



Issy McGrath. Photo Credits Gavin McCutcheon

Right to Dream 5 Year Strategy 2022-2026

Our Right to Dream

A few thoughts from Deafblind Scotland's Co-Chairpersons

Issy McGrath

When asked about their dreams and aspirations for Deafblind Scotland over the coming 5 years our chair's responses were these inspiring thoughts:

Issy McGrath is a deafblind woman who has Usher's Syndrome and has been a Co-chair of Deafblind Scotland for the past two years. She invites you to read this strategy as the first point in engaging with her world and through doing so she hopes that many more people will feel confident in reaching out and walking alongside deafblind people.

"Reaching out with my hand and fumbling around my kitchen table searching for a fork is a voyage of discovery. On the way I have already found the salt, the pepper, the tomato sauce. And then suddenly a knife is put into my hand. Confused I ask why have you given me a knife and the reply 'Oh, I thought that's what you were looking for'.

"Let me make my own mistakes and don't pre-empt and share your mistake with me. Leave my thought processes to run their natural course and I'll find my own happy ending.

"Walk with me on a journey of mutualism. If you see a rose then tell me that it is there and I will reach out and touch it. I will experience its beauty through my fingertips and smell the scent. If I happened to hit a thorn on the way then the risk is mine and only mine to own and you don't have to say sorry to me. In that moment of connecting with my space I have learned so much and a small stumble on the way is a risk I am willing to take.

"If the way in which I move around is perceived as a struggle to you, to me it is just searching, feeling around to make sense of my world through touch. Let me fumble and stumble and each time I will have built up a map of the space in my mind, creating a more autonomous and resilient life for myself. I invite you into my Space and Deafblind culture and I will show you my world, not through your ears or your eyes but through my hands and my sense of touch."

John Owens

“It is a privilege to provide a foreword to Deafblind Scotland Strategic Plan. As we emerge from the challenges of the recent pandemic it feels like this is the perfect moment to refresh our strategy and bring new direction and optimism to our plans for the future.

“There has already been a great deal of work undertaken by the organisation to build and strengthen partnerships with other third sector organisations, statutory agencies and the Government to create a better understanding of the needs of people impacted by deafblindness and the loss of sight and hearing that could result in dual sensory loss. Work still needs to be done to have an agreed definition that links to properly funded, high quality, services. Working in partnership to deliver this aspiration remains a key strategic imperative.

“Deafblind Scotland has a strong campaigning role and as the Scottish Government prepares its Human Rights Bill we must continue to embed a human rights approach in everything we do.

“Writing this foreword alongside Issy reminds me of a key principle that has guided how we have modelled the co-chairing role and that is co-production. For me this means each of us as genuine partners respect the skills, experience and talents of each other and bring this collaboration to bear to ensure the best for Deafblind Scotland and all those now and in the future who require the services, support and community that it provides.”

Dare to Dream Ambassador Foreword

The Dare to Dream Leadership group of deafblind people contributed significantly to the development of this strategy themselves but also adopted an ambassadorial role in reaching out to other more isolated deafblind people to ensure that all who wanted to were able to contribute. One of the group shares her thoughts on being involved below:

“I leaped at the opportunity to be part of the Dare to Dream project and to contribute to something constructive that could have significant benefit for us all today and future deafblind persons. The quest for peace, justice, equality and inclusion have played a large part in my life yet, had no personal significance until a fateful day and freak event changed my life leaving me deaf and almost totally blind.

“The status of deafblind persons is ‘minority’ and as such our existence has no awareness in the public consciousness with few basic rights and ability to impact on the outside world.

“Dare to Dream leadership – Discussed and deliberated before reaching a unanimous conclusion on the need to focus on the prominent areas of exclusion and inaccessibility. We identified the consequences and impact

the lack of awareness has at all levels of society including health, emergency services, transport, and local and national government etc.

“Being part of this leadership group involved learning about other members, sharing in the dream of change, enjoying the sense that we were going to make a difference and having the honour of being the voice of those who lack the confidence to use theirs.

“Pre deafblind life was a privileged adventure enabling me to see and do things others only dream of. I had no idea people like us existed. I prided myself in standing up for many different causes. I had no idea one day I’d be part of a minority struggling for their rights.

“We are daring to dream – that in the not too distant future we will achieve our goals and consequently others will also Dare to achieve new dreams.”

Beth Greene, one of the founding members of the Dare to Dream Leadership Group (now Right to Dream).

Our Vision

Deafblind Scotland’s aim is a society in which deafblind people have the permanent support and recognition necessary to be equal citizens. We enable deafblind people to take their rightful place in their local communities ensuring their voices are heard across society.

Our Purpose

We talk to people and provide training about deafblindness so that they can understand what the experience and challenges are and how they can help us to build a more inclusive Scotland.

We work with public services, employers and Governments to ensure that deafblind people can have an equal chance to thrive and that their right to good quality support that enables them to lead the lives of their choosing are upheld. We provide empowering support that enables deafblind people to live independent lives and to take on new challenges should they wish to do so and to enable people with a single sensory loss who are more at risk of developing a second sensory loss to prepare for the future.

Having created a purpose-built Learning and Development Centre for deafblind people we will continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in the built environment so that deafblind people can have not only equity of access to but also experience of using buildings and community spaces.

Our journey has only just begun

During the pandemic we have all come to know how it feels to be socially disconnected and to experience periods of loneliness, boredom, and frustration. However, this is not 'unprecedented times' for people living with a dual sensory loss but rather a daily experience. Many deafblind people live with unacceptable levels of isolation and have their lives limited by a lack of inclusive environments and opportunities; however, we believe that this need not be the case. Despite these significant challenges when support is available people with dual sensory loss lead fulfilling lives, take on new challenges and contribute to the lives of others. Unfortunately, all too often deafblindness is misunderstood across society and as a result this support is not as readily available as it should be. We are working hard in Deafblind Scotland to change this and have big dreams for the next 5 years. Having been successful in running a capital campaign to build our very own 'Field of Dreams' a purpose-built Learning and Development Centre we now intend to build on this achievement to bring to life an ambitious, but we believe achievable new 5-year strategy. One that centres on deafblind people's 'Right to Dream' of a more inclusive future where they can demand that their rights to a meaningful life are realised.

Furthermore, in this strategy we outline how we will work to ensure that funders, commissioners, and policy makers understand that access to inclusive communication and support to freely navigate the world should be upheld as a right and not a privilege. We also want to aim high in what we ask of society and no longer accept that 'accessible' buildings, spaces and services are good enough. People with sensory loss and those living with a dual sensory loss deserve environments that are not only possible to 'reach and access' which is so often the definition of an accessible environment but places and spaces that they can equally use and that enrich their lives. In this strategy we aim to look inwards in the first instance and ensure that our spaces, services, and opportunities support self-determination and feel owned by deafblind people.

Over the past year the challenges within our current Social Care System have come sharply into focus. People with a sensory loss and in particular older people with a dual sensory loss are amongst those most impacted by the social care system. As Scotland emerges out of the pandemic and looks to create a new fairer society and health and social care systems, we want to do all we can to ensure

that this is built around those who experience some of the greatest health and social inequalities - deafblind people. As we strive to achieve these critical improvements in services, we will also turn our attention to the role that we all play in pushing boundaries

of inclusion and rights to self-determination across society. We will ask that all of us raise our ambitions about how we create a society where deafblind people can equally thrive.

ACHIEVEMENTS DURING OUR 2017 - 2021 STRATEGY



Since 2019 we:

- Provided 150,000 Guide/Communicator support hours
- Provided deafblind people with 3,000 hours of health, wellbeing, and skills development programmes
- Helped over 70 deafblind people navigate the online world for the first time



Since 2017 we:

- Trained over 2,000 public service staff
- Raised Awareness of deafblindness amongst 3,000 community members



Since 2015 we:

- Raised funds to build the Deafblind Scotland Learning and Development Centre



Since 2015 we:

- Helped almost 2,000 people access £3million of recurring welfare benefits
- Achieved almost a 100% success rate in supporting deafblind people to access their entitlements

A Right to Dream

To support the development of this strategy a deafblind leadership programme was developed through funding provided by the National Lottery Community Fund Leaders with Lived Experience Programme. This enabled us to bring together a group of 9 deafblind people who undertook leadership training and worked collectively to create a draft Manifesto of Rights. This group of deafblind ‘ambassadors’ developed a consultation process to engage the wider deafblind community and because of this, consensus was reached on a Rights-based Manifesto for deafblind people. This set of rights has framed the thinking in this strategy as: the individual services; health, wellbeing and skills development programmes; training programmes; and campaigns set out in this strategy are all aimed at supporting the realisation of these rights over the next 5 years – and beyond.

Following this work on the development of the Dare to Dream Strategy this established group of ambassadors has now begun to look outward as part of the Right to Dream Programme which is a Scottish Government funded Equality and Human Rights Programme. This work will involve improving people with a sensory loss’s understanding of their human rights, supporting public services to uphold people’s rights, and enabling deafblind people to undertake a leadership role in the promotion of human rights. All this external work is aimed at ensuring that deafblind people have a voice that is heard and that they are unmistakably visible in future developments that will impact their lives.

MANIFESTO OF RIGHTS

Across 2020, the Dare to Dream Leadership Group consulted widely with deafblind people on their rights, the following is the rights-based manifesto that frames this strategy.

1. It is the right of deafblind people to be recognised as a unique community and we should be included in all aspects of society.
2. We expect the Scottish Government, public and private sectors, and the wider community to be deafblind aware.
3. It is the right of deafblind people to have equal access to influence local and national policy and we should be fully consulted throughout.
4. It is our right to have access to communication, information, travel and equipment that is fully accessible and is financially inclusive.
5. It is every deafblind person's right to accessible support across multiple services during diagnosis, transitions, and major life events.

"Nothing about us without Us"

Unprecedented Times?

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Deafblind Scotland faced an unprecedented need to provide more emotional, social, and practical support including home visits for deafblind people particularly for those self-isolating (most of whom were older or living with multiple conditions). Many Deafblind Scotland members have limited support networks and therefore we knew we had to do more and work speedily to ensure that they did not experience any preventable isolation and resulting distress. We also wanted to make every effort to work with deafblind people to minimise their risk of becoming ill through working alongside them to protect and improve their physical health whilst also reducing the mental health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic. Most Deafblind Scotland members were considered within the Government's definition as 'vulnerable' and therefore in a high-risk category for catching and experiencing more serious illness from Covid-19. Unsurprisingly during the initial lockdown Deafblind Scotland was contacted by many deafblind people, anxious about and affected by Covid-19, missing social activities and friends, telling us they were feeling much more isolated and lonelier as well as being confused about what was going on and unsure what

information to trust. Comments from a consultation we had with deafblind people about how they were feeling during this time included 'feel left out and tired', 'realise how cut off I am'. 'I have not seen anyone, always on my own', 'I am so frightened'.

In response to these issues we:

- Produced, formatted, and sent out weekly bespoke Covid-19 information (briefings) to keep deafblind people abreast of the situation and actions they need to take to enable them to stay safe.
- Provided access to a daily phone line and email to provide emotional support but also advice and information.
- Worked hard to increase the number of deafblind people able to use assistive technology, proving to be a "lifeline" (words of a deafblind person) during Covid-19 by providing access to regular contact to Deafblind Scotland activities and their own friends and relatives.

- Piloted a wellbeing programme and through training Guide/Communicators in psychological First Aid, supported the most isolated deafblind people in distress over lockdown.
- Moved our activities online including a virtual wellbeing week and facilitated weekly craft, bingo, and quiz sessions many led by deafblind volunteers.
- Maximised social media facilities to brighten up people's days and to showcase what deafblind people can achieve through regular peer led items like 'Let's Get Physical with Dot'; <https://business.facebook.com/dancercisewithdot/videos/1032978440545429/>
- Held a highly successful virtual Christmas party in 2020 and many of our most isolated and vulnerable members received a Christmas party box.
- Due to the further set back of the Omicron Variant in Christmas 2021, we delivered 25 five course Christmas lunches generously supplied by Clyde College Catering Department to the most isolated and older deafblind people living in Central Scotland.

Our experience during the pandemic has reinforced the need to continue to build services and support that enables deafblind people to have as connected and full a life as possible. Critically we were left in no doubt that the experience of deafblind people needs to be better recognised across society and to do this we have renewed our commitment to offering the necessary assistance to ensure that the voice of deafblind people is amplified and that they are more visible in all the developments towards creating a fairer more sustainable post pandemic Scotland. The feedback from deafblind people during the pandemic has both inspired and informed this **Right to Dream strategy**.



Laying the Foundations for Change

Over the most recent years Deafblind Scotland has been evolving from being considered as a more 'niche' charity to an authoritative national sensory loss body, able to deliver real impact and change for some of the least visible and most isolated members of society. There are approximately 31,000 deafblind people in Scotland but Deafblind Scotland, the principal authority on advocating for the rights and meeting the complex needs of deafblind people, has thus far only been able to reach a proportion. This has been limited by resources which will be addressed later in this strategy but also by challenges in identifying deafblind people further compounded by a lack of diagnostic definitions or agreed thresholds around deafblindness in Scotland. Many people who have a dual sensory loss are just not recognised by services as being deafblind. There remains much confusion across those services that are often the first point of contact for people with sensory loss that deafblindness does not always mean complete dual sensory loss. Many people who are deafblind have some residual hearing or sight but have experienced sufficient loss that one of these senses can no longer compensate for the other. At this stage life becomes extremely challenging as society is not structured in a way that supports low vision or hearing or the

use of other senses and in particular touch to help people navigate and connect. In our recent strategy consultations with deafblind people, it was therefore not surprising that the importance of creating greater public awareness of deafblindness came so strongly to the fore.

In recognition of this transition point of acquiring a second sensory loss we have taken the first steps in 2020 to allow us to work more preventatively by adapting our Governing documents. This has offered us the opportunity to reach people at risk of a second sensory loss at an early stage. The central aim of this transitional approach is to support people emotionally through what is often a traumatic experience whilst also providing practical support that can assist them to find and adopt new coping strategies and to adjust their living skills; making it possible for them to continue to experience a full and vibrant life of their choice.

"I was referred to the ophthalmology department, after examination consultant told me 'you have Usher Syndrome, you will be totally blind by 40, there is nothing we can do'. He walked out leaving me to digest those chilling words. He did not offer counselling nor tell me about Deafblind services. It was a life sentence at

20 condemning me to no prospects because I would be totally blind combined with my deafness. I could no longer train as a vet.'

Against these frightening odds, this individual got a degree, married and had children, and has enjoyed a successful career as Deafblind Scotland's Training and Participation

Officer. John is now 64 and still has very useful acute central vision, albeit it is restricted to around 4 per cent. He feels very fortunate but says 'With this vision I could still have operated on animals in my own familiar surroundings, with more information and support at the time of prognosis I would have made different life choices'.

Realising Our Dreams

In the following sections of the Strategy, we will describe how we will realise our dreams through:

- Services and programmes which will work towards ‘Achieving Ambitions and Realising Potential’.
- Creating the right conditions and environment to make that possible through ‘Place, Space and People’.
- Raising public awareness and supporting action amongst services by ‘Changing Minds and Opening Doors’.
- Ensuring that deafblind people’s ‘Voice and Leadership’ is at the centre of all we do.
- A funding strategy that will work towards ‘Making our Dreams a Reality’.



1. Realising Potential and Achieving Ambitions

1.1 Realising Potential – Individual Services

Currently our main individual service is our Guide Communicator service delivered by social care registered Deafblind guiding and communication specialists. Since establishment in 1995 Deafblind Scotland's Guide Communicator Service has developed into one of the largest in Europe. Around 130 people with a dual sensory loss across 16 local authorities and 4 Health Board areas receive a service on a regular basis, some daily. Each year the service is commissioned to deliver around 50,000 hours of Guide Communicator support. Currently there are 60 highly skilled individuals employed in this specialist workforce.

Over the next 5 years it is our intention to grow our specialist individual support services across two main areas.

Expansion of Existing Guide Communicator Service

This service is tailored to meet individual needs enabling deafblind people to get the most out of all that life has to offer. This is achieved through providing support that enables deafblind people to enact their right to:

- Equal access to community and civic opportunities.
- Autonomy and choice.
- Engagement with cultural and leisure interests.
- A good standard of health and mental health.
- Financial security and dignity in benefits access.
- Navigate the physical and virtual world as independently as they choose.

The first new developments to this service have come about more recently in response to the pandemic, which has shone a light on the levels of mental health and health inequalities that deafblind people experience. Many deafblind people experience higher levels of poor health in part due to barriers to health improvement support or screening programmes but also as many deafblind people are older and therefore living with other co-morbid conditions. Lockdowns over the past two years took a real toll on the mental health of deafblind people and for some anxiety and distress were daily experiences. To address this

Deafblind Scotland ensured that Guide Communicators who as social care workers were providing home-based services throughout the pandemic, were equipped to provide a range of early interventions, which enabled Deafblind people to transition with as little distress as possible through this most difficult of times. We also wanted to turn this negative experience into an opportunity to ensure that deafblind people came through the other side of the pandemic with skills and the right kind of support service that would make it more possible for them get even closer to achieving their life goals.

To this end we adopted a 'making every contact count' approach through increasing Guide Communicators competency in being able to recognise when people were anxious, low in mood or experiencing distress. We achieved this through providing them with Psychological First Aid and brief intervention training, enabling them to embed wellbeing support in their everyday Guiding and Communication contact. Some of these Guide Communicators went on to provide an outreach wellbeing programme that has enabled us to support deafblind people who don't currently have access to a local authority funded service but despite this are isolated and at times struggling to cope. We also wanted to find new ways of working alongside people to support them to better identify their own outcomes and be aware of their rights and where needed and appropriate to help raise ambitions around these. Guide Communicators applying enhanced skills were invaluable in this endeavour.

The pandemic also highlighted just how important the virtual world has become in enabling us to stay connected with one another. For many of us the lockdowns were an unprecedented experience, however for many deafblind people these compounded lives that were already isolated and added further layers of boredom, frustration and stress. This was worsened by a lack of access to or competence in the use of technology. Where technology may not provide a solution for all deafblind people, many have some residual sight or hearing and with the right training, support and equipment, technology was able to ameliorate some of the isolation, boredom and lack of development opportunity that they were experiencing. To facilitate this digital access, we trained a small group of Guide Communicators as Digital Champions (or digital co-navigators).

In this next 5 years we aim to continue to build and develop this well-established Guide Communicator service in the following ways:

- Building the ‘making every contact count approach’ and through doing so ensuring that Guide Communicators feel competent and confident in:
 - Working alongside people who feel that their health is poor or would benefit from improving their health to support them to adopt new healthier lifestyle behaviours and habits.
 - Supporting people who are feeling stressed or distressed to help build resilience and embed coping strategies and solution focused approaches into their daily lives.
 - Assist people to navigate the virtual world as well as the physical realm through acting as digital champions.
- Showing courage in moving closer to a co-navigational approach where Guide Communicators can be alongside deafblind people supporting them to manage risk and to act autonomously.
- Developing opportunities for professional and career development for Guide Communicators that takes account of communication and navigational aspects of the specialism on a par to social care aspects of the role.
- Achieving greater recognition amongst Commissioners, Funders and Government of Guide Communicator’s highly specialist role and skills. Furthermore, as we seek professional recognition for staff it will be vital that we don’t lose the foundational importance of human connection within the support Guide Communicators provide to members but rather seek to influence the workforce development elements of the National Care Service to play our part in ensuring that authentic relationships remain at the heart of a professional social care workforce.
- Recognising the different levels of competence, communication skills and responsibility across the workforce by creating the fairest possible work environment that supports personal and professional development and effectively values what Guide Communicators contribute to the lives of deafblind people.
- Attracting a new cohort of staff to take on the role of Guide Communicators to allow us to succession manage and further grow the services across the country ensuring that no-one whose life can be positively changed by this vital service is denied it.

Building a Communicating Care Service

In 2021 it was agreed by Deafblind Scotland's Board of Directors that we would expand our individual services to include elements of personal care and care at home. The rationale behind this was simple; At Deafblind Scotland we are committed to lifelong support and as members age their needs will no doubt change. Whilst it remains our aim to continue to work to enable deafblind people to remain as independent as possible, currently almost half of our membership is already in receipt of personal care services provided by carers who cannot communicate with them effectively. Deafblind people have told us that receiving personal or intimate care, having medications administered and their meals prepared by people whom they cannot see or hear and who are unable to communicate with them is a frightening experience that leaves them feeling overwhelmed, confused and vulnerable.

The case to expand our individualised services to allow us to provide care at home is therefore compelling.

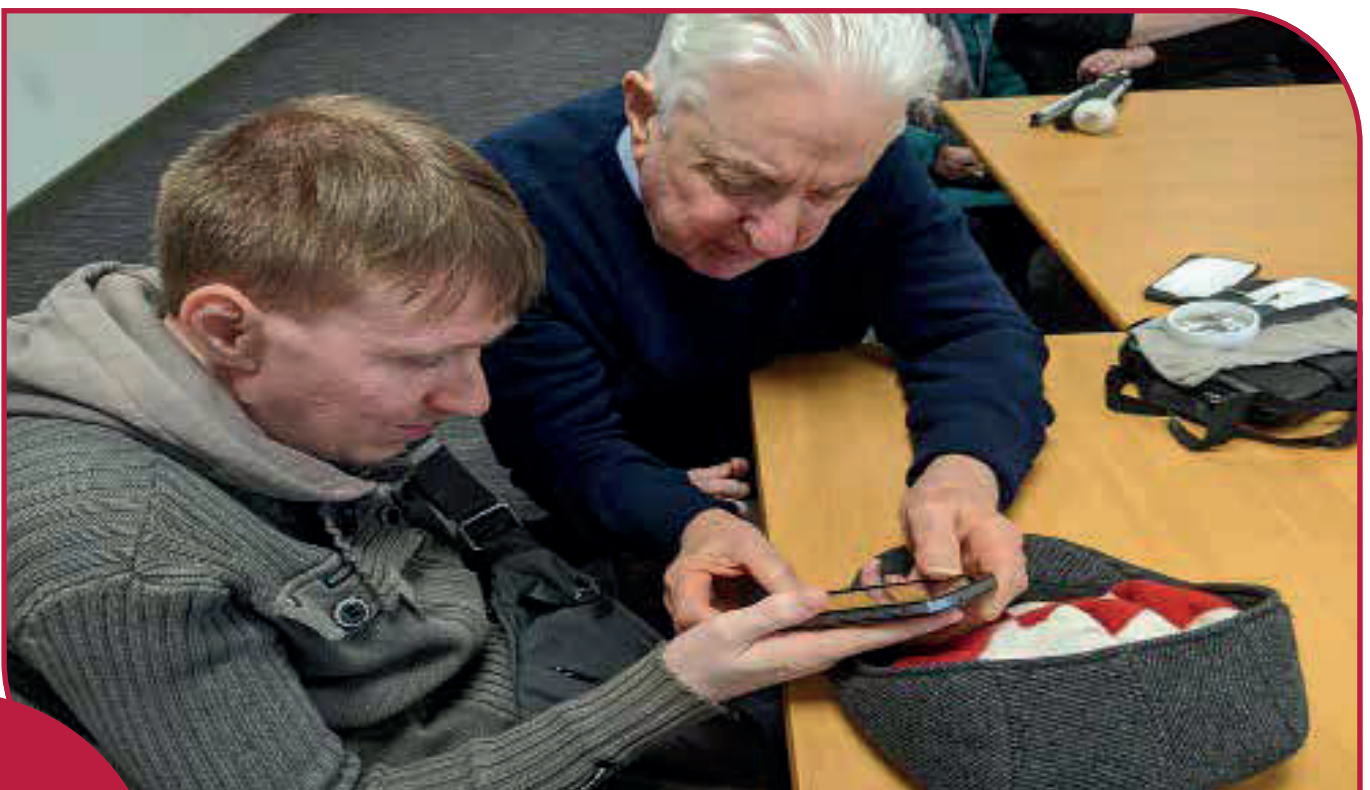
In the next 5 years we aim to begin to develop this service.

- This development will be undertaken with care, managing expectations of those that would seek to use this service as due regard to recruitment challenges of the social care sector and the time and resource that will be required to provide communication support training to personal care experienced staff is required.
- This service development will be carefully balanced with the importance of continuing to attract social care staff to the existing Guide Communicator service to ensure that we are able to not only fulfil our commitments to members that currently rely on that service but also to expand to better reach the great many deafblind people living across the county who currently are not able to access Guide Communicator support.

1.2 Raising Ambitions

Since Deafblind Scotland's Learning and Development Centre opened in June 2017, with the exception of periods of lockdown, activities within the Centre have continued to grow and increasingly higher numbers of deafblind members are attending projects and sharing or learning new skills. These projects and activities have been initiated in response to project evaluations, surveys, and other forms of consultation with members including through the Scottish Advisory Group on Deafblindness (SAGoD) and more recently within the Development Committee. The Development Committee established in 2020 provides an opportunity for members to work alongside Trustees and staff leaders to take the emerging big themes and ideas and build them into viable projects that can be taken forward as funding applications. This Committee also takes responsibility for ensuring that these projects all work towards addressing the major health and social inequalities and inclusion barriers that deafblind people experience. One important strategy adopted over recent years is that Deafblind Scotland has worked to move from smaller short-term projects to create bigger strategic programmes aimed at addressing some of the deeper rooted and more systemic changes needed to improve life for deafblind people.

During the pandemic, out of necessity, we were able to progress some of this programmatic work quicker than we had planned, particularly in relation to tackling isolation and loneliness, digital exclusion and health inequalities as these were key pandemic related concerns. Other priorities identified as requiring a programmatic approach include welfare rights/financial exclusion, public awareness training and social, cultural and skills development activities. There are several overarching approaches running across each of the programmes,



for example technology is threaded throughout as a vehicle for strengthening social connectedness and reducing loneliness as well as being utilised for delivering training and providing information to members. Equally peer leadership approaches are taking shape across all of our different programmes.

Our existing programmes aim to:

- **Address Financial Exclusion** – Connect 2 Support (C2S) began in August 2014 and currently has three full time members of staff, two of which are highly experienced welfare advice staff members and the third is providing advice and information to carers in Fife. All three staff have specialist Communication and Guiding skills to enable them to support deafblind people and their carers to navigate often complex systems that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.
- **Promote Digital Inclusion** - It was vital during the pandemic that Deafblind Scotland ensured deafblind people didn't feel alone or isolated and accessible technology was a critical but surprising means for achieving this. Over the past couple of years, we have supported almost 80 deafblind people to get online which has greatly exceeded all expectations. This has been significant work and proved invaluable in enabling deafblind people to learn new skills and access information but also importantly to establish social contact with family and friends.
- **Improve Health and Wellbeing** - During the early stages of the pandemic and in recognition of the increased isolation of deafblind people, Deafblind Scotland applied for and was awarded funding from Scottish Government Equalities Unit. This would go on to ensure deafblind people received timely, accurate and formatted accessible information relating to the latest pandemic guidance. This also funded wellbeing outreach support connecting with the most vulnerable and isolated members through wellbeing calls, visits, Facetime, Skype, and regular emails. In addition, members were assisted to maintain positive physical health with Guide Communicators supporting them to undertake regular wellbeing walks. This vital programme of work reached deafblind people across the country and in doing so helped towards achievement of one of our longer-term goals of expanding our reach to more geographically isolated deafblind people. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board along with NHS Lanarkshire continue to lead the way by funding the organisation to provide individual Guide Communicator support to enable equitable access to health and wellbeing services for deafblind

people. As part of this funding a health and wellbeing week of health activities and information sessions was trialled in 2020 and repeated online in 2021. We also provided expert advice during the pandemic to national health improvement programmes such as the Government Screening and Vaccination Programmes and during the roll out of the Covid and flu vaccines we worked closely with Public Health Scotland to ensure that deafblind people had access to formatted vaccinations leaflets.

- **Strengthening Social Connectedness and Reducing Loneliness** – Our Centre based, and online activity programme supports deafblind people to learn new skills to promote social connectedness in the longer term such as the digital and BSL cafes but also to engage with others more immediately through joining groups like the Salsa dancing, Gardening, Taiko drumming and Walking groups. The growing cohort of digitally skilled members played an important role in helping to reduce isolation and loneliness during the lockdowns and notably deafblind people who are unable to attend Centre based activities due to geographic distance were also able to connect with other deafblind people in ways that had hitherto not been possible. This online approach to activities is a promising development and one which we continue to grow, creating a hybrid approach to our future activity programmes.
- **Promote Peer Leadership** – Touching Lives Take 2 (TLT2) is a 3-year programme aiming to raise Deafblind awareness with a particular emphasis on those community groups and services that could benefit older Deafblind people. There is now a substantial programme of Deafblind Awareness training across Fife and East Dunbartonshire running until 2023. This essentially peer-led training is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and the Robertson Trust. In the first year the training reached almost 100 people and a training pack was developed to support this. There are 6 deafblind volunteer trainers who have been supported through the provision of training for trainers' and these volunteer trainers co-facilitate sessions with project staff who support when needed. Other opportunities for members to share their skills/experiences with other deafblind people are embedded across online and face to face activity programmes.

These priority areas remain a focus within this next 5-year strategy where we will continue to seek funding and where possible ongoing support to grow the programmes that we know have the greatest impact and that require long-term sustained approaches and therefore over this next period of Deafblind Scotland's development we aim to continue work to:

- Pilot new ideas within small innovation projects and where we find significant solutions grow these into large programmes that raise ambitions, support more substantial skills development whilst working to tackle the complex multi-layered challenges deafblind people encounter.
- Tackle health and mental health inequalities through awareness programmes and resources that enable deafblind people to have equitable access to health improvement opportunities.
- Address digital exclusion by continuing our Covid focused effort of getting as many people online as possible and supporting them to use these skills to address issues such as loneliness and boredom but also to address structural challenges such as health and financial inequalities by providing an opportunity to access information and rights.
- Adopt a rights and strength-based approach across all our programmes, ensuring that through the Development Committee members continue to be able to inform and guide development of programmes and feel empowered to lead.



Over the next five years we will also aim to:

- Extend programmes through outreach hubs across the country to ensure that deafblind people can access the support they need and opportunities they want wherever they live.
- Create greater opportunities for deafblind people to build natural friendships with other deafblind people, others with single sensory loss and the general population.
- Attract younger people through expanding our engagement approaches and involvement opportunities.
- Become an accredited welfare rights provider through achievement of the Scottish National Standards and FCA Accreditation and becoming a Wiser Advisor centre.
- Work preventatively by creating a transitional programme to support people at risk of a second sensory loss to learn new skills and strategies to enable them to adapt to the next phase of their lives.
- Build a programme focused on access to culture and arts participation through creating 'sensory friendly' arts programmes within Deafblind Scotland and alongside mainstream arts partners alongside contributing to a newer field of pro-tactile art.
- Create a new sports access programme supported by our growing partnership with Scottish Disability Sport as a member of the new Deaf Sports steering group.
- Using the land within the Learning and Development Centre campus to create a horticultural programme that leads to access to 'sensory friendly' outdoor space that will create opportunities for deafblind people and the public to mutually enjoy, reducing social distance.
- Work towards the Learning and Development Centre becoming a centre of excellence through the provision of skills development and leadership opportunities that enable deafblind people to continue to make their contribution to society or to enrich the lives of other deafblind people

Health and Wellbeing

- “ This is the best thing you’ve done for me, fairly cheered me up. I got dressed today, hair done. I feel marvelous. ”
- “ In the outside world I can feel isolated, through Deafblind Scotland I feel more included. ”
- “ It made me feel included and relevant, part of society rather than an object of exclusion or derision which I have been subject to in the past. It also made me see other individuals have different situations but often experience difficulties like myself. It’s good to know we have a contact point to turn to at Deafblind Scotland. ”
- “ Speaking on facetime about things that happened in my past has helped me accept myself as I am now. I feel more myself and am not afraid to say that I am deafblind now. Because of this I have joined DbS activities as I can now feel I can mix with other deafblind people. ”

Quotes from our members...

Online Activities

- “ These classes have been a life-line during lockdown as we’re restricted from seeing friends and family. It’s a great thing to meet people on-line and have a good laugh with the other deafblind members. This has stopped loneliness setting in and stopped my getting fed up and bored. I look forward to the classes every week. ”
- “ I personally have got a new lease of life from the classes...I feel my balance and general “feel-good” feeling has improved as well. ”
- “ Penny Whistle class was very good, it was great for morale and meeting others was good, and interesting to meet and hear others’ stories. It’s good to try different things. Kirsty [tutor] knew how to bring people out of themselves. I hope it will start again as I would like to keep going. My friend has lost his hearing and has shut down, but I’m determined to keep going and try different things. ”

Briefings Feedback

- “ My best reference and updates throughout the pandemic have been from Deafblind Scotland. I’m really grateful for the briefings. I’m medicated for anxiety; my fear raises to more alarming levels than it should. I’ve felt heavily reliant on your information, trusted more than the news, and less confusing. It’s made a significant difference. ”
- “ I don’t get many visitors but that briefing from you is like a little friend coming through my letter box showing me someone is thinking about me. ”

Quotes from our members...

Addressing Financial Exclusion

- “ Staff very informative and helpful. ”
- “ Service 1st class.”
- “ An excellent service for people who need help and advice on all sorts of issues.
- “ I admire the time and effort you put into your service. It is indeed a comfort to know that you are available. ”

Christmas Activities

- “ Received my Afternoon Tea Box absolutely overjoyed with it really appreciate your kindness. ”
- “ Just received my treat box thank you so much for your generosity, also thank you from her dad. ”

Quotes from our members...

2. Place, Space and People

2.1 Place and Space

In 2017 Deafblind Scotland realised the opening of the Learning and Development Centre, previously referred to as the “Field of Dreams”. This was only made possible through the committed fundraising effort of many deafblind people, family, and friends alongside generous donations from funders and a notable legacy from Mr Neasham. Having realised this dream Deafblind Scotland now owns a purpose-built premises in 1 Neasham Drive, where deafblind people can come to enhance existing skills and learn new ones as well as a place where a community of deafblind people can form. This is critical as the communication skills required to socially connect with other people are unique and deafblind people need places where they can meet, communicate, and engage together in a relaxed and natural way. However, we are not content to stop at having an accessible building and in this next phase we want to further develop the Learning and Development Centre to create a ground-breaking space that deafblind people can utilise autonomously. We aim to achieve this by creating a physical and social environment where deafblind people can self-determine and navigate without reliance on others which is so often their daily experience. We want to do even more to ensure that there is at least one space that deafblind people can come to that is focused on their strengths and possibilities and not losses. Our dream is an environment that on one hand supports the use of residual sight and hearing that deafblind people have but is also fully pro-tactile. Having achieved this our aim thereafter will be to share the learning from this work with planning departments and others involved in decision making around the built environment.

We want to model what is possible and raise the bar on what is acceptable.

Over the next 5 years we will:

- Fundraise to allow us to work with experts to create design features that will establish the Centre as the first of a kind pro-tactile and sensory enhancing environment developed by and for deafblind people. We want to ensure that this experience begins at the start of the long path into the Centre that carves its way through Deafblind Scotland's land. This land forms a unique opportunity for deafblind people to engage with nature as we are surrounded by the Campsie hills and on occasion have wildlife encounters on the path. We want people to be able to walk along the path using a sensory handrail and to stop at the end of this to enjoy a tranquil sensory garden and friendship 'Blether' bench before entering a pro-tactile state of the art Centre. This will form the first environment of its kind that is not merely accessible but that enriches the lives of deafblind people and as we advocate for change across society it is for now the one place where we can showcase a new way of inclusive living that facilitates the rights to self-determination and autonomous choice.

Some key features will include:

- Sensory path - a full handrail with sensory features. Wide enough to co-navigate with a guide dog and/or a Guide Communicator.
- Sensory garden - sculptures/water features, aromatic plants providing many sensory experiences - touch, shape, sound and movement.
- Internally deafblind people will be able to independently navigate the Learning and Development Centre assisted by:
- Changing flooring textures for wayfinding (stairwells/doorways etc.)
- Increased use of tactile/Braille signage (including established international standards for signals/cues), bright colours and contrasts.
- A system of handrails throughout the Centre with braille messages or tactile signs imprinted on the inside of the handrail to give identification, direction, and warnings.
- Deafblind Scotland have this asset of a large area of land and over the next 5 years as we are working to create this pro-tactile oasis, we will also look at ways this land can be further utilised to enhance the lives of deafblind people. This may mean that the land is leased on a short-term basis to other charities or public services whereby deafblind people may use the facilities or where there is a complimentary social care or charitable objective. This will unfold over the coming 5 years, but we are committed to ensuring that all these decisions will be framed by the principle of furthering the creation of space that enriched the lives of deafblind people and any decisions on the use of the land will have this test applied.

2.2 People

One central foundation in achieving our ambitious dreams for and with deafblind people is ensuring that we can continue to recruit and retain a skilled and committed workforce. It will fall to the energy and commitment of people to make our dreams a reality. Deafblind people taking on leadership roles and working to inspire and support others but also our workforce. Whether working to manage and govern the organisation or in frontline roles bringing life to new models of support. Adopting models of support where the centrality of relationships is acknowledged is critically important as in the absence of specialist support, communication barriers can make it impossible for deafblind people to interact with others in the nuanced way needed to form good quality relationships. Furthermore, our engagement with the world is wider than immediate friends and family, from the neighbourhoods in which we live to the navigation of a series of services and systems across society. For this reason, the workforce needs to feel competent in negotiating family dynamics whilst also facilitating opportunities for deafblind people to enact their rights to full and active citizenship. It is rare for deafblind people to start life with a dual sensory loss with most acquiring at least a second sensory loss in adult life. Therefore, our people need to be prevention and early intervention focused if we are to support people at the earliest stage in their transitions to a dual sensory loss, helping them to retain as much of their existing coping strategies, skills, and support networks as possible but also to adapt and learn new ways of navigating the world. Working in this way will create real possibilities for exploring wider life domains with deafblind people, identifying individual strengths and potential assets in their social and physical environment. Deafblind people have told us that earlier intervention at the point of the traumatic transition to a second sensory loss could have enabled them to retain much higher levels of autonomy and social connectedness.

Over the next 5 years the foundation stones that we will put in place to ensure our workforce can rise to these challenges are:

- Continuing to develop our specialist Guide Communicator workforce through:
 - Providing enhanced skills training such as accredited Deafblind Manual and tactile BSL. Ensuring that as existing highly skilled Guide Communicators retire there is a succession plan in place.
 - Exploring opportunities for professional registration for Guide Communicators.
 - Creating career pathways, conditions of service and pay structures that value this unique specialism.
 - Continuing to improve our accredited Guide Communicator training and to move further towards a co-navigational and 'alongside' approach to guiding.
 - Further enhancing our 'Making Every Contact Count' model to ensure that Guide Communicators can facilitate choice around the range of life decisions we all encounter daily. From adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours and coping strategies with support of Guide Communicators skilled in health behaviour change and mental health improvement, to navigating the virtual world alongside the physical through Guide Communicators adopting digital co-navigator roles.
- Building a Communicating with Care workforce that can provide personal care support to deafblind people as they age, where possible, ensuring that this intimate and often last stage of life care is not provided by people who cannot communicate with deafblind people. By building this workforce we will ensure that deafblind people can continue to take autonomous decisions and stay in control of their lives right through periods of ill health or later life until end of life.
- Taking the next steps to build our programmes of transitional support ensuring that deafblind people have access to staff that can provide them with living and communication skills training and support.

- Facilitating access to peer mentors or a buddy that can walk alongside people as they transition into a second sensory loss, helping them to imagine a more hopeful future. This may include face to face support but also access to a peer facilitated 'Blether line'.
- Ensuring we have a workforce that can operate within the Centre but also right across Scotland to support people individually as Guide Communicators but also providing programmes of transitional support and health, wellbeing and social connectedness programmes that are accessible wherever people live
- Building a programme of volunteers that can support deafblind people to: travel such as volunteer drivers; navigate in new settings; or provide befriending and social support to alleviate loneliness and boredom.
- Advocating for recognition of the specialism of our services within the development of the National Care Service ensuring our specialist are seen as requiring rates of pay and career pathways that reflect the complexity of the role.
- Creating staff capacity within the fundraising department to capitalise on opportunities to expand the reach of our services, programmes and training through local funding and through doing so contributing to our goal of ensuring that deafblind people can access services wherever they live in Scotland.
- Building leadership opportunities for deafblind people as peer-advocates, project leaders and within governance of the organisation.
- Protecting and investing in the wellbeing of our greatest asset – our people through promoting an environment of trust and candour where people feel safe to try new things and learn from what doesn't work as much as what does. In doing so we want to create a resilient, courageous and reflective workforce that can model to those they work with the concept of having another go.

Overall, we want to grow our workforce to provide more support that is easily available to deafblind people wherever they live and adaptive to the range of their support needs. However, we want to do all we can to enhance the lives of deafblind people which will mean working in partnership through others and building the deafblind communication and guiding competency of other workforces as outlined in the following section.

3. Changing Minds and Opening Doors

A Deafblind Vision for Training – John Whitfield

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”

As the trainer for Deafblind Scotland and involved with the organisation over 20 years I have become aware of many changes in thinking around how deafblind people are or should be included in society. We have perhaps created our own obstacles through our main support solutions being a sighted and hearing person leading a deafblind person, the assumption is that there is one world and one reality and one truth. And it is the sighted and hearing person who has access to this world and provides information about it to the deafblind person. In many situations that is helpful. However, it can be counterproductive if the person wants information that is pertinent to themselves. What does that world feel like? Let us make mistakes and learn from them and let our guides step back and support this to happen.

We need deafblind people to feel empowering to experience the world by feeling our way around our own space. In other words, Pro-tactile.

We need to bring this pro-tactility and all the risks attached to it into all of our Guide Communicator training and perhaps we should consider changing the name to Co Navigators who will walk side by side with you through your journey. Imagine the sense of freedom and fulfilment of enabling a deafblind person to experience the world independently, breaking free from the risk factors imposed by society. It does not matter how long it takes to negotiate our way around. Appreciate the impact on our confidence along with increased well-being that such an adventure can bring.

We need to feel ownership of the world around us. A feeling of belonging and being attuned to the surroundings.

Let us feel the world, walk on the grass and take a walk on the Wild side!!

Deafblind Scotland has a long history of using training as a tool to raise awareness of deafblindness and to challenge stereotypes amongst the public and services that come into contact with deafblind people. As part of our work

programme within the BSL partnership group set up by the Scottish Government to support the implementation of the BSL national plan, this awareness work was further strengthened. Furthermore, evaluation of Deafblind Scotland's BSL partnership training produced important learning that has helped us to reframe our future training programme. Public services that we worked with as part of the BSL partnership reported greater knowledge and understanding of deafblindness post training but there was no associated improvement in confidence to take action to identify and engage with deafblind people. As a result of this our deafblind awareness training offer was redeveloped and now also includes a focus on practical communication and navigational skills. As part of the BSL partnership and to support public services a Deafblind Communication Toolkit was produced to complement the training programme.

We have provided peer led training initiatives in schools and communities for a number of years through programmes such as Touching Lives and the more recent Touching Lives Take 2 with a view to reducing social distance and tackling stigma.

There are now 4 key areas of awareness training provided by Deafblind Scotland that we would expect to strengthen over the next 5 years, these are:

- Touching Lives Take 2 – peer led introduction to deafblindness.
- An online licensed Deafblind Awareness and Skill Development Training.
- Face to Face Deafblind Awareness and Skill Development Training.
- An accredited introductory Guide Communicator Training for public services.

In the next 5 years we want to continue to focus on creating greater awareness amongst the general public through training but also using campaigns such as Deafblind Awareness Week as a means of improving public attitudes and garnering support for our cause. Creating campaigns that capture the public imagination will be an important area of development for Deafblind Scotland as deafblind people have strongly told us that they want the public to have greater understanding of the experience of deafblindness and the role that they need to play if society is to become more inclusive.

Deafblind Scotland previously provided BSL training for the public in addition to the internal workforce but more recently we have shifted focus to ensure that most of our energy is placed on providing communication skills training to the groups that are in a position to use these skills to make the biggest difference to the lives of deafblind people. We also recognise that many other organisations provide BSL training but as we are the only body that is able to bring expertise to communication skills that are particular to deafblind people such as Tactile BSL, Visual Frame BSL and Deafblind Manual then this should be our central

communication training priority. As we move forward with this strategy our training and public affairs programme will prioritise:

- The Deafblind Scotland workforce such as Guide Communicators who need to have the full range of deafblind communication skills
- Deafblind people who have limited alternative communication skills and as they transition into higher levels of dual sensory loss and may be left unable to communicate with others.
- Professionals and public services that support or engage regularly with deafblind people (Health and Social Care Staff, Teachers and Employers).

Alongside these training priorities Deafblind Scotland will continue to strengthen our unique Signature accredited Guide Communicator training for our own workforce.

Over the next 5 years we will:

- Further develop a skilled specialist Guide Communicator workforce that can walk alongside deafblind people to enable them to navigate the world and access all their rights of citizenship.
- Support the development of a Personal Care and Care at home competent workforce that have Guide Communication skills as part of the 'Communicating with Care' programme aimed at meeting the needs of our ageing population.
- Ensure that deafblind people have equitable access to public services through raising awareness of what services can do to create inclusive environments and culture. To achieve this, we will provide public sector training and environmental accessibility audits and consultancy support.
- Support people with a single sensory loss through the transition to a second sensory loss by providing adaptive living and communication skills training such as Tactile BSL, Braille.
- Enable deafblind people to retain autonomy and live as full citizens by providing living, personal development and communication skills training.
- Build peer leadership opportunities by providing peer mentoring, ambassador and leadership training to deafblind people.
- Ensure deafblind people who are in employment or wish to take up employment have equitable access to and experience in employment through the provision of training in deafblindness and reasonable adjustments aimed at employers.



Really good
session . . .
fantastic
facilitation!

4. Voice and Leadership

The Scottish Advisory Group on Deafblindness (SAGoD) has had a key role in influencing the strategic direction of Deafblind Scotland across the years. This has mainly been through the facilitation of quarterly events bringing the deafblind community together with Deafblind Scotland staff and Trustees. This group also provides opportunities to access information on local and national policies and plans and is a forum where deafblind people can explore how best to influence these at a local level. During the pandemic Deafblind Scotland reached out to a much wider group of deafblind people than those that attend activities in the Centre or get involved with developments through SAGoD and found many more people with a desire to engage in the work of the organisation. As a result of this a new Dare to Dream Leadership group was formed which was made possible through 18 months funding from the National Lottery Community Fund Leaders with Lived Experience Programme. Dare to Dream involved nine deafblind people collaborating with senior staff to find creative ways of engaging the wider deafblind community ensuring everyone who wanted one had a voice on the creation of this 5-year strategy. This peer leadership group was represented at the Board of Directors through the newly established Development Committee comprising members of the group, Trustees and Senior Staff and Team Leaders.

In recent months having contributed effectively to the development of this 5-year strategy, this peer leadership group has begun to turn its attention to external affairs and through Scottish Government Equality and Human Rights funding is now focused on influencing the national and local government policy and service developments that are most likely to improve the lives of deafblind people. This group is now called the Right to Dream Leadership Group.

Over the next few years, the Right to Dream Leadership Group will work in partnership with Visibility Scotland to promote awareness of and improve access to the human rights of deafblind people and people with single sensory loss. We will achieve this through:

- Making information on human rights accessible through the creation of e-learning resources and through the production, formatting, and dissemination of rights-based briefings. These will be supplemented by dissemination workshops held across Scotland and virtually. This will enable deafblind people and others with single sensory loss to receive information on human rights in the communication format that is right for them thereby maximizing their awareness and understanding of human rights and how to access and realize these.

- Establishing a Deafblind Scotland policy forum to engage with ongoing rights-based activity such as the emerging National Care Service and Scottish Human Rights Legislation. Members recruited for the policy forum will receive the relevant training and support, so that they have the skills and confidence to be effective and active participants. This forum will initially develop a Deafblind Scotland influencing plan and working to this agreed plan, participants will be able to call for reasonable adjustments that would facilitate equitable access in public life.
- Co-producing a rights-based toolkit and e-learning course to ensure that public services that are key to lives of deafblind people are sensory literate and therefore upholding their duties to put in place inclusive communication and access supports that are necessary in ensuring equity. These training supports will enable public services to better understand that equitable communication and access are key to unlocking human rights, practical examples will be showcased of how rights-based approaches can be put into practice. Consultancy support will help to embed sensory literate approaches in public service strategies, guidance, and plans.
- Providing sensory loss informed feedback to the Scottish Government, and for example this group will be well equipped to reach the many older people living with sensory loss who use social care services and don't currently have a voice but who will be most impacted by the development of the National Care Service.

Over the next 5 years we will:

- Continue to grow opportunities for deafblind people to take on leadership roles within the organisation and within wider society to ensure that deafblind people are at the heart of improving the lives of other deafblind people.
- Enable the Dare to Dream group to evolve and operate over much of the life of this strategy as the Right to Dream Leadership Group focused on building the visibility of deafblind people across all the major legislation, policies and plans that will most affect their lives. Through doing so the Right to Dream group will be a key vehicle for ensuring that the Deafblind Manifesto of Rights are brought to life in wider society.
- Engage new members including younger people and associate members such as family members and people with single sensory loss to join the collective advocacy effort of creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

- Build a programme of public campaigns that are lived experience led and enable the public to better understand the challenges deafblind people encounter but also the contribution that they make to society.
- Work through the Development Committee and leadership group to review the impact of the 5-year strategy determining whether it is changing lives for the better.
- Ensure our internal governance structures and processes operate as a full partnership model with 50% deafblind people and 50% hearing and sighted experts.

Overall, we want to create an internal culture whereby deafblind people and staff and trustees work alongside each other as full partners in shaping the future direction of the organisation.

5. Making Dreams a Reality

5.1 Trusts and Foundations

Over recent years we have adopted the following approaches to fundraising:

Following a highly successful capital fundraising campaign to fund the creation of the purpose-built Learning and Development Centre, which was known as our 'Field of Dreams' campaign, our focus for Trust and Foundation fundraising has shifted from capital funding to project and programme funding. The success of this can be evidenced in the growth from mainly a portfolio of small short-term funded projects to the larger programmes as described in the 'Realising Ambition' section. In the past 2 years this has also led to growth in programme staff including recruitment of a full-time Senior Development Officer post. We aim to continue to build on this success but with a strong focus on the priority areas outlined in the strategy and a continued strengthening of our programmatic model. Care will be taken not to over expand or to build unsustainable approaches but rather to seek funding to continue to build on successful initiatives that have been piloted in small projects and to retain and grow carefully and incrementally the group of programme staff that have a significant level of expertise in working alongside deafblind people. Furthermore, we will work to create a new programme of transitional support for those experiencing a second sensory loss or a worsening of a sensory loss. This will take the shape of a person-centred training programme and will require specialist staff to take this work forward. This will require a continued focus on Trust and Foundation fundraising whilst also seeking ways to mainstream programme funding to enable us to provide programmes of support across what is now 7 central areas of priority and one cross cutting theme of 'growing peer leadership'. We will also continue to seek support for core costs from Trusts that provide unrestricted funding and other routes to building unrestricted income streams as outlined below.

CROSS CUTTING THEME 'GROWING PEER LEADERSHIP'



Priority Areas

1. Improving Health and Wellbeing
2. Addressing Financial Exclusion
3. Promoting Digital Inclusion
4. Strengthening Social Connectedness
and Reducing Loneliness
5. Increasing Access to Arts and Culture
6. Promoting Physical Activity Reducing
Barriers to Sports Access
7. Providing Transitional Support

5.2. Community Fundraising

In late 2019 we employed a community fundraiser with a clear goal of growing our community fundraising through a programme of supported events such as asking community groups to run events 'in aid of Deafblind Scotland'. However, during the pandemic this effort had to be put on hold furthermore, as we come out of the pandemic it is looking more likely that events fundraising may not reach the previous pre-pandemic levels for some time. In addition, as we have built our training offers and are enhancing the role of Guide Communicators there are other funding routes that are likely to be more accessible whilst at the same time allowing us to fulfil our charitable objectives. For example, further growing the Guide Communicator service to create a care at home service would enable us to support more vulnerable deafblind people whilst at the same time growing our charity. Likewise selling training services and resources will enable us to raise awareness of deafblindness amongst an even greater number of participants whilst bringing in vital unrestricted funding.

5.3. Charity Shop

Over the past year we have been reviewing our approach to our Charity Shop and are currently reframing the shop as a re-use centre and working with Revolve Scotland's Zero Waste Initiative to apply their standards to support us with this new approach.

5.4. Wills and Legacies

Until recently we were able to provide a free will service aimed at bringing in legacies which offer a valuable unrestricted funding source for charities. During 2021 our current partnership with McClure's solicitors ended due to the closure of their company. This meant that we could no longer provide a free will service. Alternative approaches were explored, and we are currently accessing legacy development support from Bequeathed.

5.5. Corporate Partnerships

Deafblind Scotland previously had a range of corporate partnerships through a partnership award scheme whereby partners could apply for bronze, silver, and gold awards. This was a reciprocal arrangement where sensory awareness training and workplace audits were provided in return for fundraising efforts by the corporate partner's workforce. This approach was not sustained. However, we will over the next 5 years aim to refresh our work to engage corporate partners.

Network Rail

An early example of re-establishing corporate connections came about in 2021 during lockdown, where we worked with Network Rail to create our first external level 1 accredited Guide Communicator training which due to lockdown was provided virtually. This now means that in addition, to producing a small funding source there are now 5 staff in Glasgow Central Station and 5 in Waverley Station in Edinburgh who can guide and communicate using deafblind manual and some basic BSL with people with sensory loss or who are deaf. This is illustrative of the importance of a strategy that enables us to develop relationships with key corporate partners as accessible train travel is vitally important to independence, freedom of movement and choice for deafblind people.

5.6. Individual Giving

Individual donors have reduced over the years due in part to careful implementation of GDPR legislation. New ways to bring on board a range of supporters and donors were being considered prior to lockdown however, our public presence is only now beginning to grow. In the next 5 years we will aim to build our social media presence and followers to bring more people closer to our cause. We will also aim to do more to capitalise on the exposure that some of our public facing activities provide such as our training programme; better using these opportunities to bring on board new supporters and donors.

Future Developments

In the year to come we aim to reshape our Fundraising Department to enable the team to work with Senior Management to build the organisation in long term sustainable ways. This will take the shape of a Business Development function with a focus on growing our services and therefore our reach to support much greater numbers of deafblind people or those at risk of deafblindness whilst also attracting unrestricted funding through our unique and specialist training offer to public services, employers and corporate partners.

Over the next 5 years we will:

1. Continue to build relationships with Trusts and Foundations through delivering well on existing projects and raising awareness of the importance of our mission amongst Trusts and Foundations that are new to us.
2. Increase our public profile through re-branding, getting the most out of social media and where appropriate traditional media and ensuring that our services, literature and resources capitalise on opportunities to bring on new individual supporters or corporate partnerships.
3. Using the analysis from our current method of our free Will service promotion to ascertain whether this produces a return on investment and adjusting our approach to growing legacy income accordingly.
4. Replacing our Community Fundraising function with a business development function that will aim to:
 - Liaise with public services and employers to market and expand our training offers.
 - Work closely with local authority procurement and commissioners and as they develop Health and Social Care Boards to secure further contracted services.
 - Support Service Department colleagues to ensure deafblind people are aware of their rights to funding packages such as how to access self-directed support.
 - Increase our public profile to gather more allies and donors to support our cause.
 - Develop a corporate partnership approach to expand our reach to big organisations that can fundraise to support our work, whilst growing awareness of how they can become more inclusive environments.
 - Promoting and marketing the new re-use approach to the Charity shop through publicity aimed at eliciting higher quality goods and an increased and loyal customer base. In addition, finding new ways to sell previously owned goods.

The Measure of Our Success

Deafblind Scotland has made significant progress since the implementation of the last 5-year strategy. Not least in fundraising to build the Learning and Development Centre on the Field of Dreams. But there is so much more to do and so in the next 5 years our central message will be that we all need to raise our collective sights about what might be possible right across society. By the end of the next 5 years we will be a fifth larger and more impactful having grown by 20% across most areas of our activity. The evidence of our success will be:

- **Increased availability of specialist programmes of support by 20%** for deafblind people and **transition support by 20%** for those at risk of a second sensory loss, who don't live in the 'central belt' through the creation of community hubs and outreach services across the country.
- **Expansion of our existing Guide Communicator services by 20%** ensuring that this workforce are the experts in supporting self-determination and autonomy and maximising the strengths and assets that deafblind people have.
- **Delivery of better care for deafblind people as they age** through a care at home service provided by carers who are knowledgeable about deafblindness and can guide and communicate effectively with the people they support.
- **A broad range of partnerships and networks** that enable us to exponentially extend the reach of support and understanding of the rights deafblind people.
- **Deafblind Scotland is the recognised accredited deafblind Learning and Development Centre with 20%** more training focused on building the competencies of those working with people with a dual sensory loss (Deafblind Manual, Visual Frame and Tactile BSL) alongside enhancing our specialist Guide Communicator training.
- **More inclusive public services, employment and community support networks with 20%** of service evidencing more inclusive practice facilitated through building cross sensory loss literacy but also practical skills.

- **A significant improvement in society's attitudes/behaviour towards deafblind people with 20% of members** expressing a positive change achieved through our campaigns and awareness programmes which will have grown a range of community allies and champions.
- **A shifting of the boundaries on what is possible in the built environment** through adapting our Learning and Development Centre to become the first fully self-navigating environment of its kind with innovative pro-tactile features.
- **The creation of an inclusive sensory friendly Deafblind Campus** on our land designed for and alongside deafblind people.
- **Emergence of deafblind leadership** initiated through the Right to Dream and the Dare to Dream deafblind ambassador programme and with this leadership **deafblind people will have reached out regularly to 20% more deafblind people peer-to-peer** to find new solutions and opportunities that enrich their lives.

Five Years from Now

Woven through this strategy are two central themes. Developing our workforce to ensure that we have staff with the skills and competence to enable deafblind people to live their best life. In parallel the importance of lived experience influence and leadership is recognised. To make this strategy a reality we will need staff who are expert in walking alongside deafblind people but the real insight into the experience of living with deafblindness can only really be provided by people who have walked in those shoes. These insights are where the solutions to making the world more inclusive lie. We need to do all we can to facilitate that voice to emerge. Alongside this we need to ensure that Deafblind Scotland can attract and retain talented staff and to achieve that we need to create a workplace where they feel that they can make a real difference and can flourish as a result. Taking this strategy forward is a partnership between those truly inspiring people that live with deafblindness every day and those exceptional staff members who have chosen to spend their working life trying to ensure that acquiring deafblindness doesn't bring an end to people's hopes and dreams. Our ambitions are high in this strategy and as deafblind leaders have clearly told us we need to enable deafblind people to make autonomous choices and own their own risks which will mean that at times they will stumble. As we grow our workforce and establish professional career pathways it's going to be critical that we don't lose that authentic relationship forged by waking closely alongside another human being. Equally as we innovate and try hard to find new solutions in the words of Theodore Roosevelt there can be 'no effort without error'. We need to accept that at times we will fail and that as an organisation we also need to be willing to 'stumble'. In further words from Roosevelt Deafblind Scotland will need to 'Dare greatly' as to do otherwise won't get us to where we need to be – a society where deafblind people can truly realise their Right to Dream.

How We Developed This Strategy

A central feature of the development of this strategy was the engagement of deafblind people supported by the Dare to Dream Ambassadors. This Dare to Dream group met regularly across 2021 overcoming challenges such as meeting for the first time on zoom. They embraced their leadership role and went that extra mile to reach deafblind people who so often do not have a voice. They also worked closely with the Board of Trustees through the Development Committee and the Land and Training working groups to help produce some of the detail set out within this strategy. In parallel we also worked closely with the whole staff team through workshops with Centre based staff and Guide Communicators

and took full account of their experiences, reflections, and ideas from working in frontline roles. The Board of Trustees took on additional demands by working across the Finance and Resource Committee, Development Committee and working groups to help shape the strategy as it developed. We are therefore confident that this strategy represents the best of our ideas and ambitions and is a consensus view of the road that Deafblind Scotland now wants to travel.

Joining Us

Deafblind people's lives can be filled with loss – loss of a valued role in society, loss of ability to cope with everyday life autonomously and most keenly little opportunity to access new experiences and pleasures, all of which takes a heavy toll on mental health.

Not surprisingly deafblindness can cause profound loneliness as described by Deafblind Scotland member Dorrie as “like living in a cupboard with the door closed”.

By becoming a Deafblind Scotland supporter, together we can open doors and ensure some of the least visible and most isolated members of society can again live a vibrant life full of colour and dreams. There are several ways you can get involved:

- Become a volunteer within our Learning and Development Centre or to support our outreach work
- Leave us a gift in your will – Deafblind Scotland has partnered with Bequeathed and its accredited legal firms who facilitate Will for Good, a national free charity Will scheme. Good for family. Good for friends. Good for charity.
- Become a regular donor
- Run an ‘in aid of Deafblind Scotland Event’
- Raise awareness of our work within your workplace if you work has opportunities for corporate partnerships or would like to purchase our accredited training.
- Sharing our work on social media to challenge stereotypes of what deafblind people can and do achieve and to raise awareness of our cause.

For further information visit www.dbscotland.org.uk/fundraising



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Registered Scottish Charity SC 031167**