



NCBI

Working for People
With Sight Loss

NCBI Gerard Byrne Bursary Awards



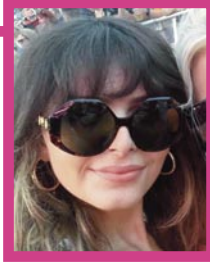
Helping people with sight loss have a brighter future

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NCBI inSight

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Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission – Your Rights Service

When you experience discrimination, you can do something about it.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is both the National Human Rights Institution and the National Equality Body for Ireland, established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The “Your Rights Service” is an information service run by IHREC.

The Your Rights Service can provide you with information about your rights under equality and human rights law in Ireland and what options you may have if you believe you have experienced discrimination or that your rights have been breached.

The Your Rights Service does not provide legal advice, only information. This means that they can tell you what the law says, but they cannot tell you how the law applies to your situation, or what you should do next. You can find more information on the IHREC website www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/ where they answer the following questions:

- What is discrimination?
- What are the different types of discrimination?
- What are the protected grounds under Irish law?
- Which laws protect you from discrimination in relation to work? This includes in relation to recruitment, promotion and retirement.
- Which laws protect you from discrimination when accessing goods or services? This includes in relation to housing and education.



**Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas**

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

- Which law protects you from discrimination when you are entering, or inside a pub, or somewhere else that has a license to sell alcohol?
- What can you do if you believe you have experienced discrimination?

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, or that your rights may have been breached, you can contact the Your Rights Service by:

Phone on **01 8583000** between 9.30am and 1pm
Monday to Friday:

Email at **YourRights@ihrec.ie**, or

Post addressed to: **Your Rights Service, IHREC, 16-22
Green Street, Dublin 7.**

European Disability Card Submission

The European Commission have indicated that by the end of 2023, it will propose an EU-wide Disability Card (EDC) to ensure recognition of disability for people across the EU. The EDC is being proposed based on the experience of people who had encountered problems in being recognised as disabled when travelling to other EU Member States.

A European approach to introducing a Disability Card would have the potential to ensure relevant legislation for the recognition of disability and for effective, equitable access to travel and benefits, such as access to transport, sport, and leisure activities.

NCBI recently made a submission to the EU on the EDC. NCBI supports the European Blind Union (EBU) call on stakeholders at EU and national level to adopt the EU Disability Card and to establish an all-Europe scheme of recognition of disability for equal access to related services.

NCBI recognises the potential of the EDC and made the following recommendations to the EU:

1. Ensure that the principles of mutual recognition and equality between European citizens are embedded in the concept of the EDC.
2. Ensure that the EDC is accessible to all people with disabilities including those who are blind or vision impaired by using accessible formats such as digital formats, tactile surfaces, and the use of Braille.
3. Increase the scope of the EDC to include other everyday activities e.g. banking, shopping, etc.
4. Ensure that the EDC preferential benefits are equitable across the EU for everyone living with disabilities in any Member State.
5. Robust engagement between Member States elected officials and NGOs to ensure widest support possible.



‘There is currently no mutual recognition of disability status between the EU Member States. It can cause difficulties for persons with disabilities travelling in the EU.’

NCBI will continue to keep engaged with all stakeholders regarding the introduction of the EDC and will provide updates regarding any rollout of the cards as and when they are available.

NCBI Advocacy Roadshow



Above and RIGHT:
Participants in the NCBI
Advocacy Roadshows,
meeting in session.



Last September NCBI's Advocacy Team took to the road and held events in libraries in Galway, Letterkenny, Navan, Cork and Wexford. This was a fantastic opportunity to promote the work of the Local Advocacy Networks and for members of the groups to meet in person to discuss access issues in their local area.

NCBI also invited members of the local Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to the Roadshow to introduce the role the PPN plays in ensuring the voices of people with disabilities are central to decision making within local Councils. We were delighted that members of local community and disability groups also attended the Roadshows.

Following the success of the regional events, we closed off the year with an event in Dublin entitled "Achieving Change Together". Advocates, service users and their family members were invited to this discussion forum to explore how we can collectively work together to make

Ireland more inclusive for people who are blind or vision impaired.

The session heard how achieving change is possible from our keynote speaker Fergus Finlay who gave a very inspiring talk in which he shared his wealth of campaigning experience across the disability and children sector. We also heard about the efforts our Local Advocacy Networks are undertaking through a panel discussion at which our advocates shared their successes and motivations for getting involved in advocacy.

A key focus of this event was to highlight the importance of the Public Sector Duty and how this can be used to affect change. Jacqueline Healy from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) gave the session a very informative presentation on this topic. Participants shared their priority issues for people who are blind or vision impaired which will be the focus of the Advocacy Department's work in 2023.

Meet a LAN Facilitator

My name is Cameron Relihan. I'm 20, I study in the University of Limerick, and my hobbies include writing, cooking and watching films. I live in Clare, close to Limerick City, but still far away enough to claim I'm from the sticks.

I was diagnosed with optic nerve hypoplasia at the age of five. For the first few years of my life, I was constantly walking into walls and tables. There's a story of me at the zoo, around four-years-of-age, looking in the wrong direction for the lion. I quickly began the diagnostic process soon after, and, once diagnosed, I began frequently working with the NCBI.

After my Leaving Certificate, I decided I wanted to give back to the NCBI — after years of benefiting from their work. I contacted my local branch, who told me of the Local Advocacy Networks (LAN) meetings. Following the summer recess, I joined the Midwest LAN, and when I was asked to become a facilitator, I eagerly said yes.

Since then, I've been part of various campaigns within my LAN. More recently, the library campaign has diverted a lot of our collective attention. This campaign focuses on making libraries in the area, and eventually nationwide, more inclusive to members of the visually impaired community, by redirecting them to the NCBI Library if they require a more accessible text. Other campaigns I've worked on include the Bus Éireann campaign, and the Clear Our Paths campaign.

For 2023, the Midwest LAN are open to tackling a new issue. The library campaign, although still ongoing, has taken on a new form, and our progress is halted for now. I'm excited for the upcoming year, working with my new co-facilitator, Anthony, and the actions we will take to ensure our region becomes as accessible as possible for our community.



Are you a person living with sight loss?



Would you like to get involved in positive change for people who are blind, or vision impaired at a local and national level?



Join one of our Local Advocacy Networks and/or sign up for regular updates on our National Advocacy Network mailing list.

NAN

What is the National Advocacy Network?

The NAN is mailing list that allows us to share our updates and news about NCBI's advocacy and policy work.

By joining the NAN, you can keep updated with the issues that impact on you and on the community of people who are blind or vision impaired in Ireland.

LANs

What are Local Advocacy Networks?

A LAN is a group of local people who are blind or vision impaired and keen to advocate for change on issues affecting them in their local areas while also lending their support to NCBI's wider national advocacy campaigns.

The LAN members are supported and trained by the NCBI advocacy team.

How do I join?

Join a Local Advocacy Network near you and sign up for the National Advocacy Network by emailing campaigns@ncbi.ie or tel: **01 830 7033** and ask for the Advocacy Team.



Working for People with Sight Loss

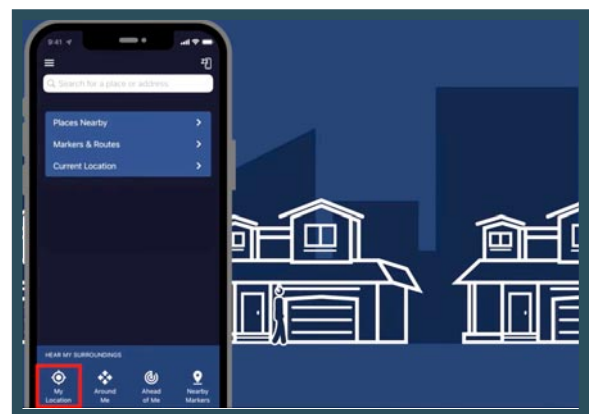
NCBI explores the art of what's possible in a new era for Soundscape app



Microsoft Soundscape was a project from Microsoft Research that explored the use of innovative audio-based technology to enable people to build a richer awareness of their surroundings, thus becoming more confident to get around. NCBI partnered with Microsoft in August 2021 to launch the app in Ireland and it has since become an important navigation tool for many blind and vision impaired users.

Unlike step-by-step navigation apps, Soundscape is unique in its use of 3D audio cues to enrich ambient awareness and provided a new way to relate to the environment. It provided comfort in unfamiliar spaces, supporting individuals in making mental maps and personal route choices.

The Soundscape research project recently reached its conclusion. The project code has been released as open-source software. NCBI is delighted to have joined forces with a newly formed consortium in order to provide continuity of service for existing app users and



take Soundscape forward in what is a new era for the app.

By leading out on the future development of Soundscape, NCBI hopes to provide more opportunities for people who are blind or vision impaired to have access to the app and to be empowered to explore the world around them.

If you are an existing user of the Soundscape app and require mobility support around these changes please email hello@possibilitylab.ie.

Gerard Byrne Bursary

NCBI was delighted to present the three recipients of the 2022 Gerard Byrne Bursary for third level students who are blind or vision impaired in December. Each student who receives the Bursary will be supported with a scholarship set at €1,500 per year for the duration of their studies.

The recipients this year were:

- **Jack Spillane**, 19, from Co. Laois who is in his first year studying English Literature and Drama at Trinity College Dublin.
- **Maya Flynn**, 21, from Greenhill Heights, Co Wicklow who is in third year studying Speech and Language Therapy at University College Cork.
- **Rafiat Agbona**, 21, from Newbridge, Co. Kildare who is in her fourth year studying Law and Criminology at Maynooth University.

This year's bursaries were presented to the students at a ceremony in NCBI Tallaght by Mr. John Kearney CEO of National Council for Special Education.

Mr Kearney said at the presentation: "I am delighted to have the opportunity to present these three exceptional students with the Gerard Byrne Bursary awards this year and I wish them all the best in their future studies and career. Increasing the number of people who are blind or vision impaired in third level education is essential, and these bursaries from NCBI go a long way in supporting students each year. We all recognise the value of education in successfully achieving employment and any opportunity to support students in education is essentially supporting their future potential and careers."

Toni O'Dwyer, National Services Manager for the Children and Young People Team added: "We wish Jack, Maya and Rafiat the best of luck in the coming years and we are delighted to be involved with their journey. NCBI is funding the Gerard Byrne Bursary for its sixth year because we are all too aware of the appetite for young people who are blind or vision



Jack Spillane, recipient and John Kearney, CEO, National Council for Special Education.

impaired to continue their education into third level. Increased representation of people who are blind or vision impaired in education and employment is something NCBI will continue to champion. It is so important that we support anyone with sight loss who wishes to progress in education so that they can thrive in all aspects of life, with the same opportunities as a sighted person."

All three students were awarded their busaries at a lovely event which was held at NCBI's offices in Tallaght. Recipients were joined by family members and friends at the event, which made the experience even more special and memorable. A group of local secondary school students who may be eligible to apply for a bursary in the future also joined the ceremony and had a glimpse at what could be coming down the road for them in the very near future. This was an important part of the celebration of the bursary as NCBI will continue to look for ways to improve access to further education for students who are currently making their way through secondary school and who should have an equal footing



Rafiat Agbona, recipient and John Kearney, CEO, National Council for Special Education.

to their sighted peers in terms of how and where they can progress their education.

Now in its 6th year, the Bursary has been awarded to 17 students in total to date. The courses and careers being pursued by people with sight loss are wide and varied and include business, STEM, education and politics. The Gerard Byrne Bursary consists of an annual grant for these undergraduate students who are blind or vision impaired and who are studying on a full-time basis at a recognised educational institution in the Republic of Ireland. The value of each scholarship is set at €1,500 per year and continues for the duration of the undergraduate programme chosen by the Bursary winners.

Across the education sector, blind and vision-impaired people make up just 1.8% of students with disabilities and represent the smallest single grouping of students with disabilities studying at third level (AHEAD, 2020). In reviewing the longer-term trends, in the last 10 years, the numbers of students with sensory disabilities has



Maya Flynn, recipient and John Kearney, CEO, National Council for Special Education.

grown at less than half of the rate of students with disabilities more generally (AHEAD, 2020).

In a bid to tackle these low numbers and provide insight into the experiences of students who are blind or vision impaired, NCBI recently launched its Equitable Education Report which details the challenges faced by children and young people who are blind or vision impaired at all levels of education in Ireland and proposes solutions to better support these students in their educational pursuits and their access to learning, which has a huge impact on their ability to develop the skills to support them as they transition through education.

The report, based on the experiences of students and their families, contains a series of recommendations aimed at the Government and state agencies to ensure that all students, regardless of their level of vision, have access to an equitable and inclusive educational experience.

Success in 2022 for ETA & WIPO Teams

The 18-month VisAble project, run by the Employment, Training and Academia (ETA) team at NCBI, ended in 2022 with overall results exceeding the proposed targets in almost all outputs.

The project has seen 44 people with a disability progress to employment, a further 107 engage in employment activation activities and 114 engage in employment skills training. In addition to that, 26 employers created opportunities for people with disabilities, and 70 people were receiving assistive technology or equipment. Finally, an additional 24 people with disability progressed to further education or formal education at the end of the project.

Sight loss toolkit

Throughout 2022, the ETA team worked to raise awareness of visual impairment through external collaborations with AHEAD, Irish Guide Dogs, Towards Work, Employers for Change and the Business Disability Forum. This work included the development of a sight loss toolkit sponsored by Roche and participation in AHEADs WAMinar series.

Internally, the team worked closely with Labs, Retail and Foundation teams, building connections within the organisation, by providing internships, work experience opportunities and employment. The team members continue to develop professionally, through Universal Design for Learning digital badge and CPL training on best recruitment practices. Alongside this we have been developing a Barista training programme specifically integrating vision-based strategies in collaboration with the Children and Young Persons Team targeting Transition Year Students to provide more tangible vocational opportunities.

Finally, the National Training Centre successfully implemented the QQI Level 4 Employment Skills 4M0857 programme, while the new Level 5 in Retail Skills (5M2105) was formally approved and will

commence in February 2023. Brilliantly, we also received a grant from the Community Foundation for Ireland to resource a worker to facilitate 40 Ukrainian refugees with pathways to employment.

Workplace Integration and Partner Officers (WIPOs) are part of the ETA team alongside Employment Advisors, Community Resource Workers & Occupational Therapists and Tutors at NCBI's National Training Centre, all of whom are overseen by Lifecycle Manager Jodie McGriele.

A busy year

As we mentioned in the last issue of inSight, WIPOs (Martina Melvan and Shane Merritt) had a busy year, building connections with different employers and organisations, as well as researching the current Irish working climate in a bid to benefit the people we work with on a daily basis.

While there is a good indication that employers want to do better in terms of making their teams more diverse and inclusive, there is still a long way to go, especially when it comes to understanding sight loss.

Martina and Shane identified that raising awareness is one of the paths we can take in making employers more open to hiring people with disabilities and creating more inclusive workplaces.

Diversity Week

Since the last issue of inSight, they did several training sessions and in-person events. These included collaboration with University College Cork, whose Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion team invited them to present on the topic of visual impairment in employment, as well as to be a part of their Diversity Week on campus in November 2022.

The WIPOs also organised an in-person educational event for Circle K's HR department, where they shared



NCBI's Workplace Integration and Partner Officers (WIPOs) Shane Merritt and Martina Melvan with Siobhan O'Brien of UCC.

some practical advice on how to make job advertisements and their workplace more accessible. As part of the event, Circle K's HR team got more familiar with the different assistive technologies and tools people who are blind or vision impaired might use to efficiently navigate their workplace and workload.

Another company that requested awareness training from the WIPOs was Pfizer, as they currently have an intern with visual impairment on board, and they wanted to ensure the whole team has a better understanding of distinct types of visual impairment, as well as tools and supports available for their current and future employees.

Supports in the Workplace

In addition to this, Business Disability Forum (a UK organisation that works with more than 500 international employers) invited WIPOs to present at one of their online events back in December 2022 and discuss the supports employers can provide to people who are blind

or vision impaired in the workplace.

Finally, WIPOs completed a report titled "Defining the Employment Experience", in which they interviewed people who are blind or vision impaired about their experiences with finding employment. The results of this research will be published on the NCBI website, together with recommendations on how employers can make their workplace more accessible and inclusive.

Stepping into 2023, Martina and Shane plan to continue to strengthen existing relationships with different employers and organisations, encouraging them to provide opportunities for people who are blind or vision impaired and who are seeking employment.

All efforts by the team will be reflected in an expanded section of the NCBI website, which will provide resources and information for employers and businesses, as well as the ETA Newsletter that will present the ETA team near the end of February 2023.

Volunteer Peer Group Facilitators Required



A 'peer' group of NCBI service users in an informal meeting.

NCBI views each of our peer groups as an important resource and support, with the capacity to impact positively on participants. During the last few years, following the impact of Covid 19, we developed many new groups to keep people in touch with each other even when they can't physically be together. Many of these groups have moved to online engagement which has allowed us to keep people connected no matter where they are across the country.

New opportunities

Our groups can vary in their purpose and scope, ranging from traditional peer support, to special interest groups and more informal gatherings for general discussion. Given the importance of this service, we hope to maintain our commitment to existing groups and potentially develop new opportunities further down the line.

To strengthen this ambition, we are looking to recruit volunteers as peer group facilitators – mainly for online groups. It is our hope that we can develop a pool of available committed volunteers to join our team in the coming weeks and months. As part of these roles, the group facilitators will be required to act as the stable and fixed central point of contact for service users who wish to attend or who already attend one of the groups currently run by NCBI. The facilitators will be required to host, supervise and facilitate the smooth and fair running of the group, ensuring all participants are heard, have a chance to participate and to provide guidance to the group on organising the content of each meeting.

Although prior experience of group facilitation is preferable, we will provide access to funded level 6 training in developing the appropriate skills. More details can be found on ncbi.ie and expressions of interest can be sent to peter.otoole@ncbi.ie

New Look Charity Partnership 2023

NCBI and New Look were joined by their ambassador, Mrs Brown's Boys star Fiona O'Carroll, to formally announce our charity partnership which will benefit both organisations greatly. Ms O'Carroll was joined by NCBI Foundation and Retail members and New Look staff at New Look's flagship store in Dublin's Jervis Shopping Centre for the photocall.

NCBI is at the fore of pre-loved and sustainable retail in Ireland and this aligns with New Look's commitment to its sustainability strategy and its Kind to our Core initiative. The partnership will see NCBI receive New Look's end-of-season stock to redistribute across NCBI stores around Ireland to ensure that its clothing and accessories stay in circulation for the long-haul and out of landfill, where it can cause a negative environmental impact.

New Look will further support NCBI through its various staff initiatives which will raise vital funds and awareness for NCBI's services and supports which are available to adults and children who are blind or vision impaired in Ireland. NCBI's services are all designed to bolster confidence and independence by delivering orientation and mobility skills training, technology training, support in education, employment as well as sport and leisure activities. From February onwards, New Look customers will also be encouraged to make a donation to NCBI at the point of purchase.



L-R: Joanne McCarney, NCBI Fundraising Executive; Rob Jackman, New Look Regional Business Manager; Fiona O'Carroll; Paulo Almeida, NCBI Area Manager; Aisling O'Meara, New Look CSR Coordinator; Rachel White, New Look Dublin Shop Manager.

London Fundraising dinner for NCBI and Fighting Blindness

NCBI wishes to extend a special thank you to Irish TV and film star Victoria Smurfit and her daughter, Evie Baxter, who recently hosted a fundraising dinner in London for NCBI & Fighting Blindness. The event was held at chef and restaurateur Richard Corrigan's Mayfair Restaurant. On the night, in partnership with Fighting Blindness, NCBI launched the Caroline Smurfit bursary, in memory of Victoria's mum who passed away in early 2022.

The event was a star-studded affair, with stars like Ronan and Storm Keating also in attendance. We also want to offer a big thanks to our host on the night, James Nesbitt, who continues to generously support the sight loss community in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



Actor James Nesbitt speaking at the London fundraiser.

Vision Walk in Spain!



Vision Walk 2023
Win a 6-day walking trip to Marbella, Spain.
Join walkers from all over the world on
4th-9th October 2023.



Tickets €3
50 guaranteed winners
*Winners will be announced on 18th August 2023
All funds raised will go to NCBI

MARBELLA 4 DAYS WALKING For more information: foundation@ncbi.ie **NCBI**
Charity No 12673

Do you want to join #TeamNCBI in Marbella, Spain on October 4th-9th 2023 for our inaugural Vision Walk? Your 6-day trip includes flights, accommodation and a gala dinner which will take place on one special night during the trip. You get to choose how many days you walk – it can be just one day or you can walk for all four days. Each day, you will also get to choose your distance - 10, 20 or 30 kilometres a day. This promises to be a lot of fun mixed into the perfect holiday!

The atmosphere is amazing around Marbella. Plaza del Mar at the Paseo Maritimo is the starting point for the 10, 20 and 30 km routes which will lead you through the city, nature and along the beach. On the last day, the 8th of October, you will walk the Via Gladiolo (gladiolus being the Roman symbol for victory) back to the Plaza del Mar where you will be welcomed with loud cheers. There are two ways through which you can make sure that you're on the plane with us on the 4th of October:

1. Fundraise for this trip – Commit to fundraising €1500 to book your place on this trip.
2. Win this Trip — Pop into any of our NCBI retail stores and purchase a ticket for €3 which enters you in a draw to win a place on the trip.

Log onto www.Marbella4dayswalking.com or email Fundraising@ncbi.ie to find out more!

Move Into The Light —2023



NCBI is delighted to confirm that **Move into the Light** is back again in 2023! Are you ready to move for 30 mins for 30 days this March? Register today and get your FREE Move into the Light T-shirt.

Email Fundraising@ncbi.ie for more information or visit ncbi.ie to register for the event through our dedicated event page.

Foundation Christmas Postal Appeal Update

The Foundation Team would like to express our sincerest thanks to everyone who generously donated to our Christmas post appeal, you all made sure it was a success. With your help we managed to raise an amazing €57,000, which is a fantastic achievement.

The funds raised in this appeal will go towards helping all our services users in your communities.

We are working on our Easter letter at the moment and hope to have it out to you in the coming weeks. If you don't already receive NCBI appeal letters and you would like to, please do let us know at fundraising@ncbi.ie and we can ensure that you will be added to our list for future mailings.

Thank you once again for your support and generous gifts throughout 2022 and we look forward to having you with us throughout 2023.

New NCBI Retail store for Portarlington



Staff and service users at the opening of the new store.

NCBI, Portarlington opened at 5 The Tannery, Droughill, Portarlington on Wednesday 7th December 2022. NCBI Retail was delighted for this opportunity to open a store in what is a prosperous and busy midland town.

The unit underwent a full refurbishment and was fit out with our new industrial store concept. Small but spacious, with an abundance of natural light, the store has been a much anticipated and welcomed addition to the town. The store launched with a vibrant seasonal offer across ladieswear, menswear, kids wear, home-ware and accessories.

Service user Marian Murray cut the ribbon accompanied by a group of fellow service users and friends. Dawn Mooney, Store Manager of NCBI Edenderry was key to the successful opening of Portarlington.



Just a small sample of what's on offer in the Homeware section of the Portarlington Shop.

NCBI Retail on McCurtain Street Fermoy

NCBI, Fermoy opened at 8-10 McCurtain Street, Fermoy on Thursday 8th December 2022. This was a relocation from an existing unit in Fermoy. A larger unit was needed to meet the full potential of the town.

The store boasts an extensive shop floor, large windows and original features that added a special creative element to the new store concept. Stocked from the warehouse and stock from the existing store, the store launched with a 'best of' package across ladieswear, menswear, kids wear, homeware and accessories.

Furniture and Vintage were new additions to the Fermoy stock range, offering a real point of difference in the Fermoy market. These departments have thrived since opening and their success continues to grow from week to week.

An epic store opening cannot happen without the amazing team at NCBI Retail so we say a special thank you to Justina from Roscrea, Paula from Mallow, and Shauna from Mitchelstown.

Fermoy long-term resident and legendary creator of 'Riverdance' and 'Lord of the Dance' Michael Flatley, visited on 4th January to show his support.



L-R: Fermoy store manager, Laura Nolan, with Michael Flatley and area manager, Elaine Williams, pictured outside NCBI Fermoy.

NCBI RETAIL—

NCBI Retail recently hired an eCommerce Manager to grow our online eCommerce presence and support selling pre-loved and donated items online.

Our eCommerce Manager has been live in role since October and has launched our presence on three different 3rd party marketplaces as part of the eCommerce strategy to expand our reach and offerings. The decision was made to first sell on existing 3rd party marketplaces as we could easily target an existing audience who are interested in shopping preloved and sustainably.

Thriftify

Since March 2022 NCBI has been available on Thriftify.ie. Thriftify is an online reseller platform which partners with charities to allow them to upload and sell their donated items online in the absence of their own online platform.

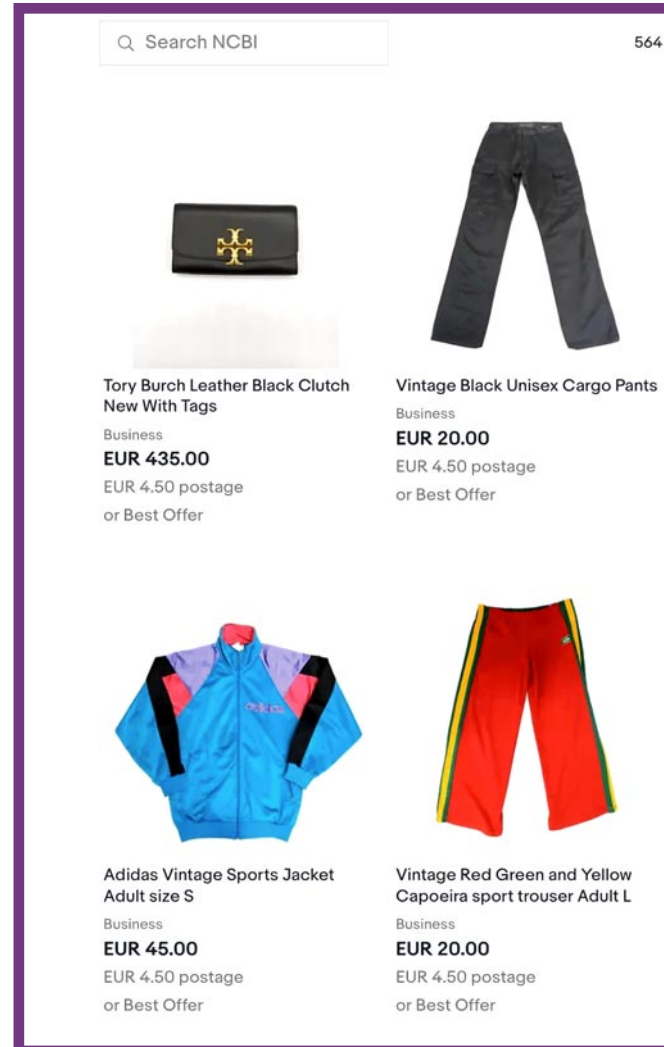
Through NCBI's partnership with Thriftify NCBI received an ongoing donation of luxury designer stock from an online retailer. The eCommerce team based in Tallaght are responsible for photographing and uploading this stock to the platform and picking and processing orders that come through. This partnership has been very beneficial for NCBI Retail.

At the end of December 2022 the eCommerce team began to upload stock from our vintage range on to the platform which has piqued the interest of customers all over Ireland, which is brilliant to see.

Vesitaire

Through Thriftify in December of last year we also began selling a small selection of the high-end designer stock on Vesitaire.

These were handpicked by the Thriftify team and professionally photographed and uploaded on to the platform by the team. Vesitaire allows us to tap in to an audience who are interested in preloved high-end designer stock. This audience are specifically seeking



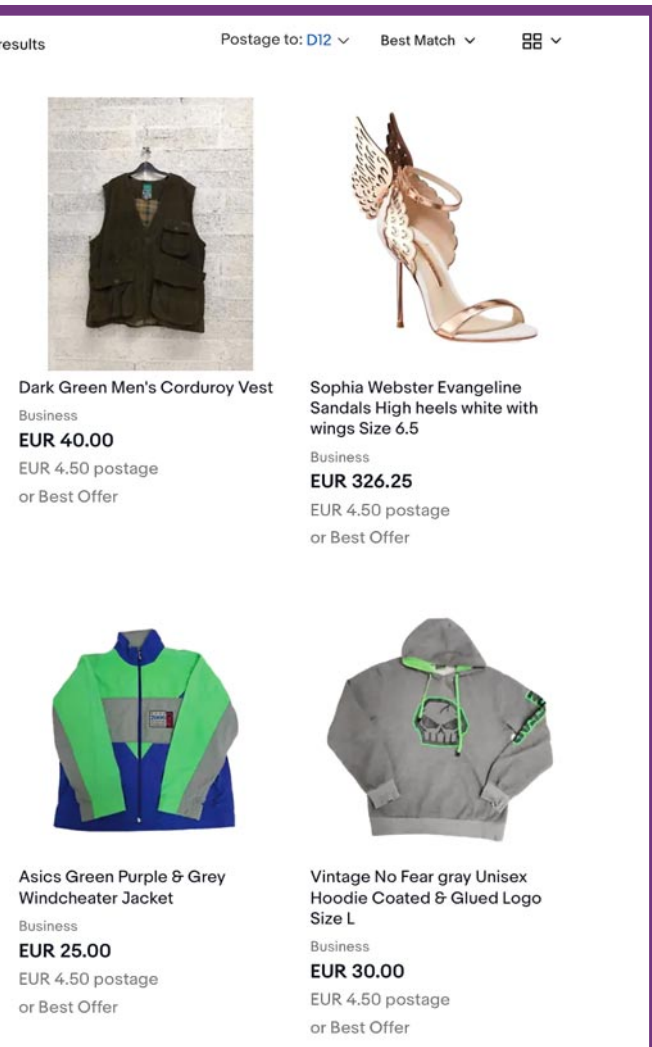
high-end brands at a reduced price and has added another string to our bow. Since December we have sold 10 items on the platform, which is a brilliant start and this platform will continue to be beneficial for us in supporting NCBI's wider goals in service provision. The retail team did not want to put all their eggs in one basket, however, and decided to target other 3rd party reseller platforms.

Ebay

Ebay have a charity programme which allows charities to avail of a discounted commission rate & additional marketing support from the Ebay team.

The NCBI Ebay store launched at the start of December.

eCommerce Growth



To date it has sold 41 items, the proceeds of which will all go back into NCBI to support people who are blind or vision impaired.

There are currently 596 items live on our Ebay and we sell on multiple Ebay marketplaces including Ireland, Germany, the UK and the US.

The majority of the stock we have sold is from our vintage range but we do sell a few donated designer items. The highest priced item we sold was a Balmain dress for €400, so congratulations to the team on that big win!

We are aiming to expand this collection to include more

collector and designer items as well as smaller antique items. To date we have seen orders come through from Ireland, Australia, the UK and the US.

Haru

In late November we also launched our presence on a third-party marketplace called Haru who are based in Belfast. We initially supplied them with 1,000 items of our branded vintage stock. They work with other charities listing on their behalf as well as end of line stock from other retailers. To date Haru has been our top performing platform for selling vintage and we have sold a total of 105 items on the platform.

Haru upload the items and manage order fulfilment on our behalf from their warehouse in Belfast. Haru gives NCBI & ForSight a good opportunity to test the UK reseller market and will help influence our own online price point. We will also benefit from any marketing campaigns they promote.

Depop

We launched our Depop in January of this year. This platform focuses on our vintage range and appeals to a younger demographic (18-25 years) similar to that of the student demographic which we have seen much success with at the college pop-ups. NCBI's presence on Depop will allow us to further our sustainability agenda among younger members of the population who are active on this platform and who are conscious about the impact that their fashion choices may have on the environment.

Many of the UK charities have seen success selling on this platform including Barnardos, British Heart Foundation and Oxfam who opened a dedicated music festival shop account.

To date we have sold 25 items on the platform and we will continue to list here as our vintage stock offering increases and gathers in popularity and scope throughout 2023.

NCBI Nominated for Five Spider Awards



The Spider Awards — dubbed “The Oscars of Ireland’s digital industry” — is the longest running digital awards programme in Ireland.

In March this year, just as Ireland will be toasting a record number of nominations at the actual Oscars in Los Angeles, closer to home NCBI will be featuring prominently in the annual digital Spider Awards in Dublin. Not for the first time either – last year NCBI was nominated for five Spider awards and brought home one for Best Remote Team.

The 5 categories in which NCBI has been nominated this year are:

- Best App – myNCBI SmartHub
- Best Podcast – Talking Technology with NCBI Labs
- Digital Team of the Year – NCBI Labs
- Best Use of Disruptive Technology – myNCBI SmartHub
- Best in Universal Design – Vision Sports Ireland Website.

The visionsports.ie website was nominated by NCBI Labs who worked closely on its development with Vision Sports staff. The result was a fully inclusive and accessible Vision Sports Ireland website that provides a great user experience for all its visitors.

Members of both the NCBI Labs and Vision Sports Ireland teams will be present at The Spiders — taking place on March 3rd at the Mansion House in Dublin. This will mark the 26th anniversary of the prestigious Spider Awards.

Digital transformation

When the Spider Awards first launched 26 years ago, the internet and websites were the prime focus, recognising the early adopters of new technology. Since then, digital transformation has impacted every corner of the modern world and the Spiders aim to award the leaders of this digitalisation.

The Spiders adjudication committee will be made up of Ireland’s leading web experts, business leaders, luminaries and visionaries. Previous winners have been on the cutting edge of their chosen fields and have since gone on to great success in their respective industries.

Labs Virtual Courses Update



By Dereck Carolan

NCBI Labs has had another busy number of months on the virtual training front.

All our courses start at introduction level and we are constantly adding to our course offerings to enable participants to develop their skills further by attending follow-up courses on their chosen accessible software.

The following is the list of Virtual Courses on offer:

Smart Speaker Courses – Amazon Echo + GoogleNest

In these courses we explore the range of smart speakers available. We cover creating timers, reminders, setting alarms, shopping lists, and initiating information searches by speaking to your device.

iPad Course

Every iPad has numerous built-in accessibility options that enables anyone with a visual impairment to use the device independently. These include the ability to speak to your device to request information, use of magnification and speech output to help read information displayed.

Touch Typing Course

Our Touch Typing Course is for anyone who would like to learn how to Touch Type. This absolute beginner's course includes step by step, instructor-led training on the QWERTY keyboard, ergonomics, and correct posture, achieving accuracy and fluency.

Screen Reading Courses – JAWS & NVDA

Screen readers are software programmes that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer. We offer courses in both JAWS and NVDA, two of the more popular Screen Readers used on a standard Window PC.

Uncontracted Braille Course

This 10-week course will introduce you to the Unified English Braille uncontracted code. You'll learn to read and write the letters of the alphabet and numbers and you'll develop an awareness of the broader English Braille code.

Sign up today

For information or to chat with any of our trainers, please email: training@ncbi.ie or call **1800 911 250**.

Five things to do with



From recording workouts to making contactless payments, David Redmond brings us his top 5 things to do with the Apple Watch.

by David Redmond

If you were lucky enough to treat yourself or to receive an Apple Watch as a Christmas present, you have really bagged yourself a brilliant device. We all know the Apple Watch has loads of great features, but like any new technology product it can be tough to know where to start. Technology wearables like the Apple Watch can be an intimidating prospect to those who haven't used something similar before, but there is nothing to be scared of as they really can open up your world to no end!

In this article we'll give you examples of five things you can do to get started with your Apple Watch. We will give a brief description of the five features below.

1) Workouts

For the sporty types out there, tracking the progress of your exercise can be part of your overall workout routine, so using features on your wearable can be hugely beneficial. Not only can you track your progress,

but The Apple Watch Workouts app is a handy way to help you get some exercise if you're unsure of where to start. You can do all sorts of workouts from running to dancing, and the watch will speak as you hit notable milestones along the way.

You can set targets for your workouts, and everything can be started using Siri. For example, you can say "start a 10-minute indoor walk" or "start a one kilometre swim". The target is then set, I hear three beeps to count me down, then a longer beep to start my session. If I have VoiceOver turned on, this countdown takes place with speech, but you don't need VoiceOver on for your watch to speak your goals. It's a fun way to stay motivated and is certainly a great feature on the watch.

2) Apple Pay

Tapping our many devices is becoming more and more normal throughout society and having the facility available to you on your wrist is a real step forward. This is my personal favourite Apple Watch feature. When you're in a shop and it's time to pay, all you do is double tap the side button, and tap your watch off the payment terminal to pay. That's it, no entering codes, no wondering is that the right card, it just works. If you're a VoiceOver user you get a handy voice saying,

Apple Watch



“hold near reader”, but the feature works the same regardless of VoiceOver being on or off. You get a nice chime when the payment goes through, so you always have confirmation that everything has worked as expected.

In some shops you might struggle to guide your wrist to the payment terminal, but I’ve noticed that more shops nowadays use handheld readers. More often than not the cashier does the guiding, and I personally haven’t found this to be as big an issue as one might expect. Overall, this is a great feature, and one that has finally helped me say goodbye to cash. I’ll never be left guessing between a 20 and a 50 again.

3) Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness might be a new one to many people, but it is becoming more and more popular as it allows us to fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. With this in mind, the Mindfulness app on Apple Watch is a great way to help you relax.

The app has both deep breathing and reflections, and lets you do between one and five-minute sessions. The

app is fairly accessible, which is a huge plus.

4) Notifications

Bing, you’ve got a notification.

The watch is amazing for notifications, especially if you’re a VoiceOver user. When the notification comes in you can just tap the screen, and it’s read instantly. I wouldn’t really recommend this for low vision users who don’t like screen readers, but if you are a screen reader user it can really reduce the need to check your phone.

From RTÉ News alerts to text and WhatsApp messages, just being able to hear what’s come in with a simple tap is truly amazing.

5) Voice memos

Using voice memos can be a great way of verbally making lists or reminders for yourself. The Apple Watch has a fantastic voice recorder. It’s simple, but it works really well. The sound quality is fantastic, and the app is really accessible with VoiceOver.

If you’re looking for a quick way to record classes, notes, or any other sort of audio, the Apple Watch voice Memos app is a good way to go.

Labs Product Review –

Reviewed by: Mairead O'Mahony

Description

The Hable One is a small light weight Braille Bluetooth keyboard around the size of an iPhone 6 that allows you to entirely control your smart phone/tablet. It has six Braille buttons and two function keys for typing and intuitive operation of Voiceover or Talkback and connects to your phone/tablet via Bluetooth. It is a great device if you love to type in Braille, you are learning Braille or if you have difficulty controlling your phone/tablet using gestures.

Unboxing / What are my first impressions of the item?

The Hable One comes in a box with a USB C charging cable, a lanyard wrist strap and documentation. I was really impressed with how small and light the Hable One was and was delighted that it would easily fit in my pocket. Pairing it to my iPhone took no time at all as it was a very straight forward process. When pairing, the Hable automatically recognises if you are pairing it to an iOS or Android device and puts it into the correct mode. For a Braille product, I was disappointed that it didn't come with a Braille manual as it would have been more efficient to jump to parts of the manual I was looking for.

I have been using this for a few days, how do I feel about it?

It did take a little time to get used to the feeling of how the Hable one is held and the typing experience on it as it is like a little remote. It isn't really designed to be used on a surface so it is held in both hands with both hands rapped around the six Braille dots. I downloaded the manual and straight away I was able to navigate my phone and complete tasks using the Hable One. I started creating notes, emails, sending messages,



browsing the internet and found it much more efficient than using the on-screen keyboard of my phone. As there is no Braille display on the Hable one, I found the haptic feedback really useful and some of the commands were very intuitive. For example, holding down the letter H would bring you to the home screen and holding down the letter B would bring you back a screen.

Is it Accessible?

The Hable One is completely accessible. It has large keys, and they are very well spaced out so they can be distinguished easily.

What did I like?

With an Airpod in my ear and Voiceover on my iPhone I loved the freedom of having the phone in my bag or another room and being able to unlock my phone, send a message, check my shopping list while in the shop and email or browse the internet without having to touch

Hable One Braille Keyboard



my phone. Also, the battery lasts for a few weeks. There is a combination of dots to check the battery status and once pressed you get a series of vibrations that indicate if the battery level is high, medium, or low.

What didn't I like?

When typing in grade 2 Braille, sometimes Voiceover wouldn't read it back properly. For example, if I wrote the contraction for "and" Voiceover would read the letter D when you typed but when you read back over it the full word has been inserted. I found that a little distracting as I would spend time checking over the text to see if the word was inserted and eventually, I started to ignore that bug.

Did it meet my expectations?

The Hable One met my expectations as I love being able to type in Braille and I was easily able to carry it around in my pocket. It wasn't just a keyboard; it was an assistant to my smart phone.

What improvements, if any, would I like to see in this product?

For a premium priced product, I feel the quality should be more durable as it feels very plasticky and I would be worried that if it fell on tiles it might crack. I would love to have a manual built into the Hable One menu and also a search function.

Would I recommend this item to others?

I would recommend the Hable One if you like typing in Braille, or if you are learning Braille or if you have difficulty using the gestures on your phone/tablet.

Is there other/competing technology you have tried, similar to this item?

The Orbit Writer is a similar device to the Hable One, but it is designed to be used on a surface rather than in the air. From online research, the Hable One seems to be more intuitive and is the preference for people who want to use a Braille keyboard.



Broadcasts
24/7

Ireland's first dedicated audio stream for blind and vision impaired listeners.

You can listen to NCBI Live through the NCBI website or through the NCBI Smart Hub which is activated using a smart speaker such as Alexa or Google.

