



north east **sensory services**

achieving independence for blind & deaf people

deafblind

deafened

registered
sight
impaired

Deaf

**NESS supports
people with serious sight
and/or hearing loss to overcome
practical and emotional
challenges and achieve
independence**

registered
severely sight
impaired

hard of
hearing

experiencing
severe sight
loss

**Strategy April 2023 to April
2029**



NESS Theory of Change

A why, how, what and where of NESS

Our mission: Achieving independence for blind and deaf people

Indicators:

Looks after themselves more independently	Is less socially isolated	Has sufficient income to improve /maintain their lifestyle	Participates in their community/ society	Has reduced some of the negative impacts of their sensory loss
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People achieve the “Living it My Way” Outcomes

I can make my own choices	I can manage the impact of my sensory loss	I can make best use of residual sight/ hearing	I can buy the things I want, and I can use the services I need	I can contribute and I don't feel excluded from society
I have people I can talk to when I want to	I can manage the impact of my sensory loss	I get all the benefits to which I am entitled	I can access work, volunteering, or learning opps	

Increased wellbeing

Confidence	Social connections	Self respect	Decision making	Feel part of society/ my neighbourhood
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Statutory service provision

Maintaining the Sight Loss Register	Social Work support	Rehabilitation and managing vision impairment	Adaptive Equipment	Lipreading and managing hearing loss
Practical and emotional support	Accessible information in a variety of formats	Aids for daily living	Help with technology: specialist and generic	Opportunities to meet socially

Positive changes for people with sensory loss

Impact

Effects on the person with sensory loss

Outcomes

Frontline services we deliver

Outputs

Our Vision:

“A Scotland aware of the needs of people with sensory impairment, that includes them as equal participants in community life and offers them the opportunities available to all.”

North East Sensory Services (NESS) is a leading provider of social care services supporting over 6,500 people of all ages living in the North East of Scotland.

Over the last strategy period, NESS made huge progress towards delivering its mission of Achieving Independence for Blind and Deaf People.

New services were started in each local authority area; service users' reach grew to over 6,500 people; external accreditation confirmed NESS's commitment to quality and innovation; staff and volunteers worked flexibly to exceed targets; partnerships flourished; fundraising enabled services to expand; high levels of contract compliance strengthened confidence in NESS services.

All of this was achieved against the unforeseen challenge of Covid. While the pandemic affected everyone, people living with significant sensory loss faced additional issues around communication, access and mobility. New services were developed, and existing services were quickly reshaped to ensure the most vulnerable were supported through lockdowns, restrictions and closures. Home working, home visits and online initiatives became the norm. Everyone in the 'NESS family' including staff, volunteers, directors and stakeholders rose to the challenge with superb support from funders and local businesses.

As one of the oldest charitable organisations in the north east, NESS has a proud history of development and innovation. During the last decade, NESS transformed itself from a respected local organisation supporting blind and partially sighted people, to become Scotland's first fully integrated joint sensory service provider. This unique change attracted the attention of funders, commissioners and influencers across Scotland and the UK and enabled sustainable growth.

New social, policy, and resource challenges will demand similar levels of change as we move through the current decade. The new strategy for 2023 – 2029 will not only help to steer NESS towards its 150-year anniversary but more importantly, towards helping thousands more young people, people of working age and older people to achieve independence. It has been informed through discussions and consultations with stakeholders, staff, commissioners, elected representatives, funders and most importantly, service users, their family and friends.

This strategy provides a direction of travel to help the organisation navigate future challenges. It aims to put quality and people at the heart of everything NESS does; provide improved and increased support; encourage those with a shared interest to join NESS in helping people living with serious sight or hearing loss to overcome practical and emotional challenges and achieve independence.



John Legg
Chair, NESS Board of Directors
2016 - 2023



Gordon McHardy
Chair, Designate
2023 - 2029

Below are the key action points from the Strategy. These will be collated into an Action Plan and then implemented and monitored on a regular basis by NESS's Management Team (MT). At the end of each year the implementation progress will be reviewed and additional actions agreed by the Board.

- ✔ Once the 2021 Census data is available, it will be reviewed with a focus on identifying major trends.
- ✔ Review the changing needs of our service users in respect of digital services and aids in 2025/26.
- ✔ Explore the potential for funding and managing evidence-based research aimed at improving service delivery.
- ✔ Review the potential impact of the changes once the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill has been approved and set out a detailed implementation plan.
- ✔ Audit the implementation plan in 2025/26.
- ✔ Prioritise future resources reviews for all external contracts on a three-year cycle.
- ✔ Implement the Energy Review findings and schedule costed improvements, maximising government assistance, by 2024/25.
- ✔ Maintain tight management of the investment portfolio and increase its strength.
- ✔ Programme a full review of fundraising by the end of 2024/25.
- ✔ Review 'added value' services in 2024/25 and 'statutory services' in 2026/27.
- ✔ Monitor and implement each of the eleven Investors in People (IIP) Evaluation recommendations by the end of the 2024/25 financial year, reporting progress on an annual basis to the Board.
- ✔ Recruit a new treasurer and new directors in line with the Board skills matrix and ensure succession planning.
- ✔ Once the Chair and Vice Chair designates are in place, reassess the governance structures taking account of new demands and opportunities.
- ✔ Ensure succession planning is in place for the MT.
- ✔ Compile and publish Social Accounts and Social Impact Reports for 2022 – 2023 and for 2026 -2027.
- ✔ Explore opportunities for further partnerships with the potential to improve and develop new services.
- ✔ Continue to vigorously promote NESS services and adapt to new and emerging communication channels.

In 2029, NESS will celebrate 150 years of outstanding service to the north east. From small beginnings, the organisation has grown into an acknowledged leader in the provision of fully integrated sensory services. Milestones from that journey run along the page footers, and over the period of this strategy, many more will be added.

While NESS continues to face forward in its push to improve services and overcome barriers, it remains close to the aspiration of its founders. At their inaugural meeting in 1879, they set the bar high when they stated: "The association should not be the least, but the best in all the land." True to that aim, the 'NESS Family' works hard every day all year round to deliver continuous improvements in the pursuit of quality services.

From a small local service for blind people, the organisation has evolved into a major regional provider of sensory services for unique groupings.

From the age of braille to mobile phones; from early struggles to have sign language acknowledged to the legal recognition of BSL in Scotland in 2015; from sporadic to fully-integrated provision, the journey has seen huge advances. More are needed however, to bridge remaining gaps and ensure that people living with sensory loss, no matter their age or circumstances, have equality of rights and opportunity. NESS has tried to capture that essence in nine aspirational statements that define aspects of lived experiences from a sensory perspective.

"I have people to talk to and somewhere to go, if and when I want to."

"I can access work, volunteering and learning/education opportunities, if I want to. (I may use support or equipment to help)."

"I can talk to goods suppliers and public service providers when I need to. (I may use communication support to help)."

"I don't feel excluded from society and can contribute and participate as much as I want to."

"I receive the statutory benefits to which I am entitled."

"I can get out and about. I find my way around and can travel where I want to go. (I may use support or equipment to help)."

"I make my own choices and decisions about my personal and social life including looking after myself, my home and my family."

"I understand my vision and/or hearing condition and can manage its impact, with or without help. I get on with my life."

NESS Supports

People who are Hard of Hearing

People who are Deaf (British Sign Language Users)

People who are Deafened

People who are Deafblind

People who have Hearing but with associated difficulties, for example, Tinnitus

People who are Registered Blind (Severely Sight Impaired)

People who are Registered Partially Sighted, (Sight Impaired)

People who are Visually Impaired (significant sight loss but not registered)

Timeline

October 7 1879: Inaugural meeting of the Aberdeen Town and County Association for Teaching the Blind at their Homes (the Association). Its aims were to seek out the blind, visit them in their homes, teach the Moon system of reading, supply them with books free of charge, and teach them to work and find employment.

NESS's 2016 – 2023 Strategy saw many successes despite the enormous challenges that came with the pandemic. Below is a synopsis of some of the main advances that were successfully secured.

Statutory Services

All four Service Level Agreements (Moray, Aberdeen City, Dundee, and Angus) were extended or retained and although the budgets were tight, each contract was fully met. While a limited tender for deaf provision was issued in Aberdeenshire, it didn't meet our six-point checklist. (See Appendix 1, page 17)

Quality

The continued drive to deliver quality services was reflected in the award of the IIP Gold Advanced Standard, a major business accolade.

Covid

The onset and impact of the pandemic was mitigated by thoughtful planning, innovation and the commitment of the 'NESS family' to put the needs of service users first, while protecting staff and volunteers. Planning frameworks were widely shared with other organisations, and vital services such as the Hear to Help Express (our hearing aid maintenance service) were introduced.

Flexible and Responsive

The mantra of being a flexible and responsive organisation was evidenced throughout the strategy period and is now embedded in all our work.

Added Value Services

Charitable services were maintained and expanded with new services introduced in the Dundee/Angus areas and a doubling of ICT support. This growth was achieved through the support of donors, trust funds and the wider public.

Governance

New Directors strengthened the Board which played an important role in navigating a series of unprecedented challenges.

Digital

New IT skills, equipment and work practices were developed, enabling staff to work from home. Board meetings also became virtual where required, and service users have been enabled to access crucial services online. Blended working proved its worth and is now the norm.

Timeline

After 1879: The Association continued to visit people who were blind in their homes, and helped "put them in a position as far as possible to make them independent of outside assistance". It also distributed books to "mitigate the feeling of isolation and loneliness".

1920: The Blind Persons Act was passed, putting a responsibility on local authorities – the Town and County Councils – to meet the welfare needs of blind people.

NESS operates in a context of changing demands, legislation and resources

Growth in Demand

There is a wealth of evidence indicating that as the general population ages, more people lose their sight and/or hearing.

During the current decade, it is estimated that diabetic eye disease will increase by 5%, glaucoma by 18%, cataracts by 26% and age related macular degeneration by 27% (Source: The State Of the UK's Eye Health 2021, Specsavers/ Deloitte Access Economics). Over roughly the same period, it's predicted that there will be substantial increases in the loss of both male and female hearing in each of the north east's five local authority areas, leading to an overall increase of over 14% (Source: Deafness: Predicting the future for Scotland, 2020). As our population ages, the demand for sensory services will increase. By 2050, it's estimated that the number of people living with significant sight loss will have grown to double the current figures and those living with hearing loss will have grown to 1 in 5 of the population.

Sensory loss is sometimes accompanied by other health conditions such as stroke, dementia and frailty. Sometimes the other condition can mask or distract from the sensory loss, which can bring additional issues. For example, 50% of falls amongst older people with sight loss are directly attributed to poor vision; 60% of stroke survivors immediately experience visual problems; high levels of dementia are prevalent amongst people with sensory loss. In 2017, the Lancet Commission reported that 35% of dementia cases could be prevented if nine modifiable risk factors, including hearing loss, were fully eliminated. The identification and support of sensory loss is especially vital amongst older people, where it can help maintain both health and wellbeing.

Despite the remarkable efforts that were made to maintain services, the pandemic adversely impacted sensory health through substantial drops in referrals, appointments and treatment. Waiting lists remain high in many areas and some estimates predict significant delays until the end of the decade.

All of this is set against an ageing population and growing demand. The findings from the 2021 Census will become available during 2023/2024. NESS has requested detailed information on the prevalence of sight loss, hearing loss and the numbers of BSL users by local authority area.

Action Point:

Once the 2021 Census data is available, it will be reviewed with a focus on identifying major trends.

Timeline

1921: The Association had employed five Home Teachers for the Blind, who visited people at home and taught them tactile reading using Braille or Moon.

Specialist Support

In addition to population ageing, recent research has highlighted higher levels of unemployment, isolation, and communication issues amongst people living with serious sensory loss. There is also evidence of an increasing requirement to use online services, requiring access to digital technology, especially mobile phones. These areas are anticipated to drive increased demand for specialist support.

Action Point:

Review the changing needs of our service users in respect of digital services and aids in 2025/26.

Researching Future Demand

Evidence-based research is invaluable. NESS is committed to using national research wherever possible to steer and inform its service delivery. Local research has the potential to add to the understanding of sensory service gaps, planning and effectiveness.

Currently, there is no locally-focused research in the field of sensory loss. While NESS is not in a position to instigate and implement local research on its own, it has a unique capacity to collaborate and aid the development of such research.

Action Point:

Explore the potential for funding and managing evidence-based research aimed at improving service delivery.

Social Care Changes

In 2020, the Scottish Government set up an independent Review of Social Care, led by Derek Feeley. NESS was involved in the consultation process and lobbied for improved and collaborative commissioning. The review's findings, noted below, were far-reaching:

- Embed a Human Rights approach in the heart of Social Care.
- Improve services and support for unpaid carers.
- Create a National Care Service.
- Improve self-directed support, quality and standards and the commissioning and procurement of care.
- Improve service models based on innovation, collaboration and a clear focus on service users and carers.
- Shift from competitive to collaborative commissioning involving codesign and redesign with providers/recipients.
- Implement the 'Fair Work' principles across Social Care.
- Prioritise finance for Social Care.

In June 2022, the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill was introduced to Parliament calling for the establishment of a National Care Service; transferring responsibility from Local Authorities to Local Care Boards (Community Health and Social Care Boards); setting out provisions for the processing of Health and Social Care information; and setting out provisions for the delivery and regulation of Social Care. The changes are anticipated to take shape and be implemented during the early years of the Strategy.

For NESS, the changes may have an impact on the operation of both statutory and charitable services. NESS however, is well positioned to cope with change, having a proven track record in collaborative working, innovation and service delivery design and review. The organisation's commitment to Fair Work principles, a human rights approach, continuous improvement and the importance of lived experience will stand NESS in good stead.

Action Point:

Review the potential impact of the changes once the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill has been approved and set out a detailed implementation plan.

Action Point:

Audit the implementation plan in 2025/26.

Resource Pressures

2022 saw spiralling inflation and energy costs, a cost-of-living crisis and the largest fall in the value of investments since the financial crash in 2008. All of these factors impacted NESS.

Inflation increases costs, erodes the value of fixed contracts and alongside the cost-of-living, squeezes our greatest asset - our staff. It also impacts on fundraising, puts additional burdens on payroll and significantly places unwelcome pressures on those we serve. If the forecasts are correct and inflation reduces in the coming years, it may still leave financial issues in its wake.

NESS works closely with a range of partners, including specialist contractors who provide and support essential services such as IT, finance and utilities. Over the last year, NESS has reviewed and reset many of these contract arrangements and, in the process, reduced costs and improved efficiency.

Action Point:

Prioritise future resources reviews for all external contracts on a three-year cycle.

Timeline

1930: The Association and the Blind Asylum were acknowledged by the authorities as the organisations providing the statutory welfare services for people who were blind. Aberdeen Council contributed towards the costs for each person visited by the Association and for training Home Teachers of the Blind.

Energy

With four offices to maintain, energy costs have been a significant budget heading for some time. Energy efficiency is an important priority for NESS and a review of energy usage in John Street was initiated in 2022, along with immediate remedial actions. Longer term proposals to improve the building's energy efficiency are currently being costed.

Action Point:

Implement the Energy Review findings and schedule costed improvements, maximising government assistance, by 2024/25.

Pensions

Pension costs account for a major part of the overall budget and prudent governance necessitates that the organisation holds adequate pension reserves in an investment portfolio. Charities are also expected to maintain a minimum of three months' running costs in reserve. Given the vulnerability of our service users, NESS maintains a minimum of six months' worth of reserves. As a consequence of occasional delays in the payment of contractual fees, there can be additional short term draws on the portfolio to cover cash flow.

While the reserves and pension funds are tightly monitored and remain in good health, there is scope to slightly increase the strength of the portfolio. This would give additional comfort while navigating resource pressures and allow the organisation to build a small development pot.

Action Point:

Maintain tight management of the investment portfolio and increase its strength.

Fundraising

Charitable governance obligates that NESS provides contracted statutory services at cost price. Fundraising allows NESS to provide a wide range of charitable or 'added value' services, which complement the contracted services and significantly enhance the lives of our service users. Charity trust funds, community fundraising, legacies, donations, investments, and other generated income, makes up 40% of NESS's overall budget, providing a range of vital support services and facilities.

Timeline

1948: The Association was formally employed by the Aberdeen Town Council and the county councils of Aberdeen, Banff and North Kincardineshire to deliver the welfare services for the blind.

1960: The Association moved to Bon Accord Square, an office base with a Braille library in the attic.

1968: The Social Work (Scotland) Act was passed. By the mid-1970s the Association was employing Social Workers to replace Social Welfare Officers and Home Teachers for the Blind.

During the last strategy period, NESS completed a comprehensive review of fundraising capacity, approaches and resourcing, and successfully maintained excellent returns despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and staff turnover. Where ‘fresh funding’ is sourced, it helps to both retain ‘added value’ provision and expand new services in areas where there is a need. NESS is however mindful of other providers and the importance of robust referral and signposting procedures and avoiding duplication given resource shortages.

Action Point:

Programme a full review of fundraising by the end of 2024/25.

NESS Service Provision

NESS offers a strong level of service provision across the north east. It has achieved this by delivering high-quality contracted, or ‘statutory’ services on behalf of four local authorities, alongside a unique range of charitable or ‘added value’, services and facilities. These have been integrated into a joint sensory service, delivered by a highly trained and dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

Critically, this approach is driven by the systematic pursuit of improvements with a commitment to ongoing external accreditation and the vital engagement of partners, stakeholders and funders. The goal of continuous improvement is woven into our planning, training, implementation, monitoring and overall governance.

Our Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are robust and full cost recovery is close to being achieved. NESS is committed to reviewing its main service areas on a three yearly cycle.

Action Point:

Review ‘added value’ services in 2024/25 and ‘statutory services’ in 2026/27.

OUR COMMITMENT

NESS is driven in its commitment to serve. Our mission, vision and values inform and shape our service delivery, strategic planning and our investment of time, energy and resources across the entire organisation.

They are ‘live documents’ and as such are reviewed regularly, woven through all our plans and policies and, where necessary, they are updated. Significantly, NESS’s core commitments remain close to those of our founders and to many of our key stakeholders.

Timeline

1975: The Association had employed a fully qualified Mobility Officer – one of only five in Scotland. Eventually, the role was replaced by the Rehabilitation for Visual Impairment Officer.

<p>Our Mission:</p>	<p>“Achieving Independence for Blind and Deaf People”</p>	
<p>Our Purpose:</p>	<p>“North East Sensory Services supports people with serious sight and/or hearing loss to overcome practical and emotional challenges and achieve independence”</p>	
<p>Our Vision:</p>	<p>“A Scotland aware of the needs of people with sensory impairment, that includes them as equal participants in community life and offers them the opportunities available to all”</p>	
<p>Values</p>	<p>Our Values:</p> <p>To work in a way that is:</p> <p>Professional Flexible and Responsive Accountable</p> <p>whilst acknowledging the need to be:</p> <p>Effective Innovative and Competitive</p>	<p>NESS’ Leadership Qualities (‘The 5Cs’):</p> <p>Everyone at NESS is a leader in their own right:</p> <p>Capable: good at what they do Committed: to our values and our people Connected: to other members of the team Communicating: good at listening and influencing others Caring: generous and willing to support others</p>

Aberdeen	Moray	Dundee	Angus	Aberdeenshire
<p>Investors in People standard holders since 2013, Excellence in The Third Sector award winner in 2016, when we first obtained the Gold standard which was retained in 2022.</p>	<p>Proud to be a Living Wage employer, accredited since 2016.</p>	<p>The Fair Work Dimensions reflect our day-to-day practices.</p>	<p>We follow human rights principles in all our practices, policies and procedures.</p>	



Timeline

1980: The Association changed its name to Grampian Society for the Blind (GSB) to reflect the area it was covering. The Grampian Tape Service was set up by Duncan Simpson. This became a GSB service in 2006.

NESS systematically reviews and improves service delivery in the pursuit of quality. Over the years, several interlinked approaches have been adopted to support the pursuit of quality and continuous improvement. These include 'The Five Cs' and Investors in People (IIP).

The Five Cs

Staff are the organisation's biggest and most important asset. In order to be effective, innovative and competitive, NESS recruits and trains staff to the highest standards so that they can provide the best possible services to our service users. Central to this process, every member of staff is viewed as a leader in their own right. This approach evolved through staff engagement in our Investors in People (IIP) programme. The 5Cs, outlined below, capture the essence of an effective leader and ground NESS's staff recruitment, development and management procedures.

An effective leader is...

Capable – They are good at what they do and have the proper balance of depth and breadth of subject-matter expertise to enable them to develop both a vision and a properly-scoped focus, execute on that vision and be self-assured and self-confident without being arrogant.

Committed – The best leaders have a strong sense of self-mastery. They demonstrate character and courage, initiative and passion. Their passion and courage are balanced by their sense of responsibility to something larger than themselves and a sense of self-discipline.

Connected – They like people and value relationships. They have a natural power with people, charisma, and an ability to create coalitions. They value their connectedness with others and tend to have extensive and diverse networks that they draw on for their support. Because of their connectedness, they have built-in support and a greater, more natural opportunity to anchor new approaches among the larger community.

Communicative – Effective leadership demands effective communication. The most effective leaders are dynamic communicators who can sell their vision effectively to others and generate excitement in the process. However, effective communication goes well beyond just the ability to be highly persuasive. The best leaders demonstrate that they are also great listeners, who allow themselves to be influenced by the thoughts and inputs of others. They are teachable, and in the process, they garner wider support and shared ownership for their vision and strategy because others, likewise, feel ownership.

Caring – Finally, effective leaders have a strong sense of service to others. They are recognized as giving to their community and being generous in sharing their time, expertise, personal support, and positive attitude to further something larger than themselves.

The 5Cs are now an integral part of our IIP approach.

Timeline

1989: The Register of Blind People was computerised. By this time, it was managed by Grampian Society for the Blind, which took over its management from Grampian Regional Council.

NESS introduced IIP in 2012 as an external health check on the organisation and to support our most important asset, our people.

Originally awarded the IIP Basic Standard, NESS worked hard to reach the Advanced Gold Award in 2018, which it retained in 2022. Two ‘heat maps’ from IIP’s report, pictured below, illustrate the areas in which NESS fully met the Advanced standard, the progress made in all areas between 2018 and 2022, and some areas requiring further improvement.

The 2022 ‘heat map’ measuring performance against key indicators shows that NESS made improvements in all three areas: improving, leading, and supporting. It also achieved the highest possible scores in six of the nine assessment areas – compared to one in 2018.

These are: ‘living with the organisation’s values and behaviours’, ‘leading and inspiring people’, ‘creating sustainable success’, ‘structuring work’, ‘empowering and involving people’ and ‘building capability’.

NESS, which was close to reaching the top platinum status, also continued to score highly on ‘delivering continuous improvement’ and on ‘recognising and rewarding performance’. It also made notable progress on ‘managing performance’ when compared to the report in 2018.



Outcomes as at December 2018



Outcomes as at April 2022

This achievement was remarkable, given that it was reached during the challenges of lockdowns and restrictions. Over the next three years, NESS aims to improve on its current Gold Advanced Standard and to be the best that we can be. Turning one of the three ‘Advanced’ areas into High Performing would earn us the top award of Platinum.

Action Point:
Monitor and implement each of the eleven IIP Evaluation recommendations by the end of the 2024/25 financial year reporting progress on an annual basis to the Board.

Governance

In December 2023, our new Chair designate, Gordon McHardy, and our new Vice Chair designate, Carmen Irving, will formally take up their duties. A new Treasurer will require to be recruited by November 2023, alongside three additional Directors by the end of 2024 to replace Directors coming to the end of their terms.

Timeline

A detailed leadership matrix tracks the skills, knowledge and experience, including both 'lived experience' and professional expertise, of Board Directors. This is complemented by ensuring wherever possible, the engagement of Directors from each of the five local authority areas that are served. In the case of Angus, a special partnership has been developed with Angus Society for The Blind which actively supports and resources NESS to provide a range of local services. A Board member of the Society sits on the NESS Board.

Currently, the Board has a strong pool of Directors, dedicated to supporting the MT and staff in delivering quality services. In addition to the Board, the Finance, Governance and Planning (FGP) Committee meet regularly between Board meetings. The FGP is composed of five Directors, including office bearers, and is chaired by the Vice Chair to ensure a balance of responsibilities. As NESS grows and develops, so too must its governance. While the current structures have served NESS well, they will be reassessed in line with changing business demands and in pursuit of the following benefits:

- Best use of resources
- Improved delivery of strategic priorities and outcomes
- Greater integrated working across partnerships and services
- Increased satisfaction and engagement of staff
- Effective governance and decision making

The MT manages day to day operations, develops new services and is responsible for implementing and monitoring both the Strategy and the Action Plan. Over the last year, two new managers joined the team ensuring continuity and development. During the strategy period, the Head of Enterprise is planning to retire and the CEO may also set a retirement date towards the end of the period.

Action Point:

Recruit a new treasurer and new directors in line with the Board skills matrix and ensure succession planning.

Action Point:

Once the Chair and Vice Chair designates are in place, reassess the governance structures taking account of new demands and opportunities.

Action Point:

Ensure succession planning is in place for the MT.

Timeline

2006: GSB established the Information, Communication and Technology service.

2007: GSB established the Young People's Project, which evolved into the current Young People's Sensory Service. An employment service was also established which continues to this day.

2009: Moray Council awarded GSB a contract to deliver integrated joint sensory social work rehabilitation services, extending our support to people who were Deaf or hard of hearing.

Social Accounts

NESS produced its first set of audited Social Accounts in 2014, and a second set was produced in 2018. The two documents measured, analysed and quantified the social impact and the associated value of the work undertaken by NESS over specific periods. They offered a unique opportunity to assess and evaluate NESS's operational effectiveness, to improve outcomes for service users and stakeholders and to provide a comprehensive account of our provision. Both accounts found that NESS was delivering tremendous added value for service users and stakeholders alike. Recommendations led directly to a series of improvement actions.

A third set of accounts is currently underway, with the gathering of data and other inputs from stakeholders. Below is an outline of the key areas that will be covered by the accounts for the period April 2022 - March 2023:

- Theory of Change
- Scope of NESS's operations
- Service user profile
- Volunteer investment and value audit
- Outcomes achieved
- Service performance
- Service User satisfaction

Although the Social Accounts stand on their own, they are closely linked with the Strategy, Action Plan and other important improvement initiatives. A further set of accounts will be published in 2027.

Action Point:

Compile and publish Social Accounts and Social Impact Report for 2022 – 2023 and for 2026 - 2027.

Partnerships

As previously mentioned, NESS works closely with a range of external contractors involved in the provision of specialist supports such as utilities, IT and telecoms. NESS also has a longstanding partnership with Angus Society for The Blind (ASB) which has developed over the years. This has recently been strengthened through formal engagement on the NESS Board and regular liaison and reporting with ASB. Strong service partnerships have also been forged with other providers, commissioners and stakeholders. Opportunities to develop similar partnerships will be explored, wherever they have the potential to improve and develop new services for our users.

Timeline

2010: GSB changed its name to North East Sensory Services (NESS), and took over the delivery of services to people who were deaf or hard of hearing in Aberdeen.

2010: NESS's Hospital Information service was established at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

Action Point:

Explore opportunities for further partnerships with the potential to improve and develop new services.

Communication

NESS communicates on a regular basis with service users and their families, communities, staff, funders, stakeholders, partners and a wide range of leaders and influencers. Accessible information is produced in a variety of formats, including BSL, audio, large print and Braille. Progress reports are compiled for funders and stakeholders and a quarterly newsletter is circulated to elected representatives including MSPs, MPs and Councillors covering each of the five local authority areas served. NESS holds an Annual Review and Celebration event, open days and hosts numerous visits to its offices across the North East. These have proved to be very successful in terms of engaging with influencers, stakeholders and service users.

To ensure that people know about NESS services when they first encounter sensory loss, comprehensive awareness raising is promoted. Information is regularly publicised in the press, social media, TV, radio and via professional networks. Much of this is conducted through our PR partner Quantum Communications. Information is also regularly updated on our website, with specialist reports and videos, and information leaflets are available at our resource centres and other outreach points. While communication is ever-changing and speeding up in this digital age, one of our most precious methods of communication remains 'word of mouth'. Health and social care colleagues, family and friends, opticians and hearing loss specialists continue to play an invaluable role in disseminating information on NESS services and supports.

Action Point:

Continue to vigorously promote NESS services and supports, and adapt to new and emerging communication channels.

Summary

The Strategy is a 'live' document and as such, will be reviewed regularly by the NESS Board of Directors. It will inform both plans and policies and shape future services and developments.

Over the six years leading up to NESS's 150 year anniversary, the Strategy will place quality at the heart of everything we do. NESS will continue to give value for money to our funders and will be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of our stakeholders and, most importantly, to our growing number of service users.

We will be professional and confident and will be the best that we can be as we approach 150 years of changing lives for our service users. We will **Never Ever Stand Still**.

Timeline

2012: NESS created a full-time Training and Information Officer role. The Connect – Include – Support service was established, and NESS set up a deaf equipment service.

Appendix 1: NESS 6-point check list

Appendix 2: IIP Actions

Appendix 1: NESS 6-point check list

- 1 Will new NESS service users enjoy a better service than previously experienced and will existing service users not be disadvantaged by expansion?
- 2 Is the proposal in line with the NESS mission and vision?
- 3 Does it fit with the overall objective of promoting and developing or leading to the development of, joint sensory services?
- 4 Will it contribute to the future security and viability of the organisation as a whole?
- 5 Unless there is effectively full cost recovery involved, is there existing capacity across the organisation to take it on?
- 6 Will it impact on NESS financial reserves and if so, to what extent?



Older woman chats to older man while sitting at a kitchen table.



Two older men and two older women sit in a cafe and chat.



A young woman signs to a young man who signs back to her.

Timeline

2013: NESS was awarded the contract to deliver the services for Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people in Tayside.

2014: NESS was awarded the contract to deliver Rehabilitation for Visual Impairment services in Angus.

2016: NESS was awarded the contract to deliver fully integrated joint sensory services in Dundee where we opened a new resource centre.

2016: In Angus, the contract was extended to provide specialist information and advice to people who were Deaf or hard of hearing.

Appendix 2: IIP Actions

Operational Ambition	Recommendation(s)	Development and Growth through ...
<p>Effective Services</p>  <p>A group of our young people enjoy a dolphin watching safari off the coast of Stonehaven.</p>  <p>Our Arbroath Eyes and Ears Social Group enjoy chair-based exercise, passing a ball round the seated circle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to empower your people whilst encouraging leaders at all levels - the 'short lived working group' approach had served you well so continue its use as appropriate. • Showcase when individuals use their initiative to contribute to the wider NESS objectives and in so doing encourage wider uptake. • Reflect on the comments regarding Competitive and consider the inclusion of the words Kindness and Caring into your values. • Review how you attract people to join your organisation. • Consider if your structure is the best it can be, particularly within satellite locations. 	<p>Leaders make the objectives clear (1)</p> <p>People operate with NESS values (2)</p> <p>Everyone is empowered and motivated to deliver (3)</p>

Timeline

2017-18: Social support groups were established across Dundee and Angus.

2019: NESS developed Hear2Help services, providing basic hearing aid maintenance and support in Aberdeen and Moray on a drop-in basis.

2020: Outreach and digital services developed to meet Covid challenge.

Appendix 2: IIP Actions

Operational Ambition	Recommendation(s)	Development and Growth through ...
<p>Forward Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and evaluate the recent changes to recruitment, induction as well as Supervision and PDR. • Reintroduce all staff meetings but in a format that encourages team building and collaborative working. • Act to address the culture amongst some admin support and statutory services roles that “identifying improvement ideas is the role of managers not me”. • Encourage innovation, create a culture of continuous improvement at all levels. • Consider ways to enable people to influence how high performance is rewarded. • Ensure recognition is consistently applied and publish outcome 	<p>Performance is managed (4) and high performance rewarded (5)</p> <p>Work is structured to deliver for the business (6) through innovation, continuous improvement (8) and sustainable success (9) within an organisation that is building future capacity (7).</p>

Timeline

2022: NESS retained the Advanced Investors In People (IIP) Gold Award in recognition of the high level of commitment and support we give our people.

2023: In response to increasing demand, and with successful fundraising efforts, NESS increased the reach of our social work, rehabilitation, technology and our social support for young people.