

inSight

Magazine

Vol. 24, NO. 2 Summer 2021



NCBI

Working for People
With Sight Loss

Sean
Gallagher
Entrepreneur



inSight Contents:

NCBI Policy & Advocacy

Pages 3 - 7

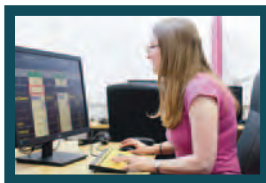
- How accessible are streaming services for blind and vision impaired users?
- Eye Clinic Liaison Officer service campaign.
- NCBI — approved Housing Body status.
- 'Change Your View' campaign.



NCBI Services

Pages 8 - 18

- NCBI employment skills for people who are blind or vision impaired.
- Camp Abilities 2021.
- Getting around safely.
- Adapt Programme.
- MayFest 40th Anniversary — Reeling in the years!
- Lego Braille bricks in Ireland.



NCBI People Profile

We feature Sean Gallagher, Entrepreneur.

See Pages 12 - 13.



NCBI Retail

Pages 19 - 20

- We Need to Talk about Charity Shops!
- NCBI senior management help out for shops reopening.



NCBI Foundation

Page 21

- NCBI provides support and services to almost 55,000 people in Ireland. You can help us to continue this vital support. By remembering NCBI in your Will, 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

NCBI Technology

Pages 22 - 23

- Introducing Sky Box Q.
- Making your home smarter.



NCBI inSight

(Incorporating The Blind Citizen 1923) is published four times a year by: NCBI, Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 830 7033 Fax: 01 8307 787 email: info@ncbi.ie website: www.ncbi.ie
Editor: Frank Callery, Mobile: 087 6724097 email: f.callery@gmail.com
Printed by: PB Print Solutions Tel: 353 86 2511640.

How Accessible Are Streaming Services for Blind or Vision Impaired Users?

We have all benefited from our streaming service of choice since Ireland's first lockdown last March. Services like Netflix, Disney+ and NowTV have become synonymous with passing the time now. But how accessible are these streaming services to people who are blind or vision impaired? A recent study carried out by Lenstore.co.uk has given us the answer to that question — and it's rather disappointing.

Now TV provides movie, entertainment, sport, and reality television titles. The Lenstore research found that it does not offer any audio description services on any titles available. Netflix UK and Ireland has over 6,300 titles available to users, but surprisingly, only 25.4% of these titles have audio description available to them. This means that only one in four titles available on Netflix is fully accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired. Some of Netflix most popular titles, such as Line of Duty, 12 Years a Slave, and Friends do not have an audio description option.

Lenstore compared this with Disney+, who have over 1,000 TV and movie titles available on their service. The audio descriptive availability on



these titles is much higher, at 62.6% as of January 2021. Ideally, all titles should have audio description available, but with almost two thirds available with audio description, Disney+ is off to a good start.

Comparing these rates with RTE is a sorely disappointing exercise however. The current target of audio description in Irish televised broadcasting is 5%, as set out by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI). RTE fulfills this requirement by buying in programming from the UK with audio description already available. Furthermore, only 6% of programming available on RTÉjr is audio described. Targets set by the BAI for 2023 are 10% for Irish programming, however this is less than half the rate already available on Netflix. It certainly begins a conversation around the meaningful inclusivity of streaming services compared to our regular broadcasters.

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer Service Campaign

NCBI is actively trying to expand its Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) service nationwide to ensure it is available in all ophthalmology clinics. Presently, the service is only available in Dublin's Mater Hospital, Temple Street Hospital, The Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and Crumlin Childrens' Hospitals.



An ECLO performs a vital role within the eye clinic — liaising with clinical staff, offering emotional support and providing information about community rehabilitation services. Feedback on the ECLO service has been overwhelmingly positive. An evaluation identified that:

- 94% of clinicians reported the ECLO service fills a gap in support which would not otherwise be offered by the eye clinic.
- 88% of patients reported improved emotional well-being after meeting the ECLO.
- Due to the ECLOs intervention, almost 90% of patients supported are now being actively supported to maintain their independence across local community.

In April NCBI wrote to Minister for Health

Stephen Donnelly, the Health Spokespeople for each government party and the 26 TDs who serve in the HSE's CHO areas where the extension of the ECLO service is being proposed. NCBI is urging the HSE to fund seven ECLO posts in total.

This action compliments the extensive advocacy mobilized by NCBI's Local Advocacy Networks, who have been lobbying their local politicians, in highlighting the need for this service, regionally. Over 20 advocates from every corner of Ireland also added their name to a national petition calling for the ECLO services, and these were included in our letters to government.

We know how essential the ECLO service is in offering timely support from the point of diagnosis onwards. We are hopeful this advocacy campaign will result in an expansion of the service outside of Dublin. We will keep you updated, thank you for all your support!

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 - Approved Housing Body status

Central to all NCBI's services is the principle to maximise independence for people who are blind and vision impaired in all areas of life — education, employment, daily living etc. Now NCBI is expanding this to housing by:

(1) Seeking Approved Housing Body status to provide bespoke appropriate social housing units for people living with sight loss.

(2) Upskilling local authorities and housing associations on the smart home features required to ensure social housing units with tenants who are blind or vision impaired can be adapted according to their needs.

The Government's Rebuilding Ireland Strategy 2016 has social housing as one of its core planks and a clear commitment to increase its volume of social housing units. Over the past few years, the increase in volume social housing stock has been minimal. Now, according to Social Housing Needs Assessment 2020, 61,880 households qualify for social housing. Of these 362 or 0.6% of applicants listed a sensory disability as their main need. There is no specific breakdown on how many of these households are living with sight loss.



NCBI believes this is an underestimate of the level of demand for social housing among people who are blind or vision impaired as the current available stock is not fit for their purposes so they don't apply or they don't declare their sight loss on the application. Likewise, social housing tenants who acquire sight loss rarely have their homes repurposed for their new needs.

In reality, people who are blind or vision impaired have specific requirements so having a bespoke home fully kitted with accessible features is what is required. If you're living in an unsuitable social housing unit or qualify for social housing and feel you'd benefit from a home that is accessible to your needs, please let us know – simply email

Finbarr.Roche@ncbi.ie .

Change Your View Campaign

Outdoor dining has become the norm for us since the relaxation of some Covid19 restrictions last year, and for the most part has been a welcome addition to our lives. It allows for a return to a type of normality while keeping diners safe and businesses afloat. However, the rush to introduce outdoor dining has come at the expense of some pedestrians. This includes those with reduced mobility, parents using buggies, and those of us within the sight loss community.

In order to combat this, NCBI recently launched our ‘Change Your View’ campaign.

This campaign provides a much needed spotlight on the issues that can potentially face blind or vision impaired people when navigating shared spaces and newly pedestrianised areas of their towns and cities.

Familiarity and comfort is key to confidence when navigating everyday life as a person with sight loss, and with these new changes to facilitate outdoor dining, many of those in the sight loss community will need to re-engage with these spaces. Change Your View is designed to facilitate restaurants, businesses and local authorities in meeting these challenges in an inclusive and meaningful way.

The campaign has three main pillars to it. The first pillar in this campaign is our ask to the public to understand social distancing is virtually

impossible when you are blind or vision impaired. We've asked staff, owners, servers and the general public to give space or offer verbal assistance when social distancing is difficult for a customer.

Safe positioning and layout of outdoor dining sets

Secondly, a guide to help businesses and retailers to operate their outdoor spaces safely has also been developed. This will ensure accessibility and offers simple steps on ways to engage customers who are blind or vision impaired. It also includes the safe positioning and layout of outdoor dining sets, accessibility of customer information and awareness of the needs of pedestrians and customers living with sight loss.

Finally, our last pillar is focused on the support government and local authorities can provide. This includes ensuring all businesses in receipt of the Outdoor Furniture funding scheme operated by local authorities receive our Tips and Guidance to ensure their compliance.

Accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired

Also NCBI urges Government to be proactive in making cultural and heritage sites accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired. This includes more Braille, audio and large print descriptions of exhibits and specialised portable audio-described tours of cultural sites and museums where visual exhibits are present.

NCBI Employment Skills for people who are blind or vision impaired

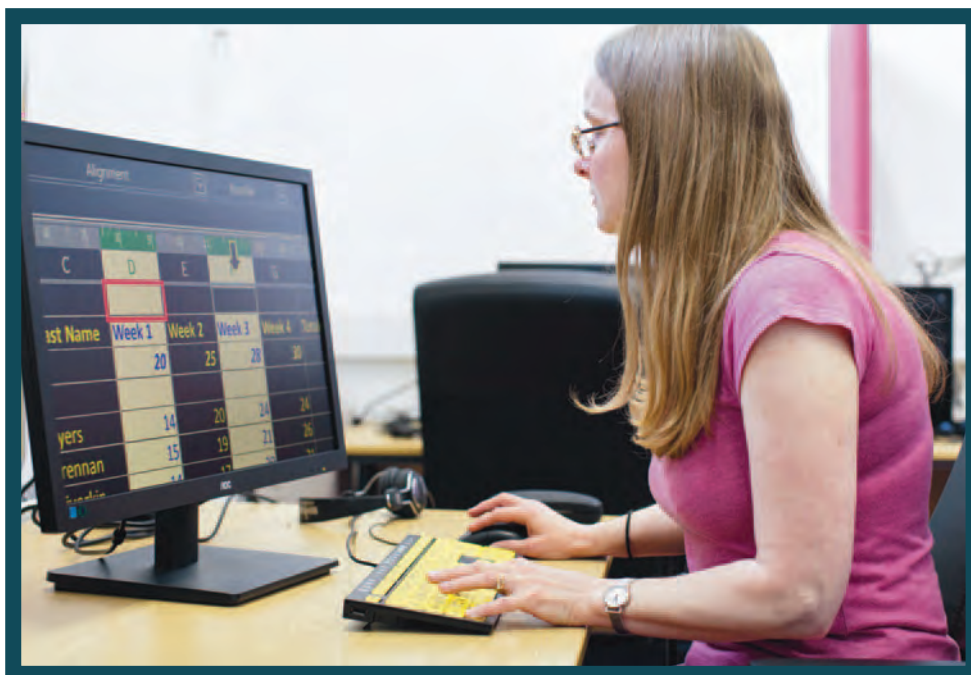
NCBI's National Training Centre has now been awarded the QQI standard.

This is a significant milestone. The QQI accredited major award, Employment Skills for Individuals with Vision Impairment or Blindness 4M0857, incorporates the newly redesigned Orientation, Mobility and Access module and offers learners a unique opportunity to develop the skills necessary to have access to mainstream employment opportunities, further education or training and the community at large.

NCBI's National Training Centre developed a new QQI Orientation, Mobility and Access module to give recognition to the significant effort made by members of the vision impairment community in gaining invaluable skills, without which independent access to the community is not possible.

The key features of the newly validated QQI Accredited Programme:

- This nationally recognised qualification, sitting at level 4 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), will help employers to have realistic expectations about the skills and competence of potential employees from the vision impairment community.



Madeline McNamara using a PC.

- The Orientation Mobility and Access module is now a separate minor award that is now recognised on the NFQ at level 4 worth 15 credits.

This new programme combines the Better Outcomes Framework (the best practice approach used in Rehabilitation Training for learners with a vision impairment) with a QQI accredited major award, Employment Skills, on level 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Using this combination the Team at the National Training Centre created a programme that allows learners to fully participate in all aspects of the curriculum:

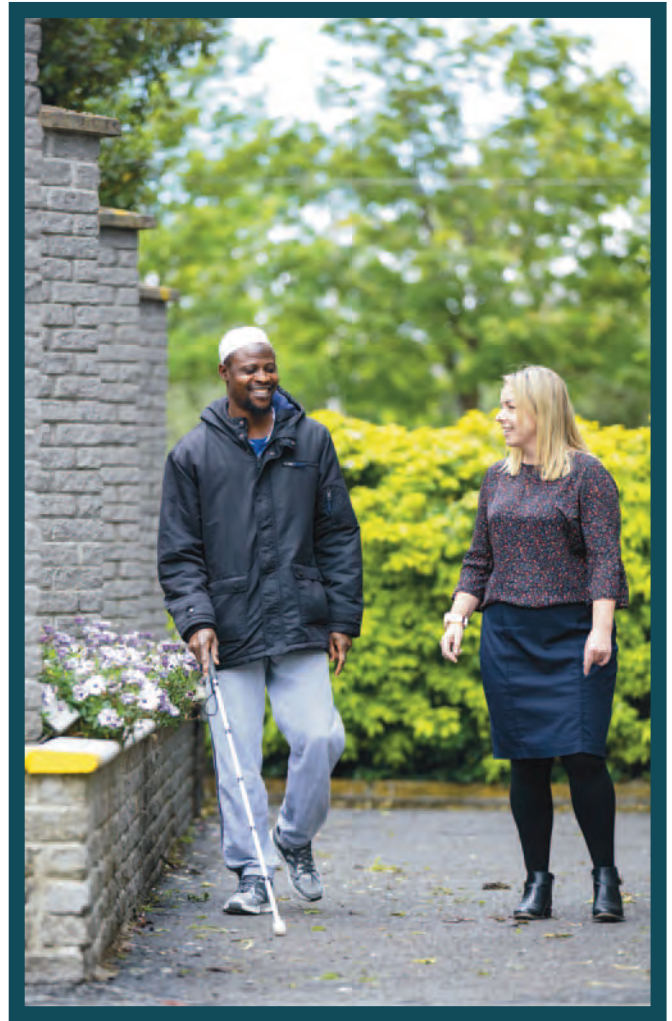
- A 2-week work placement supported by the Team and the National Training Centre to ensure accessibility and support independent travel.
- All assessments have been carefully mapped to simulate skills necessary for full participation in the labour force.
- All learning outcomes have to be reinterpreted to update the award, making it relevant to the lives of members of the vision impairment community in the 21st century.

Learning outcomes were carefully considered to ensure the content was accessible, realistic and achievable for learners in the vision impairment community.

One of the key considerations for the content in the award was the inclusion of Maths as this is a QQI programme requirement. The maths components were evaluated and reinterpreted to reflect maths in everyday life and everyday scenarios that affect the lives of learners who are blind or vision impaired. NCBI Employment Skills for Individuals with Vision Impairment or Blindness 4M0857 aims to promote choice and independence by facilitating learners to develop the competencies and skills required to enter the labour force in meaningful roles.

The Team at the National Training Centre continue to develop relationships with a wide variety of workplace partners to support our learners to gain valuable work experience as part of the programme.

As part of the NCBI's commitment to support service users to gain meaningful employment, the NCBI has become a member of the Business Disability Forum which is an international organisation that supports individuals with disabilities make a greater impact in their chosen fields of employment.



Long Cane training at NCBI.

The NCBI Employment Skills for Individuals with Vision Impairment or Blindness (4M0857) Covers the following topics:

- **Communications Module**
- **Orientation Mobility & Access Module**
- **Access Technology Module**
- **Employment Supports**
- **Advocacy & Engagement**

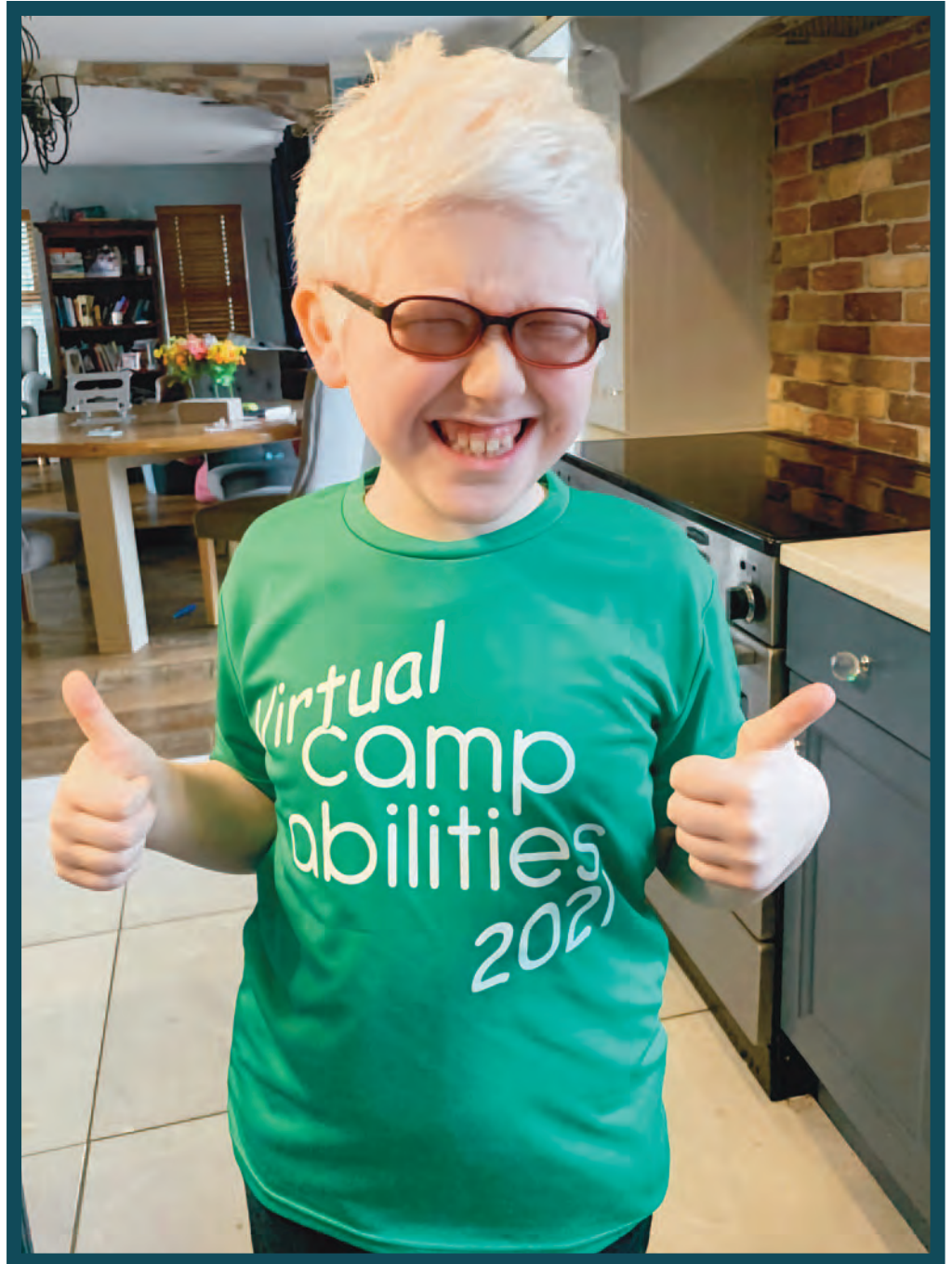
Camp Abilities 2021

Camp Abilities held its second virtual camp in Spring 2021.

This was a significantly larger and more improved version of our 2020 virtual event demonstrating our increased expertise and confidence with online delivery as we moved from a one day to 4-day event.

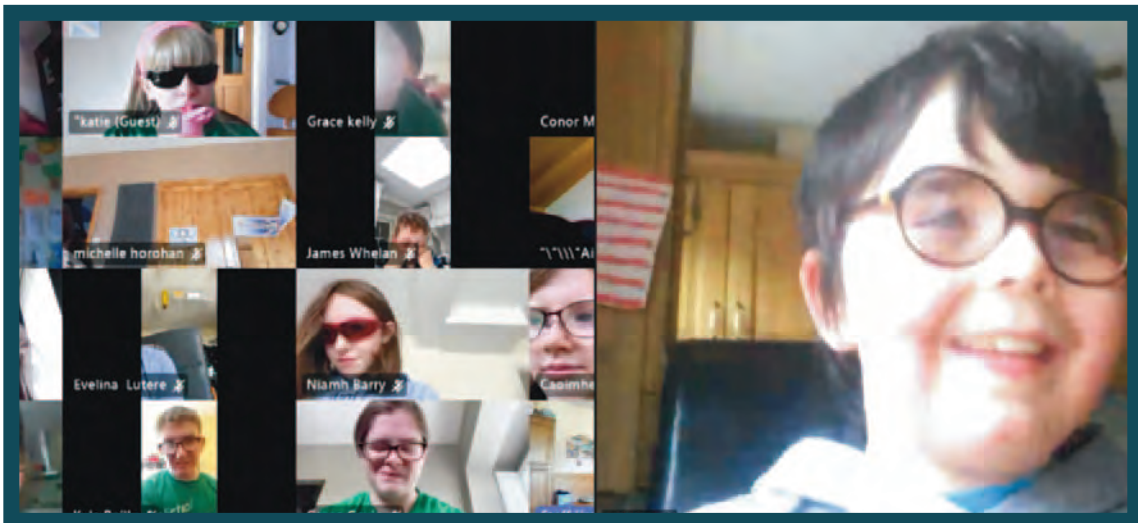
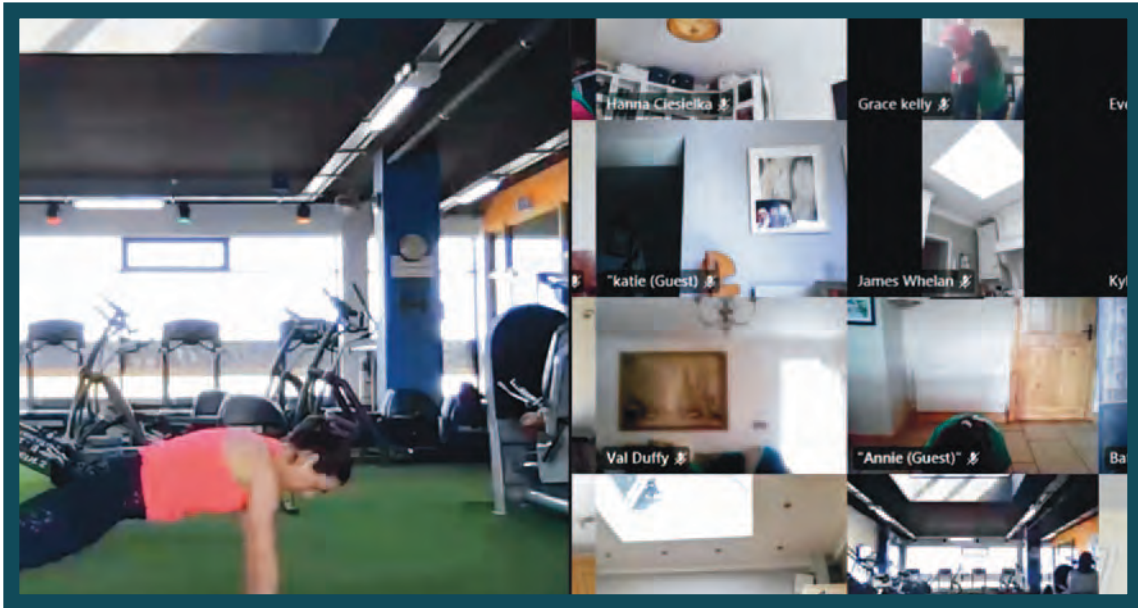
It was also NCBI's first year to fully manage the event after a 3 year take over transition period from the CARA centre who set up Camp Abilities back in 2009, having brought the original Lauren Lieberman concept here from the US.

This year, camp hosted 40 children with siblings, parents and even pets getting in on the action, taking part in activities delivered by 21 instructors! To mention a few, Tennis Ireland, FAI, Judo Assist, Helen Whearity fitness, Ursula Barrett, Sarah Banville and Maria O Sullivan and Paralympian athlete Greta Streimikyte officially opened the camp. We had most counties represented and even 2 cross border



Adam Duffy gives the thumbs up to Camp Abilities 2021.

participants. The theme of the camp was "Home Olympics" with campers representing one of 4 countries and clocking up points the more active and creative they were.



Participants going through their paces at Camp Abilities' "Home Olympics".

The "Goosechase" App was a brilliant tool that was used outside of camp time by the campers to demonstrate their work.

The planning committee which comprises of NCBI staff from the CYP Team (Margaret Bousquet, Aoife Buckley, Aileen Ahern and Caroline Lane), VSI (Pádraig Healy and Sara McFadden), Katie O'Connor (Cappanalea Outdoor Education Centre) and Ursula Barrett (MTU) began preparing back in October 2020 and were overwhelmed with the response from campers, parents and instructors.

"It was very exciting. Learned a lot of sports activities. Thinking of venturing into playing tennis as an additional sport."

"Extremely challenging to run a camp online and I believe the organisers did a great job."

"Camp was excellent. Goose chase was brilliant, such fun."

We are looking forward to 2022, with fingers and toes crossed for a face-to-face event once again but for now, the committee are glad of the rest!

Sean Gallagher

Sean Gallagher, the former CEO of Smart Homes, Dragons Den Dragon and Presidential Candidate, and strong advocate for the sight loss community, chats to InSight about growing up with congenital cataracts, finding his feet in business and having the courage to carry on amidst adversity.

"I was born with congenital cataracts. Growing up, many people wouldn't have been familiar with these terms and would associate cataracts with older people. When I was born, there wasn't the technology to remove the cataracts, but I was very fortunate I was under the care of Dr Tomkins in the Eye and Ear Hospital. He performed an innovative operation where he cut the blue out of my eye and let the pupil fall down this allowed the light to come in and refract it, so I wasn't completely blind, but with the iris opened up this made me sensitive to light, making things challenging. I am very grateful for this ground-breaking surgery which enhanced the quality of my life.

"My biggest challenge as a child was schoolwork, I couldn't read the small print and subsequently my reading was slow and awkward. In a time before SNAs and teaching assistants, it was felt that I was just slow. This impacted me as I thought I wasn't good enough, meaning I had to work harder to keep up. Even sitting in the front row in class, I couldn't read the board, but I did develop a skill for absorbing information by listening. Although I couldn't get away with just listening and taking down notes

phonetically when it came to subjects like Irish. While all the other children would be outside playing at lunchtime in school, I would stand at the board and write down everything from that day's lesson.

"Due to my sensitivity to light, I developed a habit of always looking at the pavement as I walked to see where I was going. Meaning I always had my head down. Even when wearing glasses became acceptable, I wouldn't wear them as I didn't want people to slag me.

"Although it was tough, it gave me a sense of determination and willingness to work harder than anyone else because if I was going to compete, I needed to do things on my own terms. I carried this through to my adult life. I always say to young people that we need to be careful how to speak to ourselves, talk to others, and the words we use around other people; we can damage someone's confidence by what we say.

"What gave me confidence at a young age wasn't school but joining a youth organisation called Foróige. They introduced me to the concept of self-development, personal growth and leadership, and it changed my life because I applied all that learning and group work to my life, and I became my own project, and I am thankful to them for that. They understood that I had lots of talents and abilities; I just needed to focus on them, and it wasn't about comparing myself with others. I believe the greatest challenge of life is not about 'having or getting' but about 'being and becoming'."



Sean Gallagher pictured with two guide dogs.

Sean looks back fondly on a series of profile pieces he did a couple of years ago for the Sunday Independent about people in business.

"I was interested in what characteristics these people shared, and what I realised was that it is less to do with intelligence and more to do with psychology. Success is a mindset. Setting up a business needs two things; skills and mindset. Skills can be learned, but so can mindset. You have to be brave and take risks. You have to be prepared to fail and keep trying. No one ever starts with a big business, so start small, have patience, and ask for help from someone who has more experience.

Achievement

"The moment I am most proud of in my career was starting 'Smart Homes' in 1999 and being the market leader in bringing technology into homes. We were wiring homes for iPods when iPods hadn't even been invented, so that was a

very exciting time. Also the launch of my book in 2018 was a fantastic achievement.

"Standing for election in 2011 as an independent to become president of Ireland was a defining moment for me. I think the presidential election is a perfect example of reframing the narrative, I didn't win, but a journalist would say I 'lost' the election, I would say that is wrong because I dared to do something that I wanted to do and stand forward for things I believe in; jobs, enterprise, community, and disability. While I didn't make it, the experience was incredible; you don't always have to win; sometimes, it is about the process. The greatest failure is just not trying!"

If you would like to hear more you can find the full interview on NCBI podcasts.

Getting around safely

Safe Travel

At NCBI we understand how getting around safely if you are blind or have low vision can be a challenge. That's why we have a team of highly skilled Orientation and Mobility instructors who teach the skills required for safe travel, both indoors and outdoors. Mobility training can help you feel more confident when travelling in everyday situations, such as, going to your local shop, or place of work, travelling on public transport or through crowded streets.

Your Orientation & Mobility instructor can show you:

- how to maximise your residual vision and manage glare.
- how to use the sighted guide technique.
- how to use a mobility aid such as a white cane.
- how the latest technology/Smartphone apps can help.
- how to make environmental adaptations to assist safe travel.

A Guide to Mobility Canes

Symbol Cane

A symbol cane is used to notify the general public that the person has a vision impairment and might need assistance. This cane is smaller than other canes and is not used to detect obstacles or level changes in the environment.

Support Canes

This cane is generally prescribed by an Occupational Therapist and measured so that the right length is prescribed for the physical impairment. If you have purchased your own then it is important that the support cane is both the correct type for you and the correct height. NCBI provide white support canes which alert members of the public that you have a vision impairment.

Long Cane

This cane offers the most protection to the user as it is designed to detect obstacles, level changes or changes in ground texture. The person taps the cane or sweeps it from side to side in front of their body.

Training is important to be able to use the long cane successfully. Call 1850 33 43 53 to avail of training.

Support from Family and Friends

Sighted Guide

There may be instances even when using a cane that you may require a sighted person to assist you. It may be because the area you are going to is unfamiliar or is known to be very busy or difficult to navigate safely. Using this approach, the person with the vision impairment holds on to the sighted person's arm as they walk along. The safe and correct technique can be taught to you and your family or friends by your Community Resource Worker.

Adapt Programme



The Adapt Group Programmes have been open to referrals since January 2021. The aim of the group and programme is to teach people how to “Adapt” to the changes in their vision.

This is addressed by facilitating discussions around eye conditions, magnification, daily living skills, technology and mobility and by further discussing NCBI supports available. The group programmes are run through group phone calls and online sessions and commenced following previous 1:1 versions piloted during COVID19. The Adapt Group Programmes are facilitated by Lisa Brown, Dearbhla Coll, Nicola McHugh and Michelle Withers.

We are currently finishing the second group programme and have more individuals on our waiting list. We try to group people together based on their age, eye condition and/or level of vision loss to try to maximum group effectiveness and learning.

Some of the feedback from participants includes:

“I think I am able to cope better from the calls. I am more careful crossing the road. I was always anxious to know what I could get to improve managing with my sight. I think it is useful to have the information and have someone ring you about your sight. I got a great deal from it all. I can make better use of the vision I have. I didn't realise this support (from NCBI) was out there and I'm glad the eye doctor referred me”. “Being asked how I feel about everything. I felt comfortable talking over the phone and felt like I could say anything. I looked forward to the call every week and think that everyone should take part.”

“It was good to be able to talk to the CRW about my range of issues and to get advice on what is available and to be honest about my fears and to get reassurance about what is available. I was quite pleased”.

If you wish to avail of this service please connect with your CRW or call 1850 33 43 53.



MayFest 40th Anniversary “Reeling in the Years”, A Mayfest like no other...

By Sara McFadden

Ready, steady go... turned into... Zoom Links at the ready, Camera is on and “You’re on Mute!”

Faced with the challenge of organizing an event during Covid-19 the entire team at Vision Sports Ireland worked tirelessly towards putting on the best MayFest possible.

Months of preparations all came together to provide Vision Sports Ireland members with a jam packed week-long virtual event which took place from May 1st to May 7th. The team led by Aaron Mullaniff, Pádraig Healy, Kristina Millar, Joe Geraghty and Sara McFadden, with the help of their fantastic instructors and partners offered a total of 17 activities/events during the week.

On Sunday May 2nd Vision Sports Ireland officially launched its MayFest 40th anniversary celebration with an opening ceremony like no other. Co-hosted by Joe Geraghty and Bernie Everard, the 90 minute event kicked off with a virtual firework display to the iconic Steely Dan song “Reeling in the Years”.

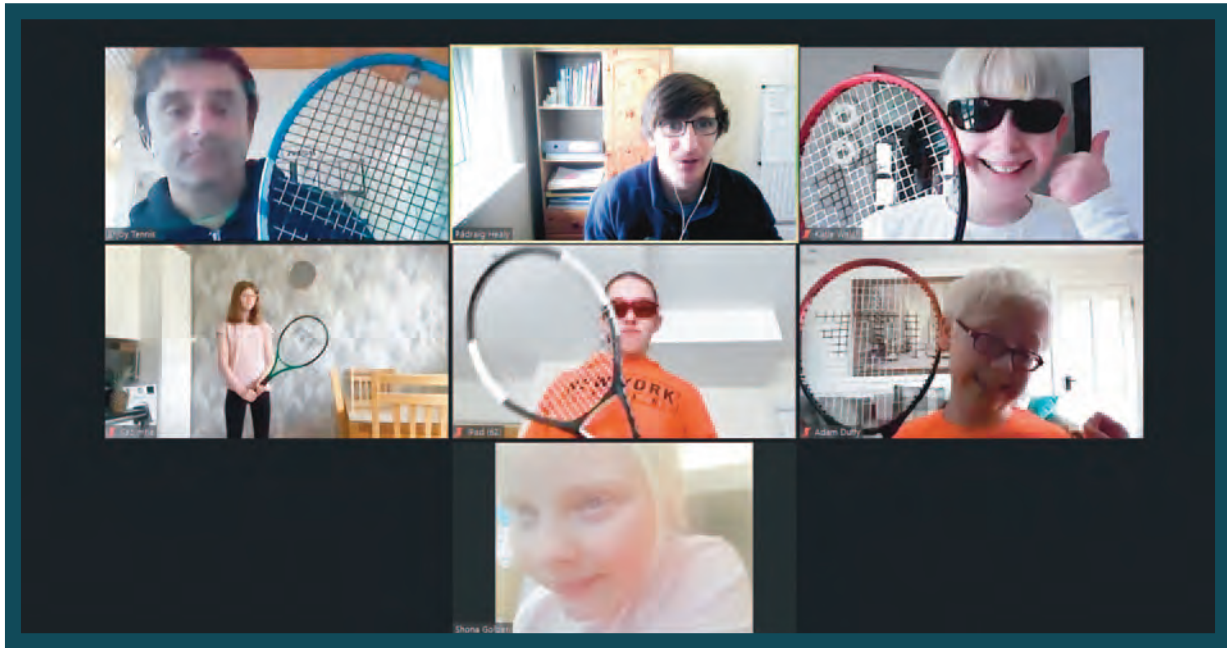
Attendees were offered the opportunity to



Vision Sports tandem cycling.

hear some incredible MayFest yarns of yesteryear from the people who built MayFest. As well as some MayFest memories from current members of Vision Sports Ireland, they got to see some rare photographs that were dug up from the Vision Sports Ireland archives. More importantly, they got the opportunity to connect with friends new and old. On the night Carol Carr, Bridie Lynch, Fintan O’Donnell and (posthumously) Michael Delaney were also inducted into the Vision Sports Ireland Hall of Fame. The four new additions bring the Vision Sports Ireland hall of fame total from 12 to 16 people.

Throughout the week, participants got the opportunity to take part in ‘come and try sessions’ of classes which Vision Sports Ireland are already offering as part of their home



Participants in the MayFest Zoom Tennis sessions.

exercise series. Classes included yoga, movement and stretch, tennis and HIIT. Participants also had the opportunity to take part in webinars such as the blind / VI tennis, co-hosted by Sight and Sound Technology and Vision Sports Ireland. This webinar included contributions from some of Ireland's top rated blind / VI tennis players. Vision Sports, with Safefood Ireland, hosted an interactive webinar where attendees got to learn the dos and don'ts to help maintain a healthy, balanced diet.

After a jam-packed week of events and activities, came the closing ceremony, which was hosted by RTE Prime Time's Miriam O'Callaghan. The event consisted of an address by Minister for Sport, Jack Chambers, TD, who spoke about a return to sport, CEO of Sport Ireland John Treacy who spoke about how impressed he was by Vision Sports Ireland programmes, Vision Sports Ireland President Prof. Michael O'Keefe who thanked Miriam for so generously giving her time and Paul Ledwidge, Chair of Vision Sports Ireland who thanked the team for all their hard work in putting the event together. Miriam also led two-star studded panel discussions.

Panel one consisted of five-time Gold Paralympian Jason Smyth, the multi-talented Freddie Wallace, swimmer Roisin Ni Riain, and car rallying's Sara McFadden who spoke about their sporting endeavours.

Panel two was led out by Senator Martin Conway, followed up by Pam Pennings and Petrina Finn who spoke about how getting active through Vision Sports Ireland initiatives during Covid19 has changed their lives for the better.

Miriam officially closed the event wishing Vision Sports Ireland all the best for the future. Miriam said the Reeling in the Years themed MayFest 40th anniversary celebration had really proved that the last 40 years of MayFest have been amazing. Miriam went on to say that there is no doubt that the future is bright, and that the next 40 years will be even better! Congrats to all involved.

Contact Vision Sports Ireland
 Email visionsports@ncbi.ie
 Phone +353 85 8500193
 Website www.visionsports.ie

LEGO Braille Bricks in Ireland

NCBI Library Access Services (LAS) are the Official Partner of LEGO® Braille Bricks in Ireland. LAS was delighted to take delivery of the toolkits at the end of 2020. Distribution of the toolkits began in early 2021.



LEGO Braille Bricks are a playful tool to teach Braille to blind or vision impaired children. The bricks have been adjusted to correspond to the Braille alphabet. Each LEGO brick has a printed letter or character to ensure the tool is inclusive allowing sighted teachers, students and family members to play on equal terms with a blind or vision impaired child. A selection of signature LEGO brick colours have been chosen specifically to ensure colour contrast and allow for a playful learning experience in an inclusive setting.

Because the LEGO Braille Bricks can be used by children with or without sight, it provides the opportunity for children who are blind and vision impaired to learn in the same way, at the same time alongside their sighted classmates.

Distribution of the Lego Braille Bricks

To prepare for the arrival of toolkits in schools, NCBI Library Access Services ran a number of online training sessions with teachers and learning support staff. Participants were given an introduction to LEGO Braille Bricks and the Learning Through Play concept, as advocated by the LEGO Foundation.

From January 2021, the LAS commenced the distribution of 500 free LEGO Braille kits to

educators of children and young people with vision impairment across Ireland. LEGO Foundation have a goal to provide a kit to every blind child in the world, so the kits themselves are free of charge.

We are delighted to see the LEGO Braille Bricks Toolkits being actively used in classrooms. Teachers are combining prepared activities as suggested on www.legobraillebricks.com/activities and creating their own lesson plans using the Bricks.

The NCBI Children's Team recently invited the Library Access Service to participate in an online group meeting with some incredible young Braille Readers. Toolkits were issued in advance and during the session, we spent some time learning to orientate the bricks and challenged each other to identify the different letters. We are looking forward to continuing our collaboration with the Children's Team and meeting more wonderful young Braille readers in the near future.

Library Access Services will continue to run more LEGO Braille Brick Training Sessions. For further information or to order a toolkit, email legobraille@ncbi.ie.

We Need To Talk About Charity Shops –

Challenging the narrative around charity shopping as NCBI retail reopens for the first time this year!

NCBI has reopened its doors and expanded its retail chain with the opening of a second pop-up shop under Re:Newed for NCBI brand on Dublin's Henry Street, new shops in Ashbourne and Killarney as well as the acquisition of the former Age Action's shops on Camden Street, Cherry Orchard and Dún Laoghaire, Ballincollig in Cork, Newbridge, Co. Kildare and Monaghan Town. During lockdown, we took the opportunity to get a greater understanding of who are our customers and what motivates them to keep returning. Some of the findings were illuminating!

A market research survey of 1,000 adults was completed in February 2021.

From the list of multiple-choice options, supporting the charity (76%) and getting a bargain (68%) are the main reasons customers shop in charity shops. With a further 36% saying they want to buy environmentally and sustainably. Interestingly this dedication to sustainability is twice as important to women than men. NCBI is very committed to the environmental agenda and is keen to emphasise customers' positive environmental impact when they support sustainable fashion.

The survey found 20% of respondents use charity shops monthly or more often, with another 11% shopping every 2-3 months in a charity shop. This was spread evenly across age, social class and location. Having such a regular customer volume is very heartening,

especially when the survey revealed that another 20% said they plan to visit the shop more often once they are reopened. This was highest among those aged under 35 years. It is great to know the younger generation are enjoying charity retail shopping for their own gain, which in turn benefits the charity's cause and the broader environment.

NCBI are delighted to receive these insights as it is crucial to stay in touch with our customers. Overall, the feedback was highly positive, but some points got our attention. As Ireland second-largest charity retailer, we want to challenge the narrative around charity shopping!

NCBI want the public to know how important charity retailing is to protecting the environment.

- 23% of respondents said they prefer to buy new clothes – but the impact on the environment is significant. Producing one new t-shirt requires approximately 2,7000 litres of water and one new pair of denim jeans requires approximately 7,000 – 10,000 litres.
- 56% said they would be concerned about hygiene and germs because of COVID-19. All our clothes are steam cleaned and due to COVID-19, we now quarantine all donations. We also have a contactless donations area in all shops.
- 8% said charity shops don't stock high-end brands. Well, gladly, that leaves 92% knowing where the hidden gems are and that's in our 130+ shops throughout the country.

NCBI Senior Management Help Out

NCBI retail staff were joined by members of the NCBI Senior Management Team in different locations across the country to mark the reopening of the NCBI Retail shops on May 17th.

This is a great opportunity to increase the understanding of how vital NCBI retail is to the organisation and to once again serve all our loyal customers who support us.



Chris White NCBI CEO steam cleaning clothes.



ABOVE: NCBI's Re:Newed shop in Henry Street, Dublin.

BELOW: NCBI's Furniture Warehouse in Cherry Orchard, Dublin 10.



Maria O'Kelly, NCBI's Head of HR in the Henry Street, Dublin shop.

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
Registered Charity CHY 12673


NCBI
Working for People
with Sight Loss

Introducing Sky Q Box

What is Voice Guidance?

Sky has recently introduced a new accessibility feature. This Voice Guidance is a screen reader on the Sky Q set top box that provides spoken navigational guidance for people with a visual impairment.



Voice Guidance speaks out items on the screen as you navigate with the remote control. To start using it, simply say "Voice Guidance on" or "Voice Guidance Off" into your Sky Q Remote. This is also useful if you share a TV with your family or sighted peers as they can easily turn off Voice Guidance with the voice remote without having to go through the menu. Once activated all menus and Electronic Program Guides (EPGs) will be read aloud by the screen reader.

Hints go on automatically when you turn on Voice Guidance with the voice remote. These are additional pieces of spoken information that give you instructions about the layout of the current menu. It is a good idea to leave hints on until you are familiar with the layout of the menus on the Sky Q box.

In the Sky Q box's latest update the voice remote also received some improvements. The voice remote makes it easier to find content

from different areas of the Sky Q service. You can try saying something like, "Search for Action Movies with Bruce Willis" and a menu will pop up on the screen with multiple choices to watch the movies.

You can also try using the new "What should I watch?" voice command which will bring up personalised recommendations based on your watch history or what's trending at the moment.

The new Voice Guidance screen reader and improvements to the voice remote adds to the High Contrast mode and wide variety of Audio Description content already available on the Sky Q box.

Making your Home Smarter with Samsung SmartThings App

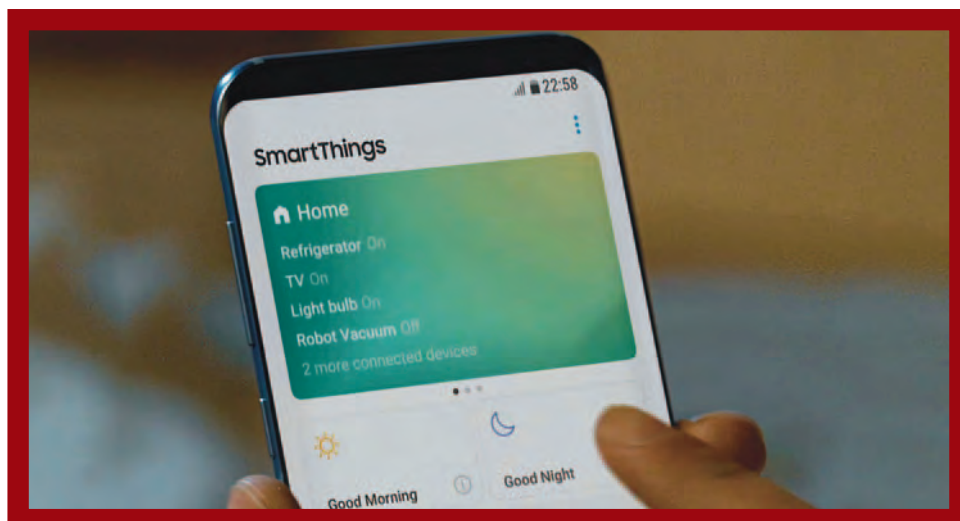
The SmartThings app gives you access to many different types of appliances you can use in your home such as a Samsung smart washing machine, dryers, dishwashers, fridges and more.

It's available to download for free on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. It has opened a lot of the features in these devices for people with sight loss as the SmartThings app is accessible with voiceover and talkback. All buttons in the SmartThings app are clearly labelled and read well with voiceover.

It works with third party apps!

Using the SmartThings app is one option to get you started on your journey to building your smart home, it also gives you access to some of the features in the more recent versions of Samsung Smart TVs. But one of the more exciting features is it works with third party apps such as Ring video doorbells, thermostats, alarms, and Philips Hue lights.

Although not essential, if you have a lot of devices you may want to consider purchasing a SmartThings Hub. This allows you to automate things like if your doorbell camera senses motion then lights can be turned on. It gives you the power to turn off everything all at once when



going to bed or leaving the house. Also, you can connect Samsung smart buttons to your SmartThings Hub if you prefer to use a button for some routines.

You can operate most actions using your voice

The SmartThings app can also be linked with your smart speaker such as the Google Home or Amazon Alexa so you can operate most actions using your voice. When purchasing products look for the sticker that says works with SmartThings, or when purchasing online it will say this in the description of the product.

Note you may need sighted help to set up some of these products as the physical interface may not be accessible, but after that the SmartThings app will help you access most if not all features of the product or appliance.



NCBI Labs

Working for People with Sight Loss

Invites anyone interested in how technology can help overcome barriers in daily life to participate in their Virtual Clubs.

- Each club has a NCBI Technology Trainer who is available to answer questions.
- When you join you will be given a Microsoft Teams link where you can join a meeting on your computer or smart device.
- Clubs are run virtually throughout the country.

**To join please
contact NCBI Labs
on labs@ncbi.ie**