

Finding Their Footing

After being handed a diagnosis of “the worst case of optic nerve hypoplasia” their doctor had ever seen, Freya’s family desperately needed a way forward. Because of your extraordinary support for this good work, they found it...

The picture Sara paints is a beautiful one, and her eyes sparkle with emotion. “I watch Freya, who turns five next month, making her way around the rooms. She walks a lot in her bare feet at home, listening to the floors and the rugs and the different sounds they make in each room. She uses the acoustics to find the things she wants.”

And as Freya finds her footing, her mum Sara recalls the family’s parallel journey.

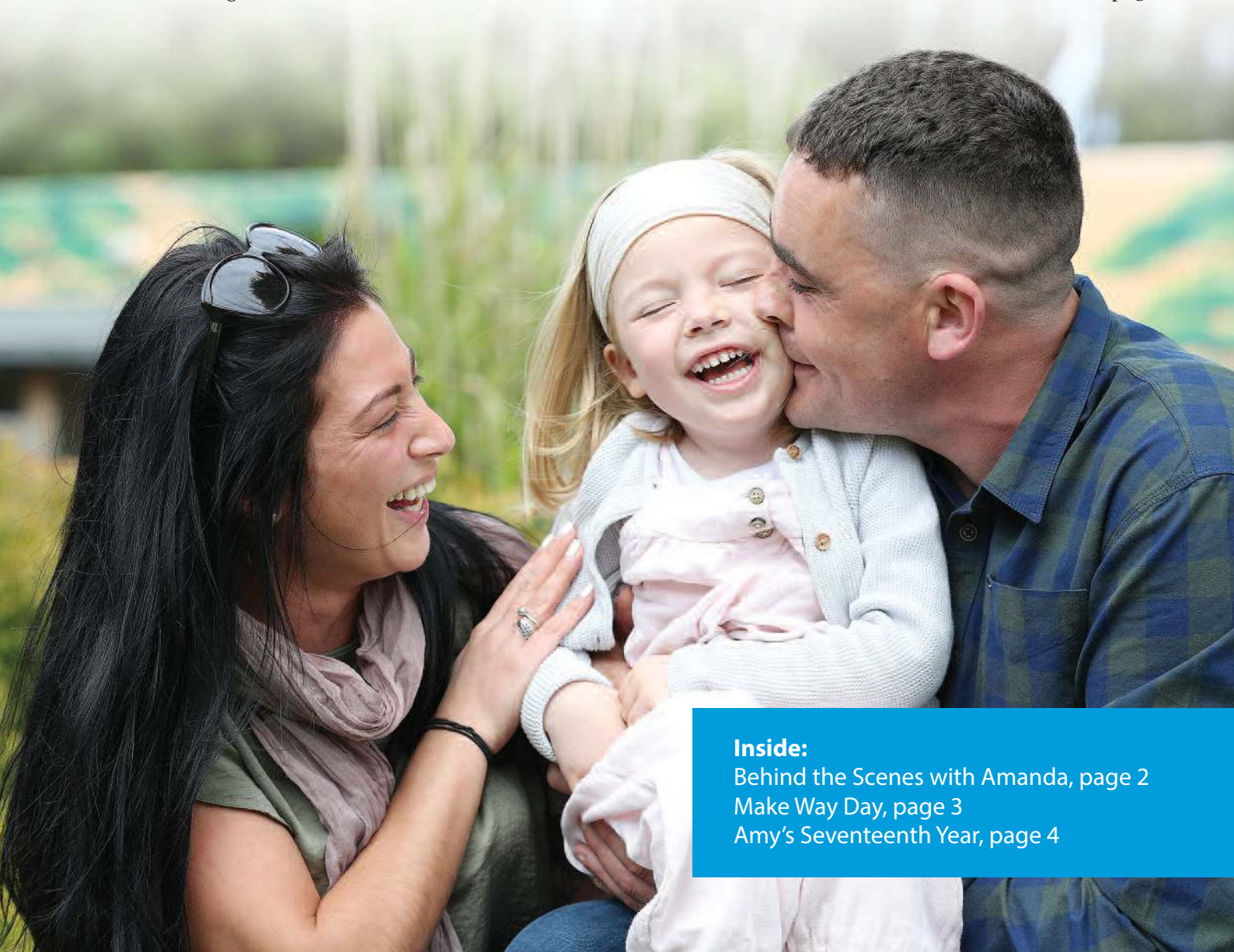
Impossible outcome

Never in a million years did Sara and her partner Wes imagine sitting in a doctor’s office just weeks after Freya was born, and hearing their baby would never see. “Wes asked the doctor, ‘Will

she need glasses?’ He said, ‘No, she won’t. She’s blind.’ It’s impossible to understand. One moment you’re deciding which buggy to buy, and the next it’s irrelevant.”

The doctor explained that Freya had the worst case of optic nerve hypoplasia (see sidebar, page 2) he’d ever seen. And as the months ticked by and Wes and Sara watched other

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Finding Their Footing

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children meet milestone after milestone, they couldn't help but compare. "All I can remember is the shock and the hurt and the worry," Sara confesses.

A new community

Then the family found ChildVision, and with it, a community that your generosity makes possible. "We finally found 'our place,'" shares Sara. "It was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Everyone had different stories, but we were all here for the same reason. The children went into preschool, and staff were telling stories – but physical stories. They told Eency Weency Spider, and had a finger spider. They told Hickory Dickory Dock, and had a toy mouse and a clock. Everything was so thought out."



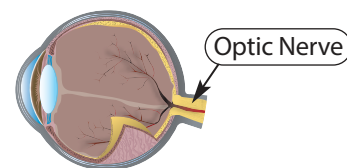
Finding their footing

After a long, hard road, the family finally – at last – found their footing. It's thanks to you, and the gratitude in Sara's voice is unmistakable. "Today," she smiles, "Freya started primary school in her school uniform with her cane in hand. Through ChildVision she's thrived in a way I would never have expected. She's brave and careful, and so easygoing. Freya became our cure. She just wouldn't be the child she is today if she'd never come to ChildVision."

Thank you for the difference you have made to their lives. ♥

Fact Box: About ONH

ONH, or Optic Nerve Hypoplasia...



- Is one of the most common causes of visual impairment in children
- Refers to the under-development of the optic nerve (which sends visual signals to the brain) during pregnancy
- Is not progressive
- Usually has no cause
- Has no cure

From mobility training to aquatic and equine therapy, the programmes you support at ChildVision give children with ONH a brighter future. **Thank you.**



The faces behind the good work you make possible —

Staff Spotlight: Behind the Scenes with Amanda

With her bright eyes and ready smile, it's no wonder ChildVision's vocational education coordinator Amanda is loved by staff and students. Combined with your generosity, she's helping bring an amazing opportunity to blind learners aged 18-23. See how...

Q: Could you tell donors a bit about the vocational education they support?

A: Vocational education is a programme at ChildVision that we specifically designed for young people aged 18-23 who are visually impaired and who often have an intellectual disability as

well, so they can gain access to learning within the National Framework of Qualifications. Students work at their own pace. This year for example one of our students decided to undertake a part time course in horticulture at a local college. Many also partake in music therapy and lessons, horse riding, and equine therapy.

Q: How has the programme changed this year?

A: Our numbers nearly doubled this year. Alongside that there's been an increase in support needs, including three wheelchair users. The spectrum of diversity has never been quite so broad, and you could see how

It's a Make Way Day!

Every day, in every town and county in Ireland, children and adults with disabilities encounter barriers. Not all are visible. But some are – and recently ChildVision students took to the streets of Dublin to remind sighted people that there is much they can do to help make way...



Imagine you are blind and making your way to work or school using your long cane. Suddenly, on a footpath where nothing should be, something blocks you. Fortunately you were alert and didn't bump into it – although you've suffered bruised shins before. What is the object? Can you get around it? Do you proceed onto the road, not knowing what's coming? Will you be forced to turn back?



ChildVision vocational students took to the streets on 26th September to raise awareness for the barriers faced daily by people with disabilities of all kinds, including blindness.

For someone who is blind, a blocked footpath is a dangerous obstacle. And on 26th September, as part of national Make Way Day run by the Disability Federation of Ireland, ChildVision vocational students helped raise awareness for the need to consider how our everyday actions impact the lives of people with disabilities. If it got in their way, from bins to bikes to cars and even vans, it got a friendly 'Hey! This Blocks My Way!' reminder sticker. ♥



Please will you help our blind students by keeping footpaths clear? Together, we can make every day a Make Way Day. Thank you!

it might have been easier to say, "This group are all doing this, and this group are all doing that." But thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the hard work of staff, we've never been a one size fits all. We've been able to give each student an amazing opportunity not only to gain knowledge and skills, but to make friends and have real-life experience.

Q: What's one of the best parts about working at ChildVision?

A: Watching students blossom! One student wouldn't speak or even look up when she started. One day we saw how confident and

chatty she'd become, that's the impact our donors have. There are so many moments, beautiful, tender, lovely moments of joy. Some of the new staff told me recently they'd been waiting for us to turn into our 'real selves' – as time went on they realised we actually are as happy to be working here as we seem, and ChildVision truly is that happy of a place thanks to what our supporters have helped to build. ♥

Your kind donations fund a full thirty percent of everything Amanda and vocational education do for multi-disabled young people here. Thank you!



Vocational education coordinator Amanda is all smiles after receiving a handmade penholder from Ashleigh, one of the students gaining new skills and independence here thanks to you!

Mum Sarah writes about life with blind uilleann piper Amy —

In Her Seventeenth Year

She didn't walk until she was eight. Didn't eat on her own until she was five. As Amy Campbell begins her seventeenth year with ChildVision, mum Sarah wrote to thank you for being such a big part of her beloved daughter's remarkable journey...



ABOUT AMY: As part of the music programme you help support, Amy learned to play the uilleann pipes that have been so central to unlocking her potential. Like Freya, whose story is featured on page 1, Amy is diagnosed with optic nerve hypoplasia (ONH) – which you can learn more about on page 2. ONH has no cure. But thanks to your kind donations, blind children in Ireland like Freya and Amy will never be written off. Instead, you rewrite their futures – and we thank you for it.

This is Amy's seventeenth year in ChildVision – she was only nine months when she started! I still remember her going off to preschool and thinking, 'Who can look after her the way we can?' It's so strange to see her now, my 18-year-old, with no school uniform and heading off to the vocational education programme.

The next few years will be good for her, a chance to really work on her mobility, and to become independent. She came home the other day and told me she forgot her cane, and I told her she had to remember to put it in her bag the night before. She's learning to ask for things if she needs them. That responsibility is all new for Amy.

The other day I met students who came back to ChildVision for vocational education and Amy knew them straight away. Seeing them all together again, I remembered them as little babies. There was no way we could imagine what seventeen years could have done for them all back then. Where would Amy be without ChildVision and the kindness and support of donors? There are no words.
– Sarah ☺



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