



north east  
**sensory services**

achieving independence for blind & deaf people



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**To end March 2023**

## The Board of Directors

<b>Chairman</b>	John C Legg (Resigned, 9 November 2023) Gordon McHardy (Chair from 9 November 2023)
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Laura A Sharp (Resigned, 9 November 2023) Carmen Irving (Vice chair, 9 November 2023)
<b>Appointed in Meeting</b>	John Imrie (Resigned, 9 November 2023) Hannah Watt (Resigned, 9 November 2023) Lynn Hawcroft Frank K Wahedally Christina Cooper Leonard Ironside Charlotte Little Martin Housden Helen Nicoll Carol Gordon Kenneth Auld (Appointed 24 August 2023) Uche Iloka (Appointed 24 August 2023) Scott Rennie (Appointed 4 May 2023) Garry Ritchie (Appointed 24 August 2023) Mary-Elena Waddell (Appointed 4 May 2023)
<b>Observers</b>	Cllr Theresa Coull, Moray Council Cllr Gill Al-Samarai, Aberdeen Council

*February 2024*

## Chairman's Report by Gordon McHardy



Following on from previous years 2023 has again been a busy and successful year for NESS. As before there have been several changes to the team at NESS as well as changes to the Board of Directors and NESS continues to provide high quality services to people throughout parts of Tayside and the North East of Scotland. One of the changes was myself taking over from John Legg as Chair of the Board in November 2023 and I look forward to working with the NESS staff, volunteers and Board of Directors in the months and years ahead as we move ever closer to our 150th anniversary in 2029. I would like to take the opportunity to thank John for all that he has contributed to NESS both as a Director and Chair of the Board.

All 3rd sector organisations are finding fundraising challenging as the cost of living crisis bites, however people and organisations continue to be generous allowing us to continue to provide our Added Value Services

A big thank you goes out to all those in the NESS 'family' who helped us to do what we do, this includes our inspirational volunteers, staff, managers, Directors and our extraordinary network of partners and stakeholders. Their effort and their determination to provide the best possible service, regardless of challenges and time constraints, make the difference.

NESS also stands for Never Ever Stands Still and we will look to continue to develop and improve services for the benefit of our Service Users giving them greater independence in their everyday lives.

Finally, if you think that you can help Ness to make a difference and help achieve independence for people living with sensory loss, then please contact us at

[www.nesensoryservices.org](http://www.nesensoryservices.org).

**Thank you.**

**Gordon McHardy, Chair of NESS Board of Directors**

## Chief Executive's Report by Graham Findlay

### Review of Activities in meeting our Objectives



In the financial year 22/23, NESS continued to deliver our services to a very high standard in what is still a difficult post Covid environment. We are better placed to deal with any future events and relevant staff now have the facility to work from home should the need arise. We have continued to work a limited hybrid model for some, if that is more effective for the organisation.

Our staff team and volunteers continue to work tirelessly to provide the best possible support to our service users.

Our Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Aberdeen, Moray, Dundee and Angus Health and Social Care Partnerships continued to be delivered successfully and we maintain excellent working relationships with all our statutory funders.

During the year, our Aberdeen services were enhanced with additional funding for a full-time social worker and a full-time rehabilitation officer. This has helped reduce waiting lists following Covid and we are grateful to the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership for recognising the value of our services and providing additional resources.

Our Angus and Moray contracts run to April 24 and these will likely be retendered within the next financial year.

Our Dundee contract operates on a rolling contract basis. During the year, we were awarded additional funding from the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership for one additional day of a rehabilitation officer and funding for a part time social worker. It is good to see our funders continue to recognise the value of our services and the impact they have on the lives of our service users and we are grateful for their ongoing support.

NESS continues to make some of our non-statutory services available to people living in Aberdeenshire where we don't currently have a statutory contract. Many of our Added Value Services are accessed by service users from Aberdeenshire. We continue to input into the Aberdeenshire See Hear group.

In March, we held our Annual Celebration at the Town House in Aberdeen.

NESS published our new six-year strategy document which will take us to our 150th anniversary in 2029.

## Quality systems

NESS aspires to be well known for providing outstanding services to people with sight and hearing loss and to be recognised as a powerful and successful advocate for their basic rights and inclusion in society.

NESS places a high emphasis on striving to improve its services, to regularly exceed the expectations of its stakeholders. NESS undertakes to act within the principles of its **Mission** and **Values** to enable people with serious sensory loss to achieve positive outcomes.

NESS is committed to meeting all its stakeholders' requirements and accounting for its performance in doing so.

We collect evidence for this using Social Accounting methodology.

## Service user statistics

The total number of service users on our database for Grampian and Tayside in the year to 31 March 2023 was **6,035**.

## Awareness raising

Our awareness raising activity is delivered in different ways, tailored to meet the differing needs of the people and organisations we are in contact with. NESS raises awareness through a structured programme of training, tailored training, talks to organisations and community groups, as well as by participating in networks and through informal meetings and discussions with others.

## Raising Awareness through our Training Programme

The way in which NESS's training programme is delivered has changed substantially in response to the pandemic and the subsequent change to the way that people work. In April 2021, NESS launched the new online learning, developed in response to the pandemic. This training programme, available for anyone to book onto, consists of e-learning content, hosted on our training site which participants can work their way through in their own time. During the period April 2022 and March 2023, there has been a further transition to a "new normal" of hybrid or blended training, with participants completing the e-learning, and then opting to attend either a Teams session or a face-to-face session. These interactive sessions provide the opportunity to discuss the practical and emotional impact of sensory impairment and relate it to everyday scenarios. We have gradually increased the availability of face-to-face training since summer 2022.



Between April 2022 and March 2023, 11 Microsoft Teams sessions were held, reaching 63 people. With restrictions on meeting face-to-face being removed, we also ran five face-to-face training sessions, reaching 30 people. Those attending the training came from a wide range of places, including private business, occupational health, nurses, social workers, OTs, support staff, student support, and other roles involved in working directly with and supporting people.

### **Raising Awareness through Tailored Training**

In addition to the open Sensory Awareness Training sessions, we have delivered 14 tailored training sessions reaching approximately 201 people. Tailored training is structured, with the content tailored to meet the needs of the customer and delivered in a way to suit their needs. This often means a shorter session, and increasingly means delivering separate Visual Awareness Training and Deaf Awareness Training.

### **Raising Awareness through Talks**

Talks are informal and unstructured, usually focusing on raising awareness about NESS and delivered to professional as well as community-based groups. These are delivered by local staff, as well as the Training and Information Officer. In total, NESS has delivered 17 talks to local professional or community groups, reaching approximately 325 people.

### **Providing Information**

As well as delivering training, we have worked with 16 organisations to promote and raise awareness of NESS and to raise awareness of what our service users need to access services. Organisations that we have worked with include cultural organisations including theatres and groups, transport providers, and other health and social care organisations. Sometimes this work involves a one-off meeting, phone, or video call, while at other times, it involves ongoing communication.

### **Participating in Networks to Raise Awareness**

NESS is an active member of the Disability Equality Partnership in Aberdeen and the Aberdeen City Transport Users Partnership, representing the needs of the people that we support to the wide range of people and groups that are members of these networks.

## Funding for Training

Our training and awareness raising activity continues to be funded by the Aberdeen See Hear Strategy Fund in Aberdeen, and by our contracts with the Angus and Moray Health and Social Care Partnerships for people who work for them. Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership commissioned us to deliver tailored awareness training to their staff.

## Added Value Services

As well as the statutory services described above, we deliver 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.

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 - 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.

In addition, we continued to ensure that information was available to patients attending Audiology, in-patient wards and other clinical departments as required.

Our **Employment Service** in Aberdeen, Dundee and Angus delivers tailored support to people of working age, school-leavers, employees, job seekers and those about to retire. We enable people to access relevant information, 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 **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, and we provide a range of equipment which can be borrowed by people who wish to try it out at home.

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. Supported by our staff and volunteers, **NESS social groups** meet regularly at our resource centres in Aberdeen, Elgin and Dundee and in community venues across Tayside (Montrose, Brechin, Arbroath, Forfar, Kirriemuir and Broughty Ferry) and across Moray (Keith, Buckie, Forres and Elgin). Our **café** and facilities, like the **fitness suite** in our Aberdeen Resource Centre, provide additional opportunities for people to meet up, in addition to the scheduled groups and clubs.

Our **Connect, Include, Support (CIS)** service brings together socially isolated elderly people aged 65+ living in Aberdeen or Moray who have a significant visual and/or hearing impairment, living in their own homes or sheltered housing. We assist with transport for those who require it, courtesy of our fabulous volunteers. Many of these elderly people would not get out of the house otherwise. Many of them form new friendships, share their experiences and have fun.

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

Our **audio magazines** are recorded in-house by volunteers and are provided free of charge on CD or USB 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. These services 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.

NESS also provides a chargeable **transcription service** to other organisations. We can transcribe their news, information and correspondence into audio, BSL DVD, braille, and large print to help them communicate with their customers and clients, who may struggle to read their communications or answer a telephone.

Our **Hear 2 Help drop-in sessions** are held in our Resource Centres in Aberdeen and Elgin on set days each month. Our volunteer Hearing Aid Champions have been trained by NHS Audiology colleagues to clean and maintain the main types of hearing aids they issue. 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.



Our **Young People's Sensory Service (YPSS)** enables children and young people with serious sensory loss to build their confidence, independence, social skills and ambition and take part in challenging, fun activities.

Many youngsters, previously restricted by perceptions of disability, have developed the confidence to cease being limited by what they can't do and raised their expectations: becoming 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.

We've held parent and baby groups, youth clubs, school holiday activity programmes, residential adventure holidays: all active fun, out with school, in the holidays, evenings and at weekends.

We successfully carried out a study for the development of a Dundee YPSS service and funding was secured to develop this service in 23/24.

As an agency of SRLPDC - the Scottish Register, NESS provides a **BSL/ English language interpreter** booking service, utilising our own in-house interpreter and registered freelance interpreters. We only use fully qualified and registered interpreters, and this is a chargeable service. As a legacy of COVID restrictions, we continue to offer remote interpreting as well as face-to-face, which has extended our reach, completing assignments in Glasgow and London, for example.

### **Fundraising and promotional initiatives**

NESS has had a high level of success with trust fund income which supports much of our added value services.

Community Fundraising is slowly starting to re-emerge following Covid although with the cost-of-living crisis, people don't always have the spare income to attend events in the same way. Highlights included the ever-popular Chapleton Bike Ride, the return of our ever-popular NESS Ball, Dine with the Dons lunch and a Race Night.

We are continually grateful to the many people who leave a legacy to NESS in their Will and their contributions are vital to the sustainability of the charity.

NESS continues to have a strong public profile and received significant coverage from local radio, and both local and national press.

We are grateful to Quantum Communications who manage our Public Relations and have maintained our profile with the media, the public and politicians to a high level.

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

### **Political Interest in NESS**

Throughout the period, we were visited by a number of different MSPs and MPs and local councillors from across the political spectrum. With the support of Quantum Communications, we produce a quarterly newsletter for our politicians, which keeps them abreast of the vital work that NESS undertakes.

### **Facilities**

We recognise the importance of maintaining our facilities to a high standard and continue to spend a proportional amount to ensure they are fit for purpose. Our John Street facility is second to none, and we hope to upgrade the building to make it more energy efficient within the next financial year.

We were successful in gaining funding to replace our diesel people carrier, with a new electric vehicle and installation of a charging point.

In Angus, we are extremely grateful to our friends at Angus Blind Society for their continued support of NESS, with the funding of community services equipment for service users and the funding of our office in the Friockheim Hub.

Our Dundee and Elgin facilities are excellent and kept to a high standard by our landlords.

We replaced our aging database with the cloud based Charity Log, which is used throughout the sector.

### **Governance**

Our Board of Directors ensure the implementation of our strategy and related action plan.

During the year, we welcomed our new directors, Helen Nicoll and Carol Gordon to our board.

We continue to engage with our service users in a variety of ways and held successful information days in our resource centres. Their input will help inform our next set of social accounts.

## **Staffing**

During the year, we had two members of staff retire and we are grateful to Ann Robertson and Hilda Young for their many years of dedication to NESS and to our service users. We wish them well for a long, happy, and healthy retirement.

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

Kevin Gregor – ICT Officer

Susan McKay – Fundraising Co-ordinator

Katrina Jackson – Field Work Assistant

Laura Ritchie – Social Worker

Gill Sutherland – Senior Practitioner

Christopher McDonald – Social Worker

Laura Mingo – Trainee Rehabilitation Worker

Pam Smith – Senior Administrator

Claire Anthony – Resource Centre Worker

NESS had one internal promotion with Carla Marchbank being promoted to Statutory Services Manager.

## **Strategies and campaigns**

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

- The See Hear Sensory Impairment Strategy, due to be published in February 2025,
- Aberdeen, Moray, Angus, Aberdeenshire and Dundee See Hear Strategies,
- The Scottish Government's plans for a National Care Service,
- We continue to engage with the Scottish Sensory Hub,
- We were involved in the development of the Scottish Government's plans for community low visual aid (LVA) service, although currently paused.

## National representation

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

- Scottish Government Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment,
- Scottish Government Cross Party Group on Deafness,
- Visionary, the UK Association for Local Societies for the Visually Impaired,
- Institute of Fundraising,
- Thomas Pocklington Trust at board level,
- SRLDPC the registration organisation in Scotland for BSL Interpreters,
- The new Scottish Government Sensory Loss in Social Care Advisory Group.

## Planned developments for 2023/24

- Put together a compelling response to the Angus and Moray Health and Social Care tenders,
- Develop new Community Fundraising Events,
- Replace our fundraising database,
- Be flexible and responsive to the cost-of-living crisis,
- Continue to review our organisational structure to meet the challenges facing the third sector,
- Develop the Dundee Young Persons Service,
- Continue to be involved with local developments and strategies,
- Implement our new six-year strategy.

## Service user feedback

We received a lot of positive comments from and on behalf of our service users demonstrating the impact NESS had had on their lives. Here is a selection from 2023:

**“You have been the only organisation that has given us help. You have been absolutely brilliant and it has been much appreciated.”**

**“Thanks for everything NESS does for Mum. She is a very anxious person and was extremely anxious about social event. Now she really looks forward to her outings, and loves the volunteer who collects her. She has really been enjoying meeting people who also have sight and hearing loss.”**

**“Whatever you did to my hearing aids was fantastic. It was such a relief! After weeks of turmoil and lots of visits to try and get it fixed, now it is so much better!”**

**“Everyone I spoke to was kind, helpful, wonderful. I'm thankful for all the help I've been given.”**

**“Bill loved his time at NESS and made many friends. As a family we just wanted to let the service know that we appreciated all the kindness and support given to Bill over the years. Keep up the incredible work!”**

**“I think the service you provide is excellent. You show so much care and sensitivity. I certainly felt great benefit from meeting you”.**

**“Wow, what an outcome! I would not have reached this point without you having my back and guiding me to take this further, so thank you so much. I feel that a weight has lifted from my shoulders.”**

**“We found the staff from NESS were exemplary. We could not have wished for a better service.”**



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
Income and endowments from:	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies	203,564	33,565	237,129	127,731
Charitable activities	9,771	1,902,512	1,912,283	1,782,246
Other trading activities	113,605	-	113,605	65,628
Investments	51,610	-	51,610	51,623
<b>Total income</b>	<b>378,550</b>	<b>1,936,077</b>	<b>2,314,627</b>	<b>2,027,228</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Raising funds	146,598	-	146,598	118,561
Charitable activities	503,981	1,890,632	2,394,613	2,253,182
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>650,579</b>	<b>1,890,632</b>	<b>2,541,211</b>	<b>2,371,743</b>
Net gains/(losses) on investments	(108,981)	-	(108,981)	49,954
<b>Net income/expenditure</b>	<b>(381,010)</b>	<b>45,445</b>	<b>(335,565)</b>	<b>(294,561)</b>
Transfers between funds	(7,437)	7,437	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds before other recognised gains</b>	<b>(388,447)</b>	<b>52,882</b>	<b>(335,565)</b>	<b>(294,561)</b>
<b>Other recognised gains:</b> Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension plans	<b>1,149,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,149,000</b>	<b>290,000</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>760,553</b>	<b>52,882</b>	<b>813,435</b>	<b>(4,561)</b>
<b>Reconciliation of Funds:</b> Total funds brought forward	<b>867,131</b>	<b>123,042</b>	<b>990,173</b>	<b>994,734</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>1,627,684</b>	<b>175,924</b>	<b>1,803,608</b>	<b>990,173</b>

## Service User Numbers as at 31 March 2023

Area	B/SSI	PS/SI	N	N/HH	HH	D	DBSL	DB	H	TOTAL
Aberdeen City	292	418	325	198	787	45	114	49	5	2,233
Aberdeenshire	72	88	78	8	39	5	3	10	9	312
Moray	145	118	150	113	367	18	17	115	0	1,043
Angus	83	103	118	81	260	35	46	43	2	771
Dundee	330	301	200	80	522	35	94	105	7	1,674
Perth & Kinross	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>1,028</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>1,976</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6,035</b>

### Abbreviations:

**B/SSI** = registered blind/severely sight impaired

**PS/SI** = registered partially sighted/sight impaired

**N** = severe sight loss, but not registered

**N-HH** = severe non registered sight loss and hearing loss

**HH** = hard of hearing

**D** = deafened

**DBSL** = Deaf BSL user

**DB** = registered blind/severely sight impaired/partially sighted/sight impaired with severe hearing loss

**H** = hearing, other problems such as Tinnitus, no sight problems

## North East Sensory Services

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

Main office:

**21 John Street**

**Aberdeen AB25 1BT**

**Tel: 0345 27 12345**

**Fax: 01224 622120**

**SMS: 07593 102004**

**E: [info@nesensoryservices.org](mailto:info@nesensoryservices.org)**

Also at:

**Elizabeth House**

**10 Victoria Crescent**

**Elgin IV30 1RQ**

**Tel: 0345 27 12345**

**Fax: 01343 547167**

**SMS: 07968 013951**

**E: [moray@nesensoryservices.org](mailto:moray@nesensoryservices.org)**

**Number Ten**

**10 Constitution Road**

**Dundee DD1 1LL**

**Tel: 01382 721455**

**SMS: 07713 711772**

**E: [dundee@nesensoryservices.org](mailto:dundee@nesensoryservices.org)**

**[www.nesensoryservices.org](http://www.nesensoryservices.org)**



north east  
**sensory services**

achieving independence for blind & deaf people



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE | Gold

