



Northumberland County Blind Association
Supporting blind and partially sighted people

NoISe

Issue 92
Autumn 2015

NoISe (Northumberland Information Service for People with Vision Impairment) is the quarterly newsletter of the Northumberland County Blind Association.

Services and technology event for people with sight loss

Join us on **Wednesday 23rd September 2015, 10am to 3pm** at Reiver House, Morpeth - in association with Dolphin Computer Access, Optelec, Calibre, British Wireless for the Blind Fund and Action for Blind People mobile information service.

Come along and explore the latest products and technologies for blind and partially sighted people. Get to grips with a range of handheld video magnifiers.

Try out simple talking computers for beginners and send your first email. Bring along a favourite photograph and see every detail in high definition, using the latest desktop magnifier?

Other organisations at the event include: Macular Society, HealthWatch and Blind Veterans UK.

For further information about this event, please call us on 01670 514316 or email: info@ncba.org.uk

A fond farewell to our Chairperson

Ken Brown, NCBA Chairperson for the past four and a half years has resigned from the Board of Trustees. Staff and volunteers would like to thank him for all of his hard work over the years and wish him well for the future. Ken says: "I became a Trustee of NCBA in February 2011 and was elected as Chair at the following meeting in April. I really, really should have seen that one coming. I chaired my first Board meeting in June 2011.

Now, sadly, primarily down to issues of my health I have resigned from the Board of Trustees.

The organisation has changed a lot in the last four and a half years while I have been its Chair.

- We introduced an associate membership scheme and changed from an AGM to an Annual Meeting to reduce our costs.
- We renegotiated our existing contract with the Care Trust so that it was based on outcomes rather than numbers of staff.
- We got into the practice of using scenario planning to help with our decision making.
- We established changes in our Articles to comply with the Charity Act 2011, and were one of the first charities in the country to do so.
- We established changes in our Articles to enable us to extend our services to include anyone with sensory impairment.

- We defined a process for developing a business strategy, we engaged stakeholders in the development of that business strategy and then we developed and published that business strategy.
- We also implemented a training programme for the CX, Trustees and staff to help with the development of that strategy.
- We brought in PQASSO Quality Management and achieved IIP Bronze Award.
- We created a Funding and Awareness Raising Committee.
- We reduced time on our waiting lists, and increased the quality of our services.
- We put together a very strong bid in response to NCC's tender for services for vision impaired people but unfortunately a combination of circumstances caused the loss of two key contracts and a number of staff.
- We handed over those lost services to the new provider in a professional and dignified manner.
- We evaluated a number of business cases to determine our future after the loss of those two contracts.
- We have determined ways to enhance the delivery of our remaining major project, Key Comms.
- We renegotiated the contingent liability of the LG pension scheme to an affordable level at a time when we were at serious risk of having to pay the full amount.

- We have reduced our costs through the redundancy of the CX and the introduction of a new pension scheme to replace the local government one.
- We sold our biggest asset, Reiver House, which now gives us plenty of working capital and we will continue to occupy this building as tenants.
- We are now in a position where all staff costs are covered by the Key Comms project or the grant from the Wills Foundation Trust.

While all these changes were happening, we kept vision impaired people, their families and carers at the centre of everything we do. Note how I used the term “we” in describing each of those changing circumstances.

These changes didn't come about by accident. They required thought, planning, people, teamwork, sometimes money, often leadership. Most of all they required commitment.

The organisation is in a financially sound position with excellent premises and excellent staff. But it can't, and won't, stand still.

NCBA has been part of my life for over four years. I will miss it terribly but now is as good a time as any to exit when the organisation is stable and ready to re-build.

I want to record my gratitude to staff and to trustees, past and present, for the support and goodwill of these last four and a half years. I wish my successor and all associated with NCBA the best of wishes for what I know will be a terrific future.

Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA) and the William Turner Garden

– article written by Brian Harle.

In 2004 a reduced replica of the William Turner Garden in Carlisle Park was taken to the Chelsea Flower Show and successfully awarded a Bronze Merit award. On its return from Chelsea it was agreed that the replica garden should be rebuilt and attached to the building occupied by the Northumberland County Blind Association at Staithes Lane here in Morpeth thereby giving the opportunity for visitors to the building to experiment with the two senses of touch and smell.

The upkeep of the gardens was carried out by volunteers for the next few years but in 2009 both the building and garden were one of the many properties that were damaged when the River Wansbeck could not cope with the volume of rainfall and overflowed its banks.

Students from Kirkley Hall Agricultural College came and cleaned up the garden after this major flooding, for which the NCBA were extremely grateful. After the 'big clear up' and when the building had dried out and the staff had moved back in, the NCBA were lucky to have the expertise of volunteer and octogenarian Tom Ridley to carry on looking after the garden.



A view of the garden in July.

He not only tends to the William Turner garden but all the flower borders surrounding the building. Tom came with a

great deal of knowledge having worked and been in charge of at one time, 72 gardeners with Wansbeck Council. Tom grows from seed in his glasshouse at home a lot of the plants in the garden, telling me that white and yellow flowers are the most suitable for the visitors to see. He is always on the lookout for donations of plants for the garden especially those that give ground cover, so reducing the problems of weeds and time.



Tom Ridley in the award winning Turner Garden

Tom also told me he reckons to spend about 250 hours a year on the garden and flower beds and I am sure the NCBA are very appreciative of his labours – they have a gem of a volunteer looking after their outside interests and while some of the original planting has gone I recommend a visit to the garden.

This article appears in the latest *Quadrifolia* newsletter (reproduced with kind permission) which aims to 'promote the life and legacy of William Turner (c1508-1568) a native of Morpeth, often referred to as the Father of English Botany in view of his naming of plants in English the first time it had been done. The name *Quadrifolia* is derived from the specific name of Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* a plant that was first described by Turner in his herbal and which grew and still does in his home town of Morpeth. For further information please contact Brian Harle on 01670 504139 or email: harle474@btinternet.com

I Can Network – Kieran’s story

Kieran Little, 18, from Blyth, Northumberland, is the next student fronting the national ‘I Can’ campaign from The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC), based in Hereford.

Kieran’s desire to help the College challenge stereotypical thinking surrounding people with sight loss meant that he wanted to demonstrate the abilities he has which place him on a par with any sighted counterpart in his chosen industry.

Kieran has completed an OCR Level 3 in Media alongside a BTEC Level 3 in IT. He proudly became one of six learners at the College to study the CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate) qualification. RNC was launched as Europe’s first Cisco Networking Academy for people with visual impairments in September 2014.

“As I am studying BTEC IT, some of the content is carried over into the Cisco course and it’s helped out with the networking unit, but the majority of the content is new,” explained Kieran. “I like the fact that we’re the first group to trial this. We’re setting it up for students in the future and finding different ways of doing things.”

In his video for the I Can campaign, Kieran talks the viewer through the networking system - such is his confidence in the abilities he has learnt. He utilised the teaching skills he has acquired as one of the student teachers of the Tech Novice Café, a drop-in session for people with and without visual impairments to learn the equipment of their choice, as defined by their own needs and wishes.

“The filming was on a Tuesday morning, first thing, so I wasn’t fully awake,” he said. “I hate being filmed but I got used to it.

I'm used to doing multiple takes in the Chapel for Media, so this was quick, actually."

Media is Kieran's passion, but he feels networking is a practical job prospect. He would love to have an apprenticeship or work experience with Cisco; as Kieran says: "I can network".



RNC The Royal National College for the Blind
Education, employment and empowerment

I Can network

Kieran, RNC Media and CISCO student

"My interests have helped to shape my future career. **Being at RNC has made getting there a reality.**"

Our students leave with the skills they need to start a career.
Find out more at The Royal National College for the Blind.

01432 376 621
www.rnc.ac.uk/ican

Watch Kieran's video and read his profile at www.rnc.ac.uk/ican.

For more information about the Cisco Networking Academy, visit www.rnc.ac.uk/courses-at-rnc or call 01432 376 621.

Living with sight loss – Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)

I am a 42 year old mum of two young children and on 20th November 2003 I was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). I was told that it would affect my night and peripheral vision and I could be registered as partially sighted. For the next five years I went for yearly appointments at the RVI in Newcastle and continued to do every day things with the RP hidden/forgotten about. With hindsight, I now know that isn't true and the RP affected me a lot. I stopped going out alone on an evening and when out with my children they became the parent that would keep us safe, telling me when we could cross the road or whether there were any obstacles in my way.

It wasn't until 2014 that I finally woke up and knew it was time to deal with the difficulties that having RP gave me. Around this time the RP Fighting Blindness charity had arranged a seminar in Newcastle. The seminar was very interesting and I learnt a lot about the condition from the presentations given by some local scientists from Newcastle University. A few of us who had attended the seminar chose to go for a drink afterwards. I hadn't realised how much I needed to talk with others in the same position as me until that day, and because of this we all decided to meet up regularly in Newcastle.

Colin Hetherington is a very proactive member of the group, who I met at the seminar, and it's thanks to him in particular that what used to be a small group has now turned into around fifty people attending. The scientists from the original seminar attend each meeting voluntarily to keep us updated on their research and we are all so thankful to them for taking time out of their precious weekend to join us. Also, we have other guest speakers that join us, one of them being the lovely Joanne Milne. Joanne who has Usher Syndrome* and became known when she had her cochlear implants fitted

allowing her to hear for the first time aged 39. She now is doing amazing fund raising and awareness for the Deafblind.

Family and friends are great but to have the chance to speak with others dealing with similar feelings and situations is amazing. Friends for life have been made in this group, myself with a lady called Sarah, and without RP, we would never have met.

Our next meeting is on 28th November at The Bridges Hotel in Newcastle at 3pm. We have a closed Facebook group called 'Northern Alliance Ushers and RP group' if anyone would like to get in touch and come along. Hope to see you there!

This article is written by Fiona who lives in Northumberland.

About Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)

Retinitis pigmentosa (RP) is the name given to a group of inherited conditions of the retina that all lead to a gradual progressive reduction in vision. Difficulties with night vision and peripheral ('side') vision are the first things that are noticed. Later, reading vision (detailed vision), colour vision, and central ('straight-ahead') vision are affected. The age at which symptoms start is variable and the rate of deterioration often varies - for example with the different genetic types - but is generally very slow with changes occurring over years rather than months. In approximately half of all cases there are other family members with RP - this information is reproduced with kind permission from RP Fighting Blindness, visit: **www.rpfightingblindness.org.uk** or call **0845 123 2354** for help and advice.

*Usher syndrome is a genetic or inherited condition that affects hearing, vision and balance.

RNIB Campaign: Being there when it matters

Only 30 per cent of eye departments in the UK currently have some kind of qualified support in place, and many of these posts are under threat.

An RNIB campaign is calling for every eye department in the UK to have access to a sight loss adviser.



They will be holding an event in Parliament during November for new, and re-elected, MPs to come and learn more about this vital service and how they can support the campaign.

This is your chance to contact your local MP and invite them to attend the event in Parliament on Tuesday 24th November 2015 to talk about the invaluable support provided by sight loss advisers across the country.

What are sight loss advisers?

Sight loss advisers are commonly known as ECLOs (Eye Clinic Liaison Officers) in England. They are trained, non-clinical, staff working within eye departments that provide patients and their families with vital quality emotional and practical support. The campaign is calling on ophthalmologists to explore the need for a sight loss adviser service in their eye department.

Campaigners have the power to make a real change and this has certainly been proved over the last year. Over the last 12 months campaigners have been extremely busy, bringing attention to MPs of the importance of sight loss advisers.

- Over 260 MPs have been contacted by more than 380 campaigners to ask if there is a sight loss adviser available in their local hospital.
- More than 60 MPs and Peers attended the launch of our 'Being There report' to find out more about sight loss advisers.
- More than 20 MPs have visited their local sight loss adviser services in England.
- Engaged over 400 people who can influence decisions to fund sight loss advisers.

Campaigners have helped secure existing sight loss adviser posts which had been under threat. In addition, a number of eye departments have either funded, or made a commitment to fund, a new sight loss adviser. However, there is still much more to do and in November a new campaign will be launched.

For further information and to access sight loss adviser reports: **www.rnib.org.uk/news/campaigning**

RNIB are calling for every eye department in the UK to have access to a sight loss adviser, to provide this much needed support.

Online Today - helping people with sensory loss get online at Reiver House on **Wednesday 7th October 2015, 10am to 12.30pm**

Technology can make life easier if you have hearing or sight problems, but knowing where to start isn't always easy.

Online Today is a new Big Lottery funded project led by RNIB, delivered in partnership, to help people with sensory loss across the UK get online.

We will look at making the most of being online – from browsing websites and sending emails. Through home visits, events, one-to-one and group sessions and demonstrations of products such as **laptops, tablets, smartphones** and **eReaders**, you will find how easy it is to gain the basic skills and confidence to use this technology.

If you have little or no experience of being online, or you have recently been diagnosed with a visual impairment and you want to learn new ways of working to get and stay online this session will help you.

If you would like to attend this event at Reiver House please call us on **01670 514316** or email: **info@ncba.org.uk** – places allocated on a first come, first served basis.

To learn more about this project please contact RNIB.

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Email:

onlinetoday@rnib.org.uk

or visit their website at

rnib.org.uk/onlinetoday

Audio Book Groups in Northumberland Libraries

Our Audio Book Groups are for people who have a visual impairment or face barriers in reading printed books. These friendly groups offer an opportunity to share books, listen to new authors or old favourites, hear other people's views and recommendations, and meet new people with a shared interest.

Meetings are held once a month. Members take home an audio book on CD then return to the next meeting for a relaxed & informal discussion lead by the group leader. Refreshments are provided and members are fully involved in choosing the books their group will read.

The following libraries host Audio Book Groups:

Alnwick Library - meets on the fourth Thursday of the month from 2.15pm to 3.30pm

Hexham Library - meets on the last Thursday of the month from 1.30pm to 2.45pm

Morpeth Library - meets on the first Thursday of the month from 1.30pm to 3pm

Ponteland Library - meets on the first Monday of the month from 10.30am to 12noon

If you are interested in joining a group please contact:

Ros Markham, Librarian: Reader Development

Telephone: 01661 823594

Email: RMarkham@activenorthumberland.org.uk

Website: www.northumberland.org.uk

Clubs and groups

SocialEyes Ponteland group celebrated two very special birthdays recently at Gateshead Hilton Hotel. Member John Duff celebrated his 98th birthday and Elsie Turner celebrated her 90th birthday. Lorna Stewart Porritt also recently celebrated her 92nd birthday but was unable to attend the celebrations. Everyone enjoyed afternoon tea while looking at the bridges over the Tyne which 'opened the flood gates of nostalgia' for many.



The group meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month, alternately in Merton Hall, Ponteland and other local venues. If you would like to go along to one of the meetings or find out more please call Moira on 07831 718061.

If you think you would like to join a group in your area please contact us and we can put you in touch with a group organiser. Groups meet in the following area: Ashington, Alnwick, Bellingham, Blyth, Morpeth, Hexham and Prudhoe.

Outreach information and advice sessions across Northumberland

Find out more about our voluntary services, demonstrations of magnifiers and equipment to help you manage on a daily basis, volunteering opportunities, or ask questions about your visual impairment.

Alnwick library on the
3rd Thursday of the
month, 2pm to 4pm.

Ashington library on
the 4th Tuesday of the
month, 2pm to 4pm.

Bedlington library on
the 1st Friday of the
month, 2pm to 4pm.

Berwick library on the
3rd Friday of the
month, 2pm to 4pm.

Blyth library on the 2nd
Friday of the month, 2pm
to 4pm.

Hexham library on the
3rd Wednesday of the
month, 2pm to 4pm.

Morpeth library on the
3rd Monday of the
month, 10am to 12noon.

Prudhoe library on the
3rd Tuesday of the
month, 10am to 12noon.

If you know of a venue where you would like us to visit please do get in touch to discuss. For further information please call us on 01670 514316 or email: info@ncba.org.uk

Fundraising news

The 14th annual fishing competition in aid of NCBA in July was well attended with over 70 keen participants at Fontburn Reservoir. We raised a grand total of £1,241.40, so well done to all concerned and a big thank you to the Fontburn Ranger Team who helped to make the day such a success.

Match results as follows: Junior event 1st place Andrew Studholme (5lb 13oz), Runner up Dylan Watson (4lb 7oz) and Heaviest Fish winner Connor Barton (2lb 11oz) who was also the winner of the Golden Raffle Ticket earning him a prize of 10 free fishing days at any Northumbrian Water Fishery.

Senior event winner was Dave Hancock (10lb 1oz), Runner Up - Des Hodgson (7lb 14oz) and Heaviest Fish caught by Wheatley Smith (3lb 1oz).

Gareth Tosney from Bedlington was the envy of everyone who took part on the day landing a coveted double tagged Rainbow worth a whopping £500. The 3lb beauty which has eluded anglers since being stocked in May was caught on a ledgered brown & red Mousetail near the North Shore Point.



NCBA Street Collection - update

A huge thank you to all of our volunteers who took part in the street collection in Morpeth last month. We raised **£457.65** thanks to the generosity of members of the public – thanks again to everyone concerned!

Congratulations to our 100 Club Prize Winners 2015

100 Club	1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
July	110 Mr J Watson	32 Mr R Fullerton	70 Mr K Raffle
August	145 Mr D Hoey	39 Mr R watts	88 Mrs A Waggitt
September	162 Mrs B Robertson	72 Mr T Ridley	115 Mrs B Wanless

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY BLIND ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 16th November 2015,
11am at Reiver House

Questions and any other business to be
submitted by 30th October 2015.

**Telephone: 01670 514316. Email: info@ncba.org.uk
NCBA, Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth NE611TD**

Registered Charity Number: 1102386. Company Limited by Guarantee: 4451537

Voluntary Services at NCBA

Sightline – a peer telephone support service for newly registered blind or partially sighted people coming to terms with the practicalities of their sight loss.

Home visiting – a trained volunteer can provide support to someone with daily activities such as reading correspondence, choosing an audio book or simply listening and chatting over a cup of tea.

Volunteer drivers – we provide a volunteer driver service for vision impaired people living in Northumberland. If you, or someone you know, needs to attend an important appointment or attend a club or group meeting please contact us.

Please contact us if you are interested in any of these services, call us on 01670 514 316 or email: volunteer@ncba.org.uk

Time to Volunteer?

You can make a real difference!
We need volunteers to help us
support vision impaired people in Northumberland

**Volunteering is very rewarding it enables you to:
Give something back - Help others - Enjoy new experiences**

We are looking for volunteers to assist with driving, home visiting/shopping. Assist with day to day tasks and to help our clubs and support groups.

Make new friends - do something positive!

Telephone: 01670 514316

NCBA, Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth NE611TD

Please email: volunteer@ncba.org.uk or info@ncba.org.uk

Website: www.ncba.org.uk

National Eye Health Week

Monday 21st to Sunday 27th September 2015

The sixth annual National Eye Health Week (NEHW) will take place from Monday 21st to Sunday 27th September 2015.

Eye care charities, organisations and health professionals from across the UK are joining together to promote the importance of eye health and the need for regular sight tests for all.

Did you know: a sight test can detect early signs of conditions like Glaucoma, which can be treated if found soon enough.

During a sight test, other health conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure may be detected.

1.8 million people in the UK are living with sight loss and for 53% of these, a simple sight test and new spectacles could really help.

For healthy eyes, eat green leafy vegetables like spinach and kale along with oily fish, don't smoke and wear sunglasses that give full UV protection and take some exercise on a daily basis.

Visit the Vision Matters website to find out more about what's going on and helpful tips to look after your eyes.

Factsheets to download and useful links to other organisations can be found on their website at:

www.visionmatters.org.uk

- Diet – nutrition and eyesight
- Exercise and eyesight – Royal College of Ophthalmologists
- Alcohol – Royal College of Ophthalmologists
- Smoking – NHS Choices
- The sun – NHS Choices

Talking Technology

BLITAB® is the first ever braille tablet, that uses a new liquid-based technology to create tactile relief outputting braille, graphics and maps for the blind and partially sighted.



It's called BLITAB® – the iPad for the blind. It is a next-generation affordable and multi-functional device for braille reading and writing that displays a whole page of braille text, without any mechanical elements.

For further information go to: www.bvi.blitab.com

New Optelec Compact+HD video magnifier

The Optelec Compact+ HD is a high quality video magnifier with a handle, made for people with low vision. It offers more reading comfort than an optical magnifier.



With the Compact+ HD, you can perform your daily reading and viewing tasks again. Text that used to be too small, can now be enlarged in the size that is ideal for you, in the colour settings you prefer.

For further information go to: www.uk.optelec.com

Conference/meeting room hire at Reiver House

Meeting Room Hire – 520sq ft. room seating up to 25 people with kitchenette including tea and coffee making facilities. £80 for a full day or £15 per hour (or part there of).



Reception waiting area and manned desk.

Desk Hire – modern office with Wi-Fi internet, photocopying equipment, staff kitchen, WC's, free on site parking and sensory gardens. Two free days meeting room hire is also included in desk hire in addition to a reception service.



Recording Studio – this can be used as office space for two people or as a small recording studio, with free equipment hire, 102sq ft. £40 per day or £10 per hour. **Sensory loss groups may be eligible for concessionary rates.**

For further details on meeting room, desk and office hire please contact us on 01670 514316.

Make a difference – support our services

The Northumberland County Blind Association is a registered charity and depends on outside help for many of its activities. We are greatly helped by our team of volunteers as well as many people that support us financially.

If you would like to help by: volunteering, fundraising, making a donation, being actively involved with one of our committees, making a bequest, joining our 100 club, please contact us on 01670 514316.

If you pay income tax your donation can be worth 25% more to us just by completing and enclosing the slip below with your donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

I am a taxpayer. Signature _____

Please call **01670 514316** or email **info@ncba.org.uk** if you would like to contribute an article or make a comment on anything you have read in this newsletter.

NoISe stands for “Northumberland Information Service for people with vision impairment”. NoISe is a free publication that is produced in large-print, Braille, audio and email. We aim to give you news about NCBA and useful general information. To the best of our knowledge all articles are correct at the time of going to print. If you know someone who would be interested in receiving NoISe or if this magazine is inappropriately addressed please let us know.

Northumberland County Blind Association
Supporting blind and partially sighted people

Christmas Fayre

Tuesday 17th November,

10.30am to 12.30pm

at Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth.

Tombola, Raffle, Bottle Bank, Christmas cards, Tea,
Coffee & Refreshments, Soup, Cakes

Everyone welcome

Address:

Reiver House
Staithes Lane
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 1TD

Contact us:

Telephone: 01670 514316
Email: info@ncba.org.uk
Website: www.ncba.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1102386
Company Limited by Guarantee: 4451537



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



LOTTERY FUNDED

