

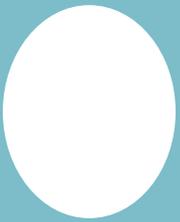
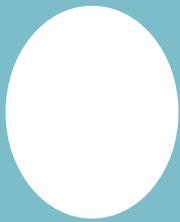
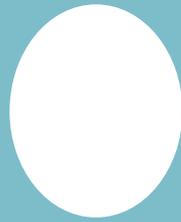
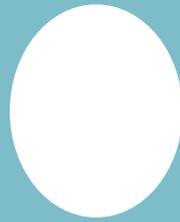
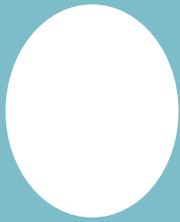
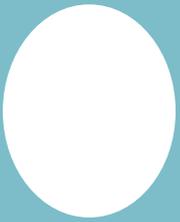


NCBI

**Working for People
with Sight Loss**



ANNUAL
REPORT
2019



Contents

Chairman's Introduction	4
CEO's Introduction	6
Our Values	8
Service Feedback	9
Our Work 2019 – infographic	10
Strategic Priorities 2017-2020	14
1 Better Outcomes	15
Children and Young Person's Team	15
Adults of Working Age Team	17
Older Adults Team	19
Centre Based Services	21
2 Access and Reach	23
Eye Clinic Liaison Officer	23
3 Excellence Across Service Delivery	28
Gerard Byrne Bursary	28
Library Access Service	29
National Training Centre	30
NCBI Labs	31
4 People Development	36
5 Impact and Value	38
Retail	38
Foundation	44
6 Policy and Advocacy	50
Finance and Governance	56

Chairman's Introduction

With the Seeing It Your Way 2017-2020 Strategic Plan so firmly guiding the direction of the organisation, it was great to see the influence and reach of NCBI extend so much in 2019. The realignment of our services into the Lifecycle model has firmly taken hold and these community based services continue to offer tailored support, stimulation and friendship to people living with sight loss. Throughout 2019, we worked with 6,921 people, an increase of over 500 from 2018.

Some key highlights for me include seeing the benefits of our previous investments in Penrose Wharf offices in Cork coming to fruition in 2019 by ensuring an improved connection and presence with our service users and a renewed links with the Cork audio library. The merger with Vision Sports Ireland guaranteeing great availability of sports and leisure services to all those using NCBI services. The restructuring of the senior management team to reflect the areas of growth and ensuring greater effectiveness and responsiveness as the organisation evolves. The forging of closer partnerships with key agencies including Child Vision to enhance cooperation and opportunities of joint working.

The increased emphasis on Advocacy and Policy has led to the establishment of the National Advocacy Network which has upskilled advocates in how to raise issues affecting them locally. The development of Local Advocacy Networks is a key part to this strategy and will continue in 2020. Informing and influencing the political agenda on how to improve policies and services for blind or visually impaired people was done through hosting an Oireachtas briefing and campaigning ahead of local and European elections.

It was very exciting for NCBI to launch Bookshare Ireland in 2019. It is Ireland's largest digital accessible library specifically designed to support students with a visual impairment and print disabilities attending higher or further education. It provides instantaneous access to over 500,000 academic books and other materials, in the student's preferred format (DAISY Audio, DAISY with images, digital braille, PDF and Word). For the first time ever, this guarantees equity of access to the curriculum with their sighted peers. This will be a total game changer for many students who are blind or visually impaired. The digital accessible library is an example of the Board's commitment to invest in technological services knowing the benefit it yields those living with sight loss.

I am delighted NCBI continues to uphold the values of good governance, transparency and accountability. This ensures the organisation complies with the standards of the Charity Regulator in all its financial accounting.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members and committee members across the Group structure for their dedication, skills and ongoing engagement. They give their time, knowledge and energy freely which benefits NCBI significantly. Specifically, I would like to thank Joe Geraghty who retired from the Board in 2019.



Paul Ledwidge
Chairman NCBI Group Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Ledwidge', with a horizontal line underneath.

CEO's Introduction

For me, 2019 was a year characterised by striving for innovation and excellence across all aspects of the organisation. It led to the commencement of new initiatives ensuring the organisation continues to modernise and be responsive to emerging needs of service users while still complementing the delivery of our quality enduring services across the country. There was also an expansion of our retail chain with the opening of nine new stores.

All our work is still underpinned and benchmarked against our Seeing It Your Way 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. It is heartening to see the improved growth, innovation and coordination across all our work as we implement this Plan.

In 2019, there was a concerted effort to raise our profile and promote our services and shops to new audiences. This proactive approach led to increased media engagement highlighting the breadth of services on offer, enhanced relationships with clinicians and new partnerships being developed. It led to an increased awareness of what we do among the public and clinicians based in either a hospital or community setting. Subsequently, the number of referrals has increased particularly thanks to the roll out of the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Service in some Dublin based hospitals. This meant, for the first time ever, patients were referred to NCBI at the point of diagnosis, offering a tailored support to assist the patient adjust and understand the impact of this diagnosis on their daily lives.

The high standard of service delivery and shop management is due to the ongoing professionalism, skills and commitment of our staff and shop managers. It is important to us to continually invest in our people and many received further training in 2019 the benefits of which are already being felt.

Other innovative developments that commenced in 2019 include the preparatory work on the creation of the Accessible Transport Training

Centre which when operational will be the first of its kind in Europe. This Centre will be pan disability providing training on how to travel safely to those with vision loss and other disabilities. It will also help future proof the public transport infrastructure by providing ongoing disability awareness training to transport agency staff, policy makers, city planners, engineers and architects.

Also the development of NCBI Labs commenced. This investment in technology, systems and people is all aimed at promoting and upskilling the importance of inclusion and accessibility across all assistive technology and mainstream technology for the benefit of people who are blind or visually impaired. The real value of this work will be seen in 2020 and beyond.

Our continued reliance on HSE funding remains a concern given the continued shortfall in funding received and the pressure to make up that deficit through fundraising efforts. Revenue raised through our shops to fund our services rose significantly in 2019 to €1.3m. We are also very grateful for all our corporate sponsors, donors and legacies. However, our efforts to diversify our statutory income will continue into the future.

I'd like to thank NCBI staff, volunteers, donors, supporters for their constant loyalty and commitment to respond to the needs and rights of people who are blind or visually impaired.



Chris White
CEO NCBI

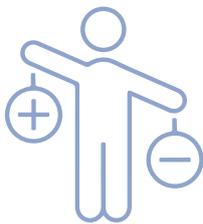
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Our Values



Inclusive Approach

We listen to people who use our services, staff members, volunteers and all other stakeholders and collaborate with them in the design and delivery of our services and all related activities.



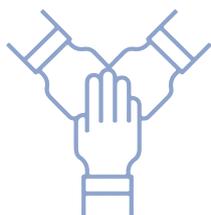
Choice

We know and respect the right of people to make choices about their lives. We will do everything in our power to support people who are blind and vision impaired in exercising this right.



Openness and Accountability

We carry out our work in an open manner and are accountable to all stakeholders for our actions and decisions.



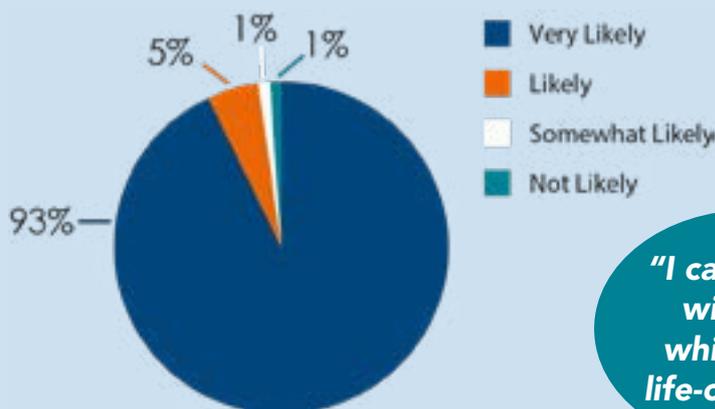
Pursuit of Excellence

We are committed to attaining excellence in everything we do through our policies, procedures and staff.

Service User Feedback

Gathering feedback from service users is conducted regularly so we can monitor how effective our services are and learn and adapt accordingly. We were heartened with the results of the 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey which showed 93% of service users would recommend NCBI to others. Also there was high satisfaction rates recorded among service users regarding their experience of our staff's professionalism and knowledge, timeliness and location of service, referral process and outcomes and solutions attained. We will continue to strive for excellence in all areas of service delivery.

Likely to recommend NCBI to others

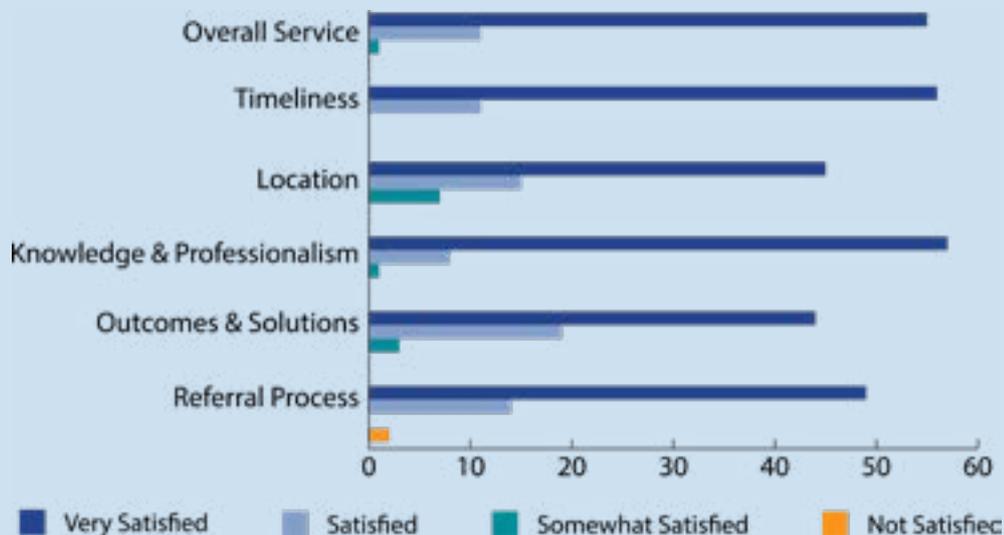


"Excellent services - I was given full attention one to one at my speed I couldn't have asked for more"

"I came away with aids which were life-changing"

"The people were very understanding and endless patience at all times"

NCBI customer satisfaction feedback survey results (March 2019)



Impact Statistics

The number of Service Users NCBI worked with:

Lifecycle Team	2017	2018	2019
U18 years - Children's Team	629	848	936
18-65 years - Working Age Team	1966	1867	2055
66+ - Older Adult's Team	3525	3677	3930
	6120	6392	6921



The number of service users and their families NCBI worked with since the start of the current strategic plan, Jan 2017 to Dec 2019:



Individuals attending digital skills/training:



Our library service membership:



4,226

avail of the library service:
(average age 57yrs)



Patients who met with Eye Clinic Liaison Officer and subsequent referrals made in 2019.



Support sessions provided across the Dublin Hospital Group.

Our number of charity shops:





Ciaran O'Brien aged 15

I have Albinism and I am currently a Transition Year student in Dublin. I did my work experience placement in NCBI offices and in their Malahide store. I was also their Youth Ambassador for World Children's Day 2019.

Throughout my primary education I always needed help seeing certain texts. I had a Special Needs Assistant beside me to read out the content of the white board and textbooks. I used a low vision aid for example a magnifier and later I was given a Liberty Scholar which is a portable video magnifier. The majority of the resources I used in primary school have followed me into secondary school.

I find people often make assumptions about me due to my visual impairment like I cannot have the same standard of work or intelligence or that it affects my personality. But Albinism doesn't define me.

"I have the same interests as any 15 year old."

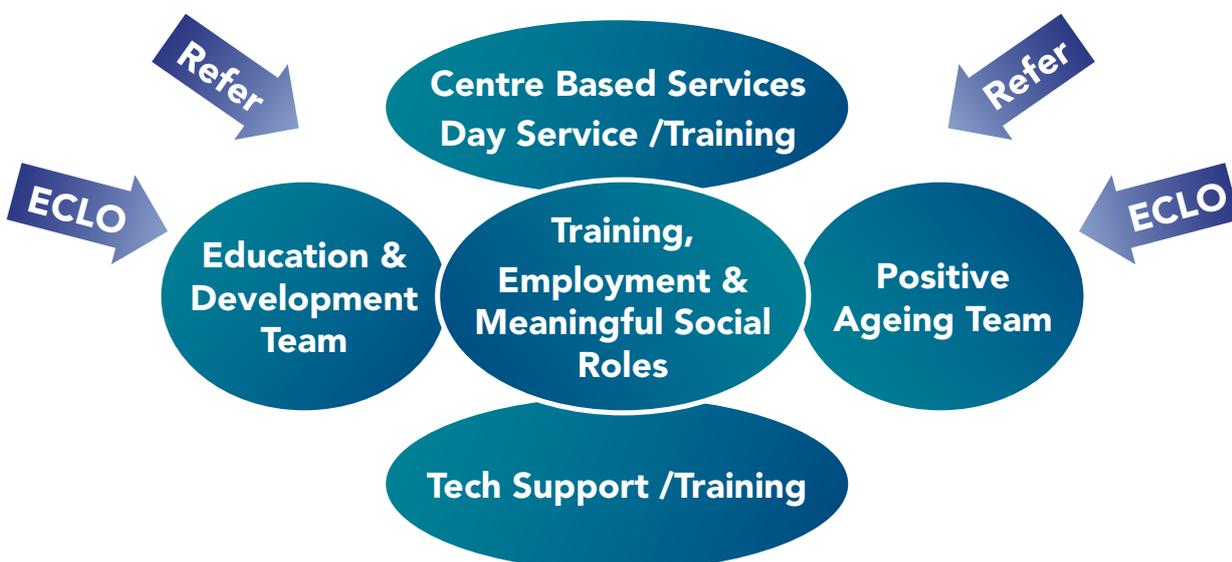
I have been connected with NCBI for many years and it has always been a source of support and advice to me. I've availed of services such as the independent travel, cooking and social programmes. I have been able to obtain several skills which have inspired new interests and make new friends that struggle with similar situations as myself. I also took part in Camp Abilities programme in Kerry in 2017. It had so many activities I could do like rock climbing, building a raft and canoeing. I returned again in 2018 and I am planning to return this year to be a leader in training. It definitely improved my confidence and I enjoyed meeting new friends. From a young age I have had a love of fashion. I have never been particularly good at sports largely due to not being able to see the ball. So I have always run to fashion. Like the way an athlete would run to the football field, in my case I am a fashionista and would run to H&M!

Strategic Priorities

NCBI's Strategic Plan 'Seeing it Your Way – 2017-2020' has provided a responsive and dynamic framework for improving the lives of people with sight loss through the provision of individualised, quality services. This has gone from strength to strength in 2019 as the lifecycle model has become fully operational.

A national model of provision has highlighted the benefits of a national structure in developing the baseline of the team skills and practice resources while improving the consistency and quality of service provision. It has expedited the development of specific offers proportionate to the different needs of children with vision loss, e.g. low vision, non-visual learners, transition planning, early years, etc. It has enabled us to achieve a level of standardisation within services.

The initial move to a life cycle model was based on age demarcation, 0 -17, 18 to 65 etc. In 2019 NCBI services re-focused in favour of support structures within each team that favours the "needs of the individual" that will move seamlessly between the support structures of NCBI while still holding true to the Life Cycle Model.



1. Better Outcomes

NCBI CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PERSONS TEAM

The core of NCBI work with children and young people is our one to one or group intervention targeted at a particular developmental or learning need specific to the individual child. In 2019, the Children and Young Persons Team worked with over 900 children and families in an ongoing way to support their independence.

NCBI Children's and Young Persons Team produced its second and most comprehensive calendar of events offering a suite of activities and support to children and families nationally.

Some of the highlights of these were:

- **Learning through play programme**

With the increasing earlier referral of children following diagnosis the Children and Young Persons team introduced the 'learning through play' programme aimed at parents of young children. Aware this can be a very difficult time for parents where so much is unknown, this programme can be a very positive support where parents learn to interact with their child while promoting development in ways that takes account of the impact of vision loss. These sessions also allow for meeting other parents and providing valuable peer support.

- **Independent travel workshops**

Being conscious of the need for increased independent travel skills the team again focused intensively on the development of this skillset through the provision of day and residential workshops during school holiday times. This skillset is so important to acquire in advance of a transition to help reduce the stress and additional burden of learning of these skills at a time where a lot of other things can be changing.

- **Assistive technology workshops**

Skills in the use of technology are without doubt a core element in enabling children and young people with vision impairment to

participate successfully in education and thereafter in their chosen careers. In the summer of 2019 NCBI facilitated a number of residential workshops to support the ongoing one to one learning which happens throughout the rest of the year. These workshops also combine programmes of independent living skills and provide valuable peer support for the young people and their families.

- **Independent living skills programmes**

Throughout 2019, numerous workshops for all ages and stages focusing on the acquisition and continuous development of independent living skills were held. Being cognisant of the need for children to acquire these skills in a timely fashion in line with their peers, this will continue to be at the core of NCBI service offer to children and young people with vision impairment.



Children and Young People availing of independent travel skills workshop

HSE Progressing Children's Disability Services Conference

In 2019 NCBI was successful in being selected to present at the plenary session of the HSE bi-annual conference on Children's Disability Services. The conference brought together more than 300 people to share learning and good practice in the provision of disability services for children and young people. A further 500+ delegates joined the conference via Webinar. Having such an audience to which NCBI could showcase the work we do is a notable achievement.

NCBI ADULTS OF WORKING AGE TEAM

The Adults of Working Age team was established to facilitate a specialist approach to a broad range of identified service user needs and to ensure consistency in service delivery and clarity in service goals. In 2019 there were 1017 referrals. The primary areas of work for working adults were broken down to:

- Orientation and mobility 589
- Low vision advice and support 775
- Counselling and support 278
- Independent living skills 820
- Assistive technology 422

The needs of this age cohort are broad, ranging from access to the built environment, accessibility issues, employment training and education, supporting individuals living with traumatic/neurological sight loss, mental health issues and supporting adults with vision impairment and an intellectual disability in addition to other psycho/social issues such as homelessness, asylum seeking and isolation.

In order to respond to the broad range of needs critical staff training was provided throughout the year including working with people living with sight loss and an intellectual disability and acquired brain injury. Low Vision Therapy accreditation by ACVREP was started and all staff completed an introductory course in Motivational Interviewing.

An Employment and Technology Seminar was held where vision loss was the primary disability for 17-28year olds living in the Mid-West, Midlands, South and South East region. Speakers included Clare Kennelly founder of Inclusive Cork and DisruptAbility podcast along with Cara Gibbons, Counsellor and Psychologist.

Awareness Training was provided to staff from the National Learning Network providing them with solutions to support vision impaired students attending the National Learning Network courses. Training was also provided to other disciplines including Public Health Nurses, Opticians and Intellectual Disability service providers including St. John of God and Rehab Care.

Digital Skills training for service users was ongoing throughout the year focused on enabling participants to carry out many everyday tasks online such as shopping, travel, banking etc.



JP Corcoran demonstrating magnifiers to service user

NCBI OLDER ADULTS TEAM

2019 commenced with the first full year of NCBI's Older Adults Team. This Team formation allowed staff from around the country to meet together for in-service training as well as sharing of resources, experience and knowledge. In this way we were able to offer a more consistent service offering nationwide.

In 2019 there were 1,597 (an increase of 9% on 2018) new referrals of older adults to NCBI as well as 985 (an increase of 7%) older people already known to NCBI returning for reassessment. The number of older adults worked with in 2019 was 3,931 which was a 7% increase on the previous year. The needs of this age group focused on mobility and fall prevention, dementia, depression and environmental adaptation for independent living as well as building opportunities for social interactions.

- Low Vision Advice and Information is the number one reason why an individual in this age group would be referred or self-refer. The ability to read your own correspondence, keep in touch with family/friends and events are a crucial determinant in an individual's ability to remain independent and also continue with their hobbies and interests.
- Daily and Independent Living Skills Training and Advice is another popular service intervention. Getting the necessary re-assurance, training, support and equipment provision allows people to continue to fend for themselves in their home.

The majority of the work we do entails working on a one-to-one basis. However, we also work with groups some of which meet on a short time basis, while others meet regularly. Peer Support is an important area of service intervention in this age group who can find themselves socially and, in some cases, geographically isolated. Facilitating groups which meet on a regular basis allows friendships to be formed and bonds to be made with others experiencing similar issues. Some of the groups which meet are involved in the following areas:



North West Peer Support Group outing

- Social groups which enables individuals to attend events and trips out of the home which would not be possible without the peer and volunteer support.
- Book clubs allowing all within the group whether using large print, audio or Braille the opportunity to discuss and enjoy various books of interest.
- Short courses in the areas of independent living; sharing and helping each other to improve their independence and self-care.
- Assistive technology groups which help to 'test out' new technologies for their usefulness and in order to provide feedback to staff.

NCBI staff also help support staff and volunteers in Day Centres and Dementia centres (both day and residential) to ensure the needs of their residents/members who are vision impaired are met and allowing them where possible to fully participate in these groups.

CENTRE BASED SERVICES

The Lochrann Centre, based in Wexford offers a wide variety of Centre and Community based Day Services for both groups and individuals living with sight loss.

NCBI at Lochrann works closely with other organisations housed in the centre such as the Irish Wheelchair Association as well as linking in with the wider community and community services (both statutory and community based) and groups in the Wexford Area.

The centre offers services including technology training courses, low vision services, mobility training and various social, emotional and leisure based programmes. And service users are also linked into NCBI services with access to Community Resource Workers as an additional support.

In 2019 a local representative committee was established for service users to actively and effectively contribute to the running of the Centre and the activities and programmes delivered. Lochrann Centre continues to provide services to individuals in a manner which is appropriate and relevant for them. And actively engages with service users to ensure a day activity service that continually meets their needs.

IONA RESOURCE CENTRE

The Iona Resource Centre (IRC) is a specialised day service for people with a vision impairment living in Dublin North. The IRC focuses on the individual, providing personalised programmes tailored to the needs of each and every service user, across our three core strands - Skills4Stability, Skills4Life or Skills4Me.

In 2019, the IRC prioritised its work under the HSE's New Directions Policy, and sought to ensure better outcomes for all service users. Greater flexibility and variety was implemented, with a new timetable featuring sessions with a greater focus on community engagement, including Blind Golf and A4Sounds Gallery. We believe integrating into the community and

working in partnership with local businesses and organisations is not only of immense benefit to our service users, but also increases knowledge and understanding, and increases disability awareness.

2019 saw our inaugural Shapeshifters programme which focused on improving health and wellbeing, community engagement and sparked the competitive edge of many of our service users! Shapeshifters will return in 2020 with new competitors and challenges!

In 2019, the IRC also launched the Access4All Sporting audio commentary, in partnership with Bohemians Football Club, and embarked on a widescale Knitting Bee for Peter McVerry Trust, making and donating hand knitted and crocheted blankets. Both of these projects also featured on RTE Nationwide, raising awareness of the service and NCBI nationally.



Shapeshifters Event L-R: Dolores Cullen, Fiona Chan, Sharon Byrne, Eugene Hancock, Angel Donoghue and Team Captain and Sponsor; founder and owner from Small Changes Wholefoods store in Drumcondra Peadar Rice.

2. Access and Reach

One of the main priorities of the present strategy is to increase access and reach to ensure that all people who require services are aware and knowledgeable of all supports that are available. We made increasing efforts in 2019 to improve timely and expanded access to services. This included increased communication with Ophthalmologists and Optometrists and the commencement of the Eye Clinic Liaison Officers across the Dublin Hospital Group.

EYE CLINIC LIAISON OFFICER SERVICE (ECLO)

In Spring 2019, the ECLO Service commenced after nearly 12 months of research and planning. The ECLO Service provides support to patients and their families in the hospital environment from the point of diagnosis, bridging the gap between acute and community-based services. With funding from the Acute Hospitals Division in 2018, the ECLO Service had a presence across three of Dublin's largest acute Ophthalmic Departments in the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear, and CHI at Temple Street.

Throughout 2019, the ECLO Service provided 736 support sessions to patients and their families, resulting in 252 new referrals to NCBI, VISPA partners and many community-based services. In addition to supporting patients and their families, the ECLO Service also delivered 151 awareness sessions to hospital staff.

Regular consultation and evaluations from both patients, family and clinical ophthalmology staff was sought to assist in the analysis and development of the service. Positive and valuable feedback was received from both patients and from eye clinic teams.

- 80% of patients stated before speaking with the ECLO, they were not well informed about supports available to help people live with sight loss.



Elaine Crossan (ECLO)

- 83% of patients stated after speaking with the ECLO they had a better understanding of their eye condition.
- 100% of patients reported the ECLO gave them all the support they needed at this time.

“It was completely overwhelming before I met the ECLO. She sat in on appointments and helped put medical terms into words that I could understand. I couldn’t have done it without her. From the moment we received the diagnosis, there was support.”

Patient

“The ECLO is an excellent programme which allows us to start meeting the expected level of care for patients. It integrates social care with medical care.”

CHI at Temple Street, staff member.

“ECLO is a valuable resource within the Ophthalmology Department. Until now, many patients have been just existing in their lives rather than living with vision loss.”

Mater University Hospital staff member.

“The ECLO makes healthcare providers more aware of engaging with supports from an early stage in disease management.”

RVEEH staff member.





Derek Walker Donegal

I have been involved with NCBI for most of my life, even though at times I didn't want them there! I was diagnosed with Stargardts Disease at age 12 and my sight has deteriorated progressively since then. By the age of 16 I was registered blind. School was very difficult as I found the persistent sight loss hard to adjust to.

“The support that NCBI gave to me at that time was something I now really appreciate.”

In my early 20's I found it hard to get a job due to my sight. Things like using my magnifier in front of people was something that I would not do, I felt people would think I couldn't do a job if they knew I had sight loss. I ended up availing of the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance scheme where you get support in setting up a business. So in 2014 Natnoot – The Natural Nutrition Co started trading. I grow certified organic wheatgrass in Co Donegal and produce a range of cold pressed juice products that are totally natural, chemical and additive free.

Within 6 months, I started supplying my first shop and it has grown from there with the number of outlets continuously expanding. I was able to set up our production facility a walk from our home in Letterkenny, meaning I can go to work independently without having to rely on my wife for lifts, this is so important to me.

In September 2018 I started a programme with Supervalu called the food academy. This is a programme where you get a chance to be listed by Musgraves. I created two new products, called Believe and Achieve aptly named because I know first-hand, that if you truly believe in yourself, you can achieve great things. These products were successful in our bid to get listed with Musgraves which is a huge boost for our company.

3. Excellence through Service Delivery

GERARD BYRNE BURSARY

Now in its third year, the annual NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary continues to support students with vision impairment studying in third level education in Ireland. The bursary is named in honour of Gerard Byrne for his lifelong contribution to NCBI. The annual scholarship aims to support three undergraduate students to a value of €1,500 per year across their full-time degree. Also, an additional offer of a 6 month paid internship at the NCBI in an appropriate field related to one student per year in their area of study is available.

The recipients of the 2019 Gerard Byrne Bursary, were Maria Vitoria Alves De Oliveira, Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, Psychology and International Development at Maynooth University; Sean O’Riordan, 2nd year Speech and Language Therapy Student, University College Cork and Niamh Kavanagh, 4th year Bachelor of Arts in Global Business (France) at DCU and Neoma Business School, France.



L-R Aoife Watson and Ruairi McGinley, NCBI, Sean O’Riordan, Minister Mary Mitchell O’Connor, Maria Vitoria Alves De Oliveira and Kevin Kelly, NCBI.

LIBRARY ACCESS SERVICE

Acutely aware of the challenges of students with print disabilities in higher and further education to access accessible educational titles, in 2019 the NCBI Library Access Service embarked on the development and launch of Ireland's largest online accessible digital library, Bookshare Ireland with Benetech.

Built with funding from the Department of Education and Skills, Bookshare Ireland provides instantaneous access to over 500,000 academic and leisure titles in seven accessible formats, including PDF, Word Document, Audio DAISY/MP3, and digital Braille. Bookshare Ireland aims to support equity in access to all print titles for both students and leisure readers with a print disability, including visual impairment and dyslexia.

"I find the Bookshare platform both saves me time and stress because previously I'd have to spend ages in the library trying to source resources that I could read. Now with the Bookshare search engine being so flexible and comprehensive, I can download books on to my device within seconds." Sean Walsh, College Student.

Library Access Service continues to liaise with Irish publishers to enrich the Bookshare Ireland platform with local content. In 2019, three Irish Publishers, O'Brien Press, Oak Tree Press and Gill Publishers joined our platform.

As a result of growth through innovation, the Library Access Service saw a marked increase in active membership with over 600 new members joining the service in 2019. In addition to our digital self-service downloads, the traditional NCBI Library Access Services distributed over 27,000 accessible titles in various formats, including audio CD, large print, and Braille.

Other successful collaborations in 2019 included work with Dublin City Libraries on the production of the accessible version of the One City One Book. The book for 2019 was the Country Girls Trilogy by Edna O'Brien.



L-R Ivan O'Brien, O'Brien Press; Aoife Watson, NCBI; Rosie Bissett, Dyslexia Association of Ireland; Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor; Aaron Mullaniff and Chris White, NCBI.

NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

The NCBI Training and Rehabilitation programme, offered by the National Training Centre (NTC), provides a service to blind and vision impaired people of working age wishing to gain or retain employment or pursue further training or education.

The NTC also includes specialist Employment Services offering a range of free supports nationally to prepare and empower job seekers to gain and retain meaningful employment, including the Pre-Employment Training Programme, and the Workplace Partner Programme – organisations currently include Salesforce, Central Bank, Fujitsu and National Gallery of Ireland.

In 2019, the NTC embarked on a new programme, Envision. It covers topics including Coping with Vision Loss, Goal Setting and Action Planning, Orientation and Mobility, Advocacy and Safety within the Community, featuring guest speakers from across all NCBI departments. We look forward to continuing to develop this programme over 2020.

In 2019, the NTC began development of a QQI (Level 4) five module award, to respond to the need for a programme syllabus that is relevant for employability skills and core components of Rehabilitation Training. The syllabus covers Communication, Access Technology, Rehabilitation Studies (Orientation, Mobility & Access), Employment Supports and Advocacy and Engagement. It is hoped that this programme will be launched in 2020.

2019 also saw extra funding secured from HSE to support this curriculum and the training demand; at the end of 2019 there were 50+ individuals waitlisted

nationally for Training Supports and an additional 50 individuals availed of training within 2019. In order to facilitate this demand, we also upgraded the Adaptive Technology across the service to include 10 upgraded large screen PCs with Fusion Software and additional desks to accommodate personal laptops and braille practice.

NCBI LABS

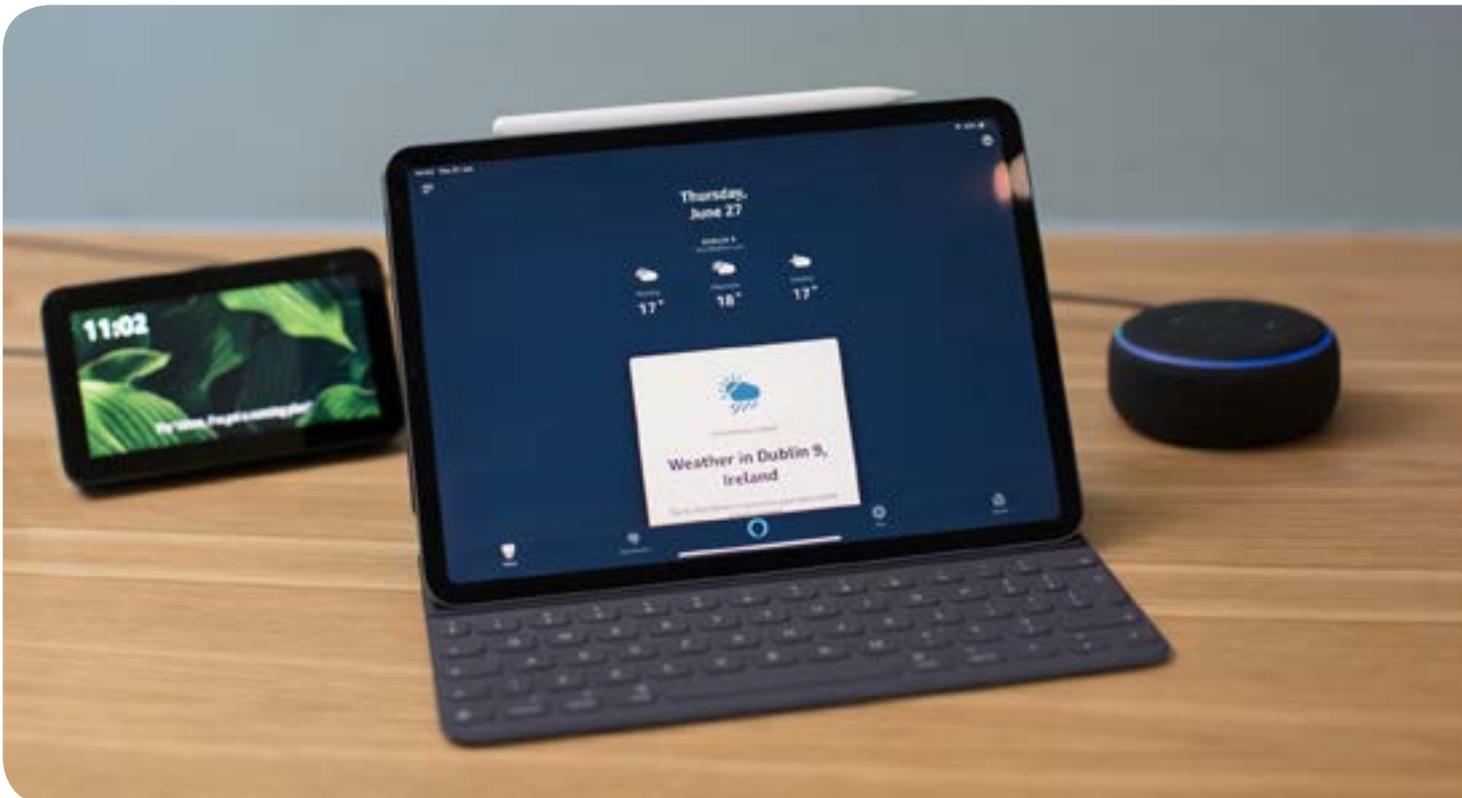
2019 was an opportunity to reprioritise and improve the technology function of the organisation for the benefit of both staff and service users. This began with an initial analysis focusing on the existing technology structure, requirements of the Senior Management Team, reviewing the assistive technology team and existing assistive technology / mainstream technology providers.

From this analysis, it was agreed to give greater strategic prominence to this organisational function and reconfigure the team to deliver a more effective service for staff, services users and use NCBI’s bulk buying power to save money from key suppliers.

Subsequently NCBI Labs was established and the new technology function would be structured around the following actions:



- **Project Management** – NCBI runs numerous technology related projects and to ensure they are delivered to the highest technical standards and within budget a dedicated project management office will be set up.
- **Training & Development** – all technology training and trainers to be moved under the NCBI Labs department to ensure best in class technology training is delivered to our service users.
- **Relationship Management** – actively support the broader Senior Management Team internally on a consultancy basis and begin engaging with external corporate and educational entities to promote technology inclusion.
- **Assistive Quality Assurance** – create a team to review external companies websites and apps as a chargeable service provided by NCBI Labs.





- **Information Systems** – This department would remain and work to support technology sales and a dedicated helpdesk for service users.

With the vision laid out, the remainder of 2019 focused on prioritising projects that would ensure NCBI is fit for purpose technologically to deliver the best possible service to people with sight loss. So the Digital Transformation project commenced and focused on the following:

- **Cloud Transformation** - migrate all NCBI's key servers to the cloud.
- **Desktop Refresh** - refresh all technology for staff across the organisation and moving key staff to laptops to enable a more agile workforce.

Significant strides were made in 2019 to modernise and future proof NCBI's technology service and its implementation will continue into 2020 and beyond.



Annie Donnelly (aged 11)

Annie is an energetic, sports enthusiast 5th class pupil from Thurles. She is the eldest of two children. She is legally blind because she was diagnosed with Achromatopsia as a baby. This causes colour blindness, light sensitivity and inability to control the movements of her eyes, so things appear just a blur. She wears tinted glasses most of the time.

NCBI helped Annie by training her to maximise her residual vision and using the correct visual aids. She also met other children with a visual impairment so she enjoys that social support. Her mum Kathleen said "in school, blinds are on the classroom window to reduce the glare and she uses a laptop and visualiser to enlarge the font in her textbooks and the teacher's white board. She also has a Special Needs Assistant to make sure her equipment and cables are safely stowed away and makes sure she's safe when she's in the playground with other children."

"Attending a 'come and try day' at Vision Sports Ireland's May Fest, was the day my daughter's life changed. She got on a tandem bike and rode about with a 'pilot' in front. She ran around the circuit with sprinter Jason Smyth (gold medal winner at several international events who has partial vision) and she played blind football. She realised that even though she is visually impaired, she could play sport. At the end of that day she was absolutely shattered, but I have never seen her happier."

Since then, through Vision Sports Annie is now active in several sports but swimming is her passion which is surprising given previously she couldn't swim a stroke. She does swimming weekly and has competed in a some competitions. Her entire family support her at these activities with younger brother Bill often trying out these sports too.

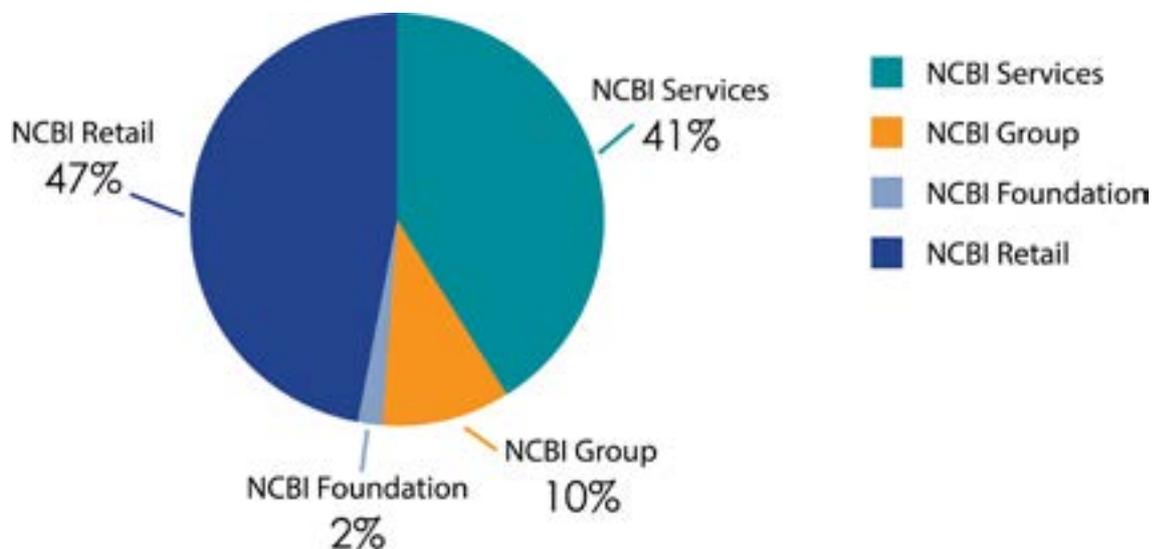
"Vision Sports and NCBI are truly helping Annie reach her potential."

Annie's latest passion is writing and already she has published a book. It's called *Four Sisters, One Life* and is about four orphans growing up in Limerick in 1931.

4. People Development

A core strategic aim of NCBI is to have the best possible workforce able to meet all aspects of the organisation. Investing, valuing and supporting our staff is central to that aim.

NCBI employs a total of 334 full time and part time staff across NCBI's Group, Services, Foundation and Retail Companies. The whole time equivalent (WTE) number of staff posts for 2019 was 287. Of these, 49% of the staff are involved in raising vital funds through our shops and fundraising initiatives. The Services company accounts for 41% of the total workforce.



As per the NCBI Strategic Plan 2017- 2020 the following activities were undertaken:

- The Senior Management Team undertook a Management and Leadership Development Training programme at the Irish Management Institute.
- NCBI's Performance Management Review system was revisited and enhanced.
- An increased number of Learning and Development courses took place.
- Organisational Change programmes were supported and implemented.
- A rollout of baseline HR metrics that were reported upon quarterly.

- Employment Engagement methodologies were enhanced which contributed to very positive Staff Engagement Sessions held in September 2019. These sessions enabled staff to learn how the organisation is faring against the Strategic Plan, participate in constructive workshops and network with each other.
- Employee Relations methodologies were improved and smoother relations have ensued. Work continues on removing barriers to proactively addressing these issues at an early opportunity and allowing appropriate systems and expertise to be engaged early on.

Policies and procedures were also reviewed proactively including adopting new retirement ages organisationally, adaptation of policies and processes to meet legislative requirements, and enhanced implementing systems applied (particularly in Retail and ongoing).

TRAINING

In 2019, €93,890 was invested in further development of our Services staff. These staff are at the forefront of delivering our services. Training included low vision training for new staff and advanced training for more experienced frontline staff. Orientation & Mobility training, Person Centred Planning for day-centre staff, Low Vision Therapist Accreditation with the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals in the US. In keeping with the HSE compliance requirements for safeguarding, staff also completed training in Children First as well as Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults.

NCBI Retail's spend of €37,200 on training including management development training for Area Managers and the commencement of the Elevate programme for Shop Managers, which was facilitated by Technological University Dublin.

Specific courses to enhance skillsets within Group, Foundation and focused advocacy training also took place.

Numerous First Aid Responder, manual handling and other health and safety related training courses took place throughout the organisation in 2019.

5. Impact and Value

RETAIL

NCBI Retail chain saw significant growth in terms of shop numbers and revenue generated throughout 2019. It continues to play a central role in raising funds for the delivery of frontline services to those living with sight loss across the country. In 2019, NCBI Retail generated a surplus of €1.4m up from €1,091k in 2018.

As per our agreed organisational strategy, 9 new stores were opened across the country in 2019 with more in the pipeline for 2020. These new locations include Malahide, Ringsend, Drogheda, Kilrush, Limerick and Skerries to name a few. These new locations enable us to become part of the local community there, enhancing our public profile through enabling customers to shop, donate and volunteer with us.

Upgrading the condition of our shops, improving our environmental credentials and enhancing the quality of our customer experience was a core focus in 2019. This was achieved by moving four shops into new sites in the same area as they were better locations, renovating some shops to a higher standard, upskilling shop managers and volunteers to decrease the volume of donations going to landfill and supporting 12 shop managers to participate in an Elevate training programme with Technological University Dublin. This training programme focuses on all aspects of charity retail including stock control, customer experience and visual merchandising. There was also an improvement in relation to health and safety with all new shops fitted with the latest in safety equipment and all relevant managers and staff/volunteers trained to a high standard in manual handling.

The chain includes a mix of shops selling preloved ladies, gents and children's fashion and furniture as well as a few specialised bridal and vintage stores. However, unique to NCBI in 2019 was the acquisition of a furniture warehouse on Kylemore Road, Walkinstown, Dublin. This premises will store and showcase quality donated furniture. It will serve the needs of multiple shops and be open to the public too.



L-R: Orla Butler, Chris White and Ruairi McGinley NCBI; Robbie Henshaw and Catherine Nolan NCBI Rathmines Shop Manager

NCBI Retail was more proactive than ever in promoting and marketing its quality stock, shop locations and value of supporting NCBI shops in raising funds for frontline services as well as supporting sustainable practices. This was done through an array of social media channels and a dedicated retail website which was launched in July 2019, www.retail.ncbi.ie.



Fortunately, we continue to have a bank of loyal volunteers many of whom have been with their local NCBI shop for years. Our shop managers and customers significantly benefit for the continued dedication and energy of volunteers.

“Having been so many years in charity retail sometimes things can become drab and dull. Same ideas, same systems of working but the Elevate programme allowed me to see the full potential that I could achieve for my store. Seeing my stock and layout in my shop now from a marketing point of view has made a massive difference not only to the way it looks but to specifically target customers needs. Improving our merchandising standards and window displays has generated new customers and it has definitely led to increased sales. The Elevate programme has helped to give our shop a new lease of life, and I would highly recommend it to anyone”

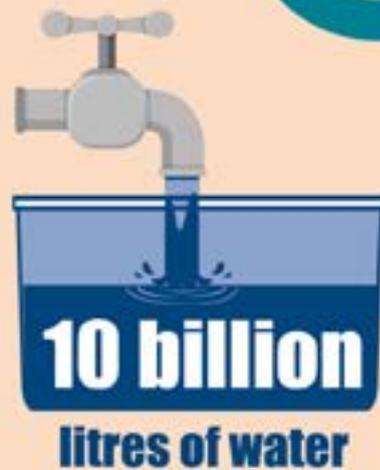
Catherine Nolan, NCBI Shop Manager,
Rathmines, Dublin.

2019 NCBI Retail Environmental Metrics



of clothing and shoes were donated to NCBI

of which we reused over



This is the equivalent of removing



from our roads annually



Smartphones being charged



of trees absorbing CO2



Margret Kearney

(85) Limerick

A few years ago I started to notice my sight failing me. I've subsequently been diagnosed with both Glaucoma and AMD. In 2018, I had a cataract removed from my right eye, which has made a massive improvement as more light can get into my eye and I can now see colours better. I cannot see numbers or letters. If I am watching the TV, I cannot see their entire face but I can still follow a story.

I use a white cane and rely on it when I'm in town as I find things like crossing the road without it very difficult. If I come to street corner without traffic lights and I want to cross over I will stand there and wait to ask someone would they mind if I walked across with them. People are very friendly and living in a city is good because there is always someone around.

I heard about NCBI through a friend. They have been so helpful in supporting and training me to live independently, travel safely and get gadgets to help me with daily tasks.

“Little things like I never knew what time it was as I couldn't see the clock and now I've a talking clock which tells me the time and date.”

I also got a talking weighing scales that I use to weigh out flour and sugar. My niece got married about 5 years ago and I made all her wedding cakes. I still enjoy making scones and fairy cakes.

I was in catering most of my life, I went to catering college in England as well. When I got married I moved around a lot because my husband was in the army, I lived in Germany, Cyprus, Singapore I have had a great life, and I can look back on some really lovely memories.

FOUNDATION

NCBI Charitable Foundation is responsible for securing voluntary income to help support services and to invest in new priorities.

The Foundation saw its income grow in the year. The surplus generated (from all sources) was €1,588,272 in 2019. This was a substantial increase from €691,021 in 2018 with almost all the increase accounted for in legacy and investment income.

Income from community fundraising activities showed a modest growth of 2.5% in the year (€662,709 as against €646,348 in 2018).

The Foundation continued to benefit strongly from Legacy gifts from supporters across Ireland. Many of these were previous service users and family connections of NCBI.

Strategically, given the purpose of the Foundation is to raise funds for delivery of services, 2019 saw a move in its focus towards embedded revenue and committed giving programmes. These provide more stable and reliable forms of revenue and give a better return in time and effort.



Trip to Tipp L-R: Joanne McCarney, NCBI staff; Joe Geraghty, Vision Sports; Billy Lawless, Trip to Tipp organiser; Brendan Smith, volunteer fundraiser; Gary Smith, volunteer.



Team NCBI at Women's Mini Marathon 2019

There was the launch of successful Radio Bingo partnerships with Highland Radio and Shannonside/Northern Sound which brought the charity to the forefront of listener's airtime in seven rural counties and generated much needed funding. The Foundation aims to develop this embedded revenue stream in 2020 with further Radio Bingo projects and a new community lottery.

Core fundraising events were streamlined and relaunched during the year. This included the Granard and Holmpatrick Golf competitions which has for the first time put the men's and women's competitions on equal footing in terms of format and prize fund.

Ongoing events during the year included involvement in third party events such as the Women's Mini Marathon and ongoing community partnerships (Des Cullen Classic, Trip to Tipp and Tesco Bag Pack). In-house events included the Cycle of Light, World Sight Day street activities and the Camino de Santiago challenge.

Corporate Engagement continued to be challenging from an income perspective as Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives often involve donations of volunteer time and NCBI is often overlooked in favour of those charities dealing with higher prevalence issues in society than sight loss.

Nevertheless, significant world-class partnerships were engaged in during the year including a strategic relationship with Novartis Ireland and Specsavers in support of Community Dine in the Dark programme. Fujitsu staff and corporate team participated in a wide range of learning, volunteering and fundraising initiatives which also included the gift-in-kind support of new equipment for the fit out of the Technology Training Centre at Tallaght NCBI Services Centre.

A major event sponsored by Lansdowne Executive Search saw seventy CEOs of Irish companies experience a CEO Dine in the Dark at a special event in the Westin Hotel in October. This has led to fruitful relationships being established which will hopefully translate into corporate relationships into the future.

The leveraging of NCBI charity shops, the organisations largest network, was supported by the appointment of a dedicated staff member who promoted fundraising activity through the charity's 120 retail outlets.

Central to the organisation's fundraising is the gifts from NCBI's monthly donors those who make philanthropic gifts in support of special projects and campaigns. With the corporate backing of Airbnb, The Foundation hosted a first annual Thanksgiving Dinner to recognise the dedicated support of individual givers as well as those who participated in community events. The Thanksgiving Dinner will be part of the Foundation's ongoing programme.

During the course of the year, NCBI gratefully received a grant of €10,000 from the JP McManus Foundation for the purchase of technology equipment for use in the Children and Young People's teams.



Diana Salagina participating in a technology group



In the year, the Foundation received €1,168,374 from 37 gifts in wills and one family trust including the following:

Jerome Kerins	Edward Rafter
Sarah (Sally) Gallagher	Phyllis Troy
Maura McNamara	Gwenyth Murphy
Cecilia Pakenham	Josephine Gilmartin
Patricia Walsh	William Storey
Patrick Drummy	Margaret Elizabeth Tomkins
Patrick Brennan	Sarah Lonergan
Thomas Kingston	Joan & Frances Elizabeth Hunt
Matheson Trust	Philomena Buck
William Gray	Evelyn Louise Lloyd
John (Jack) McNelis	Mary Spellacy
Mary Margaret O'Sullivan	Thomas Connors
Rita Conlon	Joan O'Callaghan
Veronica (Vera) Wootton	Moira Noelle Kenny
Kathleen Heine	Margaret Burke
Vincent Mullen	Eileen Patricia Maher
Clare Leavy	Robert Jennings
Margaret Burke	
Bernadette Duggan	
Nancy Meade	
John J. Sheerin	
Frances Cahill	

The Foundation honours the memory of all those who have supported its work over the years.



Helena Mollaghan

I started to experience sight loss at age 12 and I was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at age 15. I found this adjustment to my new life with sight loss really difficult.

“Growing up in the country, I found that sight loss had a huge impact on my ability to be independent.”

I have been involved with NCBI since my ophthalmologist referred me when I was 16 years old.

I moved to Dublin for college and to improve my chances of getting a job. Initially I found that transition hard because I wasn't used to having to ask for help and I was still quite new to sight loss. I am now a guide dog user and that gives me great independence and companionship.

I now work part time with NCBI and am keen to work full time but am finding this hard as employers are always looking for experience while all my gains never seem to be enough. I think there is too much prejudice against the sight loss community which prevent us from fully participating.

I enjoy being involved in the NCBI Advocacy campaigns trying to increase awareness of sight loss which in turn would have a positive impact for people's access to employment and services.

6. Policy and Advocacy

In 2019, our focus was on setting the groundwork for expanding our advocacy work and embedding it across the organisation. In order for advocacy to grow, it became a new strategic priority for the organisation and a number of actions were undertaken which included:

- A new advocacy and engagement strategy was developed setting out our new approach to this strand of work entitled “Engage, Enable and Empower.”
- Advocacy training was provided to 25 people with vision loss.
- A guide to advocacy for all NCBI staff was produced and an advocacy workshop was held at our staff engagement day to help grow awareness about advocacy amongst our staff.

At a policy level, there was developments on a number of issues that NCBI had consistently lobbied on for the benefit of those living with sight loss. These included the Blind Welfare Allowance no longer being considered as assessable income in social welfare means tests. This was an issue which we had been actively lobbying on for a number of years. Also improvements in banking accessibility when Ulster Bank confirmed that all but two of their ATM’s in the Republic of Ireland now have the voice feature enabled allowing people who are blind and vision impaired to use ATM’s independently. We will continue to put pressure on all banks to follow suit.

In May, we held our Clear our Paths campaign. This campaign aims to urge members of the public to think about the temporary obstacles on our footpaths that make safe and independent travel difficult for people with sight loss. These include cars parked on footpaths, wheelie bins, overhanging branches, dog litter and bicycles tied to poles. Obstacles such as these can lead to injury and make each journey more difficult for someone with low or no vision. Advocates participated in the campaign by sharing videos on social media of obstacles in their path.

For the European elections, we sent all possible future Irish MEPs a manifesto outlining the issues that concern people who are blind and vision impaired in Ireland. We also expressed our concerns that people who are

blind and vision impaired would be unable to vote independently in the local and European elections, despite the availability of tactile ballot paper templates. While we recognised the strides taken by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to introduce tactile templates following the April 2017 High Court ruling, the reality is, given there were multiple polls it meant that voters who are blind and vision impaired had to use three tactile templates, something which was likely to prove confusing for many. We believe that the only truly independent means for a person with impaired vision to cast their ballot is either by telephone or electronically. NCBI looks forward to engaging constructively with the Department as part of the existing Working Group on Accessible Voting to make this a reality in the years ahead.

In advance of Budget 2020, we held our first ever Oireachtas briefing. There was a great turnout with nearly 50 TDs and Senators dropping in to talk to some of our trained advocates about key concerns and asks of the Government. We were also given the opportunity to present our budgetary asks to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection and to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Pre-Budget Forum.

Disability services including NCBI continue to be desperately underfunded. This ongoing deficit is affecting our ability to deliver frontline services. We need the Government to address this urgently and in 2019 we joined a new Disability Action Coalition (www.tdac.ie). The coalition is a group of nine national disability service providers who have come together to campaign for a secure future for the services that we



*Noreen Carter
demonstrating possible
injury due to overhanging
branches during our Clear
Our Paths campaign 2019.*



L-R: Senator Martin Conway; Chris White, NCBI CEO; Minister Josepha Madigan; Kevin Kelly and Alan Breathnach, NCBI.

provide. Members of the coalition had the opportunity to put forward the demands of the coalition at a briefing in Leinster House. A private members motion was also tabled in the Dail so that the underfunding of the disability services could be highlighted further.

We also partnered with Bartiméus Foundation in The Netherlands to try out a new app called Earcatch which allow people who are blind and vision impaired to access audio description whilst in the cinema, regardless of whether or not the cinema is equipped for audio description. NCBI, along with the Bartiméus Foundation, launched this technology on the 12 October in Movies @ Dundrum with the Universal Studios movie Abominable.

NCBI's flagship Dine in the Dark was brought to the United Nations in October 2019 in partnership with the Global Coalition on Aging. It was a timely and historic event to coincide with the launch of the WHO first ever report on Vision.

On the night nearly 60 UN ambassadors, policy makers and leaders from global nongovernmental organisations took part. Diners were invited

to challenge their thinking around sight loss and the implications of Governments' inaction to support those affected now and into the future. Ahead of the WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing from 2020-2030, the reality is with the population aging the numbers of people who are blind and visually impaired will skyrocket and this will lead to unsustainable health and care costs for countries.

The menu was curated by Christine Ha, the first-ever blind contestant and winner of MasterChef USA. The event was also co-hosted by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN. It was kindly sponsored by Novartis.



L-R: Susan Schwartz and Mike Hodin, Global Coalition on Aging; Senator Martin Conway; Christine Ha; Chris White NCBI; Alan Morse, Lighthouse Guild; Melissa Mitchell, Global Coalition on Aging.





Barry White aged 75

I have had diabetes for decades and knew the possibility of losing my sight was high. However, when I developed Diabetic Retinopathy it was still a shock. I noticed my sight had gone blurry and I was banging into things because my peripheral vision was poor. I found it hard to accept that this was happening to me. My eye clinic referred me to NCBI as I needed help but didn't know where to turn to. I haven't looked back since.

With NCBI I got the emotional support I needed to help me accept and adapt. I can now see the upside of the situation and am grateful for my residual vision. The staff have always been so supportive and never patronising. They truly understand what it is like.

“Having my independence is very important to me and I also got mobility support from NCBI to assist me and give me the confidence to go about by myself.”

I was given training in using a symbol cane with my walking stick and although my village doesn't have traffic lights, I now have learnt a safe way to navigate around.

I have taken up painting which I really enjoy. I can see the detail of the paint up close. NCBI arranged for a volunteer to collect me so I can attend my art group weekly. It has been fabulous not to have to rely on my family. We've become good friends and attend art exhibitions as well as our art group together.

Recently, I've been getting more technology support through NCBI Labs so I know how to maximise the accessibility functions of my phone or ipad especially if my sight deteriorates. I'm glad NCBI is in my life and would happily recommend them to anyone living with sight loss.

Finance and Governance

GROUP BOARD ATTENDANCE 2019

Paul Ledwidge	6/6
David Hickson	6/6
David Keegan	0/6
Tony Murray	5/6
Martin Conway	5/6
Donnacha McCarthy <i>(joined March 2019)</i>	4/6
Eithne Walsh <i>(joined March 2019)</i>	4/6
Anne Troy	5/6
Sean Costello	5/6
Joe Geraghty <i>(retired Oct 2019)</i>	5/6
Roddy Feely	4/6
Nancy Holland	4/6

SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Paul Ledwidge	5/5
Niamh Trihy	3/5
Triona Culliton	3/5
Gerry Kerr	4/5
Tony Murray	2/5
David Keegan	0/5

RETAIL BOARD ATTENDANCE 2019

Aoife Clarke	2/6
Declan Delanty	5/6
Jacques Henry-Bezy	4/6
Nancy Holland	4/6
Colin Hughes	2/6
Pat Hughes	1/6
Ian Logan	2/6
Nicole O'Brien	3/6
Malachy O'Connor	2/6
Yvonne Quinn	3/6
Rachel Waite	3/6

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Met 5 times in 2019.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Met 4 times in 2019.

The Financial Results on a Consolidated basis are set out below;

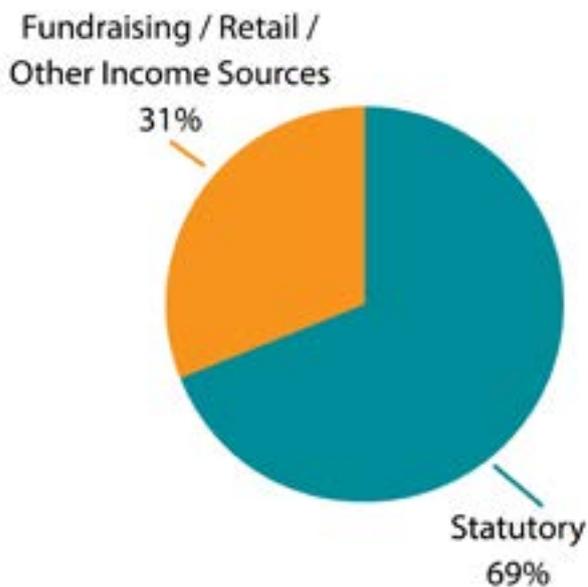
Result highlights for 2019 are:

- Surplus of €1,084k
- Growth in trading income which is from our charity shops
- Strong legacy income

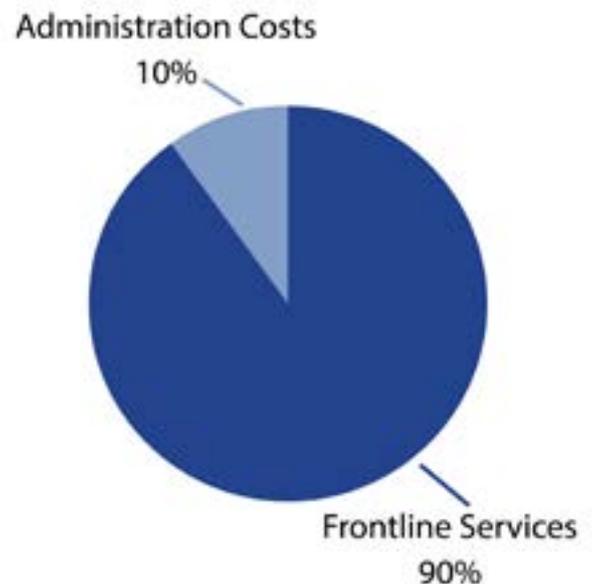
Balance sheet highlights for 2019 are:

- Growth in Financial Assets.
- Capital in progress assets which reflects advance work / funding from National Transport Agency on Transport Training Centre project.

Income sources



Expenditure Breakdown

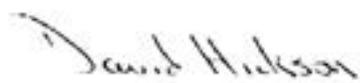


CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds €	Restricted Funds €	2019 Funds Total €	2018 Funds Total €
Income from:					
Donations and Legacies	6	2,074,837	-	2,074,837	1,332,819
Trading activities	8	9,275,149	-	9,275,149	8,388,738
Charitable activities	7	703,757	6,741,230	7,444,987	7,971,252
Other income	7	62,466	823,943	886,409	297,916
Rental income	9	187,646	-	187,646	185,768
Investment income	9	217,903	-	217,903	(35,631)
Total Income		<u>12,521,758</u>	<u>7,565,173</u>	<u>20,086,931</u>	<u>18,140,862</u>
Expenditure from:					
Donations and Legacies	10	568,231	-	568,231	664,060
Raising funds	8	7,965,464	-	7,965,464	7,296,900
Charitable activities	11	1,091,248	9,300,736	10,391,984	9,461,053
Governance costs	12	77,492	-	77,492	77,492
Total Expenditure		<u>9,702,435</u>	<u>9,300,736</u>	<u>19,003,171</u>	<u>17,499,505</u>
Net income/(expenditure)		2,819,323	(1,735,563)	1,083,760	641,357
Total funds brought forward	22	4,204,028	994,591	5,198,618	4,557,261
Aquisition reserves brought forward		57,948	4,093	62,041	-
Net transfers between funds		(1,708,831)	1,708,831	-	-
Total funds carried forward	22	<u>5,372,468</u>	<u>971,952</u>	<u>6,344,420</u>	<u>5,198,618</u>

There are no recognised gains or losses other than the surplus or deficit for the above two financial years.

On behalf of the board



David Hickson
Director
Date: July 29th 2020

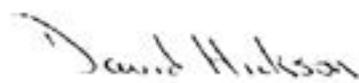


Paul Ledwidge
Director

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Notes	Consolidated 2019 €	Consolidated 2018 €
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	13	5,332,188	5,377,709
Financial assets	14	2,807,164	2,130,578
		<u>8,139,352</u>	<u>7,508,287</u>
Current assets			
Stocks	15	211,733	227,948
Debtors	16	556,729	571,206
Capital in progress	17	996,271	-
Cash at bank and in hand		1,297,252	573,218
		<u>3,061,985</u>	<u>1,372,372</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	(1,099,134)	(1,193,386)
Net current assets		<u>1,962,851</u>	<u>178,986</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		10,102,203	7,687,273
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year			
Long term liabilities	19	(1,007,017)	(729,851)
Capital Grants	20	(2,750,766)	(1,758,804)
Net Assets		<u>6,344,420</u>	<u>5,198,618</u>
The funds of the charity:			
Restricted funds/(debt)		971,952	994,591
Unrestricted funds		5,372,468	4,204,027
Total charity funds		<u>6,344,420</u>	<u>5,198,617</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board on July 29th and signed on its behalf by



David Hickson
Director



Paul Ledwidge
Director

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The NCBI group of companies includes the holding company NCBI Group, hereafter referred to as the company, and four subsidiary companies - NCBI Services (Registered Charity 4626), NCBI Retail (Registered Charity 20619), NCBI Charitable Foundation (Registered Charity CHY 12673) and Vision Sports Ireland (Registered Charity 10793)

The NCBI Group Board, currently meets at least six times annually and retains overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the companies. The day-to-day running of the company is overseen by a senior management team, which is headed by the Chief Executive and supported by other senior staff.

The underlying charitable activities of NCBI are 69% funded by HSE which means the Group is relying on continued financial contributions from NCBI Charitable Foundation & NCBI Retail.

Both fundraising arms continue to perform well and the Directors are thankful to the financial supports from bequests and from supporters who financially contribute to the main events that Foundation run and also the customers who loyally support our charity shops.

PRINCIPAL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The directors consider the following are the principal risk factors that could materially and adversely affect the company's future operating results or financial position:

- Fluctuating income from NCBI Retail.
- Further unanticipated funding cuts or the withdrawal of support from the HSE.
- Overdependence on unpredictable legacy income.
- Over-reliance on trading income to support the deficit in Services where the full cost of services only being 70% funded by HSE.

The company has business policies and organisational structures to limit some of these risks and the Board of Directors and Management regularly review, reassess and proactively limit the associated risks insofar as possible.

RESERVES POLICY

NCBI's total reserves (represented by Restricted and Unrestricted Funds) are assets (principally tangible fixed assets and cash) held by the NCBI Group.

Tangible assets are effectively restricted, in that they are not immediately available.

Reserves for the purposes of this policy describe that part of charities funds that are freely available. The directors have considered various factors, including company wind up costs, involved in assessing level of required reserves and analysed the available assets. The increasing activity levels reflected in income and expenditure growth of NCBI prompts a need to target increasing cash reserve levels.

Reserves represented by cash and investments stand at €4m as of December 31st 2019. The Directors note this is an improved position from 2018 which helps to ensure that finances of NCBI remain in a sustainable position. The Directors have considered 2020 Capital Expenditure plans and full year cash flow projections which indicate that unrestricted reserves will reduce during Q1 2020 and increase over the balance of 2020.

FUNDING FROM THE FOUNDATION ASSISTED WITH PROVISION OF FOLLOWING SERVICES:

➤ Training centre - €216k

'Paradise' environment for people with sight loss, employment training, activities such as community garden, ceramics including use of kiln, training in accessing public transport, training in use of technology for people with sight loss, rehabilitation and occupational training, accessing educational opportunities and technology demonstrations.

➤ **Whitworth Road - €425k**

Technology advice, shop with specialist items, range of low vision equipment, counselling for individuals and families, sight assessments.

➤ **Centres in each region €364k**

Centre based sight assessments, provision of aids and appliances, home visits, telephone counselling, provision of advice and assistive technology training.

➤ **Iona and Lochrann day centres – €598k**

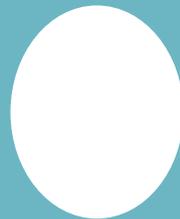
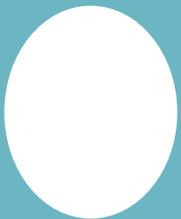
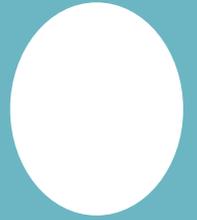
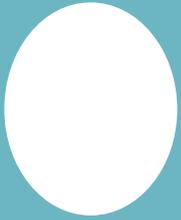
Day Services, varied activities for people with sight loss e.g. gym, art, yoga, ceramics, transport services for service users in the Dublin and Wexford areas in particular, also to a more limited extent in other locations including Cork and Galway.

➤ **Library & Media Centre - €376k**

National Library service for Braille, Digital Media and Audio. Snizzly Snouts – Children’s book production. Production of Braille and Audio material for library users in a state of the art media production centre.

➤ **Information - €58k**

Provision of newsletters, website and online referral.



If you or somebody you know,
is experiencing significant
difficulties with their eyesight,
NCBI can help.

Call us on:
01 830 7033

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Dublin 9

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