

North East Sensory Services Social Accounts April 2022 - March 2023

Prove, Improve, Account!

NESS
21 John Street
Aberdeen
AB25 1BT
0345 271 2345

NESS
10 Constitution Road
Dundee
DD1 1LL
01382 721 455

NESS
10 Victoria Crescent
Elgin
IV30 1RQ
0345 271 2345



info@nesensoryservices.org
www.nesensoryservices.org

NESS is a complex organisation with many faces and a wide reach; there are similarities and differences throughout. Also, NESS is a dynamic organisation, which continually changes and evolves

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Introduction

Welcome to our third set of Social Accounts

Whether you are a NESS service user, funder, stakeholder, or donor, this report is for you. It's a fascinating and easy read and one that you will hopefully enjoy.

The report provides a unique insight into the many and varied impacts that NESS makes in delivering services and support to well over six thousand people living with sensory loss in the northeast of Scotland. Encouragingly, the report identifies the continued progress across the organisation, strong service standards and very high levels of service user satisfaction.

The progress made is to the great credit of NESS staff and volunteers, who work thoughtfully and tirelessly to deliver the best possible services. It is remarkable that, despite the many challenges and barriers associated with the pandemic and increasing financial pressures, the performance and depth of service has been maintained and indeed improved.

The report also notes areas where more can be achieved. Much of this has been captured in NESS' new strategy, which will take the organisation up to its 150th anniversary in 2029!

As you read over the report, please forward any comments, ideas or issues that you identify, to either Graham Findlay, Chief Executive, or Adam Hillhouse, Head of Enterprise, using the contact details supplied.

Thank you for taking an interest in NESS and for your support.

John Legg,
Chairperson.

Preface: The context in which we work

NESS continues to be a leading provider of joint sensory services in Scotland. Our staff team are trained to a high standard and can work across the spectrum of sensory loss. The people we support include people who are Severely Sight Impaired (Blind), Sight Impaired (Partially Sighted), Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafened and Deafblind.

Statutory Contracts

NESS holds four statutory contracts with the Moray, Aberdeen, Angus and Dundee Health and Social Care Partnerships. As the end of a contract date approaches, statutory funders may decide to carry out a competitive tendering process. We have excellent working relationships with all of our statutory funders and have had a high level of success in our responses to tenders.

Added Value Services

There is no requirement for NESS to deliver added value services. However, we believe that it is only right and proper that we use our charitable income to go much further in supporting our service users and have developed a wide range of life changing added value services.

Local Representation

NESS is represented on a number of local forums and networking organisations. We ensure that the voices and needs of our service users are heard and taken account of.

We are members of the local See Hear Groups in five council areas (we are the lead in Aberdeen), as well as being members of other third sector forums including, Third Sector Interfaces, Chambers of Commerce and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI).

National Representation

NESS is represented on a number of important national forums and regularly give our views on national initiatives. We are members of both the Cross Party group on Deafness and the Cross Party group on Visual

Impairment. Recently, we were invited to take up a place on the Scottish Government's Sensory Loss and Social Care Advisory Group.

Further, being the lead for the Aberdeen See Hear implementation group, our CEO attends the See Hear National Leads meetings.

We have close working relationships with politicians be they local councillors, MSPs or MPs and we produce a quarterly newsletter to keep them all informed of the important work that we do.

Our CEO is the only Scottish representative on the board of the Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT), which provides a wide range of grant support to sight loss organisations.

We are active members of Visionary, the sight loss umbrella group for local service providers. Unfortunately, there isn't an equivalent version for the deaf sector.

Summary

NESS is the leading provider of sensory services in all of the areas we cover. We continue to not only use our resources for the benefit of our service users by providing life changing outputs, but we strive to influence decision makers on the needs of our service user group and work towards our mission of achieving independence for blind and deaf people.

Graham Findlay

Chief Executive

What is social accounting?

Social Accounting is a systematic and objective accounting procedure that enables organisations to measure a range of internal and external factors not covered by financial auditing alone. Social Accounts serve a dual purpose. As well as demonstrating the value of activities undertaken, they can be used as a tool for improving practice and increasing impact.

Prove, Improve, Account!

Ten years ago, the NESS Board of Directors agreed that collecting and publishing audited Social Accounts would be a useful means of demonstrating the difference we make to individuals and the communities we serve. In short, to **prove** our effectiveness.

Looking forward, it also gave an indication of what else we needed to do to **improve** the outcomes of the people we serve.

It has provided a useful tool in terms of proving, improving, and also in **accounting** for the differences we have made.

In 2023, after a period of fairly constant change, not to mention a worldwide pandemic, NESS looks quite different to how it did in 2018 and very different to how it did in 2013. This is our third set of social accounts.

NESS Never, Ever, Stands, Still!

The scope of these social accounts

These accounts cover the financial year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. This is implicit in references to “this year”, “this accounting period” and “2022-23”.

They cover our operations which are summarised in the Theory of Change model on page 19. A fuller picture of our work can be gained by reading this report in conjunction with our Annual Report, which includes our directors’ and financial statements, available at Appendix 1.

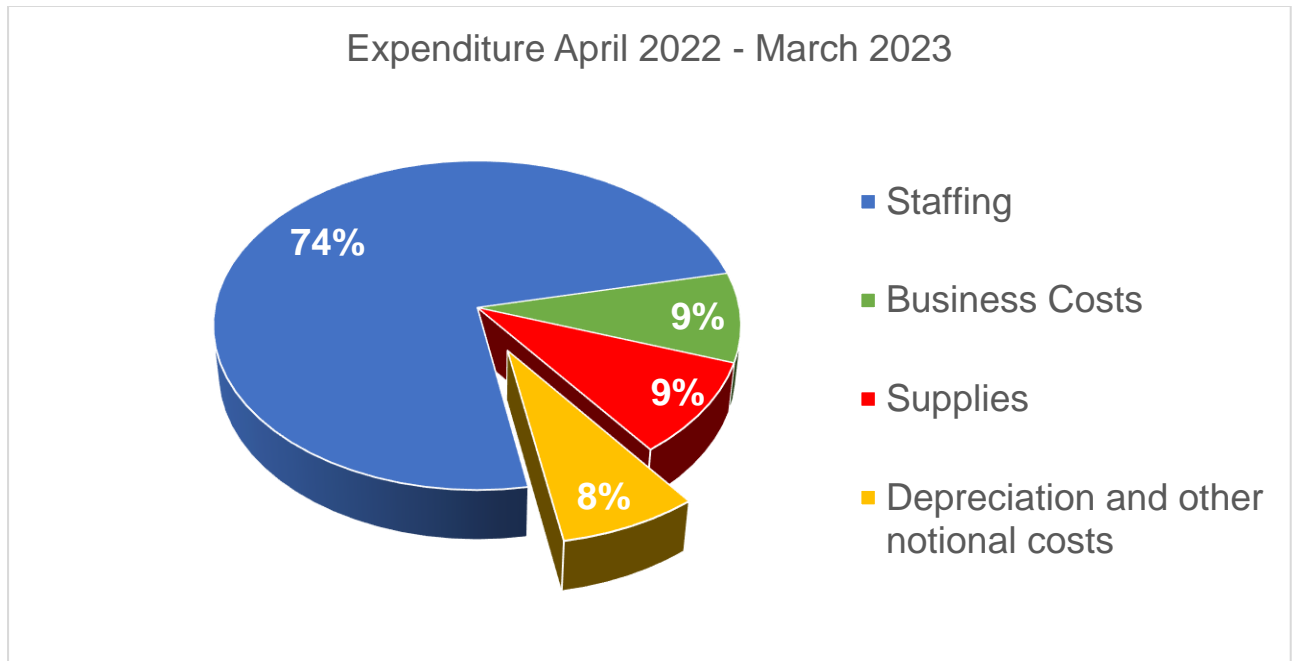
This report was produced in accordance with the process previously recommended by the Social Audit Network UK.

In accordance with this approach, we compiled these accounts using a combination of internally and externally generated data and consultations with key stakeholders.

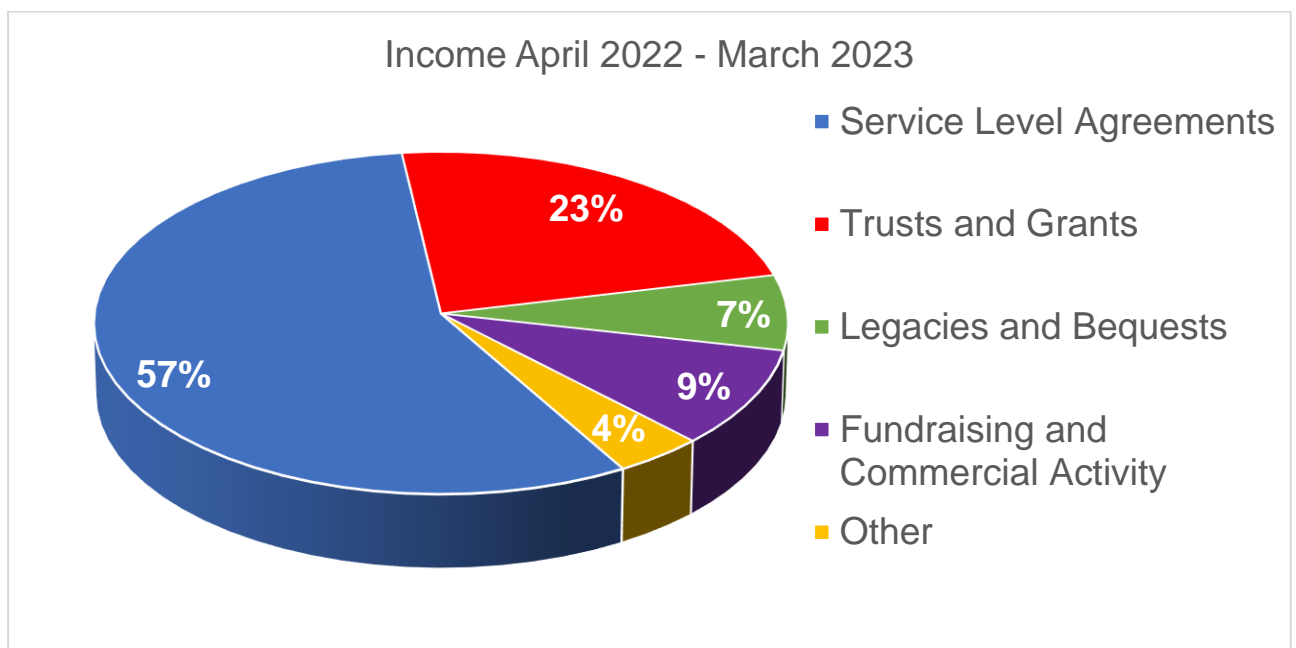
Where we have quoted comments, we have selected these to be an illustrative sample of opinion from the consultations conducted and from sporadic feedback collected in this year. All quotes have been anonymised and can be attributed by reference at source rather than by identification of the contributor.

Income and Expenditure

In the year April 2022 – March 2023, NESS' income was £2.5 Million, drawn from four main funding sources.

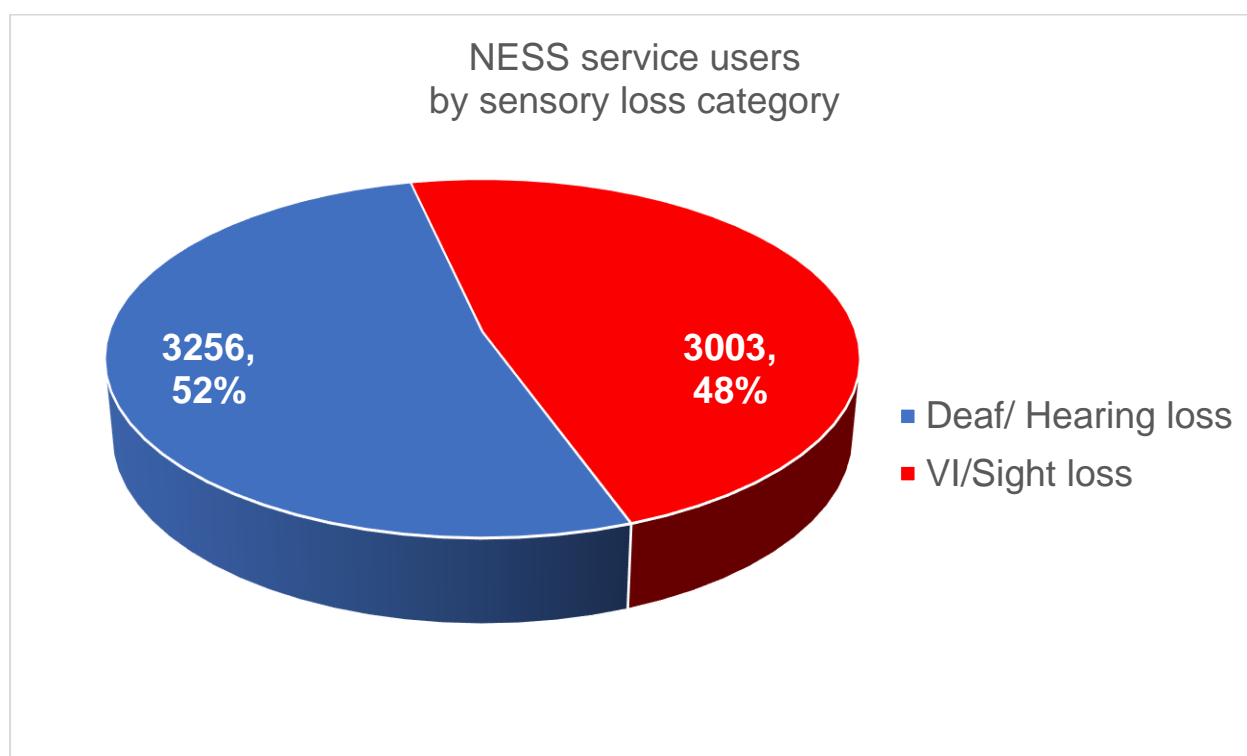


Although NESS achieved a deficit position of £101,000, with an expenditure of £2.6 Million, this figure includes depreciation of £62,700 and a notional rent of £56,000, amounting to £118,700 - neither of which are real costs - represented below by the amber segment.



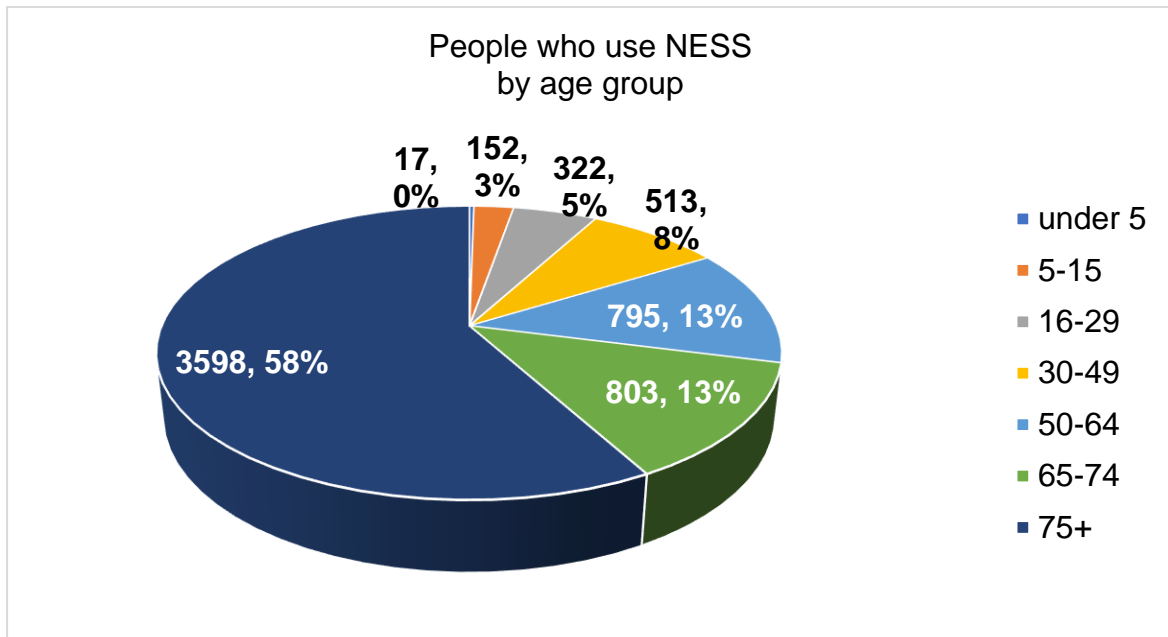
Service user profile

NESS keeps in touch with all the people who are living with sensory loss, who we have worked with and who may need us again, across the five local authority areas¹. We add the details of every new person to our register. We also take the trouble to try and find out if any of the people we have worked with have died, and we remove them from the register when they have passed away. As a result of this, the total number of service users is constantly changing, but generally remains fairly stable. On 31 March 2023 there were 6,259 people on our register. The number of people with sight loss compared to the number of people with hearing loss is fairly even, with only slight variations across different local authority areas. Of course, a great many people have serious difficulties with both.

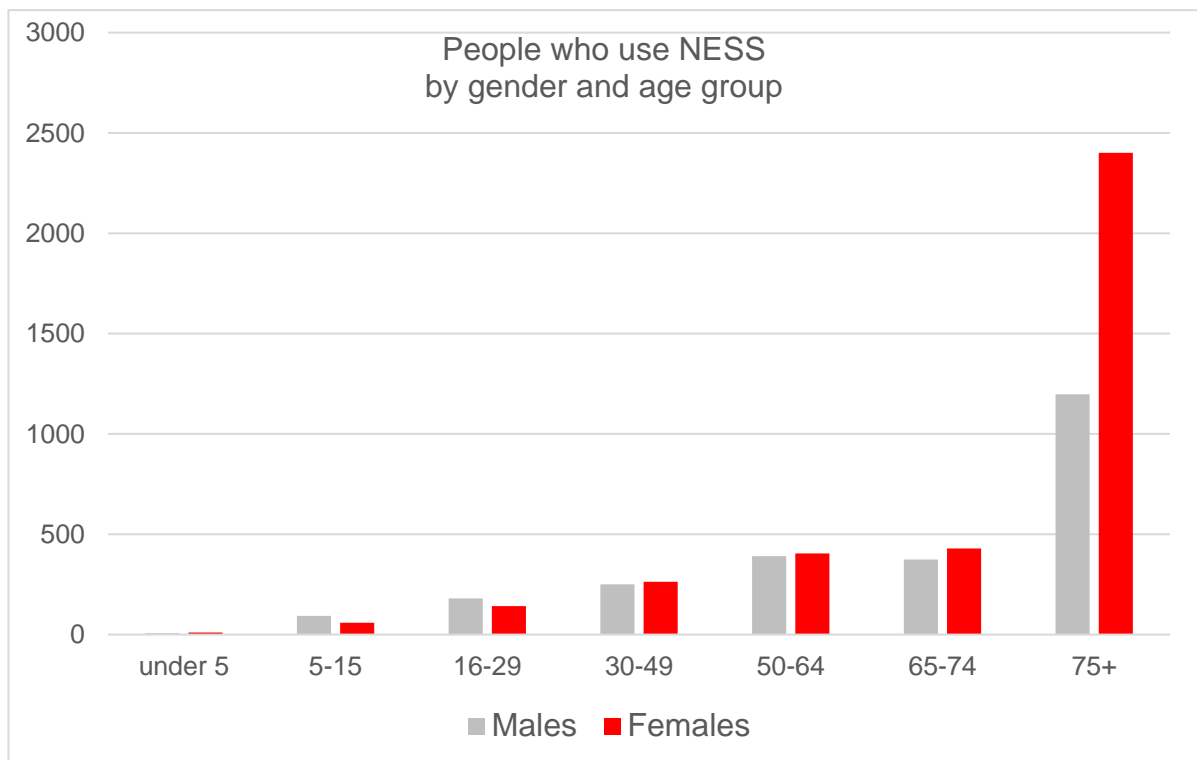


¹ Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dundee City and Moray

The greatest incidence of sensory loss, both sight loss and hearing loss, is in the elderly population - so it is no surprise that 58% of our service users are aged 75+, with a further 13% aged between 65 and 75.

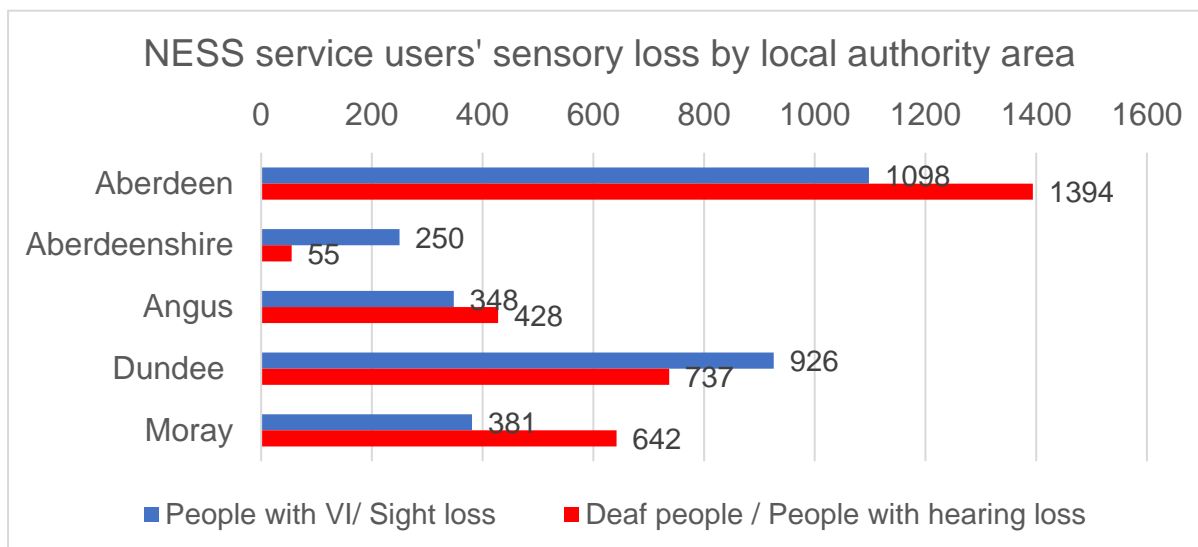


There are slightly more males than females in the youngest cohorts: children and young adults. Numbers are fairly evenly matched through working age, but by the older cohorts, females easily outnumber males.

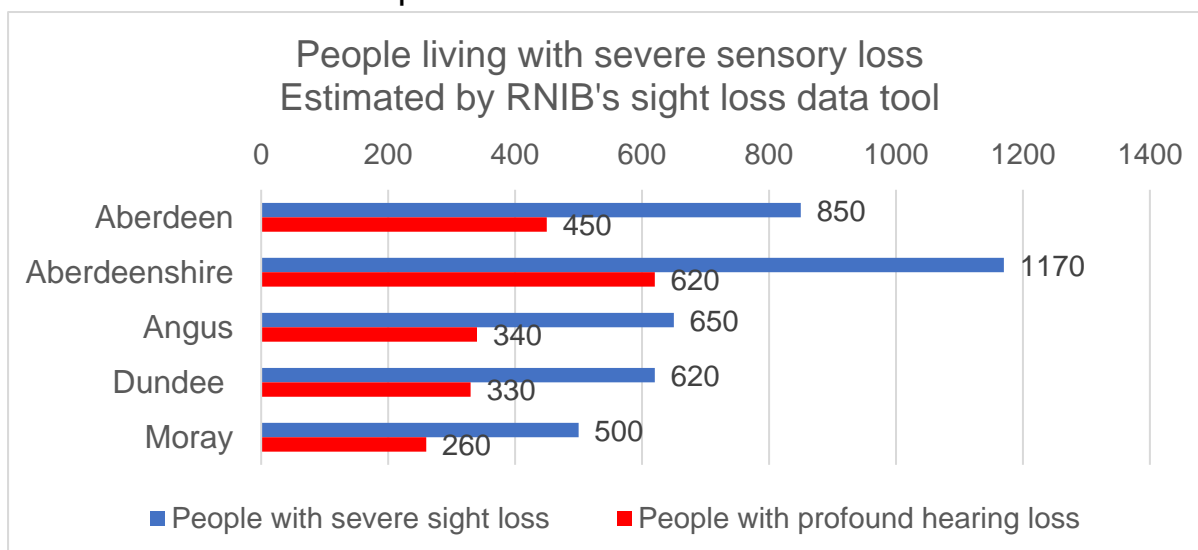


Reach

There are difficulties in trying to establish the numbers of potential service users in the region we serve, other than those already known to NESS.



RNIB's sight loss data tool, which includes statistics for people with hearing loss, allows data to be extracted by UK local authority areas. Although some of the data is eight years old, one expects fairly minimal changes to the figures in under a decade and the proportions are likely to be similar. They provide an indication of what the incidence may be in the areas in which we operate.



The difference we make

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision is:

- “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.”

Our Mission is:

- Achieving Independence for Blind and Deaf People

Our Values:

- As an organisation, NESS needs to be **effective, innovative, and competitive.**
- Our people work in a way that is **professional, flexible and responsive** and **accountable.**

Our Leadership Qualities

Everyone at NESS is encouraged to demonstrate these key qualities:

- Capable: being good at what they do
- Committed: to our values
- Connected: to others within and outwith NESS
- Communicating: good at listening and influencing others
- Caring: generous and willing to support others

“Living it my way” and personal outcomes

Our objective is to enable people with sensory loss to reach and maintain the intended outcomes we call ‘Living it My Way’.

NESS’ ‘Living it My Way’ outcomes
Based on the UK vision strategy’s “Seeing it my way” outcomes. NESS shares these aims and wishes to extend them to people who are deaf and have hearing loss.
1. I make my own choices and decisions about my personal and social life including looking after myself, my home and my family.
2. I have people to talk to and somewhere to go if and when I want to.
3. I understand my vision and/ or hearing condition and can manage its impact, with or without help. I get on with my life.
4. 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).
5. I make the best use of my remaining sight and/ or hearing to do what I want to do. (I may use equipment, aids and/ or technology to help me).
6. I receive the statutory benefits to which I am entitled.
7. I can buy the things I want and use the services I need (I may use communication support to help).
8. I can access work, volunteering and learning/ education opportunities, if I want to. (I may use support or equipment to help).
9. I don’t feel excluded from society and can contribute and participate as much as I want to.

There is a vast spectrum of need and capacity for achievement within the wide range of people supported by NESS, and each individual starts out at a different point, with their own perspective. We developed our organisational ‘Living It My Way’ outcomes to frame these individual experiences against shared standards which are valued by people with sensory loss leading, or trying to lead, independent lives.

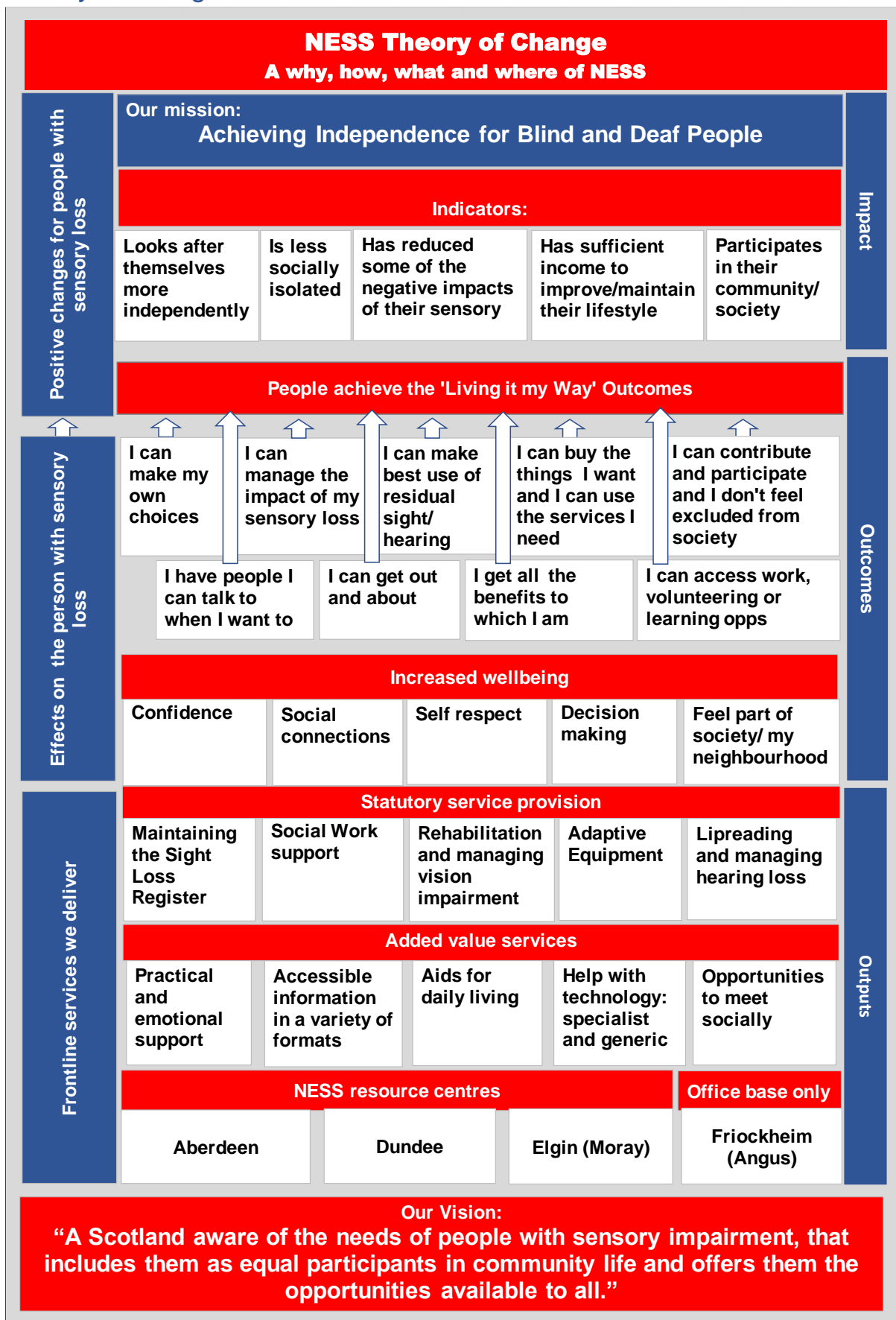
Sally is in her early twenties, and lives in a city-centre flat with her boyfriend. Halfway through a degree course at the local university, and with ambitions to be a journalist, Sally has recently been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). This has resulted in loss of night vision and a deterioration in her peripheral vision, and she is worried about how this may progress. Sally has become anxious about leaving the house after stumbling and falling, has lost confidence, and has suspended her studies.

George is a widower in his 80s, living alone in a rural cottage. After a deterioration in his hearing, George has just been given NHS hearing aids, but is reluctant to use them – although he finds it difficult to hold a conversation now and is feeling increasingly isolated as a result. He is also struggling to hear his television and radio and misses these terribly.

Both Sally and George are struggling to come to terms with their recent sensory loss and are feeling isolated and low as a result. Both need support to achieve outcomes 3 and 5, before their emotional wellbeing deteriorates further. Sally would still like to reach outcome 8 and fulfil her ambitions, while both need help to reach outcome 9 to reduce feelings of exclusion. (Numbers refer to previous page)

Living it Sally's Way is different to Living It George's Way. Sessions with a rehabilitation worker, possibly including the use of a long cane, could give Sally the confidence to get out and about independently again, and help her cope with the impact of her diagnosis. Our Employment Officer and IT Officers could give her guidance on adaptations and assistive technology to enable her to continue her studies. Joining a NESS social group in his area, meeting other people who wear hearing aids and seeing how they cope with their hearing loss could help George wear his hearing aids with confidence, as well as reducing his feelings of isolation. He may also benefit from coming to lip reading classes. Our teams could install a hearing loop in George's home, enabling him to enjoy his TV and radio again.

Theory of change- revised 2022



Our Theory of Change details the changes we wish to achieve as an organisation and the steps in which these will occur.

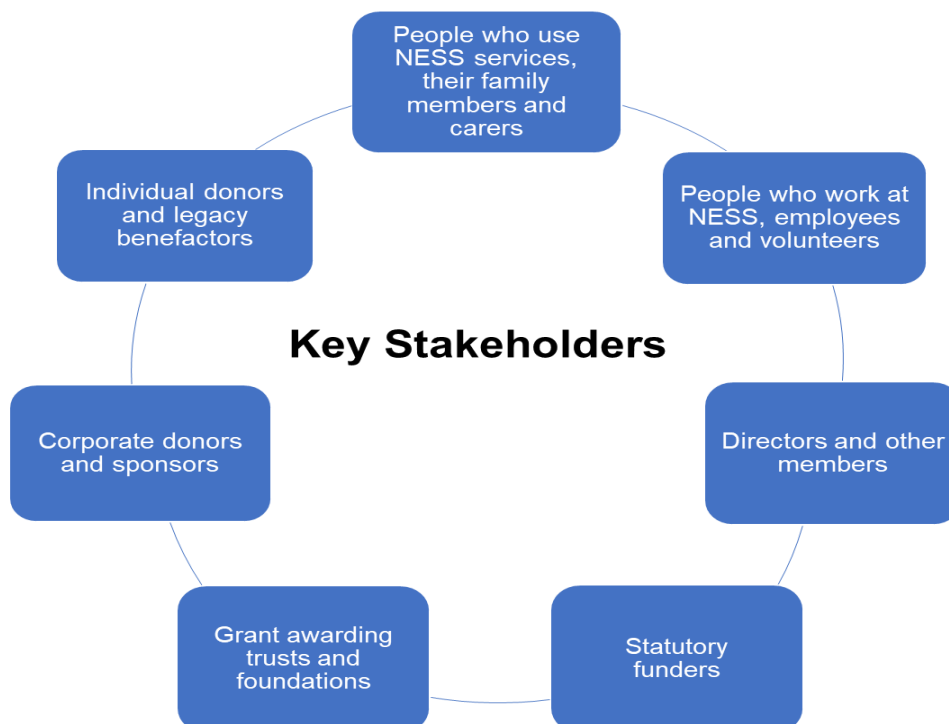
There are three main elements:

- the outputs (the things we provide) - what we do,
- the outcomes (what happens for the service user) - the change that happens as a result of what we do, and
- the impact, (the overall effect of what we do) - the broader or long-term effects of our activities, outputs and outcomes.

They all link together by a series of pathways to show what, why and how the things we do focus on outcomes for the people we are here for and link strongly to our mission (our purpose, or what we are here for).

Key stakeholders

The following diagram shows the key stakeholders associated with NESS. We communicate with, collect feedback from, and report to each group through a variety of methods.



Reporting to funders

The award of ongoing, repeat funding from our funding partners – both statutory and charitable - is an indication of their satisfaction with our performance, and faith in our ability to make a positive impact on the lives of those we support. We value our funding partners' input and feedback, and understand the importance of communicating the difference their funding makes, through our services and support, to the lives of our service users. Building and maintaining relationships with funders at all levels is a key priority.

Statutory funders

Our service level agreements (SLAs) with our statutory funders - Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee and Moray Health and Social Care Partnerships – enable us to deliver our specialist social work and rehabilitation support to people living with serious sight and/or hearing loss. Each local authority requires reports featuring statistics and key performance indicators against specific objectives, in slightly different formats. We are delighted to provide these reports, all of which are well received.

Charitable funders

Without the support of Grant Awarding Agencies, Trusts and Foundations we would be unable to deliver our vital range of added value services, and we are extremely grateful for all funding received. We are in regular contact with all our funders and provide reports in varying levels of detail - whether or not these are a formal requirement of our funding award.

Consultations and feedback

Following the severe disruptions to our operations caused by the COVID pandemic in the two years since 2020, we held Open Days on the 7th, 9th and 11th November 2022 to remind everyone we were still here and happy to see people in person at our three resource centres in Dundee, Aberdeen and Elgin. This was also an opportunity to consult with the visitors face to face, to see how they felt about the services delivered by NESS, and to inform the strategy review that was taking place. Thirty-one people took part.

A volunteer survey was conducted electronically during December 2022 using Microsoft Forms. Details are included below.

A service user satisfaction survey was conducted throughout February 2023, focussing on those who had received a service or support from NESS within the previous twelve months. Nine hundred and thirty-seven questionnaires were sent out in six different formats and three hundred and ninety-six responses were received back within the timescale, a 42% return.

NESS employees

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, we use the Investors In People (IIP) framework to enhance our business plan and strategy. NESS has been awarded IIP accreditation since 2010 – and has consistently achieved the Gold standard since 2016. We have chosen to be continually assessed by IIP, ensuring that we remain focused on quality and in looking after our people. This in turn, leads to improved outcomes for those we support.

NESS began a process in late 2019 through which we could further empower our staff by developing a culture of leadership at all levels and involving staff in a review of our Vision and Values. This consultation continued remotely during COVID restrictions. Throughout this period, it became clear that staff were rising to the complex challenges they faced by living the NESS Values, and that this culture of trust, empowerment, and leadership at all levels was enabling us to effectively support our service users.

In 2022 we retained the IIP Gold Level, with significant improvement since our previous assessment. Six of the nine indicators were met at the High Performing level – with each indicator returning a score higher than the IIP average. A total of 21 of the 27 themes were met at the highest level, including our areas of focus: ‘living with the organisation’s values and behaviours’ and ‘empowering and involving people’. The IIP assessors congratulated NESS on “the way in which you have managed to empower and engage your people under very difficult circumstances”, and commented “you have progressed your journey to being an organisation that demonstrates leadership at all levels”.

As one staff member said during the assessment process: “I feel 100% trusted. I know where to go if I need support or help, but I feel totally trusted to get on with the job and it is that trust and belief that motivates me.” Another commented “What is important is the service user and our leaders are passionate about that and as a result they motivate us to go the extra mile.”

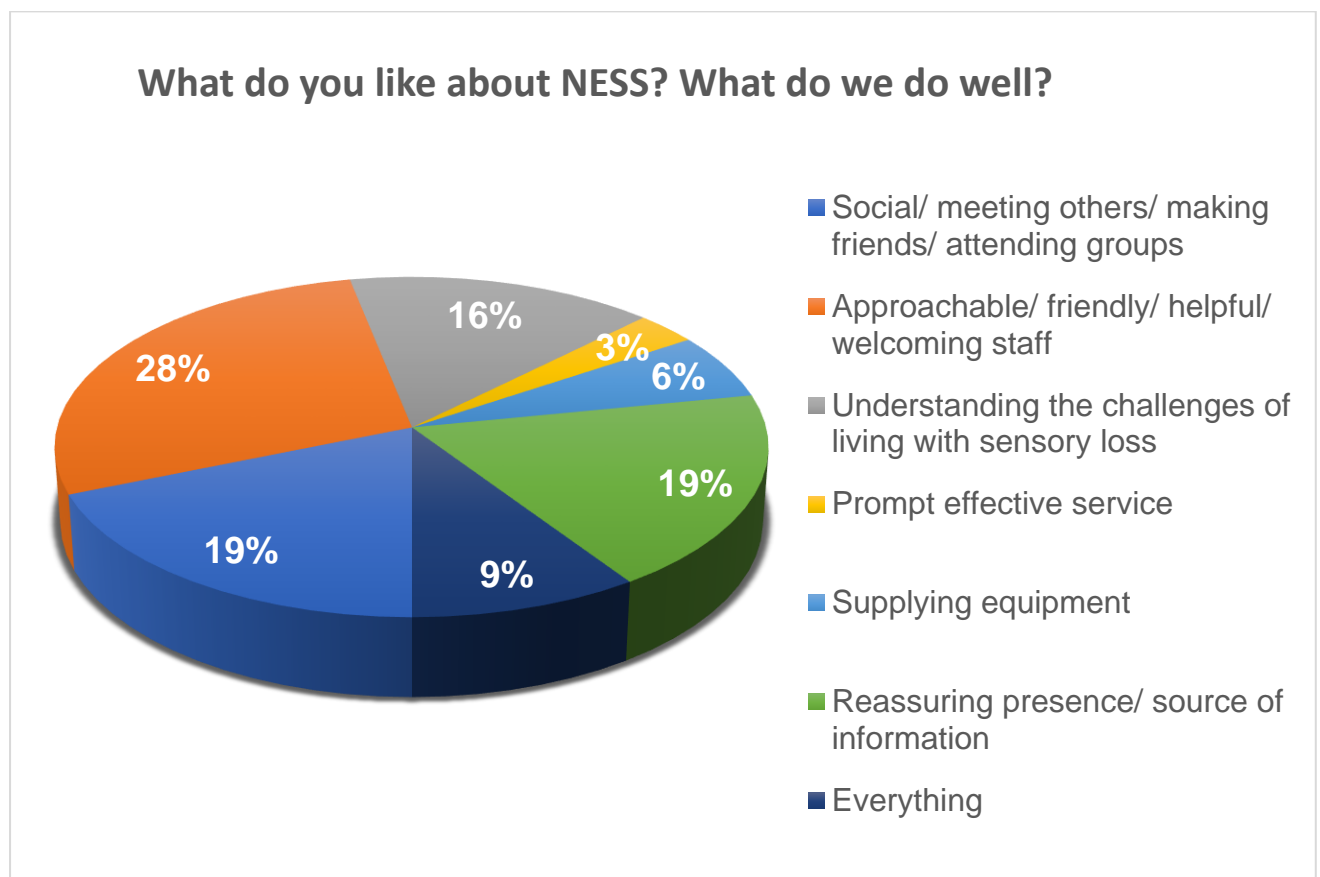
Volunteers

Our volunteer survey, mentioned above, was sent out to the 89 volunteers who had an email address listed, which was 63% of the total number of volunteers.

Twenty-one of them returned the questionnaire, including volunteers from Aberdeen, Angus and Moray. Thirteen did not use NESS services themselves, three did, two were the relative or carer of someone who used NESS services and three didn't say.

Three respondents had volunteered with NESS for 15 years or more, two for 10 to 14 years, nine for 5 to 9 years. Six didn't answer this question. There was an even spread of regular activities undertaken as a volunteer, including supporting our Activity or Social groups, Driving and providing transport, Hearing aid support, Reception and Events. Many of the volunteers also volunteered for other charitable organisations.

When asked what they liked about NESS or what they thought we do well, their answers were in the following categories.



Some of the observations made:

“NESS is a grand organisation but needs to get more publicity, so people know what is available.”

“It’s a lifeline for a lot of people who I know appreciate the service.”

“Keep the good work going.”

“I feel quite humbled seeing how much my small contribution means to the service users.”

“I think a lot of people don’t know about the services we provide.”

“Happy being part of NESS, they supported me to move on with my life through my volunteer role.”

The value generated by our volunteers

Against a background of the increasing need to demonstrate value in voluntary action, there is a demand for ‘headline’ figures that evidence the impact of volunteering. Expressing this in financial terms may be a useful way of highlighting the value that volunteering creates.

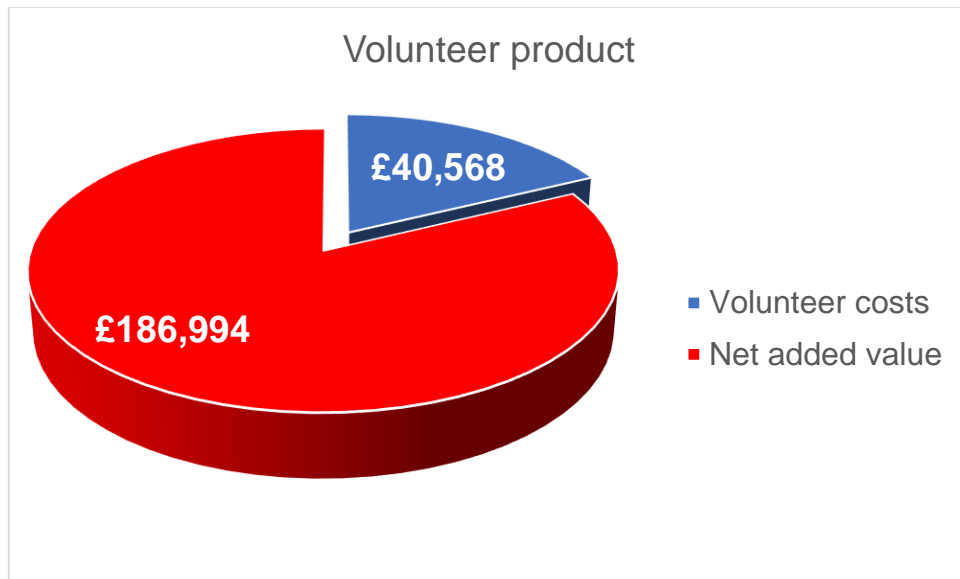
Since its introduction in 1996, Volunteer Investment and Value Analysis, or “VIVA”, has been tried and tested by many organisations across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

Total financial value of volunteering

VIVA analyses what tasks volunteers do, for how much time and matches it to market hourly rate for equivalent paid jobs, producing a notional “wage bill” – what we would have to pay people to do the work of our volunteers. To complete the VIVA exercise, the costs associated with recruiting, supporting and generally managing the volunteers is calculated and subtracted from the “wage bill”. This NET figure is the notional value created by the volunteers.

We undertook a VIVA for the year 2022-23, see Appendix 2, and this is what we found.

Our VIVA ratio was 5.61:1, which means for **every pound** we spent on volunteers we got back **£5.61** in the value of the work they did: more than a five-fold return on the organisation’s investment in volunteering.



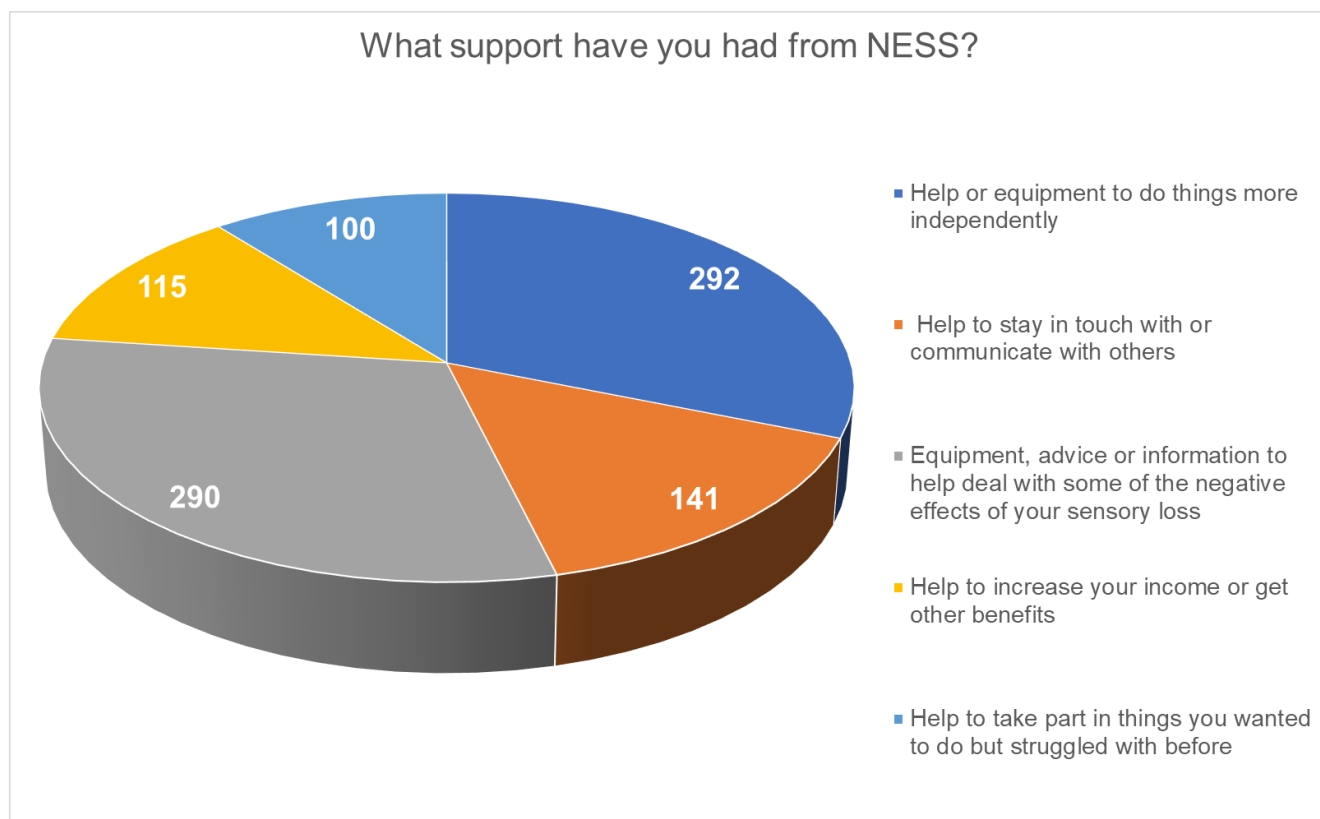
This VIVA also produced the following key results:

- The total number of volunteer hours given to the organisation in the year 2022-23 was **11,026 hours**.
- The full-time equivalent of the total volunteer hours was **5.85**, meaning it would take the equivalent of almost **six additional full-time staff** to do the work that our volunteers contributed.

Service user satisfaction

NESS has continually evolved and made significant changes in response to the community it supports and serves. Collecting feedback from our service users is vital, enabling us to ensure that our services are 'fit for purpose', and we continue to do this through a wide variety of means. In February 2023, we sent out satisfaction surveys to **937** of our service users – the number who had been 'open cases' in the previous year. The survey was sent in their preferred format – including large print, jumbo print, Braille, BSL video, and audio on CD. The accessible survey used face 'emojis' to represent a scale from "Absolutely!" to "Definitely not!", and also included space for recording free text. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix 3.

We were delighted to receive **396** responses, with good representation from across our areas of operation. The range of support received is shown in the pie chart below.



The graph below shows the overwhelmingly positive responses to the survey questions – with over 90% of people choosing “Absolutely!” or “Good” for every question.



The quotes below, taken from the survey responses, bring to life the impact of NESS services on the lives of the people we support.

95% of people said they got the service when they needed it:

“This service was prompt and the visit from staff was helpful. They understood my needs and gave advice and support.”

“She helped us when we didn't know what to do or where to go for help. She was a really nice lady and a credit to NESS.”

91% of people said the support or equipment was helpful to them:

“The Echolink is a great help in listening to music and TV. I will be 88 this year and my wife passed away 8 years ago so living on my own, the link is a godsend.”

“I am very grateful for the equipment I received. It makes life a lot easier.”

98% said the staff they met were kind, friendly, helpful or welcoming:

“Very impressed with the help and support given on all fronts. Personnel excellent, i.e. Social Worker, IT Officer, Lipreading. All empathetic without being patronising so, so important.”

“The staff at NESS have given me great support over the years. So helpful, friendly, they put you at ease. The advice I sought (and still do) is always delivered expertly. It's always a pleasure to visit.”

94% said the staff understood the challenges they were facing:

“The help I received was invaluable. Having to learn new things at 85 has been difficult, but with help from NESS, I am managing.”

“Overall I feel a lot more confident about daily living challenges.”

91% said our support helped them to make the best of their situation:

“She explained all the kit, this necessitated more than one visit. She also met with my wife and helped her adjust to my new situation. An excellent experience in adjusting to life with hearing loss.”

“The support I got has enabled me to enjoy life again – it's everything to me now.”

93% said the information we provided was helpful:

“As a department you all shine, as to what a service can be. Honestly, I thought this level of care was a thing of the past. Everyone has been so efficient and helpful. We are amazed, especially as other parts of getting my parents help have been so difficult to negotiate.”

“Thank goodness you exist to help. Thank you.”

92% said overall NESS delivered the help and support they needed:

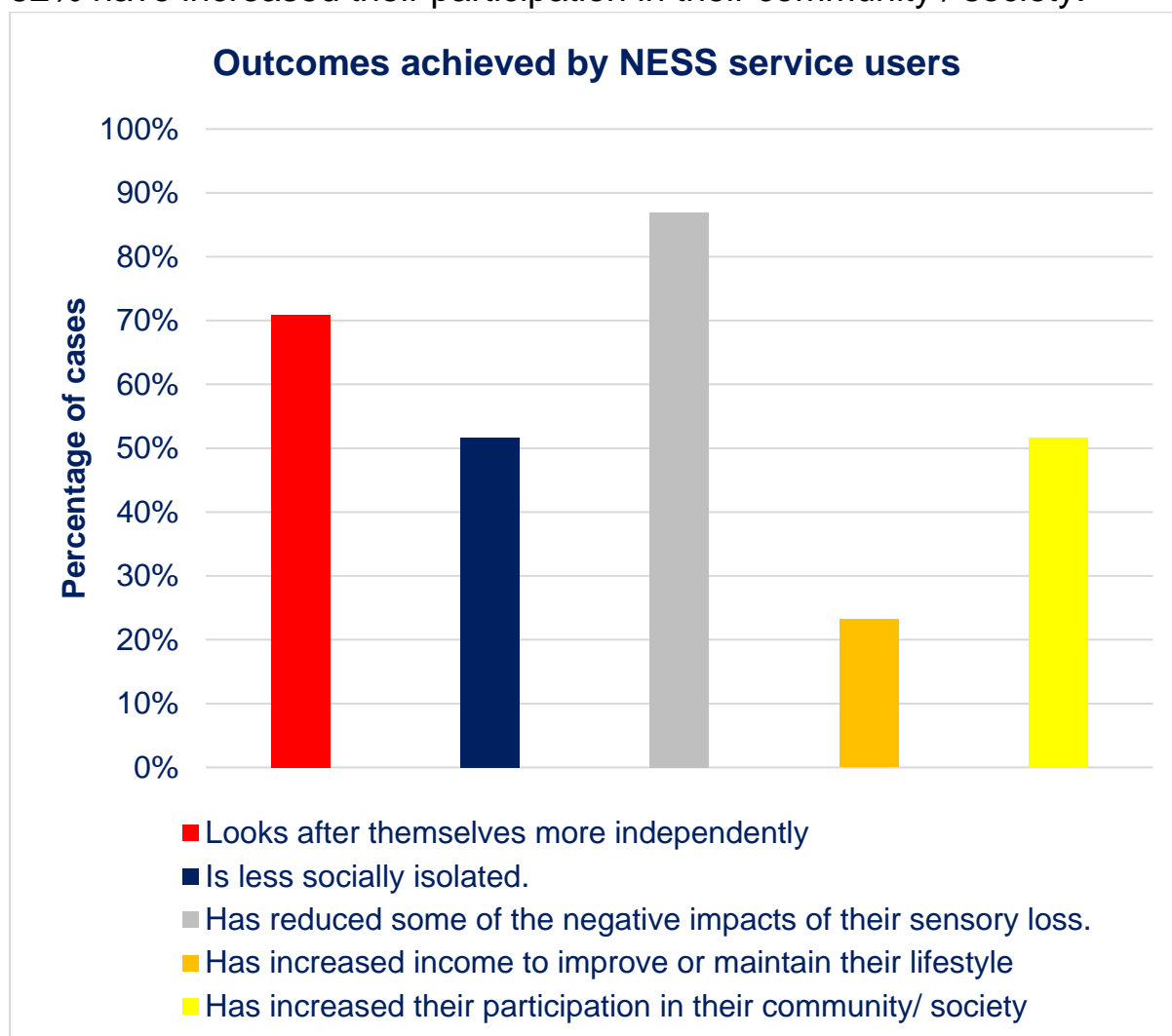
“I would just like to say I think this is a very worthwhile organisation and I am so glad I had access to it.”

“I could not have had better support.”

Our Performance

Every time we review or close a case, we evaluate what has been achieved by, with, or for the service user (their outcomes) against five key indicators. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, our evaluation data shows that, from a population of 1000 people:

- 71% are looking after themselves more independently;
- 52% are less socially isolated;
- 87% have reduced some of the negative impacts of their sensory loss;
- 23% have increased their income to improve or maintain their lifestyle; and
- 52% have increased their participation in their community / society.



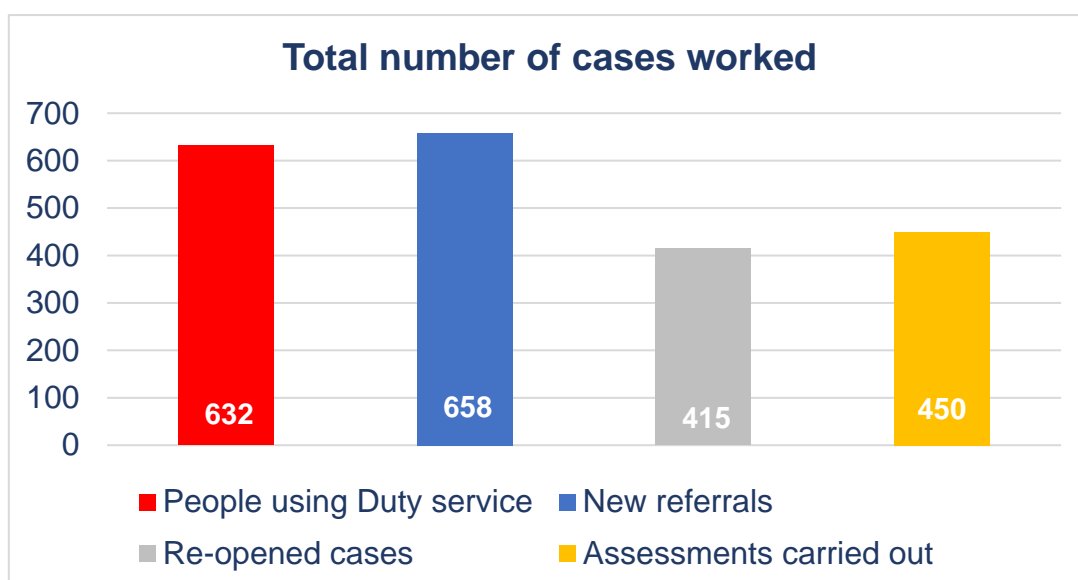
For more details, see Appendix 4.

Outputs: NESS services

This section describes in more detail those services listed on the NESS Theory of Change model on page 17.

Statutory Service Provision - Practical and Emotional Support

People with sight and/ or hearing loss can come to NESS for support via a number of different routes. “New referrals” are usually people we haven’t supported before, who are referred by other agencies or professionals such as the Eye clinic, a care professional or audiologist. We also accept what we call self-referrals, or family referrals, who may be people we have supported in the past but have not seen for some time. People call in or phone our Duty Service at specified regular times, which are local to each resource centre, to speak to a specialist worker who may be able to resolve their issue with advice or a simple action. If it needs more work, the case may be re-opened and assigned to a case worker. People are offered a full assessment of need when they are referred to us so we can help them to access the benefits and concessions they may not be aware they are entitled to.



Specialist Support / Maintaining the Sight Loss Register

NESS has statutory contracts with the health and social care partnerships in Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee and Moray - to provide specialist support and rehabilitation services - and it maintains the Sight Loss Register for three of them. Our support services offer practical and emotional support to help people to remain independent, when living with sight or hearing loss. Once an individual is referred to NESS, they are allocated a specialist worker who will work with them to help identify the best ways to tackle the specific challenges they are facing. We know that each person who has sight or hearing loss is unique, and we try to build what we can offer around each individual's preferences, needs and wants. They are offered the information, advice, specialist equipment, and practical assistance which can make everyday life just that little bit easier. This could include advice on claiming welfare benefits and other practical support to which they are entitled, but may not have been aware of.

“After speaking to [NESS Social Worker] when I first contacted NESS it gave me the confidence to get on with my life as I know there was good support when I needed it.”

“I was overwhelmed by the help I received getting a blue badge and attendance allowance. The service is great, and everything was followed up to ensure I had received the things I was entitled to.”

Rehabilitation for those with Vision Impairment

If an individual has a visual impairment, our rehabilitation workers can help them to re-learn mobility and day to day living skills, such as food and drink preparation, enabling them to be as independent as possible. This can include an assessment for mobility aids and help at home, and training to learn new routes and techniques.

“I didn't want to go out unless I was with my husband, but now I am going by bus on my own and walk about Elgin.”

Adaptive Equipment

From simple kitchen gadgets to complex pieces of technology, there is a wide range of adaptive equipment available which can help people living with sight and/or hearing loss to remain independent.

Our Resource Centres display useful specialist equipment, sometimes called daily living aids, to help with everyday activities. Our knowledgeable staff can provide information and advice to help individuals choose the right gadget for their needs. Demonstrations and training sessions can be arranged on an individual basis or in the home.

Examples of daily living aids to support people with a sight loss include talking clocks and watches, tactile markers (used to identify settings on cookers, washing machines and other areas of the house), large button telephones, and Liquid Level Indicators – which can help people make a hot drink safely.

Examples of equipment for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing include flashing doorbells, loop systems for the TV, vibrating alarms, and personal listeners - which work with or without a hearing aid, and can help individuals to hear other people in conversation.

“They helped me take up my hobbies again, knitting and baking by providing a light and stickers for my cooker, which I'm very grateful for.”

“I would like to thank NESS for the valuable service they provide. They supplied equipment to my father which allowed him to stay in his own home for longer.”

Lipreading and Managing Hearing Loss

Lipreading is the skill that may be used by those who are Deaf or hard of hearing to help them follow what other people are saying. Developing good lipreading skills has been shown to help people be more confident when communicating with others, reducing social isolation. We run free lipreading classes in both Aberdeen and Elgin as part of our service level agreements. Our classes involve presentations, games, exercises and chat - all in a supportive environment. Individuals can learn to recognise visible lip shapes and develop coping strategies for different situations, while being able to share tips with others who are having similar experiences.

“I now have a better door bell and a headset for listening to TV, after attending lipreading classes which I enjoyed.”

We support those who were born blind or deaf, who have lost all their sight or hearing, who have developed serious vision or hearing problems or who are losing their sight and/or hearing. Our action can have a life-changing impact on their level of functioning, self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

Added Value Services - more Practical and Emotional Support

As well as the statutory services described above, we provide a range of added value services funded from our charitable income. These are designed to bridge the service gaps we have identified through our understanding of the complex needs of the people we support. Individuals are often referred to our added value services by our social work or rehabilitation teams, or self-refer, after hearing about them through other routes.

Hospital Information Service

Our Hospital Information Service, based within the Eye Clinic at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI), provides vital information, advice and support to people at the point of diagnosis - at a time when they may be feeling emotionally overwhelmed and unsure of the options available to them. Our Hospital Information Officer (HIO) supports patients through the registration process. Becoming Sight Loss Registered enables patients to access concessions, benefits, equipment and services to which they are entitled, and we can support them to do so.

Our HIO also provides practical and emotional support and information to patients with hearing loss via the Audiology Clinic. As our HIO says, *“I translate clinical jargon and context into clear, understandable language which the patient and their family can relate to”*. They are able to refer individuals to key projects and services provided by NESS and other agencies in the community from which they may benefit, to ensure the best possible outcome for each individual.

Employment Service in Aberdeen and Dundee

Our Employment Service provides a comprehensive service to people of working age, or transitioning from school. Our one-to-one support enables people to access relevant employment, education and/or training opportunities; this includes arranging work placements or volunteering opportunities to build people's skills and confidence as they progress towards their employment goal. Our Employment Officer also

supports both individuals and employers to enable people to remain in employment following a sensory impairment diagnosis.

“Thank you for the wonderful services, help and advice. Thank you to [NESS Employment Officer], who has been so patient and helpful in understanding my difficulties.”

“Guess what? I have just received a letter from college offering me a full-time place to study HND Administration and Information Technology!!! I am so happy, as you know, it's been my dream to reach this level of my education and I'm here!! Thank you so much for your support.”

Opportunities to Meet Socially

Positive outcomes frequently happen when people meet. NESS provides the opportunity for people to meet one another and gives them information and support at a time that is right for them. Our café and facilities, like the fitness suite in our Aberdeen Resource Centre, provide opportunities for people to meet up, in addition to the scheduled groups and clubs described below.

Connect, Include and Support (CIS) in Aberdeen and Moray

Our Connect, Include and Support (CIS) peer support and social groups reduce social isolation and improve mental and physical wellbeing in those aged 65+ (most are in their 80s and 90s). For many, these groups are their only regular social contact. Our varied activity programme includes visits, talks, music, games and quizzes to spark memories and discussion, craft sessions, and in-chair exercise sessions to enhance flexibility and mobility. Transport is provided for those who are unable to travel independently, thanks to our invaluable volunteer drivers.

One regular member describes CIS as a “lifeline enabling me to remain socially active. Apart from the CIS activities, and family, I have nothing to get me out and about to meet friends.”

Peer Support and Social Groups in Angus and Dundee

We also provide a number of groups in Dundee, Broughty Ferry and towns throughout Angus – again, giving those people who may be socially isolated the chance to meet up, share experiences, and enjoy talks, activities and visits. Each group has a core of regular attendees, most of whom are elderly, and who often have mobility issues too. Transport is therefore provided by our team of volunteer drivers.

“I look forward for our group meetings. I have made great friends and got lots of positive feedback and help from group members. Visits made to places were very informative, I would otherwise not get into those places.”

“My mother received help from your services which greatly improved her confidence and quality of life. She very much enjoyed the socialising of the meetings and organised trips, meeting people with similar problems, also the company of the volunteers and staff.”

Young People’s Sensory Service (YPSS) in Grampian

Our Young People’s Sensory Service (YPSS) increases confidence, independence, social skills and ambition in children and young people with serious sensory loss. In addition to our baby and toddler group and youth clubs, our full school holiday activity programme encourages our youngsters to feel confident and entirely included in activities, in a safe and secure environment, from which they may previously have been excluded or have felt reluctant to engage in – all at their own pace. This means that our youngsters become less limited by what they can’t do and are unafraid to push the boundaries of what they can do, resulting in increased self-esteem, independence and initiative, and a greater sense of their own potential.

“It’s helped me feel less shy when meeting people and doing new things.”

"Thank you so, so much for all you do in providing such a nurturing place for young people. Your social group has given him so much confidence and self-belief alongside being able to do so many fun activities and to be able to be just himself."

We can also refer internally to e.g. our Employment Service for tailored advice for school leavers.

While the above services bring people together in group activities, they are also another way for us to provide tailored practical and emotional support to individual service users as and when they need it.

Help with Technology: Specialist and Generic

Our ICT for All Service increases independence and inclusion by providing tailored training and support in the use of accessible technology and digital devices – either within our Resource Centres, or in individuals' own homes. Advice and support can range from showing people how to adjust the operating system settings on their existing computer, or use the accessibility features on their tablet or smartphone. Others will benefit from familiarisation and training in specialist equipment, including electronic magnification aids, stand-alone scanning units, and screen-reading applications - and we provide a range of equipment which can be borrowed by people who wish to try it out at home. In an environment which has rapidly moved online, we enable people to undertake everyday tasks independently, enjoy reading for pleasure, and reduce social isolation by enabling them to keep in touch with friends and family.

"The device your worker installed is allowing my wife to read letters which previously I would have had to read to her and to read magazine articles I would have told her about. His suggestions for the computer have made it easier for her to order groceries and bus tickets and generally keep in touch with the world, for herself. Both visits from NESS were like the US Cavalry galloping across the desert to relieve John Wayne's beleaguered stagecoach. That is as big a compliment as I

can give." The wife of this elderly couple is dealing with rapidly progressing sight loss.

Accessible Information in a Variety of Formats

Each individual with a sensory loss is unique, and has their preferred way of accessing information. This may depend on when they lost their sight or hearing, how much sight or hearing they still have, and what their language preferences are, e.g. sign language or spoken language. This may also change depending on the circumstances or environment.

Communication can be a significant barrier to anyone who has a sensory loss. The Equality Act 2010 requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure people with disabilities, including those with a sensory loss, can access services on an equitable basis. This includes providing information in a variety of accessible formats.

At NESS we have developed effective ways of working, and services to make communication easier. Each individual we support receives information in their preferred format. We also provide services to other organisations, as outlined below, enabling them to fulfil their legal and social obligation to provide accessible information, and enabling them to effectively communicate with their customers or clients who have a sensory loss.

British Sign Language (BSL) to English Language Interpreter

NESS provides a BSL to English language interpreter booking service, utilising both freelance interpreters and our own in-house interpreter, enabling Deaf people to access vital services and participate in society as equals, as they are entitled to do under The Equality Act 2010 and The British Sign Language Scotland Act 2015. We only use fully qualified and registered interpreters², and this is a chargeable service. Here is a selection of some of the customer feedback we've had:

"We are incredibly happy with the BSL interpretation. The interpreter is always great to work, engaged with our events and invaluable to the accessibility elements of our programme."

"The interpreter was very friendly and thorough, double checking that she had understood questions and answers so that she was interpreting correctly."

"The interpreter was excellent - she was very supportive and invested in the launch and providing advice on the approach. The preparation time was invaluable, and I felt very confident about the event as a result. I would recommend her very highly and hope to work with her again in the future."

"The interpreter was patient and very easy to communicate with, she managed to relay the information to the employee even with some technical issues."

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend you to other organisations and would absolutely work with her again on future projects."

² Registered with "The Scottish Register" or Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community

Transcription Service

NESS also provides a chargeable transcription service to other organisations. The formats in which we can provide information include audio, BSL DVD, braille, and large print.

In addition we produce our own quarterly newsletter, NESS News, which is delivered to everyone on our mailing list in their preferred format. Aimed at our service users, it contains contact details, information about NESS and other services and initiatives across our operating areas, new equipment reviews, and any other notices. NESS News is our main method of staying in touch with those we support – including people who may not have seen us for a while, but who may wish to use our services again in the future.

Audio Magazines

Our audio magazines are recorded in-house by volunteers, and are provided free of charge on CD or memory stick to people with a sight loss. They are posted to each individual's home address in a plastic wallet, which is then used to return the magazine when they would like the next edition. Our audio magazines are:

- 'Hameower' – our fortnightly audio round-up of articles from the Press & Journal newspaper,
- 'Leopard' – produced monthly and featuring articles from the print edition of Scottish Field Magazine, and
- 'Bon-a-Talk' – our regular magazine featuring news and interviews.

These magazines help our subscribers, many of whom may be quite isolated, to find renewed enjoyment in listening to storytelling for pleasure, stimulation and to rekindle previously held interests.

"I thought I would write you a little note to tell you how much I appreciate your efforts, sending out the Hameower CDs again. From the cheery introduction music to the final farewell, it makes for worthwhile listening. I enjoy the variety of readers as well as the topics."

Audio Library

Our NESS Audio Library members have access to over 2,300 audio book titles on CD, written by a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction authors. These can be accessed via the drop-in libraries within our Aberdeen and Elgin Resource Centres, or can be posted to members' homes free of charge. This valuable service is run by NESS volunteers.

"The staff at NESS have gone over and above to help my mum. They have been excellent giving advice on useful aids, classes, audio books and any time I have a question they always help me. Cannot emphasise enough how valuable this service is. Thank you to all concerned."

Hear 2 Help

Relying on hearing aids to connect with other people and the outside world can be tricky; to get the best out of their hearing aids, wearers need to clean them, replace the batteries, and replace the tubing periodically – which can be difficult for those who may also have limited vision or reduced dexterity.

Our Hear 2 Help drop-in sessions are held in our Resource Centres in Aberdeen and Elgin on set days each month. Our Hearing Aid Champions, all volunteers, have been trained by NHS Audiology colleagues to clean and maintain the main types of hearing aids they issue. New NHS hearing aid batteries can also be provided, free of charge. In Dundee, NHS Tayside delivers this service from our Resource Centre as well as other community venues.

"Thanks, ladies for a great service! Without these wonderful volunteers that fixed my two hearing aids, I would have been struggling to hear properly, also the volunteer tea lady that makes you feel so welcome."

Training and Awareness

As part of NESS' commitment to achieving the vision of **“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,”** NESS delivers a variety of training and information activities. NESS has developed a reputation for delivering high quality training and information, helping organisations and individuals be aware of the needs of people living with a sensory impairment, and be more able to provide accessible information and communication.

Training Programme

NESS delivers a programme of Sensory Awareness (sight loss, hearing loss and Deaf awareness training), which during the pandemic, moved online. Since the removal of restrictions in 2022, NESS' training programme has gradually moved to a hybrid model, offering a mixture of e-learning and either a Teams or face to face session. The e-learning is designed to provide the underpinning knowledge and theory about sight loss, hearing loss, Deafness and deafblindness. Participants then explore the practical and emotional impact of sensory loss in an interactive session, which either takes place on Microsoft Teams, or increasingly, in a longer, interactive face-to-face situation.

This year NESS delivered seven Microsoft Teams sessions, two face to face sessions in Aberdeen, three in Moray, and one in Angus, reaching 73 people. Feedback from these sessions includes comments such as:

“Very relevant and thought-provoking. Feel much more confident in working with those with sensory impairments,”

“Very useful information and enjoyable”

“Excellent, very interactive and opportunities to talk.”

The training programme has a complex funding structure. Training delivered in Aberdeen is funded through the Aberdeen See Hear Strategy Fund, and the training delivered in Moray and Angus, is funded through our contracts with the local Health and Social Care Partnerships. People who are not eligible for these funding streams pay

to attend the training. Prices for our training remain highly competitive, so that money does not act as a barrier to accessing the training.

Tailored Training

As well as our training programme, NESS delivers tailored training, which is tailored to meet the needs of the organisation requesting it, and delivered at a time and place to suit the customer. Some tailored training focuses more on explaining what NESS does, while other sessions focus on raising awareness of the impact of sight loss, hearing loss, Deafness or deafblindness.

Tailored training can be delivered face to face or remotely, and often consists of shorter sessions. Some tailored training used the e-learning along with a tailored face-to-face or Teams session, depending on the needs of the customer. Some tailored training sessions were delivered as information events, where NESS has an information stand to promote NESS services and raise awareness.

Organisations receiving tailored training, included organisations providing health and social care support, cultural and educational organisations, employment and employability organisations, schools involved in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative and many others. This year 19 tailored training sessions were delivered, reaching an estimated 295 people.

Providing information and supporting organisations

As well as structured training and talks, NESS provides information informally to organisations looking to improve their services for people with a sensory impairment. During this year, NESS provided information and advice to over 15 organisations, including cultural, statutory, third sector and leisure and entertainment industries about the issues that the organisation in question was trying to overcome, to try and make their services more accessible, particularly in terms of communication and information.

In addition to this, NESS sits on the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP) of Aberdeen City Council and the Aberdeen City Transport Users Partnership (ACTUP), representing the needs of people with a sensory impairment in discussion with a variety of Aberdeen City Council senior planners, to try to ensure that major travel and infrastructure

developments that are taking place in the city are designed to accommodate the needs of the people that we support. Aberdeen See Hear Funding is used to fund the work in Aberdeen.

[The future of training and awareness raising](#)

As we continue to move towards a post-pandemic way of operating, we will continue to provide training via e-learning. Increasingly, we will offer face-to-face training sessions, while maintaining opportunities for remote sessions, providing a flexible hybrid model to meet a variety of needs and styles of learning. NESS will continue to be involved in a number of networks to share information about sensory impairment and the needs of the people that we support.

NESS in the Press

NESS does not commit any of its precious funds to advertising, however regular news stories about NESS and the life-changing work we do were frequently featured in the press, online and in broadcast media throughout the year.

Many of these stories recognise the achievements of our service users, highlighting the countless personal journeys they have undertaken with our support. Others pay tribute to those who have raised vital funds for NESS services. In addition, these stories promote the support which NESS can offer to others with sight and/or hearing loss.

Some of the headlines included:

Aberdeen man's charity praise after rare condition left him suddenly 'housebound'

North-east charity reaches Investors in People Awards Final

Dundee social worker takes up management post at sensory charity

Meet the 'professional problem-solver' Carnoustie mum helping those with sight loss back on their feet

Offshore energy company donates £1,500 to sensory charity that supported staff member's daughter

Dancing gran, 84, raises £10K for north-east charity

These articles and many more are available in Appendix 5.

Key aspects:

Human resources: equality and diversity

NESS is committed to equality and diversity within the workplace and society in general and commits to:

- Treating everyone as an individual, regardless of their background, circumstances or lifestyle and ensuring they are able to access the same or similar opportunities on an equal basis.
- Ensuring any services, groups or activities are inclusive.
- Challenging discriminatory actions and prejudiced ways of thinking.

We are a Disability Confident Employer, committed to interviewing applicants who declare a disability, provided they meet the basic requirements of a job description. We are committed to providing “reasonable adjustments”, which enable our employees with disabilities to undertake their job on a fair and equal basis.

Organising our workforce

Members of staff are based at four premises:

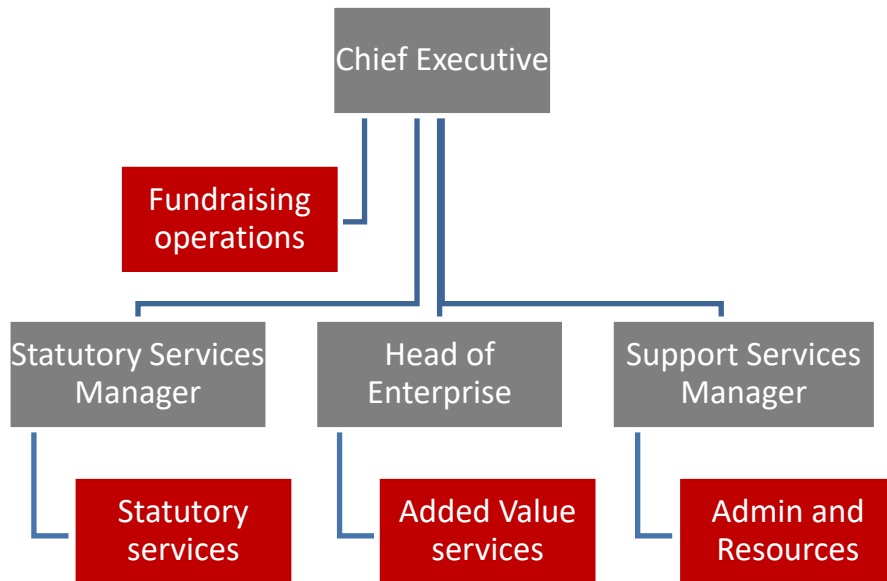
1. 21 John Street, Aberdeen (Headquarters, owned)
2. Number Ten, 10 Constitution Road, Dundee (leased)
3. Elizabeth House, 10 Victoria Crescent, Elgin, Moray (leased)
4. The Hub at Friockheim, Angus (thanks to Angus Society for the Blind who generously fund this for us).

Our resource centres in Aberdeen, Dundee and Elgin are open for public access. Our office base in Angus does not have public access.

There are three organisational sections within NESS:

1. Statutory Services, including our core Social Work and Field work teams in Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee, and Moray.
2. Added Value Services, including our grant funded projects and charitable functions.

3. Administration/ resources including our resource centres and the essential backroom and support functions.



At the start of this period, NESS employed 52 people, ten, or 19%, of whom, have a sensory loss making them eligible to use NESS services. There were 29 full time and 23 part time members of staff.

The flat management structure reflects close supervisory relationships with no employee being more than three supervisory stages from the Chief Executive.

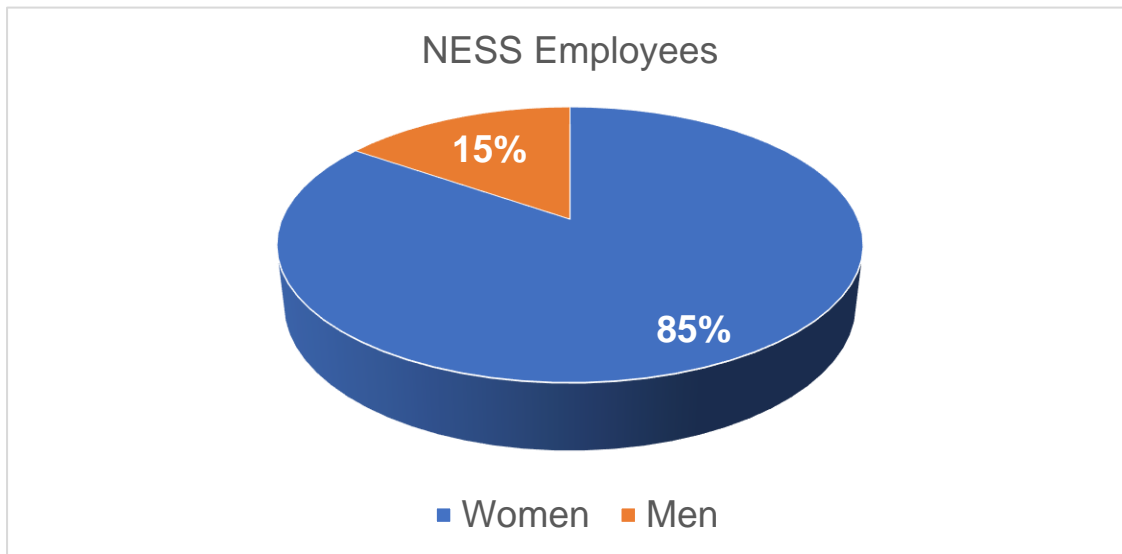
Gender pay-gap analysis

UK companies with 250 or more employees have to publish their gender pay gap data as a statutory requirement.

With 52 employees on 5th April 2022³, NESS was not required to produce this information, however, with an 85% female workforce, we felt it would be good practice for us to do so.

³ This data was correct at 5th April 2022, the "snapshot date" which voluntary sector employers of over 250 employees are required to use, to report their gender pay gap

NESS employed eight men and 44 women at the start of this period.



This pay-gap analysis includes all levels of employees below Chief Executive.

There are two ways to present this: mean and median. The mean gender pay gap is 3% in favour of men. Mean is based on average pay across the board. This measure suggests women earned 96p for every £1 men earned. The median gender pay gap is 0.04 % in favour of women. The median calculation is influenced by the number of people on each pay grade. This measure suggests men earned 99p for every £1 women earned. The ratio top earner to median salary is 2.76:1.

Governance and Accountability

NESS has a sound framework to support decision-making on any future developments, and a robust structure in place for implementing them. Our strategy provides a direction of travel to help the organisation navigate future challenges. It is informed through discussions and consultations with stakeholders, staff, commissioners, elected representatives, funders and, most importantly, service users, their families and carers. The result is a live document which is woven through all our plans and policies, reviewed regularly and, where necessary, updated.

Board of Directors (Trustees of NESS)

All NESS Directors are volunteers, including our Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. We maintain a Skills Matrix of our Board Members' professional and personal skills - a dynamic document which is used to map our Board Members' skills and experience against those we have identified as required for the achievement of our organisational objectives. Our term limit policy for Board Members is seven years, after which they must stand down.

This year two volunteers were appointed as directors, joining the 12 existing members, to make a board of 14 in March 2023.

Managers regularly report to the Board on performance.

The NESS Board has one sub-committee, the Finance, Governance and Planning (FGP) committee, which maintains a strategic overview of operational matters.

Members of NESS

As a company limited by guarantee, NESS is required to have Members, who are responsible should the business fold. NESS' directors are required to become members. NESS offers membership to its stakeholders, who have the option of joining for an annual or a lifetime membership fee, entitling them to vote at official company meetings. 133 people were subscribed Members of the Company limited by guarantee; 80 were service users and family members, while the remaining 53 were directors and former directors, employees and previous employees.

Compliance

As both a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, NESS has made the required submissions to both Companies House in Edinburgh

(<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC155630>) and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (<https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=SC009537>).

Financial Sustainability

A significant amount of income from non-statutory and charitable sources enables NESS to carry out its range of Added Value Services. This is drawn from grants and trust / foundation funding awards, fundraising events and activities, and legacies and bequests – as illustrated previously on page 10.

As part of the budgetary process, the Directors consider the financial and other risks associated with the organisation's income and expenditure streams, assets and liabilities. This allows them to determine the level of unrestricted reserves necessary to protect the organisation, and in particular, continuity of its services (i.e. 6 months' trading).

Our statutory accounts include a pension liability; although required to be reported in charitable accounts this is, however, not a true liability to NESS, as it is underwritten by Aberdeen City Council. Member organisations, including NESS, are contributing additional sums each year to clear the deficit over a twenty year period. NESS' membership of this scheme is now operated on a closed basis, and is not open to new staff. Should a member of this pension scheme leave, their replacement is enrolled in NESS' current Group Personal Pension Scheme.

Environmental Sustainability

NESS is committed to minimising the negative impact of its activities on the environment. Building on our Environmental Policy we have introduced a six point Green Office protocol.

We will:

1. Minimise waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are as efficient as possible
2. Minimise toxic emissions by vehicles used for NESS' business
3. Actively promote recycling
4. Source products to minimise the environmental impact of the everyday running of the organisation
5. Meet all the environmental legislation that relates to the organisation
6. Make all staff aware of environmental issues and enlist their help in maintaining a green organisation.

Further details can be seen
in Appendix 6.

Economic Impact

NESS' turnover has increased by over £553,000 in the last five years, and last year it contributed a turnover of over £2.5 million to the Scottish economy.

NESS has been an accredited Living Wage employer since 2016, joining the Living Wage Foundation's nationwide campaign to help reduce poverty. This commits us to ensuring that every employee who works for NESS earns the Real Living Wage.

Review of previous social accounts 2018

Our last set of Social Accounts, published in 2018, included the following lists of Actions and Recommendations for the next Social Accounting Cycle. We are satisfied that these have been completed or superseded.

Actions:

- Additional staff and volunteer resources in Dundee and Angus
- Efforts to try more 'local neighbourhood' activities in Angus and Moray, which are chiefly rural areas
- Development of further added value services and infrastructure
- Recruitment of volunteers in Dundee and Angus
- Review our processes: Using the 'Living it My Way' outcomes to demonstrate our impact
- Our people: Debate "What is high performance and how to reward it?"
- Review purpose, function and reach of NESS News
- Monitor gender pay gap.

Recommendations:

- Link all actions with strategic plans and business planning mechanisms
- Embed our 'Living it My Way' outcomes into case evaluations – now superseded by recorded progress against our five Service User Outcomes as listed on page 31
- Develop additional ways of better evidencing NESS' impact to statutory and other investors
- Consider using social science methodology to analyse qualitative feedback to better demonstrate our impact
- Implement actions from the planned reviews above.

In addition, the next section lists further achievements over the last five years.

What's new since last time?

- ❖ Our Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee and Moray Health and Social Care Partnerships continued to be delivered successfully and to a high standard.
- ❖ Established peer support and social groups in Brechin, Kirriemuir, Dundee and Broughty Ferry during 2018/19.
- ❖ A highly effective organisational response to COVID lockdowns and restrictions; staff's quick adoption of remote working practices ensured continued and effective support of our service users through a number of innovative, accessible means.
- ❖ Delivery of hearing aid batteries, and 'Hear2Help Express' mobile hearing aid maintenance and retubing service – during COVID restrictions.
- ❖ Connected isolated service users through telephone conference call system 'The Party Line', and Zoom meetings, during COVID restrictions.
- ❖ Awarded Investors in People Gold in 2019 and 2022.
- ❖ Winner of Northern Star Business Awards 2021 – 'Making the Difference' category.
- ❖ Launched online Sensory Awareness Training in 2021, enabling remote access during COVID restrictions.
- ❖ Launched a new website in 2021, enhancing user experience and accessibility.
- ❖ Moved our Angus office from Arbroath to The Hub at Friockheim in October 2021.
- ❖ Finalist in the Investors in People Awards 2022 – 'Third Sector Employer of the Year' category.
- ❖ Extended our 'ICT for All' Added Value Service through the recruitment of an additional, part-time ICT Officer in May 2022.

- ❖ Commissioned a funded feasibility study into the provision of a Young People's Sensory Service in Dundee, which was undertaken by Dr Beth Hannah, a Senior Lecturer in Educational Psychology at the University of Dundee. The report was delivered in October 2022, and has informed the development and introduction of this service from 2023/24.
- ❖ Finalist in the Scottish Charity Awards 2023 – 'Digital Citizen' category.

Social Impact headliners 2022-23:

Strategic

- ❖ New six-year strategic business plan began to be developed during this period, for publication later in 2023, taking NESS up to our 150th Anniversary in 2029.
- ❖ Our Vision is, “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.”
- ❖ Our Mission is, “Achieving independence for Blind and Deaf people.”

Our people - Employees

In 2022, we again gained the Investors in People (IIP) Gold award, achieving a significantly higher score than last time.

- ❖ IIP assessors congratulated NESS on “The way in which you have managed to empower and engage your people under very difficult circumstances. You have progressed your journey to being an organisation that demonstrates leadership at all levels.”
- ❖ A team member stated, “I know where to go if I need support or help, but I feel totally trusted to get on with the job and it is that trust and belief that motivates me.”
- ❖ Another said, “What is important is the service user and our leaders are passionate about that and as a result they motivate us to go the extra mile.”

Our people - Volunteers

- ❖ According to our calculations, during this period, our volunteers donated 11,026 hours to NESS, the equivalent of almost six additional staff members.
- ❖ Our VIVA ratio was 5.61 : 1, which means for every pound we spend on supporting our volunteers, we got back the equivalent of £5.61 in the value of the work they did.
- ❖ Volunteers said, “[NESS is] a lifeline for a lot of people, who I know appreciate the service.”

- ❖ “I feel quite humbled seeing how much my small contribution means to the service users.”
- ❖ “[I am] happy being part of NESS, they supported me to move on with my life through my volunteer role.”

People who use our services

In our customer satisfaction survey:

- ❖ 95% said they got our service when they needed it.
- ❖ 98% said they believed our staff were kind, friendly, helpful and welcoming.
- ❖ 94% thought our staff understood the challenges they were facing.
- ❖ 91% said our support had helped them make the best of their situation.
- ❖ 93% found the information we provided was helpful.
- ❖ 92% said that overall NESS delivered the help and support they needed.

“[NESS Social Worker] could not have been more helpful. Nothing too much trouble. A good listener. Kindly and understanding. Very knowledgeable.”

“Help to date useful but as I have macular degeneration, I expect I will require more advice / support as my condition worsens. I know I can come to NESS for this, which is reassuring.”

“After getting some benefits, I manage a lot better as it's nice to have a few extra pounds in my purse thanks to NESS.”

“The survey says it all. Brilliant services and staff. Couldn't ask for better. Thank you.”

Our own evaluation data shows that, following their contact with NESS,

- ❖ 71% of people are looking after themselves more independently,
- ❖ 52% of people are now less socially isolated,
- ❖ 87% have reduced some of the negative impacts of their sensory loss,

- ❖ 23% have increased their income or resources to maintain or improve their lifestyle, and
- ❖ 52% have increased their participation within their community or in society.

ENDS

List of Appendices

1. Annual Report 2022 - 23
2. Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) 2022 - 23
3. Service User Satisfaction Survey 2023
4. Impacts observed at case closure 2022 - 23
5. North East Sensory Services Media Report 2022 - 23
6. NESS Environmental policy and Green office protocol.