



# NoISe

**Issue 101**  
**Spring 2018**

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

## **Shaping our future**

You may already know that NCBA has undergone many significant changes in the last year. This has resulted in a new Board of Trustees, a new Operations Manager (Sandra Donkin) and several new staff. One thing that hasn't changed however, is our dedication to supporting those that are visually impaired and our team of enthusiastic volunteers who are an inspiration to us all. We continue to be supported by the Big Lottery fund, by small grants and the fundraising efforts of our volunteers and the wider community; and

of course, we have the excellent resource that is our Morpeth drop-in centre.

We are fortunate to have this strong foundation to build on; however, over the coming year we face some challenges; the largest of which is the lottery fund which will reach the end of its term. After extensive consideration of the options and in order to position ourselves for the future, the Trustees have identified several areas for future development.

Trustees and management would like to present their initial ideas to the volunteers, service users and their families, and would appreciate your feedback.

Our current thinking is summarised below:

1. NCBA will continue to provide all the services that we currently offer and intend to expand the offering to include rehab services and to enhance the outreach support across the region.
2. NCBA are investigating whether to also offer services to support people with hearing loss. We already have a great partnership with 'Action on Hearing Loss' and are looking to expand this collaboration.
3. Building on our knowledge of welfare rights and employment issues we are looking to obtain funding to support people with a sensory impairment to

access benefits they may be entitled to and to assist working age people enter the employment market, or maintain their current role when diagnosed with a sensory impairment.

4. In order to reflect the increase in the scope of services we provide, NCBA would need to undergo a name (and logo) change. One name that has been proposed is the 'Northumberland Sensory Association' (*supported by the strapline 'for the visually and hearing impaired'*). Our newsletter, the NOISE, will also undergo rebranding and we would like your suggestions on a new name.

We want to bring you all with us on our journey, and would very much like to hear your views and ideas relating to the wider service offering, the name change, and any other ways that we can better provide support to people in Northumberland living with sensory loss.

If you would like to comment on any of the ideas that are presented, or any other way that you feel our service might be improved; please send your feedback to: Sandra Donkin at Northumberland County Blind Association, Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth

NE61 1TD or email:  
sandra.donkin@ncba.org.uk  
no later than 1st March 2018.

We appreciate your support and look forward to receiving your feedback.

**The Board of Trustees**

## **My 10 Years at NCBA** **by Ruth Speirs, Finance Officer**

December 10<sup>th</sup> 2017 saw the anniversary of my 10 years here at NCBA. The day I started was the staff Xmas outing and as I sat listening to bad jokes, anecdotes and Xmas stories with a silly hat, gifts, cards, crackers, and party poppers, I knew I'd met a great bunch of people and I'd never felt so welcome in my life.

After a business degree at Northumbria, I'd hopped from various sales & marketing roles to customer service & finance – mostly in the private sector but it was always my dream to work for a charity.



Above a photograph of Ruth

I'd volunteered for Oxfam throughout my studies and going to work for a pay check alone was never enough for me. I needed to feel more useful and more fulfilled – I knew there was better out there and I found it in NCBA.

The charity sector was a breath of fresh air to me – yes, the work was perhaps less secure as you were always relying on the next funding bid to keep going but the people were warm and welcoming and supportive and had a deep passion for those they were trying to help. They had charity at their heart and it radiated through everything they did.

I loved my role - I was learning new skills, discovering new technology and felt at ease in a function that suited my personality and approach to a task. It was varied – one day I'd be flicking between spreadsheets behind a desk, scratching my head trying to balance the figures and the next, on an activities outing or

running a chocolate tombola at one of the fayres. Over time I would get to know more of the clients and gain an understanding of some of the daily challenges they would face. It gave me perspective and a new found sense of respect for the people that manage to go about their daily lives with this challenging and multifaceted condition.

Of course it wasn't all sunshine and lollipops. We had the (great) flood of 2008 that destroyed 95% of the contents of Reiver House, led to a fire that burned part of the roof and saw us temporarily located at Ashington Business Park for 10 months. Various staff & trustees came and went but the loss of the Rehabilitation contract in 2014 was perhaps the most upsetting. The core NCBA team was split and the confusion, worry and dismay from our loyal clients was palpable. With no manager at the helm, myself and Nicola along with 3 new recruits and a handful of trustees that had stuck with us through thick and

thin, vowed to keep the engine running until we could recover, stabilise and get back on track.

In amongst all this I lost both parents and had 2 more children – both of whom – like the first, made it their mission to keep me up all hours of the night! So I've had 10 years of ups and downs but coming into work surrounded by people who care about others, who are selfless, unwavering in

their support and dedicated to the cause has been my stability and my saviour.

NCBA is a special place and it's special because of the people. Working here has given me a sense of fulfilment, purpose and enjoyment, that - I'm willing to bet - most people can only dream of. I actually look forward to coming to work on a Monday morning - how many people can say that?

## **My Guide 'Friends & Family' training in Northumberland**

**Would you like your friends and family to have a better understanding of your eye condition and have more confidence guiding you? If so, My Guide Friends & Family training can help you!**

We provide bespoke training for friends and family members tailored specifically to your needs. The training is part of the My Guide service, provided by Guide Dogs in association

with Northumberland County Blind Association.

It consists of a basic introduction to sight loss awareness and sighted guiding techniques.

The session will make you more confident that your family understands your eye condition and how to guide you safely and correctly.

Customers who attended the training, said:

“Really informative and interesting. Really enjoyed it.”

“The training was brilliant. We did loads of practical activities and by the end of it I felt really confident in my guiding skills.”

“Very useful, very clearly described and demonstrated. I will use it with members of my family.”

“Very useful, makes me more aware of surroundings.”

If you would like to join us, we have a number of sessions taking place at Northumberland

County Blind Association,  
Reiver House, Morpeth, NE61  
1TD, as follows:

**Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> February**

**Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> March**

Sessions times:

**from 10am to 12pm**

**from 1pm to 3pm**

More sessions will be planned throughout the year.

To book places please call

**Karen Stuart** on

**01670 514316** or email

**[Karen.Stuart@ncba.org.uk](mailto:Karen.Stuart@ncba.org.uk)**



The photograph above shows a visually impaired man being guided by his friend



**W I N D E R M E R E**  
M A N O R

In an ideal world, a person's ability would not be a factor in influencing whether or not they have an enjoyable, relaxing and stress-free holiday and we are determined to make this ideal a reality.

Windermere Manor Hotel, part of the Starboard Hotel Group, is committed to ensuring Blind and Partially Sighted people have a carefree holiday and can do as much or as little as they wish.

The intimate understanding of the needs of Blind and Partially Sighted people is at the core of all the services and activities that we provide.

Why not try out one of our great Theme Breaks, which can be an interesting week about Beatrix Potter or a week of High Level Walking....the choice is yours?

Alternatively, enjoy a short break at the hotel, doing your own thing, relaxing in the heated indoor pool and partaking in one of the half-day excursions out and about in the local area.

With complimentary pick up from Windermere Railway Station, we are there for you every part of the journey.

For more information and to get the latest brochure and rates call **01539 445801** or log on to **[www.windermerehotel.com](http://www.windermerehotel.com)**



The photograph above shows Windermere Manor Hotel and its grounds

## **Congratulations to our 100 Club Prize Winners**

<b>100 Club</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Prize £40</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Prize £20</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Prize £14.50</b>
<b>November</b>	Moira Hart	Fiona Clark	F S Wright
<b>December</b>	Mrs M Tiffin	Mrs C Hovespian	Ms F Clark
<b>January</b>	Mrs B Wanless	Mrs J Turnbull	Mrs M Barker



**Bursting with exciting features, explorē 8 is everything you could want in a portable magnifier.**

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- Up to 22X magnification.
- Flip-out handle instantly switches on the HD camera.
- Handle folds three ways for different reading options.
- Customised settings for personal preference.
- 3-4 hours use from rechargeable battery.
- Gallery to store up to 1000 images.

You can spread the cost of purchasing an explore magnifier over 12 months with Interest-Free Credit. Explore 5 from £34.08 each month and Explore 8 from £59.08.  
Call us today for more information on **01933 415800**

**Visit Northumberland County Blind Association to test drive the explorē 5 and explorē 8 and see the difference for yourself, you won't be disappointed!**

# One to one IT Training

## by Jenny Stewart, IT Consultant

Technology has come a long way in being able to help people who are visually impaired; so much so that with the right bit of software, people are able to regain their independence and let the technology assist them.

I run my own IT consultancy business in the Tyne Valley (JennySys Computing Services: [www.jennysys.co.uk](http://www.jennysys.co.uk)) and have been in IT since 1985. I have been training visually impaired people at NCBA for nearly 3 years. The program that I use is called Guide (produced by Dolphin).

This is a really nice piece of software that keeps the user safely within the program. It is an important bit of information to get across as one of the main worries people have (visually impaired or not) is “can I accidentally damage or mess up the computer?”

With Guide, users are given a menu driven system where they can create letters, documents, write emails and browse the web. However, one of the really good bits of Guide is the ability to scan and read documents.

Now this is where, visually impaired people can get a bit of their independence back, rather than ask a friend or neighbour to read their mail (some of which may well be personal). Guide can scan the document and read it back to you. I can remember very well when I was training someone on Guide. They asked me to setup their newly purchased scanner / printer that they had delivered to their house. On arrival, there were 2 letters on the door mat. My student said “great we can use these as a try of my new scanner / printer”. I knew what the letters were about, but they didn't. So I duly set up the

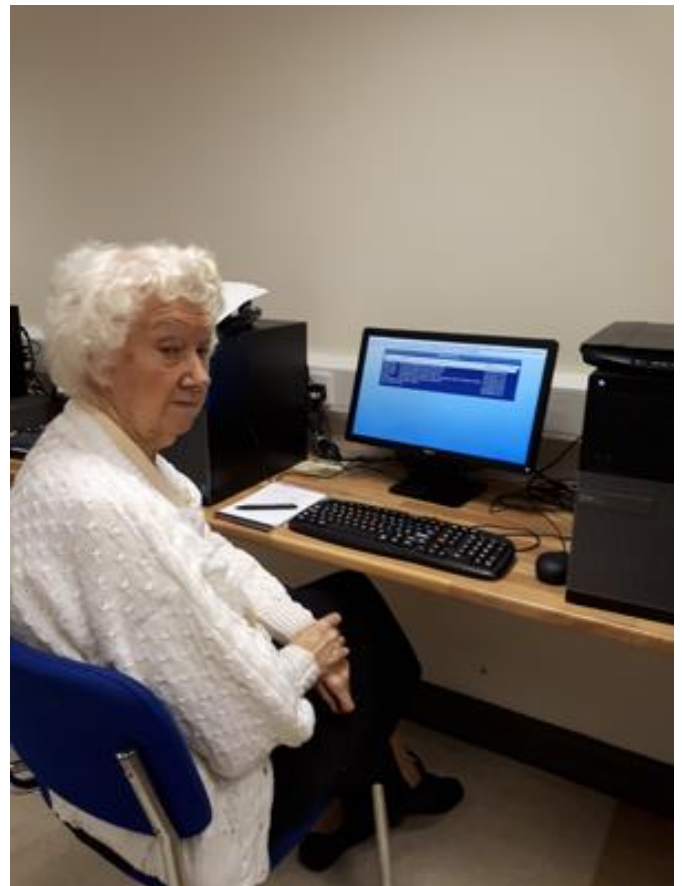
printer and sat them down. When Guide scanned the letter in and read back “Premium Bonds Awards notice” my student was delighted!

Independence is a word that I keep hearing when I’m training my students. Some have just recently lost their sight and are unhappy at having to ask for help for things that they had never had to in the past. Here, Guide can give a little independence back allowing the user to fully participate in the information and technology changes that are taking place.

Age is not a barrier to learning either. My oldest client was 93 and she was amazing. In fact, they have all been amazing. A lot of my students have said that they wanted a new challenge in their lives and Guide has been that.

The vast majority of my students have never really used a computer before and never used a keyboard, so one of my first tasks is to get the

student familiar with the layout of the keyboard. The idea is that the fingers become the “eyes” for the student. If your fingers can get to all letters on the keyboard, then they can do everything that a sighted person can do with a computer.

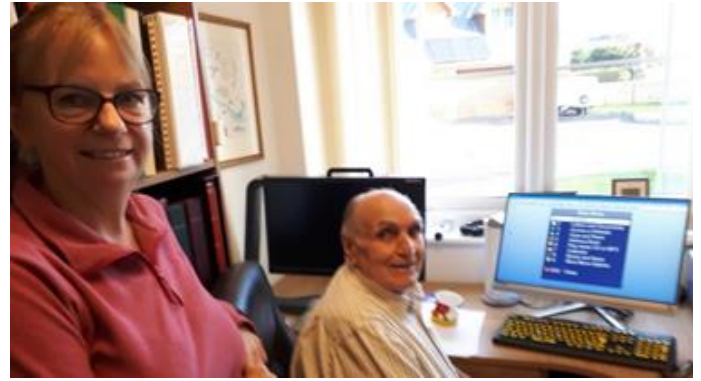


Above photograph shows Violet Carruthers, Jenny’s student, sitting at the computer

I train people on a 1:1 basis. I initially trained in small groups but found that this just simply wasn’t possible with people with varying degrees of sight

loss and varying knowledge of computers.

So now, it's just you and me and I make it very tailored to what you want to learn and we go at your speed and no-one else's. I have really enjoyed training people and it is a joy to see people's initial reticence change into confidence.



Above, a photograph with Jenny and one of her students, George Brewis, sitting at the computer



Registered charity No: 1102836

# Can you help us with Fundraising

## by supporting NCBA Events?

Do you have creative ideas or a hands-on approach to Fundraising & Events?

We need volunteers based in North Northumberland, Ashington and Blyth, Castle Morpeth, Cramlington and Bedlington and Tynedale

Making a difference to the lives of People with a Visual Impairment - within Northumberland

**Northumberland County Blind Association**  
Tel: 01670 514316  
Web: [www.ncba.org.uk](http://www.ncba.org.uk)  
Email: [volunteer@ncba.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@ncba.org.uk)



# IT Peer Support Sessions

Do you have an iPad, or smartphone that you are struggling to get the most out of using, or perhaps you want to learn more about the different kinds of apps suitable for someone with a visual impairment?

If this sounds like you, come along to our friendly and informal drop-in sessions at Reiver House, Morpeth to get hands-on advice and answers to your questions. We look forward to seeing you at any of the following peer support drop-in sessions:

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018**  
1.30pm – 3.30pm



**The above photograph shows an iPad**

Are you recently diagnosed with Sight Loss?  
Have you lived with it for a while but unsure  
of what support there is for you?



Join our new course in

# Confidence Building

Living with  
Sight Loss

**Every Wednesday from  
16th May until 6th June  
1pm - 4pm**

**NCBA at Reiver House, Morpeth NE61 1TD**

Gain confidence and knowledge through interactive workshops and talks. Share experiences, advice and support and hear how others

have overcome the challenges of sight loss.

Courses are run in conjunction with RNIB

**RNIB** Supporting people with sight loss

For information contact:

**01670 514316**

Northumberland County Blind Association

Reiver House, Staithes Lane Morpeth NE61 1TD

Tel: 01670 514316 [www.ncba.org.uk](http://www.ncba.org.uk) email: [info@ncba.org.uk](mailto:info@ncba.org.uk)



LOTTERY FUNDED

## 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 via 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 newsletter is inappropriately addressed please let us know.

## Leave a legacy gift in your Will

Leaving us a gift in your Will, however large or small, will help to provide a range of support services to people who are registered blind and partially sighted living in Northumberland. By remembering us in your Will you can help to ensure that our services continue into the future.

We recommend that you seek professional advice when drawing up your Will. We do not provide financial or legal advice. If you wish to find a solicitor please visit the following website:

**[www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)** or telephone 0870 606 2555. For further information on how to set up a personal legacy account, visit the following website: **[www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving](http://www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving)**. The Will site provides a complete online service for writing a Will at **[www.thewillsite.co.uk](http://www.thewillsite.co.uk)**

### Address

Reiver House  
Staithes Lane  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 1TD

### Contact Us

Telephone: 01670 514316  
Email: [info@ncba.org.uk](mailto:info@ncba.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ncba.org.uk](http://www.ncba.org.uk)



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