



# **A Vision for 2020 and beyond**

# **British Blind Sport's Strategic Plan 2018 onwards**

## THE 2020 VISION

This document aims to demonstrate clearly the British Blind Sport strategic plan for 2018 onwards.

It sets out what our aims are, how we intend achieving them, and how we will conduct ourselves and our business to the purpose of improving blind and partially sight people's lives through sport and physical activity in the UK.

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# 1. Introduction

In addition to reviewing our 2013-2017 strategic plan, British Blind Sport has researched government recommendations, the Sport England 'Towards an Active Nation' strategy and consulted with key stakeholders including our members, the BBS board, specialist sport section representatives, staff and volunteers and key partner organisations including national governing bodies of sport, disabled people organisations and organisations that are representative or have an affinity to the wider visually impaired (VI) community.

BBS has considered where we are, what we have learnt over the most recent strategic period (2013 -17), what the needs are, demands and motivations of the VI community going forward, what the current sporting landscape is, and what BBS can do to ensure we maximise opportunity to grow participation and promote inclusivity for visually impaired children and adults across each segment of the sporting environment.

We have actively consulted;

- Representatives from our membership
- Young visually impaired people
- VI people who currently do not participate in sport or physical activity (inactive people)
- PE and support teachers of visually impaired people in specialist and mainstream schools
- Committee chairs and representatives from our specialist sport sections

We have engaged with third sector partners to discuss their future plans for sport, recreation and leisure activities, as well as those that represent sport such as national governing bodies and county sports partnerships to see how we can support one another to deliver quality sporting opportunities.

We have utilised our own data, Sport England and EFDS's research data, and that of key partners in the sector such as RNIB and Guide Dogs UK. We have held sessions with staff and reviewed our services, achievements and learnings with the BBS board.

## **2. Who We Are**

British Blind Sport is a national registered charity (No: 1168093) that was set up in 1975. BBS was established as a company limited by guarantee on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 (No: 10009918). It is a membership organisation made up from individuals and affiliated sports clubs that are committed to supporting visually impaired people in the sporting and recreational environment.

Our membership consists of both children and adults, most of whom (approx. 96%) are living with sight loss. Our remaining membership is made up from volunteers and supporters of the organisation.

As the National Disability Sport Organisation that represents visually impaired people across the UK, we offer a number of core services. These include:

- delivering around 80 sporting events per annum that are open to all our membership including competitions, tournaments and training days;
- delivering a programme of Have a Go days across the UK which are free or at a low cost to attend and open to visually impaired people and their families;
- working with national governing bodies of sport to create and distribute bespoke educational learning tools to raise awareness and promote a high quality and confident workforce that supports visually impaired people;
- providing a 'free to use' information and advocacy service to signpost visually impaired people that are new to sport

into clubs and activities within their local area and support visually impaired people already in sport to encourage them to develop and maintain a sporting habit for life.

- providing a sight classification service to enable visually impaired people to participate in sport in a fair and transparent way.

## **3. What We Know**

### **The Facts**

#### **Visual Impairment**

1. There are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss. This figure includes around 360,000 people registered as blind or partially sighted in the UK, who have severe and irreversible sight loss.
2. There are 29,000 blind and partially sighted 0-18 year olds living in the UK. As many as half of these children and young people may have other disabilities.
3. There is a link between sight loss and reduced wellbeing.
4. Over one third of older people with sight loss are also living with depression.
5. The number of people in the UK with sight loss is set to increase in line with population ageing: by 2050 the number of people with sight loss in the UK could be nearly four million.
6. Nearly half of blind and partially sighted people feel 'moderately' or 'completely' cut off from people and things around them.
7. One in five people aged 75 and over in the UK are living with sight loss.

### **Sport and the Visually Impaired**

1. According to the Sport England Active People (APS 10 – 2015/16) visually impaired people have the second lowest participation rates of all impairment groups;
  - a. 4.5% take part in sport 3x30 (minutes) a week
  - b. 12.9% take part in sport once a week
  - c. 16.2% take part in sport once a month

BBS's own research indicates that visually impaired people see transport, cost and lack of understanding on the behalf of coaches, teachers and gym staff, as key barriers to them participating in sport.

### **Participation in Sport for the Visually Impaired**

Sport generates inspiration, passion and excitement for all types of people regardless of age, gender or background. It challenges participants and brings a sense of purpose. In addition, it can help a visually impaired person to develop spatial awareness, better orientation and higher fitness levels which can, in turn, benefit their everyday life.

Social inclusion and making new friends is key to a visually impaired person, as is often the nature of the impairment, he/she can feel 'cut off' or isolated. Participation in sport can make the difference between feeling lonely and being part of a group or team.

## **4. What We've Learnt (2013 – 2017)**

In 2013, British Blind Sport launched a new strategy that encouraged the organisation to have a more outward looking approach. Prior to 2013, BBS had been very successful in supporting its core five sport sections (Acoustic Shooting, Archery, Cricket, Partially Sighted Football and Tenpin Bowling). However, the Board and Executive staff realised that to have an increased and more sustainable impact on sport for those living with sight loss, as an organisation, we needed to look beyond our sport section event delivery programme.

Within the new strategy, BBS has extended its core objectives to include education, research and collaboration with other sport delivery partners.

Our key learnings from our new approach include;

- **Research is crucial and needs to be at the heart of what we do**
  - Our research programme has helped the organisation to fully understanding the landscape of sport.
  - Commissioning research on the 'Barriers of Participation' has helped us and many of our partner organisations to recognise the wants and needs of visually impaired people wanting to access sport and physical activity.
  - Having the opportunity to focus on groups and demographics (*BBS commissioned a piece of research in 2016 in partnership with Women in Sport to gain a greater understanding of the motivations of visually impaired women wanting to access sport*) enables BBS to confidently share data with interested parties, but more importantly, really understand groups within our core market.
  - Sharing our research with partners enables them to optimise their services and provision for VI people wanting to access sport and recreational activities.
  
- **Working in partnership is key to success**
  - By working with a host of like-minded organisations, we have immediately been able to access a wider audience.
  - Shared objectives with partners have enabled more resources and increased communication channels *e.g. BBS embarked on a training programme with Riding for the Disabled to enhance the skills of their coaches to support a visually impaired rider. Over 300 volunteers have been supported.*



- We have recognised that there is a much greater prospect of sustainability when delivering educational resources and programmes with partners.
  - Initially, at the start of 2013, BBS focused on greater collaboration with organisations within the sport sector e.g. national governing bodies and county sports partnerships. It became apparent that there is value in working with sport providers. However, our core market can be better reached through collaboration with disabled people organisations such as the RNIB and Visionary.
  - Throughout the most recent period, BBS has acted as a conduit, connecting sporting organisations with disabled people user-led organisations, as we recognise the importance of enabling others to achieve together, ensuring we all maximise the opportunity for more visually impaired people to be able to participate in a sport or physical activity of their choice.
- Volunteering
    - BBS has been, and remains, very reliant on its volunteer workforce within our sport sections.
    - To ensure BBS meets its obligations to its members, particularly around safeguarding, health and safety, and finance, we have introduced customised training for our staff and volunteers which is supported by more robust policies.
    - We have learnt to engage more with our volunteer workforce as they, more than most, have great insight into the wants and needs of visually impaired people in sport. The feedback from our volunteers alongside research conducted, focus group work and membership questionnaires, have helped shape our strategic direction for 2018 and beyond.
    - Setting up VI forums across England has enabled BBS to work with organisations and volunteers at a local level. Taking pride in their own area and being able to see tangible results is rewarding for both the volunteer and participants involved.

These forums will continue to contribute towards, and shape, sustainable opportunities for visually impaired people

## 5. A Vision for 2020 and beyond

This is an ambitious strategy. Our experience has taught us that there are no quick fixes to changing perceptions and opportunities for visually impaired people in sport. However, by continuing to develop partnerships that achieve short-term objectives, underpinned by sustainable long-term plans, means we can maximise opportunities and capacity for all.

Our intention is not to be led by the industry's four year cycle. We intend to review our strategy every year, but have the vision to lay the foundations over the next two years, so that we are keenly placed to keep delivering and growing beyond 2020, so that sport and physical activity for all visually impaired people is a realistic proposition. We want this strategy to be a shared vision between our members, partners, volunteers and the wider VI community. We are keen that our vision to create a '*Visible Difference Through Sport*' is embraced by all, and that others will support our ambitious plan to support VI children and adults in sport.

This document has been published in the hope that our vision is shared by all.

Considering what we have learnt, what we know, and what our community is asking for, our strategy for 2018 and beyond is;

**Our Vision** – Maintain our vision to create '*A Visible Difference Through Sport*' so that more blind and partially sighted people can participate in, and enjoy, quality sport and physical activity experiences

**Our Mission** – *To improve the quality of lives of blind and partially sighted people through sport and physical activity.*

**Our Values** – BBS aspire to be *Inspiring, Supportive, Knowledgeable, Collaborative and Respectful* in all that we do

How we conduct ourselves – With clear focus and integrity  
Responsibly  
With the wants and needs of VI people  
at the core of all we do

**Our Aims**

- To **Promote Inclusivity** across the sporting community for VI people
- To **Share Insight** in a clear and useable format with both the sport and VI sector
- To continue to **Grow Participation** and **Develop New Opportunities** in sport and physical activity for VI people
- To **Enable, Encourage** and **Educate** deliverers of sport as to the needs of VI athletes, from grassroots opportunities, up to Paralympic standard

### **Our Aspirations**

BBS wants to support visually impaired people at every touch point of their sporting journey - from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood; recognising the challenges and opportunities at every step of the journey, and supporting not only the VI person, but the people and services around them.

BBS wants to tackle inactivity amongst the VI community by identifying the barriers to participation, and working with our partners to create cost effective and workable solutions.

BBS want all leisure centres to be fully accessible to visually impaired people.

BBS wants to ensure that young children are given access to sport and physical activity from as early an age as possible to maximise their physical development and enjoyment.

BBS wants to improve perceptions about visually impaired people and their abilities within the sport sector.

BBS wants all visually impaired children to be able to participate in sport regardless of whether they attend a mainstream or special school.

BBS wants PE teachers to understand how to incorporate a visually impaired child or young person into their sessions, so that they can enjoy the experience of sport in childhood and reach their full sporting potential.

BBS wants a choice of accessible sports clubs and leisure facilities in every local area, where visually impaired people are welcomed and supported.

BBS wants the 'sporting experience from childhood to adulthood' to be supportive, positive, accessible, and inclusive for visually impaired people.

BBS wants visually impaired people to have the chance to receive high quality coaching and instruction across every level of involvement in sport.

BBS wants visually impaired people to become involved with their chosen sport at all levels including coaching and instruction.

BBS wants visually impaired people to have access to a wide range of sporting and physical activity opportunities.

BBS wants visually impaired people to have the chance to participate in sport and physical activity regardless of age so that they can maintain a healthy and active life.

BBS wants advice, support and guidance to be available and accessible to families and carers of visually impaired children and young people.

BBS wants all information and resources relating to sport, and accessing sport, to be clear, up to date, and accessible, for all visually impaired people, coaches, parents and teachers.

BBS wants to see the achievements of visually impaired athletes on the local, national and international stage to be positively recognised and empowering.

BBS wants visually impaired people to have an active role in shaping sport in their local area.

BBS wants to celebrate the work of our volunteers and provide training support when needed.

BBS wants to provide new opportunities for volunteering that enable visually impaired people to be empowered to grow sport in their area.

BBS wants to encourage more opportunities available for visually impaired people to work in the field of sport – both voluntary and in a paid capacity.

**We recognise that we have ambitious and far-reaching aspirations. To achieve these, we will work in collaboration with our partners and funders to achieve our goals.**

## **6. Our Commitments**

British Blind Sport acknowledges that the organisation has changed over the past few years and is now much better placed than we have ever been to serve the VI community. To realise our vision completely, we recognise that we are on a continuous improvement journey, and as such, strive to invest in the organisation, and its people, to stay on a path of growth and development to achieve our goals.

### **People**

#### **Staff**

British Blind Sport acknowledges success lies in having a professional, positive, and motivated workforce. As an organisation, we breed a culture of integrity and teamwork. To allow our staff to excel within their individual roles, we shall be a fair employer and support our staff.

Objectives
Identify training needs – both collectively and for the individual, and respond with structured training opportunities to develop each person’s full potential
To maintain an employee handbook to ensure that everyone fully understands the needs of the organisation and how the organisation intends to support them
Support regular team meetings to ensure that staff have a ‘voice’ as to how the organisation conducts itself
Provide staff with the tools to do their job effectively
Breed a culture of being able to support one another and respect each person’s opinion
Provide a comprehensive induction to all new staff members to demonstrate the ethos and culture of the organisation
To encourage staff to explore self-development outside of formal training, such as secondments and volunteer trustee roles within the sport sector

## Trustees

Trustees remain the backbone of any charity and as such, BBS ensures that we recruit people with the right level of knowledge, skill and experience that can effectively support and grow the organisation.

BBS is committed to providing information, tools and the necessary training for all board members to be able to deliver their roles effectively.

Objectives
Deliver on a robust recruitment procedure and procedures to ensure fair and transparent processes of selection to the board
Ensure that we encourage a diverse board that reflects our community and that there is a fair representation of men and women on the board
To ensure that there is representation from the BBS membership on the board

Ensure that all members of the BBS board adhere to a trustee code of conduct
Ensure that the skill set of the board meets the needs of the organisation
Provide ongoing training to the board as and when necessary
To provide a trustee introductory pack to ensure that everyone fully understands the needs of BBS and their role and responsibilities within the organisation
Include trustees in volunteer opportunities at BBS events to enable more interaction with our stakeholders

## Members

British Blind Sport has seen an increase in membership year on year. We acknowledge our membership is made up of people who are interested in participating in sport, or who are already participating in a sport of their choice. We are committed to providing our membership with meaningful, positive experiences in sport and physical activity to help them continue to enjoy an active lifestyle.

Objective
To provide a choice of events, activities and sporting opportunities for members to enjoy
To continue to provide relevant and consistent communication channels (including advances in technology) that can aid VI people to feel part of something
Encourage members to participate within specialist sport section discussions and committee meetings, in order that their thoughts and opinions be heard
Engage with members via regular surveys to ensure that BBS are listening to our membership
To act upon survey results that will enhance our membership programme
Support key members of the BBS sport committees through an annual conference and training event
Ensure that we provide an affordable membership with benefits relevant to participation in sport and physical activity
Ask members to sign up to the member's code of conduct to enable fair play and professionalism at BBS events

## Volunteers

Around 5.5 million people volunteer in sport across the UK. Volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of our organisation with over 100 people volunteering for BBS across each year. Our volunteers include trustees, guide runners, sport section members, coaches, event staff, support staff and fundraisers. We will continue to support, maintain and motivate this 'workforce' to ensure that both they and others are able to enjoy sporting opportunities.

In addition to people that volunteer for British Blind Sport, insight tells us that there are small numbers of visually impaired people volunteering in sport. In recognition of our aspiration to see more VI people working within sport, we intend to include objectives to enhance opportunities beyond BBS.

Objective
Work with volunteers to provide interesting, relevant and valuable opportunities for them
Provide training to ensure that volunteers feel confident to deliver on the work that they are participating in
Provide specific safeguarding training to protect both VI people and the volunteer
Provide a volunteer handbook to ensure that everyone fully understands the needs of the organisation and how the organisation intends to support them
Develop more coaches and better coaching opportunities for the VI community
Encourage our partner organisations to advertise both paid and unpaid roles to the VI community to increase opportunities to work within sport
Encourage NGBs to provide pathways that are inclusive for VI people to participant and achieve coaching status
To enable volunteers to have an influence in shaping local provision of sport for VI people
Gain insight from our volunteer workforce so that we can remain committed to improving experiences for all



## Young People

We take the future of VI sport seriously. As such, it is important to enable young visually impaired people to feel included and empowered on decisions that affect them now and in the future. We are keen to enable young VI people to work with organisations to help them shape the future of inclusive sport.

Objective
Empower more young VI people to be heard by sports providers
Provide leadership skills to young VI people
Provide a platform for young VI people to share their ideas and opinions on sport
Develop a leadership mentoring scheme for young VI people to lead by example to encourage more young VI people to participate in sport
To extend and grow the First Steps pilot into a robust national programme for 3 - 11 year olds
Provide more opportunities for young people to trial different sports with clear pathways into continuation of sport
Provide advocacy and advice to parents to assist the breakdown of misconceptions and concerns that may prevent them from allowing their child to participate in sport and physical activity

## Older People

We acknowledge that the UK has an ageing population. Although it can affect anyone at any time, losing our sight becomes increasingly likely as we get older. Recognising that 1 in 5 people living with sight loss are aged 75 years and older, our intention is to tailor services and programmes that meet the needs of older people.

Objective
Connect with organisations that represent older people e.g. Age UK
Recognise appropriate communication methods to engage with the older VI community
Provide positive case studies to inspire older people

Work with partners to develop inclusive programmes and activities that are suitable for older people e.g. Walking for Health, yoga

## Women and Girls

BBS commissioned a piece of work alongside Women in Sport to gain a better understanding of the needs and wants, as well as the barriers, facing VI women in sport. Armed with the insight we gained, we are committed to providing support for VI women and girls, so they have more positive experiences and increased opportunity to take up sport and physical activity.

### Objective

Expand our educational work with partners and organisations to demonstrate how sport empowers and delivers women's core values

Champion VI women and girls to share stories about their experiences of sport and physical activity

Develop communication that appeals to VI women that is both timely and accessible through relevant channels

Encourage VI women to volunteer in sport either locally, through BBS events, or as members of our sport section committees

## Governance

Over the past four years, BBS has shown a strong commitment to robust governance. In line with Sport England's new Code for Sport Governance, we pledge to continue to be accountable, transparent, and act with financial integrity. Recognising we are on a continuous improvement journey, BBS will

- Endeavour to ensure when possible, that the board is made up of at least 30% female members.
- Endeavour to include a diverse make up of board membership including (but not limited to) representing BME groups, a wide age group and disabled people.
- Hold quarterly meetings of the Board

- Minute all board and sub-committee meetings (e.g. HR group)
- Hold an Annual General Meeting to which all members are invited
- Annually review our constitution and strategic plan
- Conduct an annual board effectiveness and skill set review
- Commit to filling any known or recognised gaps within the board structure
- Ensure that Board members always comply with a Trustee Code of Conduct at all times

## **Policies**

BBS is committed to underpin our work with clear policies and procedures. To build upon our work over the past four years, we continue to commit to

- A detailed matrix of our policies including review dates and actions
- Ensuring that key policies including child protection, safeguarding adults, finance and health and safety are available online
- Supporting the lead safeguarding officer within the organisation whose responsibility includes an operational plan that underpins the child protection and safeguarding adults' policies.

## **Partnerships**

Partnerships are key to the success of extending delivery and opportunity for visually impaired people in sport and physical activity. British Blind Sport concedes that although we have a committed workforce (paid and unpaid) we remain a small organisation covering the whole of Great Britain and as such, collaboration is key to increasing opportunity and gaining a wider reach.

We acknowledge that our work can enable partners to deliver sport and physical activity either alongside us, or with our support, to attain our objectives as well as their own.

We remain committed to working with the sport sector, including national governing bodies of sport, home nation federations such as EFDS, county sports partnerships and local clubs.

In addition, we will focus on more work with disabled people organisations that represent visually impaired people. Our evaluation of the most recent strategic period has shown us that working directly with the community that we serve, increases awareness and impact across the whole VI community.

Our objective is to collaborate with partners that are keen to identify sport and physical activity as a vehicle to enhance the quality of life for visually impaired people. We will work together on programmes and projects that increase opportunities for children and adults to assist each person's sporting journey – through encouragement, education and enabling.

## **Next Steps**

1. The successful implementation of this strategy plan across all aspects of our organisation.
2. Detailed action plans drawn from our strategic objectives which are specific to staff, board and sport section members.
3. The development of a diverse fundraising strategy to work in parallel with this strategic plan to continue to support the long term stability of the organisation.
4. The sharing of this plan with our partners to influence and contribute to their own VI sport specific plans for the future.
5. Setting formal plans and agreements with identified collaborative partners which meets our objectives as well as their own.