Vision Northumberland

InSight - Winter 2025

Dear Friends,

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Board for Vision Northumberland. I'm very excited to be heading such a marvellous organisation and to be working with an excellent team of co trustees, staff and volunteers. I've been a volunteer and trustee with Vision Northumberland for several years, having retired after 30 years working in the sight loss sector.

Vision Northumberland has for many years provided exceptional services and support to its service users across the county, achieving so much more than expected from a small local charity. However, we know there is much more needing to be done and I know that together we can be even better. So over the next few months we, trustees and staff, will be talking with service users, volunteers, and supporters to see what else we can do. Please do get in touch if you want to help us. I look forward to working with you all.

Best wishes, Sue Taylor (Chair of the Board)

Hear Today Morpeth

Is your hearing in decline?

Hear Today is a local support group.

Join us for coffee, conversation & friendly, practical advice.

Meet **last Wednesday** every month.

Next meetings:
Wed 26th February
Wed 26th March
Wed 30th April
Wed 28th May

1pm - 2.30pm at
Reiver House, NE61 1TD

Living Well With Sight Loss course

RNIB
See differently

Have you, or a family member, been diagnosed with sight loss?

We will be offering RNIB's free, 2 day Living Well with Sight Loss course; aimed at helping you increase your independence, boost your confidence and connect with others to share experiences.

Sessions will provide practical advice, information and guidance on organisations, products and services available to help you.

Our next course will be at **Reiver House** at 10.00am - 3.00pm
on **Friday May 23rd and May 30th 10.00am - 3.00pm**

Call Helen on 01670 514316 or email
helen.wade@visionnorthumberland.org.uk for more information.

Chatter Box Café - extended opening

As well as our usual Tuesday mornings (10am - 12pm), until March 27th, our Chatter Box Café will be open on Thursdays too!!

So join us from 11am - 1pm for FREE soup and a roll and great company. Everyone welcome, we hope to see you then

Volunteer Drivers Wanted

We are currently looking for Volunteer drivers to take Visually Impaired clients to activities and appointments.

So if you or someone in your family are a driver with access to a vehicle and some free time, we'd love to hear from you. Your contribution could make a massive difference!

Call or email us for more information or an application form.

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. One of our amazing volunteers is **David Skuse**, who has volunteered with us since 2023.

Why did you decide to volunteer?

After my beloved dog Thai died, I found myself at a loose end. Walks without him were no longer appealing and were over much more quickly in the absence of his time-consuming sniffing and investigating. I was walking past Vision Northumberland during a solo walk when I saw a poster asking for volunteers - so, I volunteered!

What is your current role at Vision Northumberland?

I am an “Admin. Assistant”.

Tell us a little about what your volunteering role involves.

I volunteer when the office needs help dealing with labour-intensive tasks such as postal distributions; prepping envelopes and inserts. This takes a long time so my labours free up the staff members to concentrate on other jobs. I also carryout research and have started contributing to and editing the newsletter.

What do you get out of volunteering in this role?

Mostly it’s the satisfaction of knowing I am contributing to the valuable work of the charity. Also, meeting with the friendly members of staff.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

My main interest is history, particularly military history. I read lots of books, listen to podcasts and most of my holidays involve a military theme. I also enjoy visiting castles, historic houses and battlefields. And riding heritage railways – preferably with steam locomotives.

David in a Lancaster Bomber

February is Retinitis Pigmentosa Awareness Month

What is Retinitis Pigmentosa?

Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is part of a group of rare eye diseases called inherited retinal dystrophies which cause the cells in the retina to break down slowly over time resulting in vision loss.

What causes Retinitis Pigmentosa?

RP is a hereditary condition (passed down from parents to children) caused by a mutation in one of the genes involved in maintaining the health of the retina. Although uncommon, RP can sometimes be linked to other conditions e.g. Usher syndrome, medicines, infections or an eye injury.

What are the symptoms?

Usually starting in childhood, the first symptom is commonly the loss of sight in the dark or adjusting to dim light (night blindness). As RP progresses, peripheral vision will worsen, leading to tunnel vision. Over time, most people with RP lose their peripheral vision and central vision completely. Other symptoms of RP include loss of colour vision, sensitivity to bright lights, Photopsia (spontaneously occurring flashes/blinking/swirling/shimmering lights), slow adjustments from dark to light and light to dark environments and blurring of vision.

What treatments are available?

There is no cure for RP but there are solutions to help with the condition - low vision aids and portable lighting, mobility and orientation training, Vitamin A supplements, fish oils and lutein supplements.

Support Available

If you would like further information or support, Retina UK is the leading organisation supporting individuals with Retinitis Pigmentosa. You can visit their website www.retinauk.org.uk or call 0300 111 4000.

Chatter Box Café
FREE Hot Sandwiches Day

Tuesday 18th February 2025 (11.30am - 1.30pm)

Hot meat sandwiches, coffee, tea and cake

To book a place please call 01670 514316

Accessibility at elections in Northumberland

Northumberland County Council

It is important that electors in Northumberland who are partially sighted or blind are made aware of what is available to them when voting in elections.

Every presiding officer is given in their ballot box a magnifier, a tactile voting device which is attached to a ballot paper to allow blind or partially sighted voters to mark their ballot paper with or without assistance and large print ballot papers.

Any electors who are partially sighted or blind, can inform the elections team at Northumberland County Council what they specifically require so we can make sure where they are voting has the support that best suits them.

If any electors would like to contact the elections team either to inform them of their requirements or for any additional information, please either email them at elections@northumberland.gov.uk or call on 01670 624811.

Thank you’s

We are extremely grateful to Ponteland's Knit & Natter group for their donation of handmade Christmas gifts which were sold to raise money towards our services - a huge thank you to you all!

We would also like to thank Rosemary Thompson, a Widdy Woods WI member and talented poet! Rosie very kindly produced a collection of her own poetry to raise funds she generously split between ourselves and the WI. Thank you all so much Rosie, your support is greatly appreciated. Rosie’s poem welcoming in the new year is below for you all to enjoy.

A POEM TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR

At last we’ve passed the longest night
And bit by bit there is more light
Red sunrise down at Druridge Bay
Heralds the coming of the day.

The snow helps spread the light around
From its white blanket on the ground
Light bounces off windmills near Widdrington
Turning in the wind, shining in the sun.

In the village the first shoots of Spring appear
And groups of early daffodils sprout in my garden here
The trees without their leaves let more light into the wood
Allowing little snowdrops and forest plants to bud.

As the days grow longer the leaves will start to stir
Another of the signs of the Spring that will occur,
Its miraculous how nature takes the rein
And the cycle of life begins again.

Information and Equipment Day

Friday 28th March at 10.00am - 2.00pm

Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth, NE61 1TD

Come along and try the latest low vision aids and solutions for sensory impaired people from leading suppliers including:

RNIB **Synapptic** **Humanware** **Optelec**

Free information and advice will be available from:

Deaf/Blind Association **Macular Society** **Healthwatch**
Carers Northumberland **Thriving Together** **Age UK**

Refreshments available

Tinnitus Awareness Week (03.02.25 - 10.03.25)

Tinnitus is a condition where people hear noises in their heads or ears even when there are no external or physical noises present. These noises can be ringing, buzzing, roaring, clicking, hissing or humming.

Most cases of tinnitus are linked to hearing loss caused by damage to the inner ear through normal ageing or exposure to loud noise. Less commonly, it can be linked to hearing loss caused by a blockage or ear condition that affects the outer or middle ear; stopping sound waves passing into the inner ear.

Tinnitus can affect people in different ways; some aren't bothered by it and others only mildly. Severe cases can have a social and psychological impact such as difficulty in concentrating, hearing and sleeping. Anxiety and depression are quite common for tinnitus sufferers.

As yet, tinnitus can not be cured but there is support available. Contact our Coordinator, Sandra for more info and advice. Call 01670 514316

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.

Oct:	1st - JR (£50)	2nd - JF (£30)	3rd - JW (£20)
Nov:	1st - JW (£50)	2nd - JW (£30)	3rd - IS (£20)
Dec:	1st - MH (£50)	2nd - BS (£30)	3rd - JB (£20)

100 Club application forms can be requested by calling 01670 514316 or emailing us on 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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- Website: www.vision-northumberland.org
- Address: Reiver House, Staithes Lane, Morpeth, NE61 1TD

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