

# Vision Northumberland

## InSight - Autumn 2024



Dear friends,

Summer has gone by in a flash, but we have lots of fond memories of activities which took place. You, our beneficiaries, never fail to amaze me; pushing boundaries while taking part in activities like water sports and photography that are usually reserved for your sighted peers.

All our clubs and activities remain well attended but please let us know if you would like us to explore something different.

As ever, we thank you for your continued support and note that we are in the process of creating an Autumn fundraising bonanza where we hope to raise thousands of pounds to assist the charity. Should anyone wish to sponsor, donate or fundraise please contact us here at Vision Northumberland.

Best wishes, Lorraine (Chief Executive Officer)

## September Luncheon

Thank you to everyone who came to our September Luncheon. Once again, our amazing Café volunteers have outdone themselves, serving up homemade ham broth, carrot and coriander soup and fruit crumble.

It was lovely to see so many of you and we were so happy to see some new faces.

A huge thank you to our Café volunteers and drivers. Your support is very much appreciated.



# All about Alexa

Amazon Echo is a range of products classed as voice assistants that can be controlled by the human voice. You simply ask the assistant 'Alexa' to perform tasks for you. These can include:

**Alarms/Reminders** - Say "Alexa, set an alarm" or "Alexa, set a reminder" then just answer her questions about time, date etc

**Listen to music** - You can ask Alexa to play any radio station i.e. "Alexa play Smooth radio" or "Alexa play RNIB Radio". You can also ask her to play specific music i.e. "Alexa play some classical music"

**News** - You can ask "Alexa play the main news headlines"

**Questions/information** - You can ask Alexa any question that you would normally search Google for or look up in a book, i.e. "Alexa what is the capital of Bolivia?" "Alexa what is the phone number for the RVI in Newcastle?" "Alexa tell me a joke"

**Make phone calls** - If you have set up your Alexa to make calls, you can say "Alexa please call Michael"

**Shopping Lists** - You can ask Alexa to add items to your shopping list. "Alexa add carrots to my shopping list". You can then view the shopping list on your Alexa app.

Some organisations will provide those with a visual impairment an Alexa device for free or provide them via grants. You can get more information on this and other Alexa functions by calling our Tech Coordinator Rachael on 01670 514316.

# Volunteering Spotlight



Our team of incredible volunteers are at the centre of the work we do. Their dedication, passion and generosity helps drive our services. Today we're shining a light on our remarkable Client Connect Volunteers.

Client Connect is our telephone befriending service that connects volunteers with visually impaired clients for regular telephone chats that provide emotional support and social contact. Some of our volunteer callers also have a visual impairment which allows them to share hints and tips on living with sight loss.

Our Client Connect callers play such an important role in supporting our most isolated clients; combating loneliness, forging friendships and sharing valuable information. They are a lifeline for many of our most vulnerable clients and we are very grateful for all of their support. Thank you to you all.

If you are interested in becoming a Client Connect Caller or would benefit from our befriending service, please call Tracey on 01670 514316 or email [tracey.hinton@visionnorthumberland.org.uk](mailto:tracey.hinton@visionnorthumberland.org.uk).

## Age Well Information Fair



Join us at Morpeth Town Hall (The Corn Exchange) on Wednesday 23rd October (10am to 2pm) for this free event from the Ageing Well team and the Mary Hollon Trust.

Information for older people and their families on staying healthy, safe and socially connected this winter. Refreshments available.

# Smart Meters - Accessible in-house displays

With the colder weather approaching, lots of us will be keeping track of how much energy we're using. If you are blind or partially sighted an accessible in-home display (AIHD) could make this easier.

They have all the features of a regular smart meter in-home display (IHD), with the addition of accessibility features which include:

- Tactile buttons with feedback of button press
- Text-to-speech function for screen navigation
- Adjustable volume for the text-to-speech function
- Coloured LEDs which indicate electricity usage
- LED push button to replay speech
- Large typeface
- TFT screen with a high contrast colour scheme

An accessible in-home display should be free but are not yet available with every supplier. If you think that you need an accessible in-home display call your energy supplier.

As colder weather approaches we know some of you will be anxious about winter fuel payments and rising costs. Citizens Advice provide free advice and support about energy. Contact The Energy Project on: 01670 339749. Also see our article on Pension Credits page 6.

## We're out and about

Our Sensory Wellbeing team will be dropping in at Newbiggin Maritime Centre on Wednesday 16th October 10.00am -12 noon.



Helen and Sandra will be available to answer any questions about living with visual or hearing impairments and demonstrate equipment to make life easier. Everyone welcome, so pop in!





# THANK YOU!

In July, our Camera Club and Walking Group took part in a fundraising walk from Pilgram's Way to Holy Island.

They didn't let the weather dampen their spirits and raised an amazing £636 towards activities for visually impaired people.

We would also like to thank everyone who sponsored our walkers or made donations. Your support is gratefully appreciated.

Great news! Our sensory garden was completed at the end of summer and we hope this provides a place that everyone can enjoy.

It's the perfect place to socialising or for quiet reflection with sensory stimulation in peaceful surroundings.



## Audio Book Group

### What?

A free, friendly group for anyone who has difficulty with reading caused by visual impairments or other challenges.

### When?

The last Thursday of the month at 2pm (except August).

### Where?

Hexham Library in the Queen's Hall.

To join this group, please email  
[info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk](mailto:info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk)



# Pension Credits Explained

## What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a benefit aimed at people over state pension age, offering a top-up to their income.

## How much Pension Credit could I get?

Pension Credit comes in 2 parts; Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. You might be eligible for one or both parts.

## What is Guarantee Credit?

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level. This level is currently:

- **£218.15** if you're single
- **£332.95** if you're a couple.

## What is Savings Credit?

Savings Credit is extra money if you've got some savings or if your income is higher than the basic State Pension. Available to people who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016. You could get up to:

- **£17.01** extra per week if you're single
- **£19.04** extra per week if you're a couple.

## Am I eligible?

To check if you're eligible, you can call the Pension Service helpline: 0800 99 1234. Alternatively, AGE UK Ashington also have a Welfare Team who can help check eligibility: 01670 784 800.

**DONT FORGET** - Pension Credit is also a passport to other benefits like health costs, Winter Fuel payments and housing costs. So don't delay, call and check today!

# Join us for Vision Zone

Our staff will be at the next Vision Zone event on **Friday 8th November 2024, 2 - 4pm at Cramlington Hub.**

Come and meet local sight loss charities, service providers, assistive technology experts and low vision specialists all in one place. You can also gain hands on experience with accessible products and technologies that can help make everyday activities and tasks easier.

Everyone is welcome, no booking needed. See you there!

## Success at Thropton Show

Jo attended Thropton show this September with some of our Camera Club members.

The 'Beyond Vision' display was very well received and we are extremely proud that Eric, a Camera Club member, won 1st Prize in the 'Landscapes, Seascapes or Panoramas' category for his photograph of boats at Amble marina. Congratulations Eric, fantastic news!



**FUNDING** - As a small charity, we rely on the generosity of our supporters and grant making organisations to provide our services. We have recently received grants from the following funders and would like to say a heartfelt thank you:

- Northumberland County Council - the Hardship Fund, providing extra support to those in need.
- Morrisons - much needed refurbishment of our training room.
- Barchester - providing free volunteer transport

Your commitment to helping people with sight loss in Northumberland is sincerely appreciated.

# 100 Club News

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has bought shares in this years 100 Club. This quarters lucky winners have now received their prizes. Good luck to everyone in the next draw.

July: 1st - KD (£50) 2nd - MC (£30) 3rd - EP (£20)  
Aug: 1st - AP (£50) 2nd - JP (£30) 3rd - GR (£20)  
Sept: 1st - EP (£50) 2nd - EL (£30) 3rd - BS (£20)

100 Club application forms can be requested by calling 01670 514316 or emailing us on [info@visionnorthumberland.org.uk](mailto:info@visionnorthumberland.org.uk)

## Your Donations

Vision Northumberland works hard to get funding to provide the services and support needed by so many. If you can help us with a donation large or small, we would be so grateful. Donations enable us to continue the great work that our staff and volunteers deliver to people with a sensory impairment living in Northumberland.

If you are considering leaving a gift in your Will, no matter the size, it would help us fund important long-term projects that will make a deep and meaningful impact on many peoples lives. We recommend seeking professional advice when drawing up your Will. Thank you

## Contact Us



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