



Metropolitan Society for the Blind

MSB STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan was approved by the MSB Council on 14th August 2007.

Summary

'...and to do all this, and do it right, and do it first, before the decade is out – then we must be bold' (JFK Moon Speech, Rice Stadium 1962)

Our vision

A world where people diagnosed with VI have

- all the information and practical help they need to carry on living their lives;
- ongoing social support from friends, family, service providers and their community;
- help to deal with the emotional consequences VI.

Mission/Purpose

- We will seek to ensure that everyone in London with VI over the age of 50 receives the services and support they need to overcome the social, emotional and practical consequences of VI. There will be help for everyone at every stage of the journey from diagnosis onwards.
- We will achieve this in collaboration with government, local communities, service providers other voluntary sector organisations.

We will offer

- Leadership to enable others to work together
- Advice to people with Vi and to organisations in areas where we have specific experience and expertise
- Assistance with information sharing across sectors and geographical areas
- Service delivery in areas of acute need, but also....
- Help with planning, funding and management assistance to others who are better placed than ourselves to provide services.

Our core values:

- Honesty; integrity and transparency in everything we do
- Making effective use of our resources
- Putting people first – listening and responding
- Learning and changing as an organisation but staying focussed

Strategic objectives

We have set four objectives:

- To develop and implement, in partnership with other organisations, a strategic plan for the provision of VI services across London.
- To deliver services which can make a distinctive and cost effective contribution to meeting the needs of people with VI in London
- To provide funding, advice and assistance to local community groups which enable people with VI to engage in social activities with sighted and or visually impaired peers.
- To develop all our resources and systems, within agreed budgetary limits, so that MSB is equipped to deliver these objectives.

These goals are closely inter-related. The strategy will describe what services exist and what new services are needed. It will offer a framework to guide decision making about how existing services can be improved, what new services may be needed, and the agencies or organisations (including MSB) which are best equipped to deliver them. It will highlight the extent to which opportunities exist for community based social activities, particularly for people with VI who are over the age of 50. It will identify how services can work together so that the person with visual impairment receives properly co-ordinated (joined-up) care, information, advice, assistance and support in the right place and at the right time. If MSB wishes to take a lead role in developing and implementing the strategy, it will need to review, and possibly extend services and office based functions.

Links with the Vision Strategy,

A UK Vision Strategy, is already being discussed under the auspices of Vision20:20 UK and with the support of RNIB, GDBA ,Action for Blind People and the National Association of Local Voluntary Societies for Visually Impaired people, of which MSB is a member. The development of a London Strategy at this time will complement and strengthen the UK strategy and initial discussions with the Chief Executive of Vision 20:20 indicate that work on a London strategy will be welcomed.

The next section describes some of the component elements or 'tasks' within each of the four strategic objectives.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1 Develop and Implement a Strategic Plan for VI Services in London

The development of the strategy will need leadership and co-ordination. MSB is well placed to act as a catalyst for change for the following reasons:

- It is known, trusted and respected by other voluntary organisations and by statutory sector providers
- It has the financial capacity to undertake a wider role

- Its already provides services in 12 inner London Boroughs and the City of London and its constitution empowers it to operate across Greater London. No other 'local' society has a similar remit.
- It is a well established member of the London Visual Impairment Forum (LVIF) and has been an active member of the 'Strategy Group' for a number of years. Within the LVIF there already exist the networks, trust and shared knowledge needed for strategic planning.
- A strategic development plan for VI services in London will enable MSB to undertake its own service delivery functions in ways which bring maximum benefit to service users.

Tasks

- Gain the support of the LVIF for a strategic approach to planning and delivering services across London. (MSB is working with other members of the Strategy Group to review and update its remit; we are in the process of seeking funding to support work on a strategic plan for VI services in London)
- Carry out a survey of all services for people with VI – including those over 50. This should include services which focus on eye care; those which provide practical assistance, for example, with employment or mobility training; and those which offer social and emotional support. (RNIB is already carrying out a similar exercise and the LVIF will now be more closely involved.)
- Organise events which will:
 - feedback the findings of the survey and validate the information collected by consulting with local service users and stakeholders;
 - provide an opportunity for representatives from different sectors to meet and exchange views;
 - identify where gaps exist and priorities for new or improved service provision;
 - share knowledge of innovations in service delivery across London boroughs; raise awareness about VI;
 - enlist support for a strategic approach to service development.
- Create web site for sharing information. This will:
 - provide information (accessible to professionals and service users) on all VI services across London;
 - display information on innovation and good practice; publicise the targets for developing improved services and provide regular updates on progress towards meeting these targets;
 - raise awareness about visual impairment; support communication among all service providers.
- Gain support from other potential partners, stakeholders or supporters including: individual local authorities; London Councils; Greater London Authority; Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities; Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) the Greater London Fund for the Blind; the Clothworkers' Foundation.
- Develop a media and public awareness campaign. This will set out: the evidence for change; key messages; media contacts and opportunities; target audiences; timescales; outcomes.

Objective 2 Develop VI Services for Older People

Our aim is to ensure that everyone over the age of 50 who embarks on a journey of adjustment to VI receives appropriate information, assistance and emotional/social support.

Tasks

In collaboration with our partners, we will ensure that appropriate and effective services are available in every inner London borough (see objective 1). These services are likely to include:

- Home visitors with an enhanced role: befriending; promoting access to local eye care services, (summarised below); linking people in to community networks for social/emotional support (Objective 3)
- Ways of raising public awareness about preventable forms of visual impairment; reducing the incidence of visual impairment
- Information and liaison workers (in hospitals and eye clinics) offering information, advice, general support and links into other services to anyone newly diagnosed with visual impairment.
- Low vision advice and rehabilitation services
- Resource centres offering low vision aids and adaptations
- Welfare rights advice for those in straightened financial circumstances
- Specialised counselling for people experiencing acute emotional distress associated with their visual impairment
- Advocacy to assist anyone with visual impairment who seeks help to assert their rights as a member of the community, for example, with housing, healthcare, transport, public utilities or professional services.
- Local groups for peer support and social activities (see below)

Objective 3 Help communities to provide social opportunities for older people with VI

The success of any single local service in meeting social care needs is dependent upon the network of formal and informal supports of which it is a part. For example, the success of the MSB visiting service will be dependent upon the availability of good statutory services (for example, GP surgeries; rehabilitation officers; eye clinics; local libraries which stock talking books and DVDs with audio transcription) services provide by voluntary organisations (for example, hospital information and liaison; low vision; advocacy; social activities organised by Help the Aged etc) and less formally constituted community groups and networks (such as clubs, pub 'regulars' neighbours, and friends).

Tasks

- Raising awareness about the consequences of visual impairment and aging among local community groups. Working with local people and local groups to identify opportunities to involve people with visual impairment in formal and informal social activities.
- Providing grants for community groups, in partnership with the Clothworkers' Foundation or another funding agency

- Providing advice and assistance to local groups, for example, in preparing grant applications.
- Working in partnership with local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to create new opportunities for older visually impaired people to enjoy a range of social activities.

Objective 4 Increase the Operational Capacity of MSB

'Operational capacity' refers to the combination of resources available for deployment at any given moment in time to meet operational objectives.

To achieve the objectives set out above, we will need to increase operational capacity in a number of areas.

Tasks

- Increase the amount of time the Chief Executive can commit to strategic development, managing change and working with partners. This will involve increased delegation, and ongoing training and support to enable all members of staff to undertake the full range of tasks and functions within the ambit of their existing job descriptions.
- Identify additional roles and areas work which may not easily be undertaken by existing members of staff. Examples include: extending the hospital information and liaison service; liaising with LVIF members; working with partners to map services in each borough; working with other organisations to improve co-ordination among existing services or developing new services; maintaining a web site; organising events. Seek Council approval for the appointment of new members of staff within agreed budget constraints.
- Improving the use of office space to ensure that all parts are fully utilised. This is likely to involve more intensive use of the meeting room and making alternative arrangements for Council meetings.

Approved by Council 14 8 07

GRANTS PAGE

MSB GRANTS TO BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PEOPLE GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS & OFFICIALS

General Principles

1. The MSB aims to encourage, support and help blind and partially sighted people to live full and independent lives.
2. Charity law states that statutory provision should never be subsidised by charitable funds.
3. Maximum grant size varies depending on the purpose of the grant but will not normally exceed £500
4. Applicants must be permanently resident in one of the 12 inner London boroughs or in the City of London.
5. All requests must be made on our Application for a Grant form. The form must be completed and submitted by a responsible official of either Local Government, an appropriate local voluntary organisation or any other responsible body (please contact us first if there are any concerns about eligibility).

Operational Guidelines

1. Application should first have been made to the Social Fund for a Community Care Grant, whenever eligibility exists.
2. A check should be made to ensure, as far as possible, that the applicant is receiving all the statutory benefits to which he/she is entitled.
3. All parts of the application form **must** be completed. A full supporting letter, which explains the background to the request and how the applicant will benefit from the goods or services requested, will assist us in making a decision.
4. When MSB is one of a number of organisations being applied to, we may pledge our contribution (rather than make an immediate award) until the remainder of the sum needed has been raised.
5. Grants for holidays are usually made conditional upon the applicant arranging holiday cancellation insurance prior to travel (and we may ask to be provided with a copy of the certificate of insurance).
6. When awarding grants towards the cost of furniture, white goods and/or other household items, MSB will, where practicable, encourage the applicant to make purchases at reputable recycling centres (to make best possible use of available funds).
7. The MSB does **not** award for the following purposes, except in exceptional circumstances:-
 - Payment of outstanding debts.

- Holidays outside the U.K, although help with associated costs could be considered.
- Payment of council tax/rent arrears - this is the responsibility of the local authority to resolve.
- Educational grants - these are the responsibility of others although help with associated costs could be considered.

8. Payment arrangements:

Wherever possible, the MSB will issue a cheque payable to the supplier of the goods or services being provided, rather than issue it payable to the grant recipient.

To obtain a grant application form contact the MSB Administrator