

ANNUAL REPORT **2019**



The Board of Directors

Chairman

John Legg

Appointed in Meeting

Laura Sharp (Vice-Chairman)
John Imrie
Rev. Mary Whittaker
Stephen McPherson
Ian Herd
Len Ironside
Hannah Watt
Colin Boag
Frank Wahedally
Lynne Hawcroft
Christina Cooper
Paul Duncan

Observer

Cllr Theresa Coull, Moray Council
Cllr Douglas Lumsden, Aberdeen City Council

November 2019

Chairman's Report by John Legg

Supporting 6,390 blind and deaf people to achieve independence through high quality, innovative and integrated services made 2019 a special year for NESS. In this our 140th anniversary, we exceeded our performance targets in virtually every area, providing more services to more people while maintaining our strong financial position.



Living with significant sensory loss can be difficult, challenging and frustrating. NESS provides vital support services designed to enable people to live life their way.

Congratulations go to our staff, volunteers and managers who this year delivered a coveted 'Advanced Gold Award' recognising their consistent commitment towards delivering quality services. Working alongside partners and service users, NESS developed innovative ways to access resources, deliver effective services and create new opportunities for people living with sensory loss.

As the leading provider of integrated sensory services in Scotland, NESS played a pivotal role in both local and national initiatives and shared best practice with a range of organisations. It is exciting that integrated services for people living with sensory loss are now seen as the most effective way to achieve positive outcomes and real value.

Each donation and grant that NESS receives is carefully managed and used. The recently published Social Impact Report illustrated the substantial value that is achieved. For every pound we invest in supporting our volunteers, we generate over £7 worth of service.

Finally, a word of thanks to our generous donors and to the NESS Board of Directors who, on a voluntary basis work hard to improve and grow services.

If you think you can help NESS to make a difference please contact us, we would be delighted to speak to you.

Chief Executive's Report by Graham Findlay

Review of Activities in meeting our Objectives

In the financial year 2018/19, NESS has consolidated our existing services and developed further added value support.



Our Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Aberdeen, Moray, Dundee and Angus Health and Social Care Partnerships continued to be delivered successfully and to a high standard. Aberdeen City has recognised the value and uniqueness of our work by allocating NESS 'Follow the Public Pound' status.

NESS continues to make our non-statutory services available 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 and we continue to input into the Aberdeenshire See Hear group.

Quality Systems

Quality is at the heart of everything we do and this year has been particularly successful. All of our funders have been appreciative of our work and the difference that we make.

In January 2019, NESS retained the Investors in People (IIP) standard and the advanced Gold Standard for a further three year period. This is particularly satisfying in that we are now assessed against the new Generation 6 Framework. Our former award would have been equivalent to silver under the new standard.

We also published our second independently audited Social Accounts and Social Impact Report accredited by the Social Audit Network. These accounted for the social value we generated in the period April 2017 – March 2018, highlighting outcomes for people using our services towards Our Mission of, "Achieving independence for Blind and Deaf people" and demonstrating the impact of NESS' contribution towards Our Vision of, "A society in which people living with a sensory loss are able to fully participate and contribute to the same level as those without a sensory loss".

NESS held our best attended yet Annual Celebration in the Aberdeen Town House in November and we are grateful to the council for awarding us a civic reception.

Service User Statistics

The total number of service users on our database for the whole of Grampian and Tayside in the year to 31 March 2019 was 6,390.

Awareness Raising

Over the year we ran or took part in 48 awareness raising events attended by a total of 619 people. This included 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 are particularly grateful to the Aberdeen See Hear group for supporting many of our training initiatives.

Added Value Services

NESS provides a BSL to English Language interpreter booking service utilising freelance interpreters and our own in-house interpreter, all of whom are SASLI¹ registered. We successfully recruited a replacement interpreter after a twelve-week hiatus, and although this did not interrupt our capacity to fulfil assignments, the number was slightly reduced from 493 assignments being undertaken last year to 457 assignments this year. Our in-house interpreter, fulfilled 219, slightly down on last year's 273. Jobs were spread through each of the local authority areas we operate in.

Providing emotional and practical support as well as information and advice, our Hospital Information Officer supported 392 Eye Clinic patient cases from across NHS Grampian and Shetland, which is up from last year's total of 330. Our Hospital Information Officer continued to ensure that information is available to patients attending Audiology and other clinical departments.

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. Reporting in May 2018, the start of the final year of this four-year Big Lottery Funded project, Blake Stevenson, an independent consultant "found clear evidence that if the project continues to progress as it has to date, it is highly likely to meet its target outcomes."

With two months yet to run, it is looking like we will meet or exceed our targets for the four year project, which is 320 people.

¹ Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Our Employment Support Services provide personalised support to people living with serious sensory loss who are of working age in Aberdeen City and Dundee. Between April 2018 and March 2019, 69 people benefitted from this support in Aberdeen, up from 59 last year and 26 in Dundee, up from 21 last year.

Offering individual assessment and tuition as well as classes on using digital technology, this year our “ICT for all” reached 235 people with serious sensory loss, up from 180 last year. From our bases in Aberdeen, Dundee and Elgin we have supported people from all over our operational area.

Our Young Peoples’ Sensory Service (YPSS) is the only project in Scotland that provides integrated sensory support to young people aged 0-19. In March 2018, we were delighted to find out that the BBC’s Children in Need had agreed to a three-year grant contribution towards the running costs of the project. Their annual fundraising TV appeal in the autumn featured our service and the experience of one little boy and his family. We were thrilled to attend their celebrations at BBC Scotland in Glasgow.

Volunteer supported services and activities have delivered an increased range of support services and peer-led activities, social, leisure and peer support groups in all our areas. This year we have added fledgling groups in Montrose, Brechin, and Kirriemuir thanks to the Angus Society for the Blind. This extends the range of options available to people with sensory loss in Angus. There is now also a social group meeting in Dundee and another in Broughty Ferry.

We have developed a range of support services for hearing aid users in all three of our resource centres and at Dr Gray’s Hospital in Elgin. Many of these are volunteer delivered and include replacing batteries, cleaning, basic maintenance and information and advice. In addition, thanks to the Aberdeen See Hear Fund, we have provided “Hearing Aid Champions” training to care staff in a number of care homes in Aberdeen, greatly improving and enhancing the lives of their residents. This equips the staff to better look after the resident’s hearing aids which significantly improves social interaction for the residents with hearing loss.

The list of clubs and groups that are supported by NESS, or that use NESS facilities, is long and varied, but all rely heavily on our volunteers. The 147 people who generously volunteered for NESS during the year have made a significant contribution. Last year we used a Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) to calculate its monetary value to the organisation as £205,889. For every pound we spent on volunteers, they generated £7.30 in the value of the work they delivered. This amounts to more than a seven-fold return on the organisation’s investment.

Fundraising and Promotional Initiatives

Over the year we delivered a number of fundraising events. Our Charity Ball at the 5 star Marcliffe Hotel was enhanced with the support of Chris Chittell from TV's Emmerdale and the world renowned singer Aled Jones.

NESS continues to be in the public profile and we are regularly featured in local and regional press, radio and TV. In August, we appointed George Walker Event Management to manage our media presence and promote our fundraising events. We are continually grateful to Ian Herd and Amplus Energies for their on-going PR sponsorship.

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.

Governance

Our Board of Directors oversaw the implementation of our business plan and related action plan. During the year Fraser Crerar retired from the Board.

Our Service User Forums in Aberdeen and Moray are ongoing and the numbers of attendees at the new Dundee and Angus forum are continuing to increase.

Staffing

During the financial year we welcomed the following new staff to our team:

- Gwen Auchterlonie, Social Worker (Dundee)
- Lisa Li, British Sign Language Interpreter

NESS recognises that our staff are our greatest asset and four staff received long service awards:

Arlene Cumming

Susan Hewitt

Michele Hughes

Brigitte Marshall

We continued to offer successful Social Work training placements in the organisation and continued to support senior school pupils with short term work experience placements. We had our first Rehabilitation Officer student join us in Dundee.

During the year we were visited by Scottish and UK members of parliament, Maureen Watt MSP, Marie Todd MSP, Lewis Macdonald MSP and Kirsty Blackman MP. We are grateful for the interest shown by both national and local politicians on the work of NESS.

Strategies and Campaigns

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

- British Sign Language Act (Scotland),
- The See Hear Sensory Impairment Strategy,
- Aberdeen, Moray, Angus, Aberdeenshire and Dundee See Hear Strategies.

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,
- Deaf Scotland Members Forum,
- SCOVl, Scottish Council on Vision Impairment,
- Scottish Vision, Hearing and Stroke Network,
- Institute of Fundraising,
- Thomas Pocklington Trust, our CEO is a member of the board of Trustees,
- Vision UK, our CEO is a member of the board of Trustees,
- SASLI the registration organisation in Scotland for BSL Interpreters.

Planned Developments for 2019/20

- Implement our action plan for year two of our business plan,
- Continue to input and influence local and national decision makers,

Spotlight on – Clubs

NESS supports a variety of clubs for our service users. They are dotted all over our area of activity. Some meet at our facility at John Street, others in our meeting room in Elgin, and many of them are out in the communities we serve. Clubs are supported by NESS volunteers and determine their own programmes of activities and events. These can range from a tea and chat to discussing books, visiting attractions in the region, sporting activities, theatre visits, games afternoons, art production, getting in speakers or musicians and having sing alongs.



CIS – In Chair Exercise

Clubs are invaluable forums for people to meet others with sensory loss and to exchange ideas, support each other, have a laugh, learn something new or challenge yourself to do something you've never done before.



Visit to Arbroath Abbey

We have a number of clubs which are very well established and have been running for a long time. Over the last couple of years we have been able to expand into the newer areas we serve and our volunteer coordinator in Angus and Dundee has set up a number of new clubs for our service users there.

QUOTES

“I go to the Visually Impaired Dominoes Group every Thursday in Aberdeen. I have been going to this group for many years. I take the bus there and meet my friends for lunch at the Church building. We enjoy speaking over lunch. Then we go across to NESS and play dominoes. We play in teams, and also in singles games against each other. We always have a tea break and a chat. I really enjoy my Thursdays at the Domino group.”

“It brightens my day. It picks me up.”

“It keeps you going.”

“[If it wasn't for CIS] you'd be sitting in the house, feeling sorry for yourself.”

“It boosts you up a bit getting out.”

“You seem to forget your problems... it takes your mind off things.”

Elgin Art Group

“It's important. Until you go to a place that's all visually impaired people you don't realise. But when you are the majority you speak about what's happened to your sight. You've got to learn not to be afraid to ask for help.”



Youth Group Trying New Skills



Service User Numbers as at 31 March 2019

| Area | Blind/ severely sight impaired | Part Sighted/ Sight impaired | Non Reg | Non Reg with Hearing Problems | Hard of Hearing | Deafened | Deaf BSL | Deafblind | Hearing with Related Problems i.e. Tinnitus | Total by Area |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|------------|--|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--|------------------|
| Aberdeen City | 279 | 435 | 318 | 191 | 895 | 55 | 125 | 113 | 0 | 2411 |
| Aberdeenshire | 114 | 116 | 108 | 6 | 38 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 7 | 413 |
| Moray | 156 | 143 | 155 | 158 | 419 | 21 | 19 | 75 | 0 | 1146 |
| Angus | 84 | 78 | 122 | 64 | 249 | 41 | 49 | 39 | 4 | 730 |
| Dundee | 315 | 297 | 190 | 71 | 557 | 52 | 110 | 88 | 9 | 1689 |
| Perth & Kinross | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Total | 948 | 1069 | 893 | 490 | 2158 | 175 | 308 | 329 | 20 | 6390 |

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

| | Unrestricted funds £ | Restricted funds £ | Total 2019 £ | Total 2018 £ |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Income and endowments from: | | | | |
| Donations and legacies | 164,590 | - | 164,590 | 174,080 |
| Charitable activities | 34,865 | 1,572,437 | 1,607,302 | 1,601,156 |
| Other trading activities | 172,215 | - | 172,215 | 134,283 |
| Investments | 63,251 | - | 63,251 | 58,833 |
| Total income | 434,921 | 1,572,437 | 2,007,358 | 1,968,352 |
| Expenditure on: | | | | |
| Raising funds | 190,766 | - | 190,766 | 134,802 |
| Charitable activities | 357,551 | 1,726,864 | 2,084,415 | 2,161,930 |
| Total expenditure | 548,317 | 1,726,864 | 2,275,181 | 2,296,732 |
| Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains | (113,396) | (154,427) | (267,823) | (328,380) |
| Net gains on investments | 78,260 | - | 78,260 | 36,503 |
| Net (expenditure)/income | (35,136) | (154,427) | (189,563) | (291,877) |
| Transfers between funds | (151,933) | 151,933 | - | - |
| Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension plans | (85,000) | - | (85,000) | 1,202,000 |
| Net movement in funds | (272,069) | (2,494) | (274,563) | 910,123 |
| Reconciliation of Funds: Total funds brought forward | 1,127,523 | 32,875 | 1,160,398 | 250,275 |
| Total fund carried forward | 855,454 | 30,381 | 885,835 | 1,160,398 |

| Income from donations and legacies | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| | Unrestricted funds £ | Restricted funds £ | Total 2019 £ | Restated Total 2018 £ |
| Donations | 9,085 | - | 9,085 | 14,229 |
| Legacies | 155,505 | - | 155,505 | 159,851 |
| Total donations and legacies | 164,590 | - | 164,590 | 174,080 |

| Incoming resources from charitable activities | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| | Unrestricted funds £ | Restricted funds £ | Total 2019 £ | Restated Total 2018 £ |
| Contract income | - | 1,189,859 | 1,189,859 | 1,167,992 |
| Added Value Charitable Services | - | 360,482 | 360,482 | 373,635 |
| Other Charitable Services | 34,865 | 22,096 | 55,961 | 59,529 |
| | 34,865 | 1,572,437 | 1,607,302 | 1,601,156 |

| Costs of Raising Funds | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Unrestricted funds £ | Restricted funds £ | Total 2019 £ | Total 2018 £ |
| Premises | 4,068 | - | 4,068 | 3,980 |
| Communications | 662 | - | 662 | 435 |
| Legal and professional | 2,913 | - | 2,913 | 3,354 |
| Fundraising costs | 59,293 | - | 59,293 | 38,066 |
| Investment manager's fees | 4,619 | - | 4,619 | - |
| Wages and salaries | 117,489 | - | 117,489 | 82,875 |
| Depreciation | 1,722 | - | 1,722 | 6,092 |
| | 190,766 | - | 190,766 | 134,802 |

| Direct Costs | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Contract Income £ | Added Value Charitable Services £ | Other Charitable Activities £ | Total 2019 £ | Total 2018 £ |
| Charitable Activities | 21,611 | 29,650 | 43,118 | 94,379 | 97,553 |
| | | | | | |

| Support Costs | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Contract income | Added Value Charitable costs | Other Charitable activities | Total 2019 | Total 2018 |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Premises | 90,588 | 19 | 36,611 | 127,218 | 121,628 |
| Other staff costs | 51,417 | 10,144 | 12,447 | 74,008 | 71,905 |
| Administration | 25,388 | 1,919 | 29,105 | 56,412 | 89,807 |
| Communications | 10,016 | - | 5,960 | 15,976 | 14,152 |
| Legal and professional | 1,416 | - | 26,219 | 27,635 | 31,603 |
| Management charges | 72,732 | 21,420 | (94,152) | - | - |
| Notional rent | 28,000 | - | (28,000) | - | - |
| Other costs | - | 8,893 | 25,249 | 34,142 | 15,207 |
| Overhead contribution | - | 35,249 | (35,249) | - | - |
| Interest on defined benefit pension scheme | - | - | 31,000 | 31,000 | 59,000 |
| Loss on disposal of fixed assets | - | - | 617 | 617 | 10,132 |
| Wages and salaries | 924,124 | 376,290 | 272,187 | 1,572,601 | 1,578,820 |
| Depreciation | 12,149 | 22,779 | 15,499 | 50,427 | 72,123 |
| | 1,215,830 | 476,713 | 297,493 | 1,990,036 | 2,064,377 |

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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**north east
sensory services**

achieving independence for blind & deaf people



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