



north east
sensory services

achieving independence for blind & deaf people

ANNUAL REPORT

2017



The Board of Directors

Chairman

John Legg

Appointed in Meeting

John Imrie (Vice-Chairman)
Graham Findlay
Rev. Mary Whittaker
Stephen McPherson
Ian Herd
Len Ironside
Hannah Watt
Laura Sharp
Colin Boag
Frank Wahedally
Fraser Crerar

Observer

Lynne Hawcroft

November 2017

Chairman's Report by John Legg

It has been a great privilege for me this year to take on the role of Chair of NESS, Scotland's leading joint sensory service, and to present this year's annual report. NESS is an award-winning charity dedicated to creating life changing opportunities for those living with a sensory impairment from Aberdeen to Dundee and from Angus to Moray.



Over the last twelve months we have helped a record number of people through the provision of direct support services, specialist equipment, advice and sign posting and our ever-widening range of groups, social activities and communication services. This has been achieved, against a background of continuing financial challenges and pressures, through our success in winning new contracts from statutory bodies, securing additional charitable donations and developing new and innovative services for a group of people who can, all too often, find themselves vulnerable, isolated and marginalised.

The achievements outlined in this report are a huge testament to the hard work of our experienced and talented staff, our dedicated and tireless volunteers, our enthusiastic and resourceful supporters and to the strength and commitment of our Board of Directors. We have also greatly benefited from the engagement and ideas of our service users, the leadership of our Chief Executive, Graham Findlay and his senior management team along with the support of many individuals, organisations, partnerships and businesses who share our vision.

In pursuing our aim to grow, innovate and improve our services we have reviewed and strengthened several key areas including governance, finance, staffing, and future service developments and invested new charitable monies in areas of unmet need. In the coming year we will continue this process of continuous review and improvement to extend both our reach and our impact.

For all those who have contributed to the success of NESS over the last year please accept our sincere thanks. If you are reading this and are interested in helping us to grow and develop over the coming year then please let us know.

Every offer of help, no matter how small, can make a big difference.

Chief Executive's Report by Graham Findlay

Within the financial year 2016/17 NESS has had one of its most successful years ever with the development of expanded services that are geared to fulfilling our mission of 'Achieving Independence for Blind and Deaf people'.



Our Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Aberdeen continued to be delivered successfully and we were able to add an additional post to our fieldwork team.

Our Tayside Consortium Deaf Service came to an end on the 30th September 2016 and was replaced by new local council area arrangements. With this in mind, and following competitive tendering we were successful in gaining the new SLA for Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership to provide a full joint sensory service. This service went live on the 1st October 2016. We successfully tendered for the two contracts in Angus to provide rehabilitation and advocacy services to both blind and deaf people. We are now able to run these projects as one joint sensory service. This SLA also went live on the 1st October 2016.

We decided not to tender for the joint sensory service in Perth and Kinross but have retained a guide communicator service in that area.

Our Moray SLA came to an end but we successfully retendered for this contract in December 2016 and the new service went live on the 1st April 2017. This is a full joint sensory service.

We are grateful to all of the Health and Social Care Partnerships we work with for their continued trust in NESS.

All staff have worked tirelessly to get these services up and running. NESS continues to make available our non-statutory services to people living in Aberdeenshire where we don't currently have a statutory contract. Many of our Added Value services are accessed by service users from Aberdeenshire.

In September 2016 we hosted a national conference on behalf of RP Fighting Blindness in Aberdeen.

Quality Systems

NESS holds the Investors in People (IIP) standard and the advanced Gold Standard and we are working hard to maintain this under the new criteria recently introduced.

Service User Statistics

The total number of service users on our database for the whole of Grampian and Tayside on 31 March 2017 was 6,226.

Awareness Raising

Over the year we ran or took part in 56 awareness raising events attended by a total of 964 people. This includes our one day Awareness Training sessions as well as bespoke training sessions delivered to other organisations, information events with larger groups, talks to professional bodies and smaller community groups and combined fundraising/ awareness raising events.

We have added the provision of awareness training to groups in Angus and Dundee.

Added Value

People who are born Deaf or who become Deaf at a very young age may use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language and many do not have a good understanding of English. Typically, many BSL users find it difficult to access services such as the hospital or dentist – and will require an interpreter to get a meaningful understanding of what's going on.

NESS provides a BSL to English Language interpreter service through in-house interpreter and freelance interpreters. All interpreters are registered with SASLI (Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters) and we are pleased to say that our trainee, Sam Rojas, has now attained full registration.

Providing emotional and practical support as well as information and advice, our Hospital Information Service supported 328 Eye Clinic patient cases from across NHS Grampian and Shetland between April 2016 and March 2017. Our Hospital Information Officer is also involved in making sure that information is available to patients attending Audiology and other clinical departments. Feedback has demonstrated that this role is often pivotal in patients getting timely and appropriate aftercare and support.

Our Connect Inform Support (CIS) service is for the specific group of advanced elderly people with significant sight and/ or hearing loss who are experiencing social isolation and living in their own homes. Two years into this four year project, which is funded by a Big Lottery Fund award, 196 elderly people with significant sensory loss have reported feeling less isolated and lonely as a result of being involved. This has helped them keep healthy, safe and independent and enabled some to remain in their own homes.

Our Employment support service provides a personalised service to people living with serious sensory loss. It enables people to access relevant employment, education and/ or training opportunities and/ or to sustain their occupation. Between April 2016 and March 2017, 71 people benefitted from this support. Since January 2017 we have been providing the same service in Dundee, available to our service users in Dundee and Angus. Also see Added Value Spotlight.

Offering individual assessment and tuition as well as classes on using digital technology, our “ICT for all” service reached 174 people with serious sight and/ or hearing loss. From our bases in Aberdeen and Elgin we have supported people all over the Grampian region. From January 2017, the service was extended into Dundee. Also see Added Value Spotlight.

Our Young Peoples’ Sensory Service (YPSS) is the only project in Scotland that provides integrated sensory support to young people aged 0-19. Funding from The Bank of Scotland Foundation, over the last two years, has enabled us to reach 171 youngsters with serious sight and/ or hearing loss and their families. Providing opportunities for them to do the same things and experience the same challenges as their sighted and hearing peers, we have delivered activities which have helped them form friendships, build confidence, learn skills and become independent.

Volunteer supported services and activities have delivered an increased range of NESS support services and peer-led activities, support, social, leisure, fundraising, special interest and peer support groups in Aberdeen and around Moray. We are also now beginning to recruit volunteers to specific briefs in our Dundee Resource centre and have recently added the post of Volunteer Coordinator for Angus. Also see Added Value Spotlight.

In collaboration with NHS Grampian, we have developed a new Hear 2 Help service in our Resource Centre in Aberdeen, which is staffed exclusively by volunteers. This enables NHS hearing aid users to access cleaning, maintenance and batteries without having to travel to the relocated Audiology Department as well as find out about the other services available at NESS. We are reaching many more people as a result of this innovation.

Additionally we have a Hear 2 Help volunteer presence at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin, which supports their hearing aid maintenance clinic on site in the hospital.

Our Head of Enterprise, Adam Hillhouse and his team have worked hard to deliver our wide range of added value services.

Fundraising and Promotional Initiatives

Over the year we again delivered a range of fundraising initiatives. Our revamped Savour Charity Ball at the 5 star Marcliffe Hotel again proved successful and our 40th Anniversary Aberdeen Football Club corporate afternoon turned out to be our most successful event of the year. Neil Skene continues to develop new and improved events and the Chapelton Bike Ride was well attended and an excellent fundraiser.

We continue to be extremely grateful to the people of North East Scotland for their continued support in tough financial times.

Trust funding continues to be a big feature of our income generation and Michelle Herd has done a sterling job in gaining significant funding from a wide range of trust funds to support our ever growing added value services.

NESS continues to be in the public profile and we are regularly featured in local and regional press, radio and TV. We had excellent coverage from STV on the opening of our new centre in Dundee. We are extremely grateful to Ian Herd and Amplus Energy for their continued support in funding Frasermedia, who co-ordinate our Public Relations.

NESS continues to be a member of the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, the Moray Chamber of Commerce, the Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI).

Facilities

We recognise the importance of maintaining our facilities to a high standard and continue to spend a proportional amount to ensure they are fit for purpose. Brigitte Marshall in her revised role as Head of Corporate Services ensures that all NESS properties are of a high standard.

We expanded our facility in Dundee to incorporate a resource centre and additional office space and have obtained office space in Carnoustie from Angus Council. Our new website went on line and we are grateful to our in house staff team for overseeing this project. The website is fully accessible and has a range of new features.

Governance

Our Board of Directors oversaw the implementation of our strategy and action plan and we implemented relevant areas of our external review.

Our three Councillors stepped down from their roles with their respective councils and we are grateful to Councillors Alan Wright, Jim Houston and Len Ironside for their public service and their excellent support of NESS over many years. Indeed, Len Ironside has now joined the NESS Board in his own right.

We were delighted that Lynne Hawcroft stayed on the Board as an observer at the end of her seven years of service.

During the year Varda Hood retired from the Board following her seven years of service and Sheila Crow, Bob Bain, Peter Copp, Andrea Barclay and Lucia Kuffova resigned from the Board. We thank them for their service.

We have recruited new directors from a wide variety of backgrounds and skills based on our skills matrix and look forward to working with them going forward.

Our Service User Forums in Aberdeen and Moray continue to be well attended and we are grateful to the work of John Imrie and the Rev. Mary Whittaker for their continued support in managing the groups.

Staffing

Since our last report we have welcomed the following new staff to our team:

- Lisa Alexander – Reader/Driver - Elgin
- Kirsti Dicks – Social Worker - Aberdeen
- Kate Fraser – Fieldwork Assistant - Aberdeen
- Jayne Gardiner – Project Assistant YPSS - Aberdeen
- Michelle Herd – Trusts and Foundations Officer - Aberdeen
- Annalise Jobson – Social Worker - Dundee
- Joan Kennedy – Volunteer Coordinator - Angus
- Lynsey Mason – CIS Coordinator - Elgin
- Jo McPherson – Driver CIS - Aberdeen
- Sam Rojas – British Sign Language Interpreter - Aberdeen
- Emily Smyth – Resource Assistant – Dundee
- Louisa Thain – CIS administrator - Elgin
- Bill Varney – Rehabilitation Worker - Dundee
- Anne Williams – Fieldwork Assistant - Angus

NESS recognise that our staff are our greatest asset and five staff received long service awards: Hilda Young, Senior Administrator, Carla Marchbank, Senior Practitioner, Carrie Crombie, Social Work Assistant, Margaret Kydd, Social Worker and Diane Lunan, Resource Centre Worker.

We continued to offer successful training placements in Social Work within the organisation and continued to support senior school pupils with short term work experience placements.

Strategies and Campaigns

We continue to support local and national strategies and campaigns including:

- British Sign Language Act (Scotland), and the two year implementation,
- Scottish & UK Vision Strategies, currently under review,
- The See Hear Sensory Impairment Strategy, currently being updated,
- Dundee Council Sensory Impairment Strategy,
- Integration of Health and Social Work, all NESS council areas,
- Moray Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy

NESS has been heavily involved in the delivery of the See Hear Strategy across the five council areas where we are active. Within Aberdeen City, where our Chief Executive has lead responsibility we have had excellent buy in from colleagues from the Council, NHS Grampian and Third Sector organisations.

National Representation

We continue to represent the needs of our service users on the following groups:

- Scottish Government Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment,
- Scottish Government Cross Party Group on Deafness,
- Visionary, the UK Association for Local Societies for the Visually Impaired, our CEO is the current Chairman,
- SCOD, Scottish Council on Deafness Members Forum,
- SCOD, Management Group, our Chief Executive is a member of the Board of Directors,
- SCOVl, Scottish Council on Visual Impairment, Our Head of Enterprise is a member of the Board of Trustees,
- Member of the Scottish Vision Strategy Development Group,
- Scottish Vision, Hearing and Stroke Network,
- Institute of Fundraising,
- Thomas Pocklington Trust, our CEO is a member of the board of Trustees.

Planned Developments for 2017

- Develop and integrate our new strategy,
- Develop new fundraising initiatives, including being a main charity with the new Great Aberdeen Run,
- Have input into and influence the new UK Vision Strategy,
- Source new areas of trust funding to maintain current services and expand our portfolio of added value provision,
- Develop support groups throughout Angus,
- Develop the role of a fundraiser in the Dundee and Angus area.

Total NESS Service User Numbers as at 31 March 2017

Area	Blind	Part Sighted	Non Reg	Non Reg with Hearing Problems	Hard of Hearing	Deafened	Deaf	Deafblind	Hearing with Related Problems i.e. Tinnitus	Total by Area
Aberdeen City	301	449	302	144	931	40	128	119		2414
Aberdeenshire	159	204	116	4	31	4	5	29	8	560
Moray	172	161	150	96	383	17	23	56		1058
Angus	69	59	95	33	221	43	47	35	4	606
Dundee	365	333	243	44	516	78	122	56	8	1765
Perth & Kinross								1		1
										0
Total	1066	1206	906	321	2082	182	325	296	20	6404

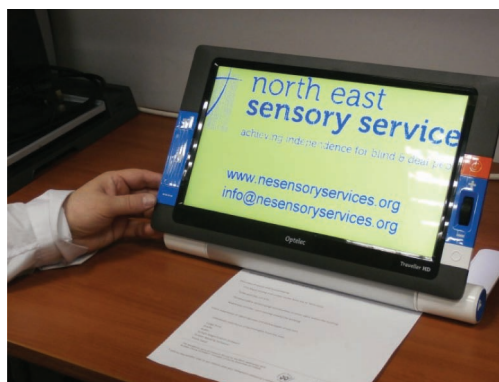
**Aberdeenshire receive non-statutory services only, mostly NESS newsletter only.*

Total numbers reflect people having received a service during the year, not, as above, the figures on our database at 31 March 2017.

Added Value spotlight - New in 2017

Building on our well-established range of services in Aberdeen and Moray, 2017 saw the opening of NESS' first **Added Value** services in Dundee. Our **Dundee Resource Centre** also shows an impressive range of equipment, aids and adaptations, which can greatly enhance the lives of people affected by sight loss, hearing loss, or both.

To complement this, we now stock a comprehensive array of digital equipment as well as having extended our **ICT for All** service, delivering information, advice and practical instruction on digital devices, both specialist and mainstream. We hold a range of specialist equipment for demonstration which can be tried out by people who might be looking to buy something or just find out what is available. As we do in Aberdeen and Moray, we have now started to offer small group workshops using mobile devices and hand-held technology, including their in-built special accessibility features, which are proving popular. We are grateful to SCVO's Digital Charter Fund and the Robertson Trust for their financial support.



Our new **Dundee Employment Service**, supported by the Robertson Trust, is modelled on its highly successful sister project in Aberdeen. We provide person centred support for people with severe sensory loss who are out of work to help them into employment, training or education. We also support people who are in work and facing challenges due to their sight or hearing loss, to negotiate with their employer, or other agencies. We also assist those wishing to further their education, to enhance their employment prospects, or to change career paths.

In nearby Angus, with the support of the Angus Blind Society, we have a new part time Volunteer Coordinator who has started developing local peer support and social groups for people with sight and or hearing loss.



Collages created by our art group which are now displayed in our café at John Street

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2017 £	Total 2016 £
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	103,750	-	103,750	218,926
Other trading activities	151,359	-	151,359	131,343
Investments	44,267	-	44,267	62,473
Charitable activities	93,274	1,465,733	1,559,007	1,402,424
Total income	392,650	1,465,733	1,858,383	1,815,166
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	164,200	-	164,200	176,219
Charitable activities	477,211	1,557,477	2,034,688	1,797,760
Total expenditure	641,411	1,557,477	2,198,888	1,973,979
Net gains /(losses) on investments	294,287	-	294,287	(140,872)
Net (expenditure)/income	45,526	(91,744)	(46,218)	(299,685)
Transfers between funds	(105,210)	105,210	-	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension plans	(858,000)	-	(858,000)	271,000
Net movement in funds	(971,684)	13,466	(904,218)	(28,685)
Fund balances at 1 April 2016	1,056,001	98,492	1,154,493	1,183,178
Fund balances at 31 March 2017	138,317	111,958	250,275	1,154,493

Voluntary Income	Total 2017	Total 2016
	£	£
Donations	61,888	46,771
Legacies receivable	41,862	172,155
	103,750	218,926

Incoming resources from charitable activities				
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total 2017	Total 2016
	£	£	£	£
Contract income	-	1,067,920	1,067,920	979,401
Added Value Charitable Services	45,466	397,813	443,279	352,183
Sale of aids, training and awareness Income and transcription and translation income	47,808	-	47,808	70,840
	93,274	1,465,733	1,559,007	1,402,424

Attributable to funds as follows	Total 2017	Total 2016
	£	£
Unrestricted	93,274	70,840
Restricted	1,465,733	1,331,584
	1,559,007	1,402,424

Total expenditure					
		Charitable expenditure			
	Costs of generating funds	Contract and Added Value Charitable Services costs	Other costs	Total 2017	Total 2016
Costs directly allocated to activities	£	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	45,146	1,112,701	64,313	1,222,160	1,157,186
Other costs	60,812	7,708	-	68,520	52,442
Support costs Allocated to activities					
Notional rent	-	28,000	(28,000)	-	-
Management charge	-	93,630	(93,630)	-	-
Cost reallocation	-	35,028	(35,028)	-	-
Other premises costs	-	86,202	42,049	128,251	104,012
General office and finance staff and other costs	47,147	155,135	392,266	594,548	476,399
Communications	698	10,488	6,279	17,465	17,874
Legal and professional	4,265	1,200	38,380	43,845	39,862
Depreciation	4,732	27,321	42,582	74,635	75,061
Bank charges	1,400	64	-	1,464	1,143
Interest on defined benefit pension scheme	-	-	48,000	48,000	50,000
	164,200	1,557,477	477,211	2,198,888	1,973,979

Attributable to funds as follows	Total 2017	Total 2016
	£	£
Unrestricted	641,411	571,232
Restricted	1,557,477	1,402,747
	2,198,888	1,973,979

General office and finance staff and other costs includes remuneration to the auditor of £6,350 (2016 - £6,350) for audit costs and £2,850 (2016 - £2,850) for other services.

Included in support costs is a notional rent allocation of £28,000 (2016 - £28,000) and operating lease costs of £6,390 (2016 - £6,390).

The management charge of £93,630 (2016 - £87,786) relates to a management charge to Contract Services.

The cost reallocation of £35,028 (2016 - £52,200) relates to overhead costs attributable to Added Value Charitable Services.

North East Sensory Services

is the operational name of Grampian Society for the Blind, charity registered in Scotland, SC009537, company limited by guarantee SC155630

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