



# NoISe

**Issue 99**  
**Summer 2017**

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

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## **Welcome to NCBA's new Organisational Development Manager**

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Northumberland County Blind Association is pleased to welcome Sandra Donkin to the team in the role of Organisational Development Manager.

Sandra joins the organisation having worked in the sight loss sector for the last few years and brings with her a wealth of experience in strategic management and organisational development.

Working alongside the Trustees and staff, Sandra will lead the organisation as it

embarks on a new period of change, growth and promotion.

Sandra will be out and about meeting as many people and partner organisations over the course of the next few months, in the meantime if you'd like to contact her please feel free to do so.

Sandra said she is enthusiastic about her new role and proud to be working for an organisation that is passionate about supporting people with sight loss as it embarks on its next phase of development.

Join us at our annual **Information and Equipment Open Day** on **Thursday 7th September 2017, 10am – 2.30pm** at Reiver House, Morpeth

This year we have a number of Assistive Technology suppliers who will be on hand to offer expert advice, demonstrations and information about a range of Low Vision Aids (LVAs), suitable for blind and partially sighted people. Sight loss organisations including the Macular Society and Blind Veterans UK, along with Action for Hearing Loss will also provide information and advice about services and support.



[www.humanware.com](http://www.humanware.com)



[www.associatedoptical.com](http://www.associatedoptical.com)

We are also pleased to confirm we will be holding demonstrations of iPads, tablets, smartphones and eReaders for those with little knowledge or experience using these devices. In addition, a demonstration of the new OrCam MyEye ('a wearable device with a smart camera designed to assist people who are blind or visually impaired' – [www.orcam.com](http://www.orcam.com)) will take place on the day.

For over 25 years, Humanware has produced a range of highly intuitive and intelligent solutions that empower people who are blind or with low vision by giving them the independence to participate effectively within a sighted world.

All products from Eschenbach Optik are impressive in terms of their intelligent combination of visually appealing exterior and creative functionality.



[www.uk.optelec.com](http://www.uk.optelec.com)

## enhanced Vision

Electronic magnifiers for low vision

[www.enhancedvision.co.uk](http://www.enhancedvision.co.uk)



[www.pamtrad.co.uk](http://www.pamtrad.co.uk)



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

Optelec offer a growing range of assistive products, whether it be a simple optical magnifier for low vision, or the latest device to assist a Braille user to access all parts of the information world.

Enhanced Vision has been at the forefront of the low vision field since its inception in 1996. They are a leading developer of assistive technology for the visually impaired.

With over three decades of experience in the technical side of visual impairment, Pamtrad offers a range of equipment and partially sighted aids that are both the latest technology and good value for money.

RNIB offer a huge range of products for people with sight loss, as well as practical and emotional support services.

Free entry, sighted guides and refreshments are available on the day. For further please contact us on **01670 514316** or email: [info@ncba.org.uk](mailto:info@ncba.org.uk)

# NCBA Home Visiting Service

Our Home Visiting Service supports people with a visual impairment to maintain their independence and continue to live in their own home.

Trained volunteers assist with tasks including accessing information, reading correspondence and, where appropriate, helping the person respond.

They can assist with shopping, organising groceries and checking 'use by' dates, helping with a hobby, accompanying the person on a walk or just having a cuppa and a chat.

All of our Home Visitors are trained in sighted guide techniques and how best to support someone with a vision impairment. They are also vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

## **Become a volunteer Home Visitor**

It's a great way of meeting people, gain new skills and experiences.

Benefits of volunteering:

- Give something back
- Help others
- Enjoy new experiences
- Do something positive
- Learn new skills
- Increase confidence and self esteem
- Receive training and support

To find out more or to make a referral, please contact us:

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

# NCBA Volunteer Appreciation Day

We celebrated national Volunteers' Week (1-7 June) by inviting all of our hard working and dedicated volunteers to an afternoon of tea, cake and entertainment on Friday 2 June at Reiver House.

Staff and Trustees wanted to show their appreciation to our volunteers who give their time supporting blind and partially sighted people living in Northumberland.

Local musician Robert Whitehead provided the afternoon's entertainment as volunteers took the opportunity to share stories and catch up with each other.

Volunteer Doris Burwood said: "I really enjoyed the afternoon and getting to know new people - thank you very much for a lovely get together."



Volunteer Sylvia Brown – cake preparation!



(L to R) Volunteers Wendy Plank, June Bailey and Frank Pogson

Susan Bennett, Volunteer Coordinator said: "Volunteers really do make such a difference to the lives of so many people living with sight loss. It's my privilege to work with so many dedicated and passionate people."

# Technology Peer Support group meetings

Do you have an iPad, or smartphone and struggling to get the most out of using your device, 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.

***“This has improved my day-to-day life tremendously. I can use the calendar, contacts and reminders to name a few. I feel more organised and I’m not afraid of the iPad or iPhone anymore.”***

If you don't have much experience using these devices, or have a particular problem about using your device, these sessions are for you.

If you use a smartphone or a tablet and they have made a difference to your life, we would encourage you to come along and share your knowledge and experience with others.

We look forward to seeing you at any of the following peer support drop-in meetings:

- Thursday 22 June 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 27 July 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 24 August 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 28 September 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 26 October 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 23 November 2017, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 25 January 2018, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 22 February 2018, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Thursday 22 March 2018, 1.30pm – 3.30pm

## Volunteering for NCBA by Sharon Field

Like many people, I first considered volunteering when I retired about 9 years ago. I investigated several avenues but decided on NCBA because it offered the flexibility that I was after and my first impressions of a friendly organisation were very good.

I prefer to help out more on a one-to-one basis rather than in a group situation, so meeting up with people in their own homes has suited me down to the ground. The clients that I have been matched up with have mainly been elderly and housebound who have felt rather isolated and in need of some friendly company to have a chat with.

This has suited me rather well, as those who know me, know I like a good natter! I like the fact that an initial potential 'match' is made by the volunteer co-ordinator and then a meeting is set up with the volunteer, client and co-ordinator to discuss needs and expectations from both

sides before any commitment is made.

My first main client, Marjorie, became a really good friend and we enjoyed many a good debate on politics, religion and the state of the world over a nice cup of tea and cake. We talked about our families and I had the pleasure of meeting all her children and grandchildren (and their dogs!) over the years.

I then became involved with Ilse who very handily lived a 5 minute walk away from me, so I was able to visit easily on a weekly basis. Although she suffered from mild dementia and short term memory problems, we still managed to have some nice chats, especially on tennis as we were both tennis fans. She also had some fascinating stories to tell about the war as Ilse was originally from Germany but married an English soldier before settling in England.

She often yearned for a pet cat which was totally impractical for her so a few times in the summer, I took her in her wheelchair up to my house to sit in the garden and she was thrilled that my (fortunately) very friendly cat sat on her lap – she talked about it for weeks afterwards!

Sadly, both Marjorie and Ilse have now passed away but I still think of them when I'm having afternoon tea and cake or when I'm watching the tennis.

I was also involved with Audrey who I visited at home for a chat, plus I used to take her in a wheelchair to the bank and shops and for strolls around the park before she moved away to be near her son.

At the moment, I take a lovely lady Joyce shopping to Asda most Wednesdays and we manage to have a bit of a natter on the way. She is always very appreciative of the help that she receives but I keep trying to tell her that I

enjoy doing it and it benefits me too by getting me out of the house.

I was also recently put in touch with Jackie who is the same age as me and we instantly hit it off, so I feel that NCBA has found *me* a new friend! We have definitely become 'ladies who lunch'! We've had a few outings, combining walking, shopping and eating plus she very kindly invited me to her birthday party AND cooked me a meal on Boxing Day. I have also taken her to my bowls club and despite being a newcomer and partially sighted, managed to play as well as the rest of us. When she is feeling a bit stronger, I hope that she might join my walking group for some local short walks.

If anyone is thinking about volunteering with NCBA, then I say “give it a go”. I have met some wonderful people and it has enriched my life immensely plus it is entirely up to you how much time and energy that you want to commit to.



# Tech Volunteer of the Year Awards 2017

NCBA volunteer **Christine Dodds** is on the shortlist for the 'Tech Volunteer of the Year' award as part of AbilityNet's Tech4Good Awards!

Christine is very passionate about how access technology can improve a blind or partially sighted person's quality of life. After attending one of RNIB's Online Today sessions at Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA), Christine was very keen to get involved in supporting people with their devices.

Christine now facilitates a monthly technology peer support drop-in service at NCBA delivering one to one advice and training in the use of smartphones, tablets including iPads and eBook readers.

Trevor Watson, Information and Voluntary Services Manager said: "Christine has proved to be an invaluable volunteer,

someone who is reliable, enthusiastic and willing to impart her knowledge and skills to others".

The Tech4Good Awards ([www.tech4goodawards.com](http://www.tech4goodawards.com)) are organised by AbilityNet. They recognise organisations and individuals who use digital technology to improve the lives of others. The awards normally receive more than 200 nominations so it's an amazing achievement to be a finalist!

Christine said: "I enjoy using technology; I was a nurse for 26 years so just like helping people. I feel it's important to keep abreast of technology and how it works."

Winners will be announced at a glittering ceremony hosted by BT on Tuesday 11 July at BT Centre, London.

Good luck Christine!

## **Northumberland Low Vision Action Group – a history**

The inaugural meeting took place in February 2009 at the AGE Concern premises in Ashington. A number of visually impaired service users were present.

It was decided that in order to be taken seriously we should have a formal structure with a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Wansbeck Community Volunteer Service provided training and helped us put together a Constitution. By the time of the next meeting in April 2009, all the roles were filled, the training completed and we were ready for business.

Our priorities at this time were to persuade Northumberland County Council (NCC) to review service provision for Visually Impaired People (VIP), to investigate the delay in CVI referrals from the Eye Dept. at the RVI, accessibility issues and widening the membership of the group.

Members are notified in advance of the meetings and it is interesting to note that in 2009, 25 VIPs opted for large print and 10 by email. This has

now completely reversed and one member gets his information by audio CD.

### **Professional contacts and other user groups**

Over the years we have built up a register of individuals, groups and organisations that have interests and objectives that overlap with the NAG group. These include Blind Veterans UK, ADAPT, Local Macular Groups (Hexham and Berwick), Morpeth Area Partially Sighted Group (MAPS), North East Accessible Transport (NEAT), Henshaws, Newcastle Society for Blind (NSBP), the Northumberland Disability and Deaf Network (NDDN) and Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA).

Some of our members are involved with other groups such as GP organised Patient Participation Groups, IAG groups set up by the Police, Healthwatch, and Health Boards etc.

All our meetings are attended by the RNIB regional campaigns officer - Francesca

DiGiorgio, the engagement officer from Guide Dogs - Linda Oliver and a representative from BID Northumberland (who provide the rehabilitation service for Northumberland).

## **Collaboration and networking**

When trying to effect change it is vital to make contact with the decision makers. This is why we have gone out of our way to contact and cultivate Town Councillors, County Councillors, Local MPs, local businesses, Chambers of Trade, Local Government Officers - particularly those involved with transport, highways, health and social care. We have persuaded many of them (including your local MP) to undertake blindfold walks which they found enlightening.

We recently succeeded in having the incorrect tactile paving replaced at Morpeth Sanderson Arcade. Martin King (Highways Manager NCC) and Ruth Bendell (NCC) have met with us on numerous occasions in our long running campaign

over pavement obstructions. Although we campaigned for a complete ban we had to compromise and guidance has now been issued for the whole County on the size and positions of A Boards on pavements.

We also met with Ian Lindley (ex Stobhill ward councillor) Richard McKenzie (NCC Planning Dept), Alison Bayard (Town Councillor) over a proposed shared pavement project. This was successfully rejected.

## **The Future**

Our success goes on and on but we need like-minded people to join us in our campaigning. Unless we make our voice heard things will not improve for one of the most vulnerable groups in the area. So get involved. Contact John Anderson on 01670 503782 or Bob Potter on 07977470677 for details of our next meeting. All meetings take place at Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA), Reiver House, Morpeth.

## ‘Sounds like Good Communication’

Following a successful funding bid we have received a grant from the P & G Fund at the Community Foundation to offer the very popular Sovereign USB players and talking clocks on free long term loan to blind or partially sighted people living in Northumberland.



The **Sovereign USB player** offers superb sound quality from its two built-in speakers, this easy-to-use, portable MP3 player will play content such as audio books, music and talking newspapers directly from a USB stick. It has four large yellow control buttons and an extra large volume control, including automatic bookmarking.

The **RNIB Communiclock radio controlled talking calendar clock** will announce the time, date and day at the touch of one large button. Cube shaped and without the traditional clock face, the simple design makes this clock easy for everyone to use.



The **Talking Button clock** has a high quality loud English voice which tells the time and date at the press of a button. It has a compact design that sits flat and secure when in use.

Please contact us for more information on how to receive a Sovereign USB Player or one of the talking clocks.

# REEL IN SOME CASH!

16th Anniversary charity cash prize fishing competition for Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA)

## Fontburn Reservoir Friday 28th July 2017

Cash prizes for adults and tackle vouchers for juniors. (The junior competition is for those aged 15 and under).

All entrants will receive a free golden raffle ticket to enter the draw for seven days free fishing at Fontburn.

**Adults:** 1st Prize £100, 2nd Prize £75 and heaviest fish prize £50.

**Juniors:** 1st Prize £40 tackle voucher, 2nd Prize £30 tackle voucher and heaviest fish prize £20 tackle voucher and Greg Robinson Memorial Trophy (if the heaviest fish is caught by the first or second place winners the next heaviest fish will win the prize).

Fishing lodge open from 7am. Entry fees and registration from 7am. Adults £24. Juniors £10.

8 fish catch limit. Competition time 8am – 3pm. Normal fishery rules apply. Weigh in prize presentations and golden ticket draw from 3pm. For more details please contact Will Lovat on 01669 621 368 or contact NCBA directly on 01670 514 316.

## **Congratulations to our 100 Club Prize Winners 2017**

<b>100 Club</b>	<b>1st Prize</b>	<b>2nd Prize</b>	<b>3rd Prize</b>
<b>April</b>	95 J Coulthard	85 G Lyons	129 A McCollum
<b>May</b>	42 R Godfrey	99 Miss M Whittle	66 Mrs E Cowan
<b>June</b>	133 I McCormack	120 D Hindmarsh	147 N Lycett

### **Table Top Sale on Tuesday 25th July 2017 at Ashington YMCA, 10am – 2pm**

Tombola, Raffle, Cakes, Clothes,  
Gift Items and much more!

If you would like to donate any items towards the table top sale please get in touch. We can receive quality donations from 10th July 2017.

**All Welcome!**

# NCBA Summer Raffle

Get your **Raffle Tickets** in support of NCBA  
£1 a ticket or £5 a book – available from Reiver House

1st prize: Alnwick Garden Family Pass

2nd prize: Large Boots Hamper

3rd prize: Azure Garden Centre afternoon tea for two,  
plus many other prizes

**The raffle will be drawn on  
Friday 29th September 2017**



## Supermarket bag pack in aid of NCBA

Staff and volunteers took part in a supermarket bag pack on Saturday 10th June from 10am-2pm, with kind permission of Asda, Cramlington.

The event was arranged and led by Lynn Woods, a volunteer fundraiser, all in aid of raising funds for NCBA. The total amount raised was **£360.13**.

We would like to say a big thank all our volunteers and to Asda staff and customers of Asda. The funds raised will assist NCBA to support blind and partially sighted people throughout Northumberland.

## Useful Organisations

**Blind Veterans UK**, Telephone 0800 389 7979. Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD.

Help and support for blind ex-service men and women lead independent and fulfilling lives by supporting them with in-depth expertise, experience and full range of services. Give veterans much-needed support to adjust to sight loss, overcome the challenges of blindness and enjoy daily life.

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**Henshaws**, Newcastle Resource Centre, Room 25, Heaton Complex, Trewitt Road, Newcastle, NE6 5DY. Telephone: 0191 275 9417. Email: [newcastle@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:newcastle@henshaws.org.uk)

Henshaws is a charity supporting people living with sight loss and a range of other disabilities to go beyond expectations. They believe that, wherever they are, everyone has the right to an independent and fulfilling life. They offer support, advice and training that enables people and their families build skills, develop confidence, help each other and look forward to a more positive future.

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**Solicitors for the Elderly**, Telephone 0844 567 6173, Email: [admin@sfe.legal](mailto:admin@sfe.legal)

SFE (Solicitors for the Elderly) is an independent, national organisation of lawyers, such as solicitors, barristers, and chartered legal executives who provide specialist legal advice for older and vulnerable people, their families and carers.



# Talking Technology



Mercury is an electronic magnifier and text-to-speech reader combined in a tablet. Versatile, fast and easy to use Mercury represents a future all-rounder for visually impaired people.

Mercury is available in three different screen sizes: eight inches and ten inches and is supplied with a stand. For further information visit: [www.pamtrad.co.uk](http://www.pamtrad.co.uk)

## What is Synapptic?

Synapptic is an award winning all-in-one software package for people who are blind or partially sighted. It

runs on Android Smartphones and Tablet computers and has been specifically designed to be quick-to-learn and easy-to-use.



Synapptic requires very little training, so most people teach themselves how to use it in just a few minutes. Synapptic is available as a separate software package to install on an existing Android device, or as a complete smartphone or table computer package and are fully setup and ready to go. For further information visit: [www.synapptic.com](http://www.synapptic.com)

# Conference and meeting room hire at Reiver House, Morpeth

## Meeting Room Hire

A 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 thereof).

## Desk Hire

A 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 room 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 or email: [info@ncba.org.uk](mailto:info@ncba.org.uk).**

## 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)**

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## Contact Us

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[www.facebook.com/NcbaReiverhouse](http://www.facebook.com/NcbaReiverhouse)



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