



NCBI

**Working for People
with Sight Loss**



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2021**

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Chairman's Introduction

2021 was a seminal year for NCBI as it reached its 90th birthday and unveiled a dynamic and innovative new strategic plan - Your Ambition Our Mission 2021-2023. This plan will build on recent successes of the past and boost our capacity to maintain and establish essential partnerships with acute hospitals, primary care teams, public and private organisations, planners and key decision makers across all government departments with the purpose of improving the lives of people who are blind or vision impaired.

An example of this in action in 2021 was the Seeing Your Career campaign which focused on highlighting the challenges faced in obtaining or retaining employment and put forward recommendations to address these challenges. The campaign which involved service users and staff demonstrated partnership, leadership and raised the public and political profile of the organisation. Its work is ongoing through the dedicated Employment and Vocational Service team responding to all employment or training needs of service users across the country and by engaging directly with employers to maximise opportunities.

Listening to and engaging with the sight loss community continues to gather apace with the continued shift to online participation as seen in the high levels of attendance at the fortnightly tech live events, participation and growth of peer support groups and the number of Local Advocacy Networks (LANs) increasing throughout 2021. These LANs provide the ideal platform to achieve change at a local level while also adding their voice to our national campaigns such as Clear Our Paths. I am pleased these advocates now play an important role in policy development, making sure our advocacy recommendations are evidence-based and grounded in the experiences of people who are blind or vision impaired.

The innovation and flexibility of staff to respond to needs of people who are blind or vision impaired continued throughout 2021 and led to an increase in demand for services across all areas: children and young people, adults, technology, day services and library.

Covid19 also presented many challenges to NCBI and I am proud the organisation is now in a stronger position financially. This is largely thanks to legacies received, success of the radio bingo and its expansion to different counties in 2021 and exceptionally buoyant sales across our retail chain since the shops reopened after a 19-week lockdown.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board and Committee members across the Group structure for their ongoing dedication, skills and commitment to NCBI. The organisation benefits greatly from their knowledge and input ensuring good governance, improved quality and unwavering commitment to service users is attained.



Paul Ledwidge,
Chairman NCBI Group Board

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Ledwidge', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

CEO introduction

NCBI's ambition to ensure full participation and involvement of people who are blind and vision impaired in all aspects of educational, social, economic, political and cultural life was at the heart of our work in 2021. This ambition is clearly reflected in the new strategic plan, Your Ambition Our Mission, which recognises how modern, responsive and innovative the organisation has become in meeting needs of service users.

The increase in new referrals (up 25% on 2020) is proof of this new strategic direction. The breadth of service offering is impressive and appealing, ranging from vision rehabilitation, technology support, employment advice to advocacy groups, to a range of sport and leisure activities through Vision Sports Ireland. Having Eye Clinic Liaison Officers based in acute hospital settings helped drive new referrals and it was heartening to receive additional funding from the HSE to expand this service in 2022.

The Covid19 pandemic continued to dominate throughout 2021 which was difficult for staff and service users. People who are blind or vision impaired were adversely affected by the pandemic due to heightened levels of isolation, the lack of support during school or college closures and difficulties in navigating by street furniture as outdoor dining increased. I am proud of how NCBI responded to these challenges, for example, with the growth of the Connection Network befriending service. Through the Connection Network over 3000 calls were made to vulnerable service users. The service's success was even more evident after a big win at the Irish Healthcare Awards. We also saw a significant rise in membership to Bookshare, Ireland's largest digital accessible library, so students were not compromised during their educational pursuits over the last year. More public awareness campaigns to educate the public on the realities of living with sight loss in a Covid19 world also played a huge role.

NCBI remained innovative in the digital space throughout 2021, leading the charge on improving digital accessibility and societal compliance to

the EU Web Accessibility Directive. Of note was the NCBI's own new website which is accessible to WCAG 2.1 AA web standards. The completion of NCBI's Smart Hub, which allows service users to access information on all NCBI services and their eye conditions through their voice activated smart speakers, was a welcome development.

Despite the Covid19 closure of our stores, 2021 provided an opportunity to modernise and expand the chain. This led to the acquisition of former Age Action shops, introduction of a new pricing guide and the development of a store blueprint which allows the same merchandising principles and retail standards to be implemented in all store types. By year end, NCBI had over 130 shops.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of staff and volunteers for their unwavering support. Supporting staff and their development is core to our new strategic plan as improved internal coordination guarantees better services for our community.



Chris White,
CEO NCBI

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

NCBI Vision, Mission and Values



Our Vision

For people who are blind or vision impaired to have the same opportunities, rights and choices as others to fully participate in society.



Our Mission

To enable people who are blind or vision impaired to overcome the barriers that impede their independence and participation in society.



Our Values

NCBI's core values give effect to our vision, permeate our mission and inform all of our actions to ensure that we achieve the highest standards in everything we do.



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 or vision impaired in exercising this right.



Openness and Accountability

We carry out our work in an open manner and is 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.

NCBI Strategic Plan Your Ambition Our Mission 2021-2023

“The challenge is to transform and partner for barrier free futures, whilst constantly refining our services as new research and solutions come to light.” - Chris White, CEO

Over the next three years, NCBI’s work will centre around the following priorities:

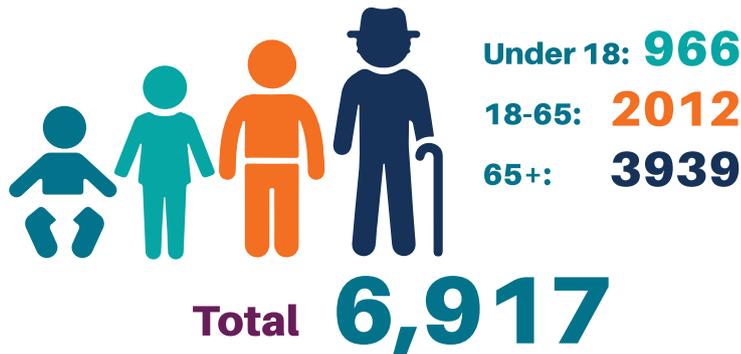
- Changing perceptions.
- Scaling excellence.
- Building capacity.
- Ensuring future-focused infrastructure is in place.

The principles of Empathy • Resilience • Solutions
• Together guide our work.



Key Statistics 2021

Total number of service users worked with in 2021



NCBI Labs Statistics:

Talking Technology Podcast



10,000
Downloads

Total Technology Sales



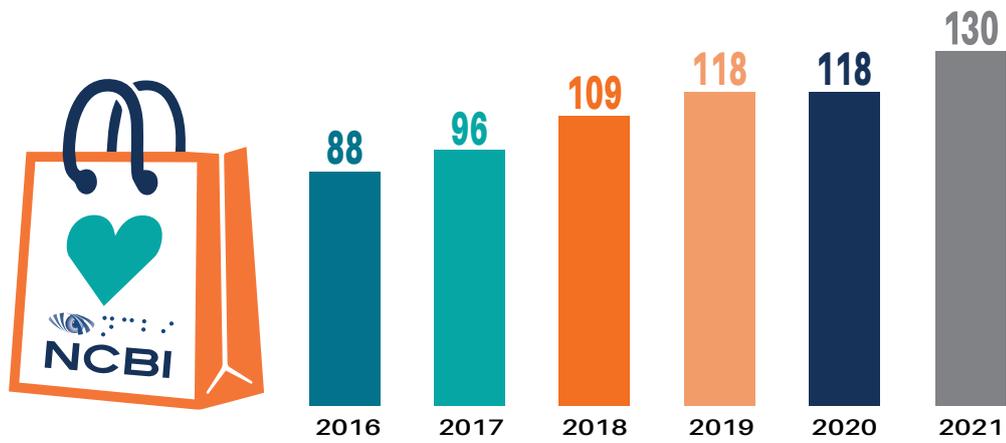
€429,958
Increase

NCBI website visitors



171,927
+ 18% on 2020

Number of shops



Volunteers



David Redmond



David Redmond is a self-confessed 'radio broadcasting nerd' who has lived with a vision impairment since birth. His love of radio and media wasn't something that happened overnight.

He explained:

'It wasn't one thing. It was a collection of little things over years.'

'I did a radio summer camp at UCC here in Cork. There were loads of different events, but ultimately when it came to filling out the CAO form and when it came to looking at QQI courses and all these different things that you do in fifth and sixth year on, radio was the only real option I considered at that point'.

Moving forward into his career, David doesn't see himself as being a 'public-facing presenter' of a radio show. He now finds that his passion is to work behind the scenes in radio in researching or engaging in the business side of the industry. He joked: I do love the media industry with a passion. I'm willing to do anything if anybody is willing to pay me!

David is already active in shaping his fledgling career having created Radio Land and his entertainment-focused Twitter account Media Beat.

Aside from his career, David has been very active within NCBI as he availed of several services throughout the years, and he is also active in his Local Advocacy Network in Cork.

He highlighted the work of the Local Advocacy Networks around Ireland as so important in facilitating civilised conversation and debate about how best to fix accessibility issues for people who are blind or vision impaired.

There will be more to come from David along with fellow NCBI service user Patrick Hennessey as they take on a project entitled NCBI Live, which is in its very early planning stages.



Priority 1: Changing Perceptions

Influencing Policy, Politicians and Public

Supporting and empowering service users to become advocates and champion reform of local and national issues affecting people living with sight loss progressed significantly throughout 2021.

Local Advocacy Networks

A total of seven Local Advocacy Networks (LANs) were operational and held monthly virtual meetings with all groups seeking to affect change in their local area. Some of the activities undertaken include:

- A campaign to install accessible traffic lights in Cork by engaging with policy makers and elected representatives.
- A campaign to encourage cyclists to ring the bell on their bike to ensure people living with sight loss are aware of their presence.
- A campaign aimed at creating partnerships between public libraries and NCBI Library.

The Local Advocacy Networks also added their voice to NCBI's national campaign seeking expansion of the ECLO service nationwide. Additional once-off funding to support the ECLO service was awarded and more will be done in 2022 to secure more sustainable funding.

Advocacy Talks

Advocacy Talks was launched and takes place monthly. Guest speakers are invited to each Advocacy Talks event to discuss a range of topics of interest related to living with sight loss. Some of the sessions covered the UNCRPD, EU Web Accessibility Directive, Positive Mental Health and Vision Sports Ireland.

EBU Low Vision Project

NCBI partnered with the European Blind Union to run focus groups with people living with low vision in Ireland. This led to the formation of a Low Vision Project Group who are now working on developing a new video sharing their experiences. The video will aim to educate people on the realities of living with low vision in Ireland.

Clear Our Paths Campaign

In August, NCBI launched the Clear Our Paths campaign which was developed with the support of advocates. The campaign highlighted the danger of temporary obstacles such as dog fouling on footpaths, overhanging branches, outdoor dining furniture and cars parked on footpaths. Edith, a nine-year-old service user featured in an informative video that was shared on social media. The video explained the challenges posed when dog owners do not pick up after their dogs. NCBI advocates and staff secured 81 media pieces (62 on radio, 12 online, seven in newspapers). This means the campaign was heard or read by over 6.7m people.

Seeing Your Career Campaign

In collaboration with the newly formed Employment Team, and in consultation with services users, the Seeing Your Career campaign commenced. It was launched by An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar and aims to tackle the challenges faced by people who are blind or vision impaired when trying to obtain or retain employment. A suite of resources were produced including the Seeing Your Career Report, guidelines for employers on accommodations that was authored by the Employment Local Advocacy Network, a guide for job seekers and a guide for employers on statutory supports available.



L-R Chris White, Breandan Ward, Tanaiste Leo Varadkar, Madeleine McNamara and Ross McCarthy

E-Scooter Legislation Campaign

NCBI worked alongside Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Irish Wheelchair Association to launch a joint position paper aimed at amending the Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021. The Bill seeks to regulate the use of e-scooters in Ireland. This is an ongoing campaign to ensure the new legislation prioritises the safety of pedestrians with access needs across Ireland.



Submissions & Consultations

The Advocacy Team, together with input from advocates, ensure our submissions are evidence-based and solution-focused. In 2021, the variety of submissions made were significant, increasing policy makers' and the public's understanding of the daily lived experiences of people who are blind or vision impaired. These include:

- Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters on participation in political, cultural, community and public life.
- Response to Draft State Report to the UNCRC.
- Pre-Budget Submission 2022.
- Submission to the HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2022-2026).
- Response to Draft State Report on UNCRPD.

The Possibility Lab - Access & Mobility Innovation

NCBI's Possibility Lab was established, offering access and mobility consultancy through the provision of bespoke training, design projects and fee-based access consultancies to key stakeholders and businesses who share a vision for a barrier free and accessible society.

In addition to working with NCBI colleagues on barrier free solutions, the Possibility Lab received 147 requests. These projects included:

- Collaboration with a TUDublin PhD study "What do individuals with vision impairment need from technology to support street navigation?". The collaboration provided vital statistics which support the need to develop training in this space and recognised the challenges associated with the increases of micro mobility on confidence in accessing the community.
- Roll out of Navilens innovative pilot project which aims to increase access to information and enhance wayfinding across Head Office, Tallaght Cross, Cork (Regional Office), Camden St (Retail) and externally across public transportation (bus & train) and micro mobility.
- Developed NCBI's first Sighted-Guide Training video series to ensure there is consistent messaging and a quality system in place for training across NCBI Group and external stakeholders.
- Worked with Microsoft Soundscape and NCBI services to ensure that blind and vision impaired people were aware of, and could access and utilise, mobility technology.
- Provided consultancy to several micro mobility schemes with the intent of developing technology which is inclusive of the needs of individuals who are vision impaired and geared towards improving safety standards for them as pedestrians.

Des Keaney





The first hint Des Keaney had that he was experiencing problems with his sight came while driving in 2010. His sight worsened in the intervening years, forcing him to stop driving at night in 2013 and by 2015 he was experiencing problems while driving in daylight.

In 2016, at the age of 58, Des was 'devastated' after he failed an eye test usually given to people who are aged over 70 as part of the process to renew a driving licence. He was forced to stop driving completely, which took some of his independence away. As his sight continued to deteriorate, Des discovered he had an inherited condition called Late Onset Retinal Degeneration. By 2021 he said 'the little cone of central vision in my good left eye finally closed in with a dark grey mist'.

Relearning everything in his life has been very challenging for Des:

'I have had to do this with everything from brushing my teeth, walking and using my phone and laptop'.

At a check-up in the Mater Hospital in 2021, Des was referred to NCBI's Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO). It was through the ECLO service Des was able to get technology training to upskill himself and avail of counselling to help him overcome his negative feelings about his situation.

Now Des is back to doing the things he loves, including woodworking and kayaking on Lough Melvin. His ability to navigate his surroundings using the Microsoft Soundscape app has also been a huge boost.

Des believes that all people experiencing sight loss should have access to an ECLO because after he did, his outlook changed. He concluded:

'Where I was slowly going to pieces, I'm now much more whole, useful and rejuvenated.'

NCBI Vision Awards

The NCBI Vision Awards are annual awards established in 2021 as part of the 90th Anniversary celebrations of the founding of NCBI in 1931.

The awards recognise individuals and organisations for their leadership and example in helping to establish a more inclusive society for people who are blind and vision impaired.

By identifying and celebrating the contribution of pioneers and advocates, NCBI aims to hold up examples of good practice and to invite others to consider how they might extend their own actions in key areas. The NCBI Vision Awards take a “whole of society” perspective consistent with NCBI’s Strategic Plan.

In its inaugural year, the volume of nominations was impressive, and we were delighted to announce four winners for their efforts.

Microsoft Soundscape were awarded the ‘Visible Difference’ Industry Award. Microsoft Soundscape have demonstrated an exemplary contribution in creating an inclusive approach for people who are blind or vision impaired.



L-R Guila Vallone, Chantelle Smith, Gillian Coughlan Cork County Mayor and Chris White



L-R Sarah Chamney, CHI @ Temple St with Hilary Devlin NCBI ECLo

CHI @ Temple Street won the Clinical/Social Care Award. The team were worthy winners due to their exceptional services in health and social care for people with a vision impairment. The collaboration between CHI @ Temple Street and ECLo has been vital for supporting children with sight loss and their families.

The Circular Economy Award went to **The Useless Project** to recognise their work in tackling challenges like climate change, waste, and pollution. The Useless Project demonstrate leadership activities and pioneering innovations to promote sustainability, to reduce consumption and waste.



L-R Geraldine Carton and Taz Kelleher from The Useless Project



The Society Award was presented to **O'Brien Press** who have pioneered excellence in inclusion for people with vision impairment. O'Brien Press support people who are blind and vision impaired to access their full catalogue of digital titles through the Bookshare Ireland platform.



L-R Ivan O'Brien, O'Brien Press and Paul Ledwidge NCBI Chairperson

Priority 2: Scaling Excellence

Adult and Children's Services

Introduction

The Covid19 pandemic continued to dominate throughout 2021 which affected both service users and staff. Service provision continued to be offered through a mixture of face-to-face and online methods. The number of new service users continued to grow and comprised of 30% of all referrals into NCBI across our adult and children's teams.

Children and Young Person's Team

It is heartening to see the number of referrals involving children and young people increasing year on year, largely thanks to the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) service based in Dublin acute hospitals. The ECLOs' comprehensive support is available from the point of diagnosis onwards.

Camp Abilities

In 2021 Camp Abilities was a week-long virtual camp where we were able to involve and engage with children and families. The week was an education



Camp abilities group

and capacity building opportunity. The creativity of the leaders ensured it was a most enjoyable event, while also prioritising meaningful physical activity and peer connections for the participants.

Centre-based and face-to-face activity was impacted significantly again in 2021 due to Covid restrictions, as were referrals. Conscious that face-to-face interventions were what parents asked for at the start of the year, NCBI ran group activities to support and reinforce learning. The one-to-one sessions covered areas such as independent travel, independence skills, and Braille learning. These group workshops not only address the primary purpose of skill acquisition, but they also provide valuable peer support to the children.

NCBI LENS TY programme

The first year of the NCBI LENS TY programme finished in May with very positive feedback from participants, parents, and industry partners. We had our second intake into the programme in September while we continue to support the group from Year 1 as they progress through senior cycle. Students are supported over the three years in senior cycle to develop the skills to overcome barriers. The aim is for students to become independent



Children attending in-person activities in our Tallaght centre.

learners and to ensure successful transition from second level education. We presented the evaluation of the project to Minister of State Josepha Madigan in September.

Cerebral Visual Impairment conference

With the growing number of children presenting with Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) we were pleased to be able to host a very successful virtual conference in June. Speakers included Sarah Chamney, Consultant Ophthalmologist in Temple St, Crumlin & Rotunda hospitals, Dr Emma McConnell, Research Optometrist at Ulster University, and Martina Keane, parent to Peter who has a diagnosis of CVI, all of whom generously shared their experiences.

Bursary Awards 2021

NCBI was delighted to have Minister for State for Special Education and Inclusion, Josepha Madigan TD, present to the recipients of the 2021 Gerard Byrne Bursary in NCBI offices in Tallaght, Dublin 24.

The recipients this year are:

1. Bartley Horan, age 19 from Co. Galway who is currently in first year studying for his Bachelor of Mathematical Science in National University of Ireland, Galway.



L-R Caroline Lane, Minister Josepha Madigan, Chris White and Senator Martin Conway

2. Chloe Moyles, age 21 from Co. Mayo who is currently in fourth year studying for her Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical and Industrial Chemistry in the University of Limerick.
3. Ben Graham, age 20 from Co. Carlow who is currently in third year studying for his Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology Degree in Trinity College, Dublin.
4. Rebecca Kerr, age 23 from Co. Louth who is currently in fourth year studying for her Bachelor of Education in Dublin City University.

Adult Services Team

This year began with the amalgamation of the Adult and Older Adult Teams. This was a huge logistical and management change but one which was faced with energy and commitment. We ensured that while there was change for the managers and staff team, service users would not see a diminution in quality and access to service but in fact an increase. Some key highlights include the following:

Peer Groups

Our Sightless Cinema programme ran several successful online introductory Sightless Cinema workshops. The programme received funding from the Community Awards Scheme. Funding has also been approved from Laois County Council and Meath County Council for further workshops that will cross over into 2022.

NCBI Men's Network was rolled out during summer 2021. The Men's Network is a space for men living with sight loss to meet others in a similar position and to learn from each other's experiences. The group has nine members who meet online every fortnight.

In September a Parenting with a Vision Impairment Peer Group was launched. This is a nationwide peer group that was established to meet the needs of those parenting with a vision impairment.

Counselling and Emotional Support

2021 saw a restructure of the Emotional and Counselling Service provided by NCBI to a counselling service built on governance and a referral pathway. This change in approach opened an innovative partnership between Fighting Blindness and NCBI. The collaboration was a success

and a positive direction for services and one that meets the needs of visually impaired clients and their families. The collaboration has been representative of the increased opportunities and positive outcomes that arise when similar organisations employ a “joined-up thinking” approach to meeting the needs of their communities.

The Connection Network - Befriending Programme

NCBI’s Connection Network is our telephone befriending support service for people who may be isolated as a result of Covid19 restrictions. The programme has grown in the last year and we now have a team of 21 volunteers who made approximately 3,000 calls since the programme launched.

Resources

Falls Prevention and Getting Around Safely resources were also developed for service users, their families, carers and other health professionals. These resources add to the already existing suite of resources available to help meet the issues people who are blind or vision impaired deal with on a daily basis. More importantly, they help to remove those barriers and assist individuals and those around them to manage better.



Beatrice Bowers accepts the Irish Healthcare Award

Training & Development

Developing and enhancing the skill base of our Staff Team is a priority for us. Despite Covid19 restrictions, many staff were able to undergo in-service training which ended in the completion of different professional development courses. These included:

- Seven staff from the Adult Team successfully completed the Orientation & Mobility: Theory & Practice course facilitated by Provision Solutions and accredited by OCN, London.
- Ten staff participated in training on visual field deficits following brain injury, upskilling their knowledge for those who acquire sight loss following a stroke.
- Another member of the Adult Team acquired accreditation as a Certified Low Vision Therapist (CLVT). This accreditation, internationally recognised, was awarded by the ACVREP, USA.

What Service Users said about the Adult Services Team

Feedback, whether given informally or formally is essential in reviewing our performance and using input provided to improve the quality of our efforts. We offer a range of ways for service users to provide that essential feedback. In the past year, the overwhelming majority of people who gave feedback were 'very satisfied' with the overall service and the knowledge and professionalism of staff. Those people also said they were 'extremely likely' to recommend NCBI services to others. Here's a flavour of some comments received:

'I made a referral for a gentleman with a visual impairment and the response from NCBI was immediate, professional, and flexible in accommodating visiting the gentleman at home. Follow up was good and overall, a great service.'

'The care and understanding and information provided were excellent.'

'I experienced great understanding and empathy'.

'They helped me initially to get my confidence back despite my disability. They provided me with some equipment and skills like using a cane to walk with'.

The National Employment, Training & Academia Team

2021 saw the merging of two structures in services - the regional Adult Working Age Life Cycle Team and the Training Centre. This change ensured improved standards and consistency of support across the country. Key highlights included:

- **VisAble Project:** a transformative pre-employment course offering learners nationwide who are blind or vision impaired an accredited pathway to employment and further educational and training opportunities.
- **QQI Validations in Orientation, Mobility and Access** which was formally commended by QQI as progressive. This programme is specifically designed to provide service users with the necessary skills to gain access to employment.
- **Workshops and Webinars** for job seekers and the Workplace Integration series focused on targeting potential employers, educational providers and other external stakeholders.
- **NCBI's Workplace Partner Programme** continued with 60% increase in partnerships in 2021. Forging these critical links with employers creates real time vocational opportunities for NCBI service users and improves inclusive practices within the workplace.
- **NCBI Academic Committee** was established with an independent chair. The committee's main function is to ensure academic and commercial decision making is clearly separate and to evaluate and develop programmes, standards and governance.

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Service

This service continues to go from strength to strength leading to more referrals to NCBI services from the point of diagnosis. In 2021, the service expanded into CHI Crumlin and an active campaign was established to seek the appointment of ECLOs in all acute eye hospitals across the country. This did result in one-off funding being awarded by the HSE which will see the service extending to Cork in 2022.

In 2021, across the four hospitals, 612 patients and families were supported through 2,062 support sessions. Referrals from ECLO is emerging as biggest source of referral to NCBI services behind self and family. The value of being placed in CHI Temple Street and CHI Crumlin has meant that 63% of all new referrals to the Children's and Young Persons Team has been as a result of the patient's interaction with their ECLO. This early intervention support with babies, children and their families really aids their development and adjustment to living with little or no vision.



ECLO Elaine Crossan



Service Users enjoying a catch up in Iona Resource Centre

Day and Hub Services

NCBI Day & Hub Services supported 126 service users across both sites (in Dublin and Wexford), with a full resumption of service and maintenance of 20 hours virtual timetable available to all. The online platform has provided not only a varied programme, but also the important opportunity for service users to connect with others and provide structure within their day. The service continues to align itself to HSE New Directions by providing person-centred service; enabling and supporting our service users to achieve their goals.

Throughout 2021, focus was on connecting our service users with their local community. To this end, we continued to grow our Access4All Audio Described Commentary Programme and were able to support service users in accessing live football at Shamrock Rovers FC for the first time when live sporting events resumed. Our social enterprise Tactile Treasures is evolving, and service users are excited at the potential of the enterprise. Also, through developing positive working relationships we've enriched the programme available to service users. This includes links with Irish Blind Golf, Park Run, Active Wexford, VSI Zero Limits at Mondello Park and Wexford County Council Access Department.

John Hourihan





John Hourihan from Cork was a keen woodturner before he had a stroke in 2018. Woodturning is the craft of using a wood lathe with hand-held tools to carve symmetrical designs into blocks of wood to make various items from furniture to smaller accessories.

As a result of his stroke, John experienced vision loss, which in turn affected his ability to use his woodturning tools in a safe manner. His peripheral vision in his right eye became almost non-existent, while peripheral vision in his left eye was also compromised, but to a lesser extent.

In the aftermath of his stroke, he connected with NCBI to avail of services that could help him navigate his new normal. He described the help given to him by NCBI as 'absolutely excellent' and he offered particular praise for his Community Resource Worker, who taught him to get a sense of his environment by scanning an area with his eyes by moving his whole body.

Part of the process of teaching John to scan effectively was taking him around Cork city with his white cane and while he 'kept bumping off stuff' he eventually got the hang of how best to navigate his surroundings.

He explained:

'I have a quality of life now, which is different to what I had, but I'm very satisfied with it.'

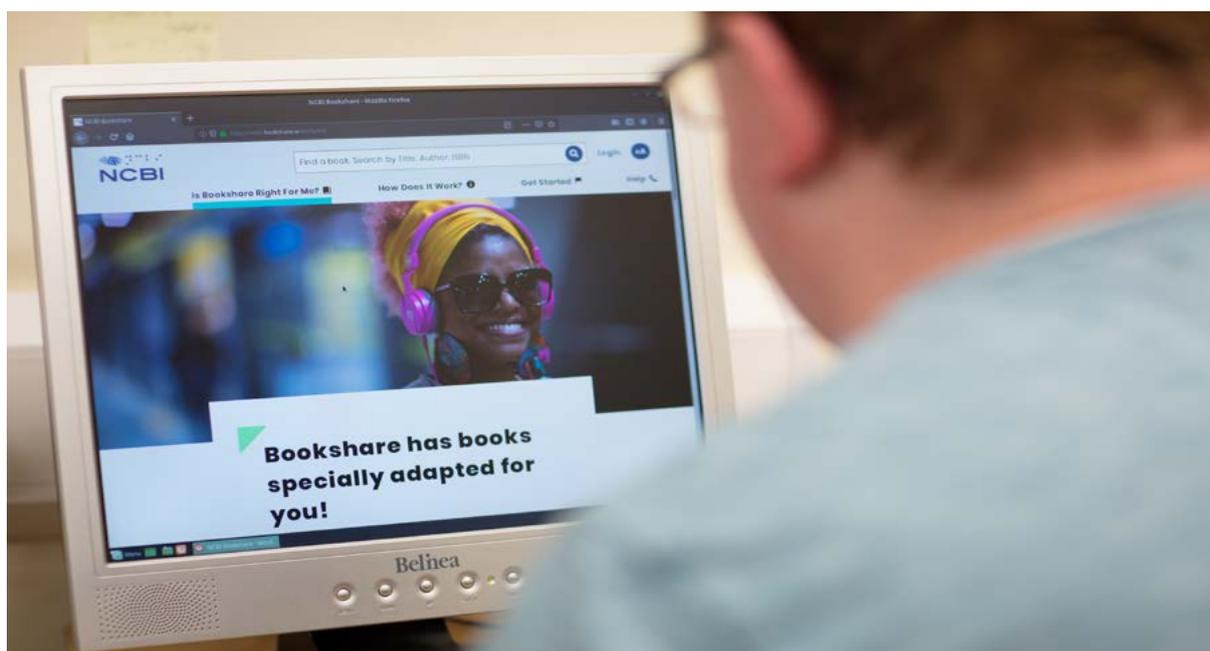
John has made so many strides in adapting to his sight loss, that he is back involved in woodturning again, making the likes of beautiful, ornate wooden pens.

The Library Access Service

The Library Access Service (LAS) is the National Library Service for people with sight loss. With over 4,950 members, the main function of LAS is to produce and distribute books in accessible formats. The success of Bookshare Ireland continues as the membership grew from 600 to 1000 in 2021.

The three main themes for LAS in 2021 were collaboration, innovation, and training. The focus points were children and young adults in education and work on this included:

- Collaboration with Benetech, Kanopi and NCBI LABS to deliver Bookshare Ireland books and audio magazines via the NCBI Smart hub.
- Collaboration with NCBI Children's Team to develop an interest in reading and creative writing amongst young library members. Bookworms Book Club was created with online participation of children nationally.
- Delivered online training and support to Visiting Teachers and teachers using Lego Braille Bricks as a tool for learning Braille.
- Partnered with the five main school educational publishers in Ireland: Folens, CJ Fallons, Gill, EDCO and Educate.ie. Students in primary and secondary classes can access their digital school books via the Bookshare Ireland platform.



- Continued partnership with the HSE to produce and provide accessible information on the Covid19 vaccine and booster programme.
- Continued the delivery of the Braille Pharmaceutical Training programme online.

Vision Sports Ireland

The integration of Vision Sports Ireland into NCBI cemented itself in 2021 as a service offering. Over the course of the year, referrals from NCBI staff has increased by 90%.

Some of the key programme highlights for 2021 included:

- Online Fitness Series – 147 exercise classes delivered to 882 participants online throughout 2021.
- Tandem Pilot Training Course – This course was designed in collaboration with Cycling Ireland. Course dry runs were delivered in Galway and Dublin. 18 Tandem pilots were trained.



- Home Equipment Grant Scheme – This was a Covid19 intervention where support was provided to 31 members to purchase home exercise equipment to support them to remain active during Covid19 restrictions and beyond.
- Vision Impaired Rugby – Collaboration with IRFU to establish Ireland’s first Vision Impaired Rugby programme. The initiative began with the training up of nine volunteers followed by three sessions across which 29 players attended.
- Youth Leadership – Delivered a six-week Youth Leadership programme targeting teenagers to support their growth and confidence in becoming leaders in the community. This group will form the Vision Sports Ireland 2022 Youth Forum which will be co-delivered by the NCBI Advocacy department.
- Zero Limits – the inaugural Zero Limits Track Day was held at Mondello Park. Supported by an instructor, 30 participants took to the driver’s seat for several laps of Mondello Park. The afternoon session was a co-driving experience in a fully international specification rally car.



Sara McFadden at Zero Limits



NCBI Retail

Unfortunately, NCBI Retail started 2021 in a similar way to how it ended 2020, with all our retail stores closed across the country due to Covid19 lockdowns. Stores remained closed for 19 weeks resulting in a loss of €2.4m in sales. It did present an opportunity to develop and introduce several new initiatives that would support the change cycle that NCBI retail is currently undertaking.

In February, with all stores closed, we welcomed our new colleagues from Age Action into the NCBI family. The welcome addition comprised the six stores including the furniture showroom at Cherry Orchard and the Age Action logistics team. This acquisition has proved very beneficial.

On 17th May shops reopened with fresh looking stores and a new summer stock package. Strong sales performance upon our return showed that our customers and supporters missed us a great deal. The first full trading week was an all-time record sales week, beating the previous record in November 2019 by €47,000.

To support the opening, we saw the introduction of the NCBI Blue Print and Brand Pricing Guide. The purpose of Blue Print is to support consistency across the retail chain in how our stores are merchandised, the standards we want to deliver to our customers, how our windows look, and what signage we use. If you shop in Rathmines, Portumna or Cork you should see the same level of presentation and customer experience.

Pricing is extremely important in driving revenue, and consistency of pricing is key. Understanding the value of a garment dependent on brand, quality and marketplace has been a key focus for retail during 2021 and will continue to be so during 2022. The Brand Pricing Guide is now in place across every single store in NCBI.

During the summer, due to a new end of line partnership with Claire's Accessories, we were able to add some fabulous Claire's stock to several of our stores across the country. The range is exclusive to NCBI and we hope to expand during 2022.

NCBI are in a very fortunate position to be a retailer with a growth mindset. There are many markets across the country in which we wish to be. Our stores are also present in towns where we have a preference to secure a



NCBI staff at opening of NCBI Capel Street, Dublin

more fitting location or a larger store. During the summer of 2021 we opened in Killarney, Ashbourne, a second store in Terenure and Athy, as well as a pop up shop on Henry St. Alongside this, we also relocated our stores in Ennis and Roscommon to larger sites in a stronger footfall location. These stores now fall under our new sustainable, modern retail concept.

In December, NCBI Capel Street, in the heart of the city centre of Dublin was opened. To keep up with the ever-changing landscape that is retail, new additions were installed in the store



including a Selfie Wall, Staff Picks, a Vintage and Retro section of clothing and a digital screen that showcases to our customers, who we are and what we do.

We are hugely proud of how our stores have evolved over the last number of years and how sustainability, modernisation and customer experience are at the forefront of what you will see in NCBI retail. We will continue our expansion plan in the Republic as well as our expansion into Northern Ireland through 2022.

Finally, everyone on the retail team, from staff to volunteers, are committed to constantly innovating ways to improve what we do and ultimately drive funds to support the services we provide to blind or vision impaired people. We're so grateful to our 760 volunteers who support our shop managers. To recognise our appreciation to our volunteer population we introduced Team Member of the Quarter in quarter 4 of 2021.

Laoise Patterson



Laoise Patterson was born with the genetic condition Oculocutaneous Albinism, which affects the production of melanin which gives colour to skin, hair, and eyes.

Laoise and her family do not let her vision impairment hold her back in any way. She is a great friend and regularly meets other children who also have Albinism which is very important for peer support. She has a particular interest in outer space and wants to study astrophysics when she goes to college.

Laoise loves to be independent and loves the fact that she is unique among the other children she is around daily.

Her parents are well aware that even at such an early age, Laoise is a 'strong self-advocate' which stems from the confidence she has in herself.

The proud parents were delighted to note that Laoise's vision impairment 'isn't an embarrassment for her' as she's happy to say she is unable to see as well as her peers.

In learning to use technology to assist her in overcoming her visual impairment, Laoise's dad Ian believes that Laoise has an edge on her schoolmates, which will also benefit her when she seeks work in the years to come.

Her parents praised their local NCBI officer, who helps Laoise and her family through difficult times. They are also grateful of the opportunities for Laoise to attend NCBI workshops, where she learned new skills and even discovered that she likes pizza!

They believe the strength of NCBI is that those working to help people who are blind or vision impaired often understand more about the daily effects of living with a vision impairment, than those who deal purely with the medical side of vision conditions.

Priority 3: Building Capacity

Staff Support and Development

In 2021 we continued to invest in our employees to foster employee potential and development, helping them grow their skills and expertise in their personal and professional lives.

The HR department introduced a swathe of fresh initiatives over the course of 2021. This included a new strategic agenda launched for the HR Department in partnership with the entire organisation. Further challenges with Covid19 and hybrid working continued for our people and HR supported our people through these times.

Focus Groups

Building on the staff survey conducted in late 2020, HR initiated employee focus groups to gather in-depth feedback to further review the information in the survey. We had a good attendance overall and the attendees identified several initiatives which feed into the people strategy below.

On-Boarding

We have successfully implemented a fully inclusive and accessible corporate onboarding programme for new starters called Welcome Wednesdays. The programme involves most of the Senior Management Team presenting, an Orientation and Mobility segment and sighted guide training which connects and frames the compelling purpose of the organisation. This process helps embed new starters in NCBI's culture and increases staff engagement.

Talent Attraction

Throughout 2021 we have managed and successfully assisted with a high level of recruitment. Over 96 new staff members, working across the organisation, were recruited throughout the year. The HR team has focused and influenced people leaders to hire for future skills



Welcome Wednesday event in October 2021

required in the organisation. Traditionally, we sought to replace roles and individuals in the workforce by seeking a similar set of candidate profiles from known talent pool sources and from those attracted to the existing employee value proposition (EVP). Instead, to ensure quality hires, we now prioritise skills instead of hiring profiles to ensure the EVP evolves to deliver on changing candidate wants and needs.

We have improved the efficiency of our recruitment process, which has helped us build rapport with candidates and improved our overall candidate experience.

Wellbeing and Engagement

The HR department successfully assisted with service users' webinars on employment topics such as how to draft your CV and how to strengthen your interview skills. These were very well received.

HR also drove various health and wellbeing initiatives for our staff with a mix of webinars and information sessions which we will further enhance in 2022.

Employee relations methodologies continued to be improved and smoother relations have ensued. Work continues on removing barriers to address these issues at an early opportunity and allow appropriate systems and expertise to be engaged.

Policies and procedures were also reviewed proactively to move with legislative requirements and enhanced implementing systems were applied.

Learning and Development

A strategic approach to learning and development has been adopted to ensure, among other things, that our staff have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles, meet strategic objectives, provide value for money and return on investment. This includes a review of mandatory and core training in collaboration with the organisation, as well as the introduction of a training needs analysis to define and prioritise organisational, individual, team and service needs.

Investors in Diversity

The Irish Centre for Diversity works in partnership with organisations across Ireland at all stages of the equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) journey.



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Mark: This is Ireland's only EDI Mark for business. NCBI is seeking to attain this mark and is now part of the Investors in Diversity initiative which provides businesses with a framework for success over three levels. We have begun the process for bronze accreditation and will continue through the process in 2022 through to gold standard.

Priority 4: Future Focused Infrastructure

NCBI LABS

Introduction

The strides previously made by NCBI Labs guaranteed that throughout the Covid19 lockdowns, the primary focus was to maintain service delivery and train NCBI staff to deliver essential services remotely.

Our key technology services to the sight loss community in 2021 were:

1. Technology Training

The nationwide team of technology trainers pivoted our training delivery to an online model via Microsoft Teams. As a result, technology training services experienced minimal disruption as service users continued to avail of one-to-one and group online training in their homes during lockdowns.

2. Talking Technology with NCBI Labs Podcasts

With over 60 shows recorded, the Talking Technology with NCBI Labs Podcast continues to grow in popularity. The podcasts, currently running



fortnightly, are made available to service users, staff, and anyone with an interest in inclusive technology.

3. Technology Newsletter

The NCBI Labs Technology Newsletter is a weekly publication that features news and articles about the latest innovations in inclusive technology for people with sight loss. There are currently over 800 subscribers to the newsletter.

4. Virtual Technology Clubs

These weekly online chat groups allow NCBI Labs trainers an opportunity to discuss with service users the latest technologies, equipment, and apps that can help them overcome many barriers in their daily lives. The clubs have already drawn in over 2,000 attendances and have proven to be a key way for service users to reduce isolation during lockdowns.

5. Technology Sales

Overall, the total technology sales for 2021 was €429,968, an increase of 22% compared with 2020. This is largely due to NCBI Labs adding more e-commerce products on our accessible website.

Key Projects & Initiatives

1. NCBI Website & myNCBI

In March 2021 we relaunched the NCBI website to the highest standard of accessibility in line with WCAG 2.1 Guidelines while maintaining a contemporary user experience. We also launched the myNCBI login portal, which incorporates Amazon AWS Cognito, allowing service users to have one login to access NCBI's digital services.

In 2021 we recorded 171,927 visitors to the website, up 18% from the previous year. We experienced a threefold increase in donations and a fourfold increase in online orders. In addition, our Salesforce CRM donor list has increased by over 1,000 people in less than a year of the site going live.

2. myNCBI Smart Hub

In 2021, development was underway to build the brand new myNCBI Smart Hub. The myNCBI Smart Hub is a voice assistant AI-based application that enables service users to avail of essential NCBI services via their smart speaker. It allows services users and their families access to the latest information on sight loss by simply saying: "Alexa launch myNCBI", "Alexa tell me about the symptoms of Macular Degeneration", "Alexa make an appointment with NCBI", "Alexa play a talking newspaper", or "Alexa donate to NCBI".



It is the first time an innovative voice AI-based platform such as this has been developed in the charity sector and it is a completely new medium to access charity services.

One of the benefits of this technology is that it can be used by other public and private organisations. This project will have profound impacts to support people with disabilities worldwide. In fact, we are already working with other charities to deploy this app to support their specific disability service.

3. NCBI Labs Helpdesk

The Helpdesk offers technical support and guidance to service users and their families. During the lockdowns of 2021 we handled 4,876 cases. Over the year we averaged 406 cases per month, with 86% of survey responses indicating they were 'very satisfied' with the services they received.

NCBI Foundation

Foundation continued its transition from an event based fundraising office to a direct giving office. While the impact of Covid19 did affect fundraising ability, some strategic partnerships, initiatives, and grants received proved very fruitful in 2021. These included:

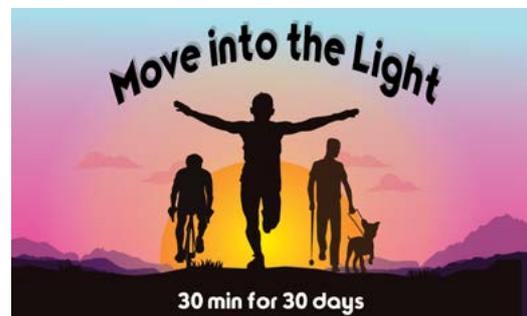
- Radio Bingo partnerships with Shannonside/Northern Sound and Highland Radio along with new games which commenced with LMFm and C103. This popular local radio bingo game is an effective and engaging way to raise public profile of the organisation and is now responsible for over 20% of Foundation's income.
- NCBI was awarded a grant of €100,000 from the RTE Toy Show fund which directly supported initiatives run by our Children and Young Person's Team.



- The Eye Can Weekly Lottery continues online and features a weekly prize draw of €200. In 2021, it generated in excess €35,000.
- NCBI ran its Tree of Light campaign ahead of Christmas and gathered the support of 37 companies which garnered more than €27,300.



NCBI's direct giving strategy continued to reap dividends as the volume of single gift donations grew to 1,946 single gifts, amounting to €238,059. These 1,188 gifts, or €91,482, were made from the two direct mails that were distributed in 2021. In addition, €10,331 came from Revenue.



Virtual Events

Covid19 presented the opportunity to trial virtual events with direct online advertising and support. The Move into the Light series was held in spring and we asked participants to move for 30 minutes for 30 days. In total 93 participants took part and raised €26,062. While in August, the Cycle for Sight Loss had 202 participants and raised €24,956.



L-R Laura, Joe, Katie and Michael Dolphin

Joe Dolphin, a 6-year-old service user and his family, went all-out for the Move into the Light initiative and raised a massive €7,435.

11-year-old Frank Brennan and his dad Mark participated in the Cycle for Sight Loss challenge. Frank has Stargardt disease and uses the services of NCBI. He was delighted to take on his first ever fundraising challenge. Frank and his supporters raised an impressive €4,000.



L-R Mark and Frank Brennan

NCBI produced our first TV ad in many years and it was broadcast in September 2021. Hilary Devlin, NCBI ECLO, starred in the advert along with a young service user, 9-year-old Laoise Patterson and her family. The advert was received with great public feedback. Unfortunately the great response did not translate into significant donations.

Strong support for NCBI through our legacy programme continued with 48 people contributing €824,537 during the year. NCBI is very mindful of the support from individuals through the course of their lifetime and the generosity they express by including NCBI as a beneficiary in their will. These gifts are treasured by the NCBI Group Board as they have often helped the organisation develop new services and respond to need. Hopefully these projects will serve as a fitting memorial and a celebration of the lives of those who have planned their giving in this way.

Legacy Gifts



Legacy donors during the year included:

Agnes Carty
 Ann O’Sullivan
 Anna Caffrey
 Anne Donaghy
 Anne Philomena Doyle
 Brona Martin
 Catherine Kiely
 Desmond Hugh O’Neill
 Dr Brian Dermot O’Hanlon
 Eileen Barrett
 Pepper Endowment Fund
 Philomena Buck
 Rev. Joseph Jackson
 Richard Flynn

Eithne Cleere
 Ethel Corby Trust
 Frances Carmel Hennessey
 Herbert Maurice Tuffi
 James Phelan
 Jean Kemp
 Joan Heney
 Joseph Maguire
 Joseph O’Toole
 Kevin Hoban
 Margaret Carroll
 Richmond Inst. of Blind
 Robert Malseed
 Rosemary Mangan

Margaret Gallagher
 Mary Agnes Mooney
 Mary Magee
 Mary Roverie Fitzgerald Nixon
 Mary Tierney
 Matheson
 Matthew Murphy
 Noelle Breen
 Patrick Carpenter
 Patrick Ryan
 Teresa Carey
 Teresa O’Donovan
 Thomas Connors
 Peggy Dowling



The Power is in YOUR will ... be part of OUR vision



It can be a frightening time when you, or a loved one’s sight, starts to fail. **National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)** provides support and services to almost 55,000 people with a vision impairment nationwide. Serving people since 1931, our experience helps people to live independently and to make the very best of their remaining vision. We provide the rehabilitation support, guidance, and technology skills needed. Public support is vital to ensure these services continue to grow into the future.

You can help by remembering NCBI in your Will.

By making a gift, big or small, in your will to NCBI, you leave a legacy of hope for so many people.

For further information phone (01) 882 1972

or visit www.ncbi.ie/personal-giving/

Email: foundation@ncbi.ie

CHY 12673

Asset Management

Housing Association

It has long been an ambition of the NCBI to commence a programme of social housing dedicated to our service users. Based on levels of unemployment, the prospect of owning or renting a home is outside the scope of many and as a result there is a reliance on family members and local authorities to provide homes. In the case of local authority housing applications, there is no dedicated identification of sight loss as an issue and therefore this is a much bigger problem than has been identified at government level.

The issue becomes more significant in relation to housing insecurity and homelessness especially in the event of the death of an elderly parent and the subsequent sale of a shared family home. To address this, NCBI lodged an application to the Department of Housing and Local Government and Heritage for Approved Housing Body Status and then began the necessary exploratory steps. These efforts were successful resulting in several meetings with relevant Approved Housing Bodies to explore possible collaborations, one of which has led to an agreement with Circle housing - one of the country's foremost housing bodies. Latterly, because of meetings held with local authorities two units have been promised with more to come subject to final approval of our Approved Housing Body Status.



Maria Greenan





Maria Greenan is a piano teacher from Cavan who is registered blind. Maria was born with congenital cataracts, but they were removed early in her life. At four years old, she was subsequently diagnosed with glaucoma after her mother noticed that Maria's eyes were very sensitive to light and that she was prone to falling over.

During the process to treat her condition while her family were living in London, Maria underwent several surgeries. At the time she wasn't aware of the severity of her condition and how the surgeries were attempts to save her sight.

Maria began playing piano and her parents enrolled her in lessons with a teacher who specialised in working with people with disabilities. Through the advice of her teacher, Maria learned to read music, but she learned how to play by ear and by memory.

When Maria moved back to Ireland, she attended the Loreto school in Cavan and it was there where she met her principal who was 'mad passionate about music'. As she progressed through school, piano remained a mainstay in Maria's life.

By the time she reached college, Maria adapted to an entirely different process of learning and playing pieces of music, which benefitted her in her future teaching jobs. She continued to teach remotely throughout Covid19 pandemic and credits technology, particularly the camera and zoom functions, for her ability to stay connected with her students and see where their fingers were on the keyboard.

One thing Maria is particularly proud of was seeing past students progressing into music in higher education and professionally. Maria herself has performed professionally on many stages throughout Ireland and abroad.

Grant Applications

One of the big motivators for us as an organisation was to protect our services, our funds, and our infrastructure wherever possible, endeavouring to generate as much income as possible where grants were given. During Covid19 lockdowns there were concerted efforts to conserve funds and take full advantage of any grants which had been allocated to the sector. We worked hard to apply for as many grants as possible.

Some of the grants applied for included:

- Restart grant Plus,
- Small Business Assistance Scheme,
- Refunds for purchase of PPE

Rental and Rates Savings

Upon commencement of the Level 5 Covid19 lockdown in January 2021 and having learned from the previous Covid19 lockdowns, we immediately ceased payment for all rents in January. This was a bitter pill for landlords to swallow once more but was an aggressive and necessary move which was successful with just a fraction of landlords requiring repayment. We then negotiated with the landlords on an individual basis with the majority writing off the amounts owed, many glad to have a tenant of good covenant who would be there after the lockdown.

We took the opportunity to close some marginal shops and unfortunately the likes of Cobh, Ballyshannon and Bandon did not reopen their doors. We estimate that we have saved several hundred thousand on rental payments in 2021.

Rates savings were also significant, and we are still counting the effect of the rates write downs.

New Shop Expansion

Despite the difficult year we kept an eye open for high value or strategic locations which would benefit the chain. We entered favourable leases with good terms and continued to expand in areas where we had long wanted a shop. The unfortunate economic atmosphere worked to our advantage in allowing us to negotiate hard, again with landlords glad to have a good tenant in situ.



Shop Opened/Negotiated 2021.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ashbourne | 2. Athy 2 |
| 3. Capel Street | 4. Killarney |
| 5. Terenure 2 | 6. Omagh |
| 7. Enniskillen | 8. Henry Street |

Sylvia Maria Crowley





Sylvia Maria Crowley is a visually impaired barrister from Cork who was called to the Bar in 2021.

Sylvia didn't have a relationship with NCBI earlier in life because she had perfect vision, but she had an accident in 2017 which led to the loss of her central vision in her left eye.

After her sight loss, she explained: "I linked in with the Cork branch of NCBI and they helped me with mobility aids and adaptive aids for improving and helping with home living and adapting to life with a visual impairment. I also got training and support with assistive technology and learning about accessibility features on my mainstream devices which helped me greatly to remain confident and independent."

In initially dealing with her sight loss, Sylvia described going through a "big adaptation" period during which she got to grips with her new home living experience, learnt new skills and with the help of NCBI prepared for living away from home.

During her time studying Law in UCC, Sylvia was able to avail of assistance through NCBI's connection with the college's disability support services and she accessed NCBI's Bookshare platform.

Sylvia said that working within law was 'very exciting' and she is 'deviling' or training with her 'master' at the Criminal Courts of Justice. During this process she will learn the practical side of being a barrister. She also has the option of wearing the famous barristers' wigs when she's in court!

To others experiencing sight loss for the first time, Sylvia explained: "My main piece of advice would be to access the services in your area".

"NCBI offers their service to people with every degree of sight loss and are there to offer support, encouragement and practical advice."

Finance and Governance

The Group Board met 6 times in 2021

Paul Ledwidge 6/6
David Hickson 6/6
Sean Costello 6/6
David Keegan 1/6
Nancy Holland 3/6 (left GB in Sep 2021)
Anne Troy 4/6 (left GB sept 2021)
Martin Conway 6/6
Roddy Feely 6/6
Anthony Murray 5/6
Donnacha McCarthy 3/6
Eithne Walsh 5/6
Aidan Gavin 4/6
Jason Smyth 0/6 (left GB in May 2021)
Paul Kelly 1/6 (joined GB in Sep 2021)
Decan Delanty 1/6 (joined GB in Dec 2021)
Kristen Foran 1/6 (joined GB in Dec 2021)

Finance committee met 6 times in 2021
Retail Board met 3 times in 2021
Services committee met 6 times in 2021
Foundation Board met 5 times in 2021
Nominations and Governance Committee met 4 times in 2021

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

Result highlights are

- Overall Income returned to 2019 levels in 2021 to €20.6m having decreased in 2020 to €19.1m.
- Statutory income from the Health Service Executive (HSE) was at the same level as 2019.

- Retail Income increased due to reactivation of shops.
- Fundraising activities grew with increases in donations in 2021.
- The group continued to receive Government support income from business restart grants and wage subsidies in 2021, however at a lower level than 2020.
- The overall surplus for the year was €1.8m arising from the following.
 - Strong Retail results due to the reopening of shops in May 2021
 - Continued support from the Government wage subsidies and business restart grants
 - Cost reductions implemented in response to loss of income from Covid19
 - Investment gains increased on previous year at over €260k
 - Legacy Income increased by over €200k at €889k for the year.

Balance sheet highlights are

- Growth in financial assets & cash position
- Increase in deferred revenue balances which represent State funding for 2021 programmes which are primarily aimed at innovations in a post Covid19 environment.
- Increase in restricted charity funds arising from deferred revenue primarily.

The Directors wish to acknowledge the strong level of State financial support and also in particular the support of employees during the last two years of difficult periods during the pandemic

Both fundraising arms continue to perform well, and the Directors are thankful for the financial supports from bequests and from supporters who financially contribute to NCBI's fundraising activities. The Directors also wish to acknowledge the contribution of customers who loyally support our charity shops.

The Board remains committed to increasing income by developing new income streams within both NCBI Retail and NCBI Charitable Foundation.

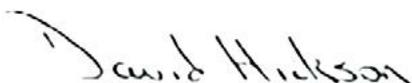
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Continuing operations

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2021 Funds Total €	2020 Funds Total €
		€	€	€	€
Income from:					
Donations and Legacies		1,800,972	-	1,800,972	1,482,506
Trading activities		8,195,733	-	8,195,733	6,220,580
Charitable activities		45,250	6,980,303	7,025,553	7,264,706
Other income		1,741,997	1,356,261	3,098,258	3,955,173
Rental income		189,577	-	189,577	189,577
Investment income		262,849	-	262,849	19,724
Total Income		12,236,378	8,336,564	20,572,942	19,135,122
Expenditure from:					
Raising funds	10	678,218	-	678,218	651,964
Trading activities	8	7,318,617	-	7,318,617	6,293,355
Charitable activities	11	1,123,371	9,538,482	10,661,853	9,218,203
Governance costs	12	77,492	-	77,492	77,492
Total Expenditure		9,197,698	9,538,482	18,736,180	16,241,014
Net income/(expenditure)		3,038,680	(1,201,918)	1,836,762	2,894,108
Total funds brought forward	22	7,228,471	2,010,057	9,238,528	6,344,420
Net transfers between funds		(1,461,047)	1,461,047	-	-
Total funds carried forward	22	8,806,104	2,269,186	11,075,290	9,238,528

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: 22nd June 2022



Paul Ledwidge

Director

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Notes	Consolidated 2021 €	Consolidated 2020 €
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	13	4,847,421	4,997,916
Financial assets	14	3,760,608	3,761,987
		8,608,029	8,759,903
Current assets			
Stocks	15	216,097	259,610
Debtors			
Cash at bank and in hand	16	1,355,580	1,072,819
		5,699,258	3,702,919
		7,270,935	5,035,348
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	(2,202,059)	(1,780,674)
Net current assets		5,068,876	3,225,674
Total assets less current liabilities		13,676,898	12,014,577
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year			
Long term liabilities	19	(995,897)	(1,100,553)
Capital Grants	20	(1,605,711)	(1,675,496)
Net Assets		11,075,290	9,238,528
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted funds		8,806,104	7,228,471
Unrestricted funds		2,269,186	2,010,057
Total charity funds		11,075,290	9,238,528

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 22nd June 2022 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 leadership team, which is headed by the Chief Executive.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The directors consider that 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
- Covid19 impact on trading income

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

Reserves Policy

The Directors have considered various factors, including financial risks highlighted above, in assessing the level of required reserves of NCBI. The reserves policy is to allow NCBI to fund working capital shortfalls and reflects the growing nature of the organisation as well as the increasing activities in NCBI.

Total reserves are represented by restricted and unrestricted funds, however restricted funds are not available funds and therefore reserves for the purposes of this policy refer to unrestricted funds that are freely available.

As tangible assets are effectively restricted, in that they are not immediately available, freely available reserves are unrestricted funds (€8.8m) less tangible fixed assets (€4.8m) equating to €4m at year end and the Directors note this is an improved position since 2020 when the balance was €2.2m.

The Directors are of the view that freely available reserves need to be at a level of €5.8m and increase further to a level of €6.4m as resources allow over the course of the current 3 years Strategy cycle 2021 -2023. This policy is in line with Charities SORP (FRS102).

Post Balance Sheet Events

There have been no significant events since the financial year end.

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

Call us on:

1800 911 250

NCBI
Whitworth Road
Drumcondra
Dublin 9

NCBI Group: CHY 20902
NCBI Services: CHY 4626
NCBI Retail: CHY 20619
NCBI Charitable Foundation: CHY 12673

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