCBI library from time to time, I was interested to talk to Rebecca Curtis to learn more about this very special and reader-focused library.

The NCBI library is based not (as it was in the past) in the Drumcondra HQ, but in Finglas, North Dublin. The physical location of the library is, in fact, quite irrelevant to its readers. That's because readers don't visit the library in person. Instead, all the library's services are provided direct to readers, using a variety of methods ranging from the postal service to the latest technological solutions.

Many Available Formats

For example, an older person with failing sight who needs large-print books can have them posted out and return them to the library by Freepost. A blind person who reads Braille can get and return a book in the same way. A visually impaired person with a standard computer or a specialised DAISY audio-reader can have audiobooks sent to them on CD or as MP3 files on a USB stick; these simply go back in the post after use in the same way. More tech-savvy readers can click on the Easy Reader App on their phone or tablet to select NCBI's Overdrive service to get access to a range of audiobooks. NCBI is constantly adding to the collection and they respond to users' requests and preferences.

NCBI library offers a very personalised service.



Rebecca Curtis, NCBI Media and Library Services.

Readers who are comfortable with technology can have access to a huge range of literature, but using technology is entirely optional, and even though NCBI's library members are all over the country and probably never meet their librarian, the librarian provides a service that is tailored to each user's needs and preferences.

Major project

Recently, NCBI has been working on a major project to make academic books available to print-disabled students – those with dyslexia as well as those with visual impairments – via a dedicated website, www.bookshare.ie. This website supplies materials in a range of formats. Publishers from all over the world who support Bookshare upload their books to the system in electronic form and they are quickly processed and made available to registered users. This is

great news for visually impaired and dyslexic students who, until now, have found it very difficult to get texts that are important for their courses in formats that they can use.

Twin Vision books for young children

As a sighted person, Rebecca has an unusual skill: she reads and writes Braille. She learned Braille as an adult librarian in order to be able to 'translate' books into Braille. Rebecca is especially proud of work she has been doing recently, producing Twin Vision books for young children. She takes an ordinary picturebook with short pieces of text on each page, and she creates a Braille version of the text, which is output onto a plastic film and pasted in place on the relevant pages in the book. This provides access to shared reading for blind and sighted parents and children. And that is what the NCBI library is all about: making the experience of books and reading for blind people as similar as possible to the experience of sighted people.

I felt quite elated as I left NCBI after spending time talking to Rebecca amazed at the breadth of services on offer to spread the joy of reading to young and old.

This abridged article was written by author, publisher and former Laureate na nÓg Siobhán Parkinson and was first published in Inis magazine in January 2020. Inis magazine is the flagship publication of Children's Books Ireland, the national children's books organisation of Ireland. www.childrensbooksireland.ie

Peer Connections programme

NCBI is launching a new peer connections initiative which aims to offer specific advice, information and support to young people, their parents and adults, aged between 12 and 50 years, with sight loss.

The purpose of which is to connect people with queries about school subjects, further education, training and career options with adults with sight loss who have such knowledge and skill sets. Due to the fact that sight loss is a low incidence disability, access to positive peer role models is often limited. It is hoped that this project will assist people in connecting with adults who can provide this practical support.

The database can offer information and advice on studying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and practical subjects at second level and in specific training and career areas including:

Nursing, business, architecture, animation, art, insurance, banking, maintenance fitting, occupational therapy, journalism, administration.

We hope to continue to add to the database over time to broaden the interest areas. Should you wish to be connected with someone for the purpose of seeking advice or information in any of these areas, please make contact with your local NCBI worker.

If you feel that you would be in a position to offer advice and information to young people, their parents or other adults with sight loss please email alix.bullough@ncbi.ie for further information.

Historical and Cultural afternoon in Carlow



L-R service users in Carlow with a hedgehog exhibit from Carlow Museum.

In October 2019, NCBI Carlow arranged for Thomas Skinner, Archaeologist in Carlow Museum to give a talk to over 50 people who are blind or visually impaired.

Thomas talked about different specimens on show in the Carlow Museum spanning Jurassic, Neolithic and Medieval eras. He brought some exhibits for people to touch including molluscs which have been evolving over 530 million years and are amongst the most diverse groups of animals in the world including snails, octopuses and oysters; ancient and modern coral specimens, a hedgehog from the museum's collection of taxidermy animals and vellum made from calf skins which were used in place of paper by monks.

This interesting and engaging afternoon was enjoyed by all and is likely to be repeated again in 2020.

Celebrating merger of Vision Sports Ireland and NCBI



Jason Smyth.

A celebration announcing the merger was held on March 3rd in Trinity College Sports Complex where attendees were encouraged to see and participate in blind tennis, blind football and tandem cycling. It was a great opportunity to raise the public profile and understanding of how sport can be adapted to be accessible to those who are blind or vision impaired. This merger will ensure greater availability of a wide variety of sports to all those using NCBI services as well as widening the scope of the sports and leisure services on offer.

It was great to have Jason Smyth, Board Member of Vision Sports and 20 international gold medalist (including five Paralympian gold medals) speaking at the event. He highlighted how Vision Sports has continuously encouraged and supported him as an athlete and how heartened he is to know that as a result of this merger more blind or visually impaired people could benefit from their work.

Spring into Mayfest 2020!



The annual multi-sport carnival for blind and vision impaired people, organised by Vision Sports Ireland in association with NCBI and Dublin City Council takes place 20th - 28th May 2020 at Trinity College and other premier Dublin venues.

Our 38th annual Mayfest will be full of energy and ideas and form part of the inaugural Dublin City Council Sportsfest Ability Week. The programme includes taking to the Liffey to row, we paddle our own canoes and later test the indoor waters for swim fun. While on dry land, mainly at Trinity College, we come and try, demo and even compete in activities as varied as shooting, tennis, football, golf, wrestling, boxing and the ever popular tug of love and war. Off site we take on a tandem tour along Clontarf seafront finishing at the Clontarf Astro where everyone gets to try a variety of cycles. We also do a park run at Raheny.

Our President, Prof. Michael O’Keeffe will be on hand, no doubt with a celebrity friend or two in tow.

For full details, including entry and accommodation, please contact Mayfest Director Alex Whelan 085 8500193, email visionsports@ncbi.ie or check out www.visionsports.ie

‘Eye for an I’ initiative



Transition Year students in St. Ailbe’s School in Tipperary Town are leading a community-based project focusing on positive eye health.

The project is an intergenerational one, supported by the HSE, Tipperary County Council Age Friendly County and NCBI.

It began because the students found 85% of the people they surveyed struggled to read labels and pricing in shops and supermarkets. Also many older people do not like using apps or technology to assist them instead they favour using magnifying glasses in stores to help them shop.

In response, the students have produced a leaflet to be distributed locally encouraging people to look after their sight by having regular eye check-ups and a balanced diet / lifestyle.

The TY students also aim to get all local shops and service providers in Tipperary Town to stock free magnifying glasses as an available resource for customers when reading very small print like food packaging or labels. Such magnifiers will hopefully be sponsored by the main supermarkets and be available shortly. This project has the potential of being spread county wide – fingers crossed!

NCBI Youth Ambassador Ciaran O

“ Since I have been a service user with NCBI, I have been able to obtain several skills which have inspired new interests and make new friends that struggle with similar situations as myself. ”

I am Ciaran O’Brien aged 15. I have Albinism and I am currently a Transition Year student in Dublin. I want to share what it is like being a teenager with a visual impairment in Ireland.

Education

My parents told me I had Albinism around the age of nine or ten. By that stage I knew I had poor vision but didn’t understand the extent of it. Throughout my primary education I always needed help seeing certain texts. I had a Special Needs Assistant beside me to read out the content of the white board and textbooks. I used low vision aids, for example, a magnifier and later in my primary education I was given a Liberty Scholar which is a portable video magnifier. The majority of the resources I used in primary school have followed me into secondary school.

People’s Perception on visual impairments

Having Albinism has never bothered me. But the thing that always affected me was how isolating it can be. You could be in a room surrounded by people and just feel like you are invisible because you can’t make out their facial features. People have a negative perception on visual impairments and disabilities alike. I felt it from



Ciaran O’Brien in Spain.

the way fellow students didn’t want to be friends with someone that was anyway different. I found teachers comment on it and random people feel like they can comment on it too. People believe due to a visual impairment I cannot have the same standard of work or intelligence or that it effects my personality. But Albinism doesn’t define me. I have the same interests as any fifteen year old.

Confidence Building Experiences

I have been connected with NCBI for many years and have availed of services such as the independent travel, cooking and social programmes. I have been able to obtain several skills which have inspired new interests and make new friends that struggle with similar

n O'Brien

situations as myself.

As I have got older I have been able to take on more opportunities inside and outside the NCBI. For instance in April 2017 I took part in the five day Camp Abilities programme in Kerry. It had so many activities I could do like rock climbing, building a raft and canoeing. I returned again in 2018 and I am planning to return this year to be a leader in training. It definitely improved my confidence and I enjoyed meeting new friends.

How my sight effects my hobbies and interests

From a young age I have had a love of fashion. It was never just to dress nice or to look dapper. It was safe place to experiment with self-expression. With my sight I have always been able to see colours and patterns best. I think this has fed into my love of fashion. I have never been particularly good at sports largely due to not being able to see the ball. So I have always run to fashion. Like the way an athlete would run to the football field, in my case I am a fashionista and would run to H&M!

Why I decided to become a youth ambassador

I was delighted to be asked to go on RTE News2day in October to discuss my visual impairment. I had thought about the idea of becoming a youth ambassador discussing what it's like being a teenager with a visual impairment and the experience in RTE really convinced me to do it. The segment went better than anyone could ever have expected. When



Ciaran in the chair at EuroDisney.

the cameras stopped rolling I felt the adrenaline rush through my veins. The experience left me with a constant craving to carry on with this type of work.

Since then, I've done a video with the NCBI being their youth ambassador for 2019 World Children's Day. The video was posted online and received plenty of positive feedback. I aim to more similar work to essentially become a voice for adolescents that don't have a voice because of people's misconceptions on what it is like living with a visual impairment. I believe it is so important to educate and challenge these misconceptions so that a person isn't judged by their disability but rather people are more accepting and understanding of differences.

'I never thought I had a lot to give... but realise I do now through leaving a gift in my will to NCBI.'

Once friends and family have been looked after and all other personal decisions are made, why not leave a gift (small or large) of better vision in this world for generations to come? By remembering NCBI in your will, you can create a brighter future for over 54,000 people nationwide experiencing sight loss.

Every legacy is a generous gift of hope and trust for the future. Previous legacies have enabled NCBI provide more tailored services to support, empower and train people living with sight loss to live independently and confidently. NCBI have also partnered up with LawOnLine's Will service enabling you to draft legal documents in a controlled and secure environment online. Please call Roisin Walsh on **01 8821984** if you wish to



discuss or receive any further information on legacy gifts. **Thank you for caring!**

Harley Donation

Many thanks to the Harley family for the monies raised for NCBI in lieu of flowers at the funeral of the late Mrs. Mary Harley, Curraghleas, Mountain Top, Letterkenny. Fourth from left, NCBI's National Services Manager, Danny Cahill receives the cheque from members of the Harley family.



Ballyroan School Fundraising



L-R: Geraldine Tarpey her mother Rita Corley and son Ross Tarpey.

Many thanks to 5th class pupils and their teacher Mrs Fallon in Ballyroan Boys National School, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin for raising €390 for NCBI through the sale of their book of poems and short stories which spanned a variety of themes.

They were inspired to do this following pupil Ross Tarpey having his grandmother and NCBI service user Rita Corley talk to the class on what it is like to be blind. Rita is an inspiring person who has undertaken many fundraising events for NCBI, including a tandem skydive from 10,000 feet! She has also completed the VHI Women's Mini Marathon and will be NCBI's Mini Marathon Team Leader this year. **See page 24 and join Rita with Team NCBI.**

Volunteering Anyone?



Have you ever thought of passing a couple of hours to give back? Opportunity is knocking and we have just the thing!

Our wonderful friends at Tesco have again facilitated two dates for NCBI Bag Packs in their stores nationwide on Saturday 16th May and Saturday 21st November 2020 to raise much needed funds for our services. Come along, bring a family member or friend and make it a fun day.

Maria Brazil, one of our wonderful volunteers explains what NCBI and volunteering means to her.

"I first became involved with the NCBI after I suffered two strokes in 2016 which left me visually impaired. All the people I have met within the NCBI have been fantastic, knowledgeable and understanding, which lead me to become involved in fundraising with them. I want others who need their services to get the same amazing support that I got. So far I've done the Tesco bag packing and helped out at a Summer Fair in Finglas. I also hand knit baby blankets, baby cardigans, jumpers and hats which I donate to the NCBI shop in Finglas village to sell so they can raise funds."

We ask a minimum of two hours of your time for the bag pack, so if you think you or some of your family or friends would like to help, please contact Angela Levins at **01 8307033** or e-mail angela.levins@ncbi.ie .

Shane Ryan: An extra-oar-dinary fundraiser

Shane Ryan began rowing in 2007 when NCBI and a local rowing team in Limerick reached out to him. Shane is now taking part in, Atlantic Rowing Challenge which will see him and a team row from Europe to South America.

“I have roughly about 6% sight left; when I started rowing, I would have had better sight. We leave on March 1st from Portugal, heading past the Canaries and Morocco before turning towards French Guiana. We will be rowing across the equator, so it'll be very hot during the day!”

Shane, who was born with Bardet-Biedel Syndrome (BBS) a rare genetic condition that leads to vision loss says “my local rowing club got in contact with the NCBI and Vision Sports looking to set up a rowing team for people with visual impairments and it just went from there.”

When Shane’s vision began to deteriorate as a teenager, he had to give up GAA and rugby. He was looking for something that would allow him to get back into sports. “I would have played any blind sports but once I started rowing I found what I loved and led me to participate in the 2012 London Paralympic games.”

Shane’s training for this challenge has been gruelling, training up to 6 hours a day. “There is 5 of us in total. I am the only person with a visual impairment. I started training last March and gave myself a full year to prepare. We will be on the boat for 50 days, we will sleep on the



Shane Ryan Paralympic rower.

boat and do everything on the boat.”

Ryan is raising both funds and awareness for NCBI / Vision Sports through a GoFundMe page. “I have chosen this charity as they have helped me personally in the past. Without their services, I would not have been introduced to the sport of rowing many years ago.”

Shane hopes his participation in the difficult challenge will inspire others. “There are many others in the same position as myself who may not realize their potential in sport. Sport is what helped me get around the challenge of sight loss.”

“Hopefully, this campaign will bring awareness to the wider sporting community and encourage the visually impaired to try their hand at sitting in a rowing boat or riding a tandem bicycle.” Stay up-to-date with his trip and donate on his Facebook page: Shane Ryan Atlantic rowing challenge 2020.

Imagining the Impossible – Vision 2020 conference

NCBI, together with our VISPA partners Child Vision, Irish Guide Dogs and Fighting Blindness are excitedly organising the 13th International Low Vision Conference.

This conference will take place in Dublin Convention Centre on 12-16th July 2020. Its detailed programme will focus on all the developments happening globally in the area of low vision research and rehabilitation. It is targeted at all clinicians, researchers, academics, companies as well as those living daily with low vision.

Already some keynote speakers include Dr. Pearse Keane, Consultant Ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London and Clinician Scientist in University College London. He has a keen interest in retinal imaging and new technologies. Also Professor Joseph Rizzo, Harvard Medical School whose research focuses on the mechanisms of vision loss, improving diagnostic methods and developing new treatment for blinding diseases.

Please spread the word about this exciting conference.

Registration and further details on www.vision2020dublin.com

VISION 2020
Dublin, Ireland

IMAGINING THE IMPOSSIBLE

13th International Low Vision Conference
by the International Society for Low Vision
Research and Rehabilitation

Sunday 12th - Thursday 16th July 2020
The Convention Centre Dublin - Ireland
www.vision2020dublin.com

NCBI Working for People with Sight Loss
Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind
ChildVision National Education Centre for Blind Children
FIGHTING BLINDNESS Cure. Support. Empower.
VISPA

Hosted by: VISPA (Vision impaired service provider's alliance)
VISPA Organisation members are: NCBI, ChildVision, Irish Guide Dogs, Fighting Blindness

Anyone for the Theatre?

Bord Gais Energy Theatre, Dublin has two upcoming accessible performances which could be of interest to many.

Phantom of the Opera with Captioning, Audio Description & Touch Tour on Tuesday 7th July at 7.30pm

My Best Friend's Wedding, with Captioning Thursday 5th November at 7.30pm

Bookings for these performance should be made directly through the theatre's Group Bookings & Access Department so that you can get the most suitable seats. Tickets have been held back for this purpose that aren't available through other channels and when booking directly you don't pay any extra booking fees.

Please call **01 677 7770** or email groups@bgetheatre.ie for more details.

Elevate Training for Shop Managers

The success of NCBI stores is largely down to the quality of our shop managers who bring their experience, enthusiasm and commitment to their role. Charity retail is an ever changing and competitive marketplace so shop managers must adapt and respond to customer needs accordingly. NCBI Retail are passionate about developing their people and providing training opportunities for their individual benefit.

Recently, 12 shop managers from around the country graduated from a new Elevate Training Programme. This programme was ran in association with DUT Dublin, College of Business and was tailored specifically to charity retail management leading to an accreditation in Retail Operations and Marketing.

The course covered all areas including - Visual Merchandising, Shop Standards, Customer Service, Marketing, Retail Excellence, People Management and was a mixture of classroom based and assignments.

The value of this programme is already being felt as each shop has become more profitable by improving its layout and display of stock, customer experience and marketing. Check out



Graduates and NCBI staff.

the change in the shops for yourself!

Congratulations:

Sandra Malone - NCBI Corbally, Co Limerick;
Rosi Robaina - NCBI Tullamore, Co Offaly;
Mary Kelly - NCBI Maynooth, Co Kildare;
Olive McKeivitt - NCBI Kimmage, Dublin;
Anne Moore - NCBI Ballyfermot, Dublin;
Catherine Nolan - NCBI Rathmines, Dublin;
Maja Julardzija - NCBI Dun Laoghaire, Dublin;
Eileen Mulvaney - NCBI Fairview, Dublin;
Sarah Spencer - NCBI Nass, Co Kildare;
Theresa McLoughlin - NCBI Claremorris;
Lorna Browne - NCBI Carrickmacross,
Co Monaghan;
Stephanie Browne - NCBI Thomas St, Dublin.

“Having been so many years in charity retail sometimes things can become drab and dull. Same ideas, same systems of working but the Elevate programme allowed me to see the full potential that I could achieve for my store. Seeing my stock and layout in my shop now

from a marketing point of view has made a massive difference not only to the way it looks but to specifically target customers needs.

Improving our merchandising standards and window displays has generated new customers and we are still growing in this area. It has definitely led to increased sales. The Elevate programme has helped to give our shop a new lease of life, and I would highly recommend it to anyone” —

Catherine Nolan, NCBI Shop Manager, Rathmines, Dublin.

“Graduating a course in retail and marketing has meant a lot to me. I am grateful to NCBI for giving me this opportunity to improve myself not



The nine Graduates.

only personally but also professionally. It is a great achievement and a challenge for me completing the course in the English language. It has also helped me to implement some ideas in my shop and gave me more confidence in my role as a manager.” — **Rosi Robaina, NCBI Shop Manager, Tullamore, Co Offaly.**

Maynooth Students Take Over

NCBI have joined forces with students from the Business and Finance course in NUI Maynooth for them to develop a business plan and implement it in 17 of our shops in the Kildare and Dublin region.

Students will be encouraged to look at all aspects of the retail business from pricing, stock levels, volunteer management and visual merchandising.

Students will be assigned to different nearby NCBI shops between March 16th – 20th to put their thoughts into action.



New NCBI stores open near you

We are delighted to continue expanding our retail chain, with 3 new openings in the last few months! We are now in Skerries, Co.Dublin, Westport, Co.Mayo and Kilrush, Co.Clare.

Already it is proving successful as we are getting great support from the public through continued shopping, donating and volunteering in these stores. Similar to all our other locations, our goal is to become part of the fabric of the area knowing that revenue raised is funding the best possible services to people with sight loss in that area.

The shop managers Katherine, Kathleen & Catherine opened their new businesses with a little help from local Ministers, Senators, entrepreneurs, priests, teams of volunteers & most importantly – the community! An opening at NCBI is never complete without a cup of tea & some Victoria sponge!

Visit your local shop – (or one of our new locations!)



Minister Michael Ring T.D., along with NCBI CEO Chris White, and Kathleen Malone, Shop Manager, at the official opening of the NCBI Westport shop.

to be amazed by the quality stock inside, make some new friends and help us to help others. You never know what treasure you might find!

Sustainability at NCBI Retail

The fashion and textile industry in its current linear business model is one of today's most unsustainable global businesses with textile production alone contributing to climate change by producing an estimated 1.2 billion tonnes of CO2 annually. The industry is heavily reliant on earth's finite resources with the use of oil, water and energy throughout production and supply chain further aiding its contribution to climate change.

We are now living in a climate conscious era and the charity store stands at the forefront of reuse and sustainability. At NCBI Retail, our sustainability and circular fashion operations across our 117 stores through clothing reuse embeds our commitment to a net carbon society by 2050. Our environmental metrics through these processes confirm charity

retail is a key player in the fight against climate change.

In 2019, approximately 1,850 tonnes of clothing and shoes were donated to NCBI of

which we reused over 90%. By reusing and keeping clothing in circulation we saved:

- 5,935 metric tonnes of CO2
- 10 billion litres of water

This is the equivalent:

- 1,260 cars being removed from our roads annually
- 750 million smartphones being charged
- 46,728 of trees absorbing CO2.



Bringing Accessibility Home

The Apple TV much like the iPhone and iPad comes with an array of accessibility features that will be very familiar to Apple Users. The device which has the dimensions of about 6 stacked coasters connects to any television via the HDMI connection. The Apple TV comes with a remote with a trackpad and clicker which is key to the device's accessibility.

VoiceOver

Like the iPhone or iPad during setup we can press the menu buttons 3 times to activate voiceover and perform the initial setup independently.

Once setup we can turn this shortcut on or off. Swiping up/down and left/right will move around the menus and a click of the trackpad will activate whatever has the focus much in the same way a double taps works on iPhones. The textured menu button acts as the back button giving full navigation to the end user.

Zoom

From the accessibility menu we can activate the Zoom feature and pick our desired magnification level. Once activated a triple click of the trackpad will turn on magnification.



Follow Focus

It defaults to "follow focus" where the zoom will follow the focus of the on-screen menus making it very comfortable to navigate even with large magnification.

Panning

While the magnification is turned on if we simply tap the trackpad with two fingers this will change the Zoom to Panning Mode. In this mode if we glide our finger around the trackpad this navigates to the corresponding area of the screen allowing us to concentrate on certain areas of the screen e.g. Subtitles.

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Audio Description

All content on the Apple TV comes with Audio Descriptions and this feature can be set to default in the menu.

App vs Apple TV device

While many people will already use the Apple TV app on their Phone or iPad. The Apple TV device allows people to watch shows or films with families or friends and not in isolation on a smart phone.

Other Apps

Because we have access to the app store other apps and content providers can be installed such as Netflix or Amazon Prime. All accessibility features native to the Apple TV will also work on these apps.

Other Features

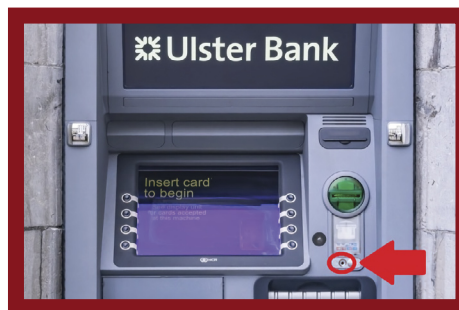
As well as apps the Apple TV is a very versatile and useful device and content and screens can be shared from iPads or iPhones making it easier to share music, pictures or video with the rest of the family.

One for all

With accessibility features so easy to access and enable or disable such as 3 clicks of the menu button to enable or disable voice over and 3 taps of the trackpad to enable or disable Zoom it makes it a device suitable for everyone in the family and easily accessible by all.

The Apple TV comes with a year's free subscription which can be added to your existing Apple ID.

Talking ATMs



Everyone needs to use an ATM machine from time to time. Whether that is to check your balance or to withdraw cash. ATM machines are located on most main streets and most of us don't think twice about using them. But what happens if you can't see the screen? What if you need assistance to access your own bank details? For people who are blind and vision impaired, this is the case. ATMs are inaccessible.

Ulster Bank have recognised this barrier to independence and have installed software into their ATMs that talks.

Here's how it works:

- Plug your headphones into the space provided to the right of the screen.
- The screen will go blank, so no one can see what you are doing.
- All you need to do is follow the instructions given to you through your headphones.
- You can check your balance or withdraw cash by using just the number pad.
- The instructions through the headphones will tell you where the cash will come out and what notes you will be receiving.

This is a fantastic step forward in accessible banking led by Ulster Bank and it needs to be replicated by all other banks in Ireland.

Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant

This grant provides funding for a person with a vision impairment who is starting or already in employment to make their workplace more accessible or equipment easier to use.

Examples of adaptations:

- Minor building modifications
- Equipment adaptation including accessible software such as screen readers, magnification software, large and small electronic magnifiers.

You are eligible if you:

- Have been offered employment or an apprenticeship in the private sector
- Are in employment in the private sector and have recently changed jobs because you have been re-deployed or promoted.
- Are in employment in the private sector and you acquired a disability while in employment, or you have a condition that has deteriorated.
- Are about to become self-employed and need adaptations to your workplace or equipment.

How much is the Grant Worth?

- The grant is worth €6,350. This is available towards the cost of adapting or purchasing equipment. This grant can also be used to upgrade adapted equipment which was funded previously, and for training to the use the equipment.

How and Where to Apply

- You or your employer can apply for the grant if you are already employed or about

to start employment. All forms are available from your local Intreo Centre / Social Welfare Branch Office.

Step 1

- Complete Part 1 of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund application form. This form requires your Contact details, PPS Number, Vision Impairment details, Employment Details.

Step 2

- Complete Part 2 of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund application form. This form identifies the equipment or adaptation that is needed and why. Submit evidence confirming your vision impairment means that the equipment or adaptations are needed so you can do your job. Provide quotations for the adaptation or equipment. You must get two quotes for costs over €700 and three quotes for costs over €1,500.
- Send completed applications to your local Intreo Centre / Social Welfare Branch Office.

What Happens Next?

A Case Officer from the Department will meet you to review the application. If approved, the grant is then paid directly to the applicant to cover the agreed costs.

NCBI Technology Staff can provide assistance in identifying assistive equipment that will help make the workplace more accessible to those with a vision impairment.

Mobile Apps for people with s

For people with sight loss, mobile apps are more than just a modern convenience; they have the power to make a massive difference in everyday life.

GPS, voice search, text-to-speech, screen readers and more are all powering innovations that benefit blind and vision impaired smartphone users across the world. Here's some of the best apps on the market.

Like to know more about any of the apps featured or do you have other suggestions? Call us on **01 5312975** or email labs@ncbi.ie.

BlindSquare

Category: Navigation

Description:

BlindSquare is an accessible GPS app, which describes the environment, announces points of interest, streets and user specified points as you travel. Once the app has determined your location using your phone's GPS, it will look up information about your surroundings, for example, you could use it to find restaurants within a 200 metre radius or to find the nearest post office or the library.

Available on: iOS

Cost: €43.99

Website: www.blindsquare.com



Seeing AI

Category: Identification

Description:

Seeing AI is an artificial intelligence app developed by Microsoft that narrates the world around you. Fully accessible with VoiceOver, it can be used to describe short text, documents, products, people, currency, scenery, colours, handwriting and light.

Available on: iOS

Cost: Free

Website: www.microsoft.com/en-us/seeing-ai/

Be My Eyes

Category: Identification

Description: "Lend your eyes to the blind" is the tagline for this app that matches a vision impaired user with a sighted volunteer. With this app, you are connected through a live video connection and the sighted volunteer can tell you what they see when you point your phone at something using the rear-facing camera. What's more, Be My Eyes offers technical support from Microsoft's Disability Answer Desk in a feature called Specialised Help.

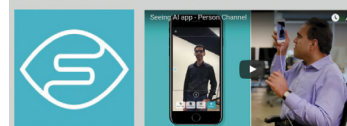
Available on: iOS

Cost: Free

Website: www.bemyeyes.com

Seeing AI iOS App:

Recognizing People, Objects and Scenes



Paths to Technology



h sight loss

Dolphin EasyReader

Category: Reading
EasyReader is an accessible reading app for readers with low vision, blindness or dyslexia. Users can browse & download from the world's largest collection of talking book and newspaper libraries, including Bookshare. If you haven't already, download the app for Android or iOS today and submerge yourself in 100,000s of books you can read!

Available on: iOS & Android

Cost: Free

Website: www.yourdolphin.com



Voice Dream Reader

Category: Reading

This app reads articles, documents, and books out loud. It has advanced text-to-speech and can be tailored to your reading style and level. All voices work offline and play in the background even with the screen locked. It does an excellent job voicing Microsoft



word files, web articles, and various e-book formats, including works from Bookshare and Project Gutenberg.

Available on: iOS & Android

Cost: €10.99

Website: www.voicedream.com



Earcatch

Category: Entertainment

Earcatch offers audio description for films and series. The content accessible through this app is increasing. To use, simply select the film or series that you would like to watch and download the corresponding audio description. You put on your headphones and hit "play" when the film or series begins then Earcatch will synchronise the audio description with what appears on screen.

Available on: iOS & Android

Cost: Free

Website: www.eucatch.eu

Join Rita and Team NCBI for this year's VHI



Womens' Mini-Marathon

Join Rita and team NCBI for this year's VHI women's mini marathon and transform the lives of those who are blind or visually impaired. Rita (aged 75) has done the mini-marathon and other fundraising events including skydiving for NCBI over the years.

"I think I've become braver after I lost my sight. I've been blind for 30 years now; it was the result of a car accident with a milk float. I fundraise because NCBI has been very good to me and I like to think that I am helping the young people who use their services as well as my own age group, the seniors. There's so much potential for younger people with sight loss now with the training provided, they have a chance to gain the skills because of NCBI and this means they have a better chance of going to college and getting a job."



Rita Corley, with Skydive tandem master Roger Kileen, descending from 10.000 feet in the NCBI skydive event.

2020 EVENTS

VHI Women's Mini Marathon

Be part of #TEAMNCBI
Get fit & raise awareness

MAY
31st
Sunday

Cycles

Pedal on for NCBI, and light up the night for sight!

MAY
SEP
OCT

Tipperary
Dublin
Cork
Galway

Extreme

Ready for the thrill and exhilaration of taking part in one of our extreme challenges. Corporate teams are welcome!

MAR
JULY

Skydive

Face your fears and take part in our 10,000 ft Tandem Skydive!

JUNE
6th
Saturday

10 Acts of Kindness

Take the NCBI challenge and do 10 Acts of Kindness in 10 days. Be kind to yourself and to those around you.

FEB
17-26

Marathons & 10Km

Take on a run anywhere in Ireland, challenge yourself and help people with sight loss.

APRIL
MAY

Bag pack & Collections

Get much more back than what you give, become a volunteer!

ALL
YEAR

Golf

NCBI HolmPatrick Cup
NCBI Granard Cup

APRIL
SEPT

Camino

Sarria to Santiago 100KM. Put one foot in front of the other. Easy does it and you'll achieve something remarkable, for yourself and for NCBI.

SEP
13-19

Your own event

Set up an online fundraising page & organise an event: Dine in Dark, Quiz, Bake sale, you decide!

ALL
YEAR

Come and join us at our events, find out more at www.ncbi.ie, contact our fundraising team at fundraising@ncbi.ie or call Joanne McCarney at 01 8821970

This is an illustration guide - planned and dates are subject to change

Charity number: 12673