



# A Time to Move Forward

## Our Strategic Plan 2021-2026





## Our Vision

A good life for everyone in Scotland who lives with bipolar disorder.



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\*Please note: Many images featured were taken before the Coronavirus pandemic



## Introduction

Bipolar Scotland is publishing this Strategic Plan during the Covid-19 pandemic. Clearly the past year has been a difficult one for everyone, and has been especially hard for many people living with bipolar disorder. But we believe it is now *A Time to Move Forward*.

We have developed this Plan looking to the future. It is a document that will enable us to support our members through the initial post pandemic period, but also to build and grow as an organisation and to expand the scope and range of our work over the next five years. We believe we are a successful charity - but we can always do more and do it better.

We started our planning process by looking back to what we had achieved during our previous Development Plan, which covered the period 2017 to 2020. We accomplished much of what we had set out to do, with some notable successes, but in other areas we were not able to achieve all we would have liked. And some actions that were not completed are still relevant, so will be continued into the period of our new Strategic Plan.

The extensive consultation process that we had planned for 2020 fell foul of the lockdown restrictions. Instead, we carried out online meetings, sent questionnaires to all members by e-mail and by post, asked for comments through our social media channels and sought input from our self-help groups. Over 100 people gave us their ideas on what our future strategic priorities and key activities should be.

Our Board of Directors then held a strategy session, discussing this input in detail and developing the framework for our new Strategic Plan. After several drafts, the final document was agreed by the Board on 16 February 2021.

This Strategic Plan will be delivered through annual business plans, allowing us flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Our mission will guide us as we work to our new strategic priorities, operating at all times in accordance with our values.

**We have set an ambitious vision. We believe that everyone in Scotland who lives with bipolar should be able to enjoy a good quality of life.**

**We commit to working towards realising this vision over the next five years.**

## Our Strategic Plan: A summary

### Our Vision

**A good life for everyone in Scotland who lives with bipolar.**

### Our Mission

**We will inspire our members to improve their quality of life and will increase public awareness of bipolar.**

### Our Values

- Member led
- Advocates of peer support
- Collaborative
- Focused on equality
- Rights based

### ••• Our strategic priorities

- To empower and support
  - To influence and campaign
  - To grow and improve

## Who we are

We are Scotland's national charity for people who live with bipolar.

Bipolar Scotland was established on 8th December 1992 as Manic Depression Fellowship Scotland. We are a company limited by guarantee and an OSCR registered Scottish Charity. We became Bipolar Scotland in 2010.

The organisation is peer led by those with lived experience, carers and supporters. Our Board of Directors, elected by members at each Annual General Meeting, is responsible for the governance of the organisation and directs the work of our staff team, which is responsible for operational delivery. In this way progress towards our strategic priorities can be monitored and measured.

## What we do

We've almost 30 years of experience supporting those who live with bipolar.

We have extensive experience of minimising the impact of bipolar through, for example, our self-help groups and self-management training. In 2020 we introduced a Peer Support Initiative as another way of empowering people to improve their quality of life.

We currently have 400 members and in 2020 we supported over 2,500 unique individuals. This has had a significant impact as people realise they are not alone. Through sharing of experiences, an individual's understanding of how bipolar affects them and how they can improve their lives is achieved.

## Equalities

We are committed to promoting equality and value the diversity of everyone we work with. But we want to go beyond simply avoiding discrimination.

Bipolar disorder can affect anyone and so we want to understand the differing needs of Scotland's many distinct cultures and communities. We want to tackle any barriers that may make our work less accessible to any particular group or community. We want to ensure that everything we do is truly open to all.

In order to develop a comprehensive Equalities Action Plan we will first seek expert advice. We recognise that we have a great deal to learn and we will strive to understand how best to translate our commitment to equality into actions.

## Our strategic framework

We set out to develop a strategic framework that would summarise our new approach, and considered a number of different ways to express this. Ultimately we have adopted the structure laid out below, which gives context to our individual activities.

### Vision

Our vision sets out what we want to achieve:

**A good life for everyone in Scotland who lives with bipolar.**

### Values

Our values are the qualities that we bring to our work as an organisation. Everything we plan and deliver is underpinned by our values. We are:

- ◇ **Member led**  
We work for our members, as directed by our members
- ◇ **Advocates of peer support**  
We assist each other, based on our shared lived experience
- ◇ **Focused on equality**  
We ensure our activities are open to all and designed to meet everyone's needs
- ◇ **Rights based**  
We aim to enhance, protect and improve access to rights
- ◇ **Collaborative**  
We co-operate with others to achieve our vision

### Mission

Our mission describes how we will work towards this vision:

**We will inspire our members to improve their quality of life and will increase public awareness of bipolar.**

## Our strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities are the three key areas we will concentrate on in order to carry out our mission. These were agreed based on responses to our consultation and the priorities that our members expressed:

- 'To empower and support'**
- 'To influence and campaign'**
- 'To grow and improve'**



## Priority 1: 'To empower and support'

We believe that living with bipolar makes people experts in their own experience. We therefore see our role as one of enabling and assisting by providing access to the knowledge, information and training that each person needs to manage their own recovery.

Our main activities will include:



### Self-help groups

Our groups bring together individuals with bipolar and those who support them to form a community of individuals to promote self-management and sustain key life relationships. Facilitators will be trained and supported and new groups will be scoped and started according to need, whether geographic or demographic such as Young Persons' group, Carers' group.

**"These are undoubtedly the beating heart of Bipolar Scotland. They connect people with similar issues and prevent the isolation that can so often be felt. They are invaluable and should be a priority moving forward."**



### Self-management training

Our Self Management Training has been reviewed and updated, and continues to be very popular. Peer-led facilitation will keep training content and delivery current and relevant. We will review where specific training can be developed for different demographics or communities.

**"It was straightforward talking and refreshing to hear and share personal experiences with other participants which was so educational and a great learning environment to be participating in; a new lease of life had come my way."**



### Peer Support Initiative

Bringing our peer values to life, we will work alongside people to help achieve their own personal recovery. We will inspire people to feel energised and informed to make changes that will positively impact their lives.

**"It is such a unique way of helping people with bipolar, the support worker "knows where it's at" - there is no substitute for talking to someone who knows the obstacles you face."**

### Publications

We recognise the importance of knowledge and will produce information, reports and papers to provide support to members and increase awareness of Bipolar Scotland.

### On the Level

Our magazine will be published quarterly, sent to all members and made available in digital format on our website. It will provide a mix of high quality information and members' stories and contributions.

### Info/advice service (phone/website/messenger)

We know people appreciate someone responding to their calls for help or advice. Our staff and volunteers will answer calls, respond to messages and anticipate potential issues via a regularly updated website. In response to calls for help and information we will make sure anyone reaching out to us is assisted by someone who can provide support and advice.

**"Thank you, thank you, thank you! I knew I was right to come to you first! Thank you for your help and assistance!"**

### Development of new areas

Through our consultation we have identified a number of areas where new activities are required and these will be implemented as resources allow. We will consider whether we should develop these ourselves, connect with existing services or develop new activities in partnership with other organisations. Key suggestions included inclusion and equalities, suicide awareness and prevention, carer support and physical health.





## Priority 2: 'To influence and campaign'

Our members identified awareness raising as a priority during the consultation process. Evidence shows that mental health stigma is reducing, but remains significant around bipolar disorder, which is a barrier to achieving our vision. We will work to raise awareness, to change public perceptions and to erode stigma. We will also campaign on key issues that affect our members' lives.

Our main activities will include:

### Media interviews and articles

Increasing our presence in the media will have a positive effect on public perceptions of bipolar. Writing and publishing articles will further enhance our position. Training our members to tell their stories publicly and effectively empowers the individual and the organisation.



### Campaigns

We will expand our communications presence and deliver targeted campaigns that will promote our members' interests. We will organise specific programmes around particular dates, eg Bipolar Awareness Week, Mental Health Week, World Bipolar Day and World Mental Health Day.



### Digital Presence (website / social media)

We will focus on improving our website and expanding our presence and reach across existing and new social media platforms.

### Events

Organising events will raise our profile externally and increase our influence. We will run events jointly with our partners, including other charities and academics as appropriate.

### Reports

We will produce and publish reports to highlight our work and to publicise particular activities or events using a variety of media. We will use our social media channels to promote and publicise relevant research, articles, conferences, etc.

### Influencing (government, research, reviews and strategies)

We will work with other organisations to have the strongest voice possible and will ensure our members' interests are represented at all levels.





### Priority 3: 'To grow and improve'

We know that delivering on our ambitious vision will require us to become more effective and efficient in everything we do. As we grow, we will require to expand our skills and to develop and implement many new policies and procedures. Successfully meeting this challenge will allow us to deliver the many new activities in this plan effectively.

Our main activities will include:

#### Train and develop our board

Our board are volunteers who invest their time and energy into governing the organisation. We will ensure they are equipped to give of their best in the interests of Bipolar Scotland, with the skills and knowledge that their role demands. This will lead to better governance and improved outcomes for the organisation.

#### Staffing structure

Our staff are responsible for delivering the services and projects that are set out in this plan. We will establish a staffing structure best equipped to achieve this within the resources at our disposal, invest in our staff and will continue to review as the organisation grows.

#### Investment of financial resources

We will seek expert advice to ensure that all moneys not required for immediate use are invested in line with our Investment Policy and will achieve the best return for the organisation.



We will monitor and steward our financial investments in order to achieve long term financial stability for the organisation.

#### Review and monitor policies

We will periodically review all of our existing policies to ensure they are up to date and in line with best practice. We will develop new policies required as our activities expand.



#### Monitoring and evaluation framework

We will develop and implement a robust framework to monitor and evaluate how well the organisation has performed against our strategic priorities. This will be used to monitor progress and to report to funders and other stakeholders.

#### Fundraising strategy

Securing increased financial resources to achieve our vision is a challenge. Working to a strong fundraising strategy will ensure that our activities are fully resourced to achieve our vision and priorities.

#### Partnership working

Working with others strengthens the impact of what we do and will contribute to growing our organisation for the future. Many of our consultation responses rightly stressed the need to avoid duplication and to use our expertise by working in collaboration with other organisations.

#### Increasing membership

Increasing Bipolar Scotland's membership will enable the growth of the organisation, expanding our reach and bringing in new skills and experiences. We will set a goal of increasing our membership by 60% over the five-year period of this plan.



## Planning and resources

In order to turn our strategic priorities into activities, our Board will agree annual business plans which will direct our work each year.

We will set annual objectives, milestones and key performance indicators. Each business plan will be backed by analysis to ensure we have an appropriate staffing structure, sufficient budget and all other resources required.

Our staff are vital to the success of the organisation. We will continue to invest in and develop our staff, building on their skills to ensure we continue to progress as a strong, creative, flexible organisation. Learning opportunities will be provided for staff to develop professionally and progression will be encouraged at all levels. Staff will agree annual objectives and be involved in regular support and supervision with their line manager.

Volunteers are involved as Directors, self-help group facilitators, in training, admin, communications and fundraising. All of our volunteers are trained and have support and supervision in the same way as our staff. It is recognised that volunteering benefits both the organisation and the individual and we will build on this as we continue to expand our volunteering opportunities.



## Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to implementing our strategic plan. Monitoring processes will be put in place for all new activities, with staff and volunteers aware of the need for, and value of, monitoring and evaluation.

Staff responsible for each activity will take responsibility for monitoring and reporting.

The Board will consider quarterly reports on the implementation of our annual business plans. This will enable discussion on current activities, ensure appropriate progress is being made and enable any remedial or corrective

actions to be taken. It will also allow consideration of any new or additional activities that may be required because of external factors or in response to new opportunities that may develop.

Each Annual General Meeting, which brings our members together, will receive a full report on the previous year's activities and the progress made against our strategic priorities. This will give an opportunity for questions and discussion and for new suggestions and ideas to be incorporated into our planning processes.



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