

Listening, Learning Leading: BSH Strategy 2021-23

Where have we come from?

This is BSH's second strategy. Our first one, called *Moving on*, was launched in autumn 2016. *Moving on* came out of a three-year process undertaken by BSH in which it reviewed all its activities, structures and processes, following a 360 appraisal by external consultants Linda Laurance & Associates (LLA). LLA then wrote up *Moving on* following various internal discussions in 2016.

During those three years BSH carried out a governance review; began to make changes to the format and content of the ASM, and expanded staff and Committee numbers. Perhaps the most prominent signs of all this activity were the consolidation of six websites into one and the rolling out of a new brand and logo, launched in 2016-17. *Moving on* had 5 strategic aims:

- i. Make BSH membership a must for all UK haematology professionals in practice, study and research
- ii. Maintain and build on BSH guidelines and education work thereby enabling science to be translated into best practice.
- iii. Transform the Annual Scientific Meeting into the go-to event for all UK haematology professionals ensuring it promotes the best in education, research and science.
- iv. Strengthen the voice of haematology at national and international levels
- v. Make sure the Society is sustainable in terms of culture, people and resources.

The Society made particularly good progress across aims 1-3 and 5, especially in transforming the ASM; Aim 4, however, was more challenging because this kind of work – advocacy, public affairs, was a very new venture for BSH.

Where are we going?

In September 2019, the Board started to plan the next strategy, to be launched in October 2020. As *Moving on* had needed considerable review half-way through its five years, it was agreed that the new plan would have just a three-year lifetime. It was also agreed that it was more realistic to have 3 rather than 5 main aims.

2020: Pause, reflect and reset

Following staff discussion of the Board's initial ideas in autumn 2019, in early March 2020 there was consultation with the Committees and SIG chairs and all groups were supportive of the direction of the new strategy.

Then the Covid-19 pandemic struck and the strategy was put on hold. The Society adapted to new ways of working and introduced measures that it might not otherwise have done for a number of years. These have fed into the thinking around the new strategy.

Trustees decided to undertake some membership research and this led to postponing the launch of the strategic plan to early 2021 so we could incorporate the findings of the research.

The initial report based on in-depth interviews showed that BSH was on the right track with its three new strategic aims. Members perceived BSH in a positive way: “what the BSH does, it does well”, with Guidelines and education being highly valued; membership is seen as excellent value for money and that the Society does have a role in advocating for the all those working in the profession. Further research undertaken by way of a member survey built on and reinforced these findings.

The pause due to Covid-19 had in fact enabled the Society to take on board members’ views when writing up the strategy and given us plenty of ideas for activities to take forward that members would like to see.

BSH Charitable objects

Any strategy the Society pursues must fall within its charitable objects as stated in the Articles of Association and which are:

“to advance the practice and study of haematology and to facilitate contact between persons interested in haematology”.

Revised Vision:

BSH will be the membership organisation of first choice for all UK haematology professionals, an association through which they connect, share their learning and provide a highly influential voice on all aspects of haematology.

Revised Mission:

BSH promotes excellence in the study, research and practice of haematology for the benefit of professionals and the wider public.

The chief ways that BSH acts on its mission are:

1. providing and supporting multi-disciplinary education for students and professionals at all levels;
2. raising standards of clinical care and laboratory practice through guidelines and the provision of expert advice;
3. providing support for research via its publications, programmes and grants
4. providing networking opportunities that bring haematology professionals together;
5. representing the interests and concerns of haematology professionals at national and international levels

New Strategic Aims

The three overarching aims for the strategy will be:

1. Membership support for all MDT professionals
2. Knowledge transfer
3. Advocacy for the discipline and across the profession with the possibility of this going into the more public benefit space

These three aims will support the ultimate objective of sustainability. This encompasses BSH role within the sustainability of the discipline of haematology and of those who work within it across all MDT roles. We also need to ensure, as far as we can, the future of the Society itself. As well as making sure the Society can continue to serve its membership and the wider profession, there are societal issues that the Society must take into account: its own impact

on the environment; the EDI agenda; and its role in nurturing the next generation or two of haematology professionals.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Agenda

It is interesting to note that the 2020 membership survey threw up the following statistics: when members were asked to think of words that described BSH only 12% said diverse; and only 21% said inclusive. Although there were many positive words used which attracted larger percentages (professional, respected) it is clear that BSH does have some work to do here.

The BSH will:

- make space for black and minority ethnic voices and leaders, and for others whose voices have been heard less, e.g. people with disabilities
- look for any structural barriers present in our organisation, e.g. gender disparity
- listen and reflect on the experiences of those who are heard less

Some points to help us:

- This needs to be a cultural and not just a transactional process
- We need to decide what it would look like if we are getting inclusion right. Maybe hard to measure as KPI's.
- Need to listen to feedback from people at all levels (possibly set up a diversity and inclusion WG)
- Amplify all minority and lesser heard voices (e.g. gender, BAME and lower socio-economic background), to address stereotypes and emphasise that we are open to everyone.

Ecological responsibility

The world is in ecological health crisis and we should consider this in our future planning.

BSH should be considering its own impact on the environment whether that is its investment portfolio, how it runs its office and its events, especially the ASM. Our meetings are online at the moment due to the pandemic but one day we will go back to face-to-face meetings – we should do an assessment of the ecological impact of them and how we can improve our carbon footprint as an organisation.

Future of BSH

A less global but still highly relevant challenge is that the BSH needs to focus on nurturing the next generation (or two) of haematology professionals: the early careers members. We can look at this being two groups, those who are yet to decide on a career in haematology and those already committed to the discipline; we should aim to look at helping all roles across both groups, e.g. be setting up working groups and/or or longer term ideas-exchange forums.

What we can do to support and nurture future members depends on the sustainability of the BSH in terms of resources: people, finance and infrastructure. We have made great strides in recent years to improve in these areas but this strategy will demand more, and we will need to look in particular at whether we have enough staff to deliver it and whether recent improvements to governance and increased support for volunteers are sufficient or need further reinforcement.

BSH does not lack finance resources; we need to ensure that we use them to the best advantage whether that is employing more staff or using external agencies to kick-start new

areas of work that, in due course, may require internal staff resource. Other financial issues are that we need to roll out the ideas we have been discussing on income generation; we already have an annual sponsorship prospects (this will be tweaked in the first year of this strategy); we now need to work on legacy fundraising (a new venture) and grapple with the financial and other issues around our building: for how long will it be big enough for the team? Will it have gained a further lease of life if staff continue to spend time working from home after the pandemic and could we take on more staff without having to worry about there not being enough space in the office?

Aim One: Membership support for all MDT Professionals

Ensure BSH membership, volunteers and activities are reflective of the broader haematology community

- Monitor and review equality and diversity of speakers invited to Education events, courses and to the ASM, and safeguard protected characteristics (Y1-3)
- Monitor and review equality and diversity of Committee members and safeguard protected characteristics (Y1-3)

Improve membership benefits and increase member numbers

- Increase members' benefits:
 - o Offer four Education webinars a year, free to all members (Y1 onwards)
 - o Make the educational online resources only available to members (Y2 onwards)
 - o Significantly increase the non-member registration fees for Education events and courses – this won't affect undergraduate and full-time postgraduate students, foundation doctors, core trainees, IM trainees, STP trainees, nurses and allied health professionals up to and including Band 7, because they can apply for BSH Associate membership for free (Y1-3)

Ideas and objectives for the membership and communications teams aligned to the mission.

Providing and supporting multi-disciplinary education for students and professionals at all levels

Year 1:

Identify additional support required by the haematology community using data from the membership research project. Implement quick wins. Prioritise promotion of student training days, student elective grants, and summer school with RCPATH. Encourage more AHP/nurses/scientists/trainees/medical students/physician associates and all other HC professionals within the MDT to join committees.

Year 2:

Implement new benefits, prioritising benefits for nurses and others in the MDT for whom current benefits are not so relevant. Stands at medical careers fairs to encourage students into the profession (not included in year 1 due to coronavirus meaning that stands at face to face events may not be possible till 2022).

Year 3:

Begin to evaluate success of new benefits

Raising standards of clinical care and laboratory practice through guidelines and the provision of expert advice

Year 1:

Use paid promoted tweets to promote guidelines to a new audience. Encourage people to sign up to the guidelines email list. Continue to work with the guidelines team to keep the coronavirus hub webpage up to date.

Year 2:

Use more awareness day campaigns to promote guidelines

Year 3:

Evaluate performance and consider new social media platforms for promotion.

Providing support for research via its publications, programmes and grants**Year 1 and 2:**

Work with the Scientific and Publications Committee to review grants. Consider and if appropriate introduce grants for AHP and nurses to better support the MDT. Implementation of genomic grant. Continue to work with BJH and EJH to promote both journals.

Year 3:

Evaluate performance

Providing networking opportunities that bring haematology professionals together;**Year 1**

Promote committee membership as a networking opportunity to encourage more people to join committees. Consider mentoring schemes and online networking opportunities and if appropriate implement in year 2. Encourage people to join social media platforms as networking tools.

Year 2

Presumes face to face events are now running. Promote networking opportunities as a benefit of attending face to face courses.

Year 3:

Evaluate performance

Representing the interests and concerns of haematology professionals at national and international levels**Year 1:**

Agree process for endorsement policy. Put in place framework to expand the number of volunteers available to provide medical expertise for campaigns so we have a larger pool of people to call on and we are not reliant on overstretched committee members to provide medical expertise for endorsement requests. Priorities for campaigns will be a) Workforce and b) Raising awareness of haematology as a speciality. Set up workforce working group. Re-launch of workforce campaign. Use Anniversary content to promote haematology as a speciality. Continue to offer and promote EHA joint membership.

Year 2:

Continue with workforce campaigning as External Affairs Committee have advised that the workload for this will be so great it will run over three years.

Year 3:

Continue with workforce campaign

Aim Two: Knowledge Transfer

Expand the educational offering to align it with the broader haematology community

Ensure that successful education events are repeated and are marketed appropriately to attract a suitable number of delegates.

Review and further develop the educational online resources hosted on the website to ensure they are up to date, fit for purpose and beneficial to students and healthcare professionals at all levels (Y1-3).

- Continue to run the BSH student essay prize competition (Y1-3)
- Collaborate with other charities and organisations to create educational opportunities for members and non-members and link with other bodies involved in Haematology Training (from Y1 onwards)
- Implement a digital platform (Y1) to run online courses and/or blended learning programmes
- Run at least one online course or blended learning programme a year (from Y2 onwards), prioritising courses which audiences do not have access/have reduced access to study leave
- Link educational online resources with guidelines (Y1-3).
- Develop four Education webinars a year (Y1-3)
- Work with the Scientific and Publications Committee to assess the viability of expanding the trainee education grants to include members who are nurses, physician associates, students, LMIC residents (for the ASM), scientists in training and allied health professionals. This will allow Full reduced and Associate members to attend BSH Education events and courses for free

Ensure the Education programme is financially sustainable

- Set registration fees for Education events and courses so that they cover all direct costs by Y3:
Y1: registration fees will cover at least 50% of direct costs
Y2: registration fees will cover at least 80% of direct costs
Y3: registration fees will cover 100% of direct costs
- Accept sponsorship for Education events and courses, as outlined in the 'Working with the Biomedical Industry and other Commercial Organisations Policy' (Y2-3)

Review and optimise procedures in the Education department

- All Education events and courses, including any proposed by SIGs, to be under the remit of the Education Committee (Y1)
- Develop a procedure to allow all BSH members to propose an Education event or course, which will be reviewed by the Education Committee (Y1)
- Create a procedure to develop and manage Education events and courses, including target audience, example programmes, steps relevant to budget creation, marketing, registration, feedback collection etc (Y1)

Facilitate the creation of high-quality guidelines

- Manage and collaborate with the Executive Guideline Committee, task forces and writing groups to support them in the creation of high-quality guidelines (Y1-3)
- Strengthen working relationship with international organisations with an active role in developing haematology guidelines, such as ASH and EHA (Y1-3)

Further develop content related to guidelines to increase their dissemination and enable science to be translated into best practice

- Continue to facilitate the creation of written and audio commentaries for each guideline (Y1-3)
- Investigate the possibility to host the audio commentaries as podcasts on an App, to improve ease of access and attract more listeners (Y1)
- Continue to record the guidelines presentations hosted at the BSH Annual Scientific Meeting and host them on online platforms (Y1-3)

Implement the guideline section of the BSH website to make it more user-friendly, improve its functionalities and the ease of access (Y1).

Improve the operational efficiency of writing groups with digital solutions aimed to strengthen communication

- Establish and maintain an online area on SharePoint for each writing group and task force, containing all documentation relevant to the guideline. When the guideline is published, the relevant folders will be archived for easy access for the three-year review (Y1)
- Establish and maintain a database with BSH members and retired consultants who are interested in joining a writing group, highlighting their area of expertise (Y2-3)

Continue to work alongside NICE to identify appropriate experts and stakeholder for NICE consultations to ensure the views of the BSH membership are channelled into the national healthcare guidance development

Expand the reach of the Annual Scientific Meeting

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the past three face-to-face ASMs and the virtual one, reviewing the number of delegates and their role/level, the amount of sponsorship, and delegates feedback, to inform the content, format and sustainability of future ASMs and measure their success (Y1)
- Support the Programme Committee to develop an ASM programme that is suitable for a variety of audiences within the haematology health care sector, including nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, laboratory scientists and any other professional working in the haematology field (Y1-3)
- Develop a live streaming option for the ASM to reach a global haematology community (Y2-3)
- By collaborating with conference organisers, create and maintain strong relationships with sponsors and other commercial companies within the haematology field (Y1-3)
- Collaborate with the BSH marketing and communications department and the conference organisers to advertise the ASM appropriately and reach a number of delegates comparable to 2019 ASM (Y1-3).

Provide information about haematology careers to increase recruitment into haematology professions

- Work with Comms dept to design and publish a careers booklet and support the Education Committee in other appropriate career-related activities (e.g. medical career fair, mentorship programme etc.) (Y3)

Aim Three: Advocacy

External Affairs Committee Input

The Committee members felt that work force issues and raising the profile of haematology with the next generation were the most important areas for BSH to focus on within this strategic aim. At its November 2020 meeting the Board agreed.

Raising the profile of haematology was important not just to encourage more people into the profession but to help related clinical and non-clinical staff who might have to deal with haematology disorders. The Committee pointed out that medical schools often provided very little in the way of haematology education.

Advocacy in its broadest sense – promoting the discipline of haematology and those working within it, certainly fits in with the above. Turning to specifics, how might we take this forward? A major challenge is the need for input from members to these very important issues but the fact is that most of them have little time for this work. The staff team can help with certain aspects but of course they are not part of the haematology work force and so what we can do is limited. This is an issue in which we will need to invest time and money to get right.

Work Force

BSH published its work force report in early March 2020, the culmination of 18 months' work by the EA Committee and staff. The research findings revealed that clinical haematologists, nurses, laboratory scientists, pharmacists and specialist managers are under increasing pressure to deliver for patients in the NHS as the burden of doing more with less staff is impacting rates of work-related stress, sickness and absence:

- Unfilled vacancies in the Haematology workforce remain significant
- Reduced numbers of trainees to fill consultant haematologists posts
- Vacancies likely to rise as current workforce approaches retirement
- Low morale, sickness and absences are affecting the haematology workforce, as they are across the NHS
- More than a quarter (27%) of those absences were taken by employees suffering from stress or mental illness
- Haematology is already adapting to the changing nature of advanced medicine.

Covid-19 may have exacerbated the concerns that many professionals expressed when we carried out the work force research and it will have raised new ones. So the work force report of 2019 gives us a solid jumping off point in conjunction with the findings from the 2020 membership research project to assess how BSH can best support the haematology work force as part of its new strategy.

Year One

Rebooting the work force project should be our top advocacy priority for the early phase of the new strategy. Firstly, we need to ensure we have the right resources to enable us to take it forward. We have no staff or volunteers trained in External Affairs, except at Board level. We have an EA Committee whose members recognise they need extra help from other members to take this work forward. How will we overcome this?

One option would be to seek external help, as we have done many times in recent years, from appointing a PCO to run the ASM to agencies to help with research. Other smallish professional bodies use an external agency to run their press/advocacy work. This has the advantage of allowing us to dip our toes without the worry of taking on a staff member for whom

we then may struggle to find enough work, in the early stages. We can plan, in later years to take on staff.

At the same time, we should expand the EA Committee and/or ask some members to focus solely on work force issues. We will need to offer media training to staff and volunteers too. Finding a panel of members who can field queries is a good idea but will take time to build up; so, we should start now.

In the meantime, we should continue with what we might call the “soft advocacy” work we are already doing – e.g. with ASH, EHA and the work of the Global Haematology SIG; keep talking to the Colleges and helping them where we can; our GLs task forces will continue to take part in NICE appraisals and we can forge a few select partnerships – e.g., we are meeting soon with Blood Cancer UK which has just done some research on work force issues. We continue to invite external organisations to collaborate with us at the ASM.

We can continue to have links on our website to other societies and charities, including patient groups. This would link back to the Vision and Mission Statements and to the desire expressed by some staff and volunteers to dip our toes into the more public realm.

Another thing we can do – and the staff can help to lead on – is on issues such as diversity, inclusion and sustainability and raising BSH profile in taking these issues seriously. As an example, we have just signed up to the RCP-backed Inequalities in Health Alliance and become a sponsor of the APPG for Diversity and Inclusion in STEM careers. These are not areas that require our busy members to give so much clinical and scientific input although we will need to use their experiences to be authentic.

Year Two

Take stock in early 2022 to see what is working from year one, and what may need revising.

How are we doing with the external agency? Have they made a valuable contribution? Have we enough volunteers with relevant experience and training involved?

We should compile the “soft advocacy”, projects into a report so we can evaluate them. Which have had solid results? Which have not – should we give them longer or drop them so we can focus more on those that have worked really well?

How we promote haematology as a profession and a subject for research; we will no doubt be doing relevant work in year one but have a special focus on this in year two. Ideas could include building on the 60th anniversary work on careers and focusing on for example nursing for a set period, which could involve podcast interviews, highlighting the relevant section of our careers booklet, promoting on social media etc. We should do more to highlight the work BSH supports with our research grants.

Year Three

Review performance of BSH external reach – e.g. how work has raised Society’s profile; have we backed any successful campaigns?

Evaluate the effectiveness of external agency (if appointed); review plans to employ staff for this work in addition to or instead of any agency.

Next Steps

Roll out of Listening, Learning, Leading

After the Board Meeting in December the plan will be rolled out to staff and managers and their teams will need to draw up work plans to enable roll out of the plan in early 2021. Managers and teams will need to review budgets to see if any tweaks need to be made. The work plans will also need to review the priorities as outlined in this document and ensure that activities for year 1 are the ones we need to carry out first and also, that we haven't put too many of these into year one (an easy trap to fall into!); we may well need to revise some projects and place them into subsequent years.

The education and GLs work is already quite detailed but more needs to be done with membership and advocacy sections of the strategy. Once we have put these together we will be able to see if there are any gaps in staffing and infrastructure and put in place mitigation plans if there are.

I referred earlier to the BSH office and for how long we think it will continue to be fit for purpose (having had a major refit in 2018/19 to take into account likely expansion in the next few years) in the light of the pandemic and likely shifts in working practices; we need to ensure that the office and meeting space we have is fit for purpose to support the strategy.

The new strategy will roll out in February 2021 once work plans are agreed with staff and senior volunteers.

As part of the roll out of the new strategy we must do some communications work. We can publicise the document (or an executive summary) to members and to other stakeholders – we should notify the Colleges for example and other external partners, eg EHA and ASH.

As part of this communications plan, we should highlight the membership research and how we have built on its findings and taken on board ideas, thanking members for their input.