The Braveheart strategy was written in late 2015 and was intended to cover the period from then to late 2018. It is now time to review and to revise this strategy in light of the changing needs of the people of Forth Valley. The review of our current strategy was also identified as our first project as part of our submission to EFQM, quality Scotland.

In reviewing the strategy we consulted with our volunteers, our staff, our board and also those people that use the services we provide. We asked them similar questions to when we developed our strategy in 2015:

* What do we do well?
* What could we do better?
* What could we start to do that would benefit the people we work with?

We took the opportunity of asking those questions at a number of different events:

* Volunteer meetings (walk leaders), Board meetings, Board and staff day out and the two community health events in the later part of 2018 (Camelon and Bainsford).

In addition, a number of documents have been published by the NHS that helps inform the health priorities of Scotland as well as Forth Valley in particular. The focus is shifting still further to keeping people well rather than treating the sick. There is an increasing awareness of the challenge that mental health presents and also with social isolation and loneliness. The demographics also play a part in putting more pressure on existing resources and helps to identify where Braveheart might be able to make the biggest impact.

* Those over the age of 65 are already a greater proportion of the population in Forth Valley than the Scottish average. However, this is set to rise still further, going from 1 in 6 in 2010 to 1 in 4 by 2035. Whilst the health of the people in Scotland is generally improving, the gap between the health of the most and the least advantaged in our society is increasing. Obesity was a problem in 2015 and it is an even greater problem today.

This is the case despite all the resources that the NHS, and others, have applied to tackle those issues. More needs to be done, and it needs to be delivered in new and exciting ways that will engage with the communities across Forth Valley.

Recommendations:

The objects of association and the vision should remain unchanged. This describes the top line of what we do and that has not altered over the last three years.

We thought the five pillars could be simplified to four, capturing communication and evaluation in the same section, as in some ways they are integral to one another.

Partnership working remains a priority with the outcome being the development of services that engage with communities across Forth Valley. Perhaps we merge those two pillars in to one? However, we should add “communities” to those we wish to develop partnerships and services with. We should also have a greater focus on two issues:

* The prevention of ill-health, ie anticipatory care
* Tackling social isolation directly

Funding continues to be a big priority of Braveheart and all third sector organisations, so should remain as a separate pillar. Perhaps we should develop this further and capture how we plan to do this in more detail?

We also spoke about developing “Braveheart Ambassadors”, perhaps only 6 or 8 people who are likely to be current volunteers. They would help with communication and helping to support One Organisation, (as opposed to walking and mentoring). This was Charlies idea and he can provide more details on this great idea.

**The Braveheart Association - Strategic Plan, 2019-2021**

**The Objects of the Association are:**

***to provide a framework of active support and encouragement for adults with a long term health condition and those at risk of developing chronic health conditions, and to promote their current and future wellbeing.***

Our main objectives and activities continue to focus upon providing support for adults living with or are at risk of developing a long term condition. In the coming years, more emphasis will be given to preventing ill health in high risk groups and also dealing with the growing challenge of social isolation. Braveheart is uniquely placed to address those issues, through our existing network of volunteers with contacts across Forth Valley. Our activities will remain to continue to develop in two main areas:

* Self-management programmes, where people come together to learn and support one another
* Encouraging people to take gentle exercise by offering a variety of supported walking groups across Forth Valley.

We know we can make the biggest difference to people’s lives when we build communities of people within the framework of those activities. This creates the environment where the group supports each individual to achieve. This is what our volunteers are trained to do and we know they do it well.

Social isolation is now recognised as an emerging public health priority. It is believed that it can have an impact on health equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes a day, every day. Braveheart already has a significant impact on this issue with those that take part in our programmes, but there is more that we could do to tackle social isolation directly. Over the next three years we will develop initiatives that help us to do this.

Braveheart promotes healthy lifestyles with a focus on preventing the development of long term conditions and has developed a number of different self-management programmes and an extensive network of weekly and monthly walks. We can also offer longer term support through our Braveheart Plus groups. All those programmes also address a significant and emerging health need relating to social isolation. Poor health can contribute to a decreasing interaction between individuals and the society in which they live.

All our services are friendly, welcoming and run with the help of community volunteers, who we train as Health Mentors and Walk Leaders. We rely on our volunteers to deliver much of what we do, and we aim to train and support our volunteers to the highest of standards.

Vision

***Our vision is to see the burden of long terms conditions reduced, to the individuals who might develop them, to those who are already living with them, and to wider society as a whole.***

The aim of this strategic plan is to ensure that the organisation can continue to deliver on its aims and objectives and to work towards the realisation of this vision. In developing this strategic plan we have taken account of the changing needs of the communities we serve.

It has been informed by three major factors:

* An internal evaluation of what we have done well in the past
* An extensive review of the local and national environment affecting health and wellbeing.
* A comprehensive consultation involving staff, volunteers, service users, community groups and other stakeholders, including the NHS and other partnership agencies.

**More about the consultation**

**To develop the plan for 2015-18:**

* Our aim was to gather the views and opinions of all our partners and those who are, or who have been involved with the organisation in the past. Our findings helped us to recognise what we do well, what we might be able to do better and in particular to help us with planning the future direction of the organisation.
* Our consultation project saw over 100 people engage with Braveheart. We ran 5 focus groups which included volunteers, staff and Board members. Service users were involved in some of these, with their views also being recorded in questionnaire format. Liaison and partnership working with the NHS and other voluntary sector organisations is considered important for Braveheart’s future and hence the project saw us consult with NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Local Medical Committee, local general practitioners and Falkirk Council for Voluntary Services (CVS).
* The specific results from the consultation are available on our website [www.braveheart.uk.net](http://www.braveheart.uk.net/)

**To develop the plan for 2018-21:**

In reviewing the strategy, we again consulted with our volunteers, our staff, our board and also those people that use the services we provide. We asked them similar questions to when we developed our strategy in 2015:

* What do we do well?
* What could we do better?
* What could we start to do that would benefit the people we work with?

We took the opportunity of asking those questions at a number of different events:

* Volunteer meetings (walk leaders), Board meetings, Board and staff day out and the two community health events in the later part of 2018 (Camelon and Bainsford).

In addition, a number of documents have been published by the NHS more recently that helps inform the health priorities of Scotland as well as Forth Valley in particular. The focus is shifting still further to keeping people well rather than treating the sick. The demographics also play a part in putting more pressure on existing resources and helps to identify where Braveheart might be able to make the biggest impact.

* Those over the age of 65 are already a greater proportion of the population in Forth Valley than the Scottish average. However, this is set to rise still further, going from 1 in 6 in 2010 to 1 in 4 by 2035. Whilst the health of the people in Scotland is generally improving, the gap between the health of the most and the least advantaged in our society is increasing.
* Obesity was a problem in 2015 and it is an even greater problem today.
* There is an increasing awareness of the challenge that mental health presents and Braveheart would like to start to work in this area in the years to come
* Social isolation and loneliness has a significant impact on quality of life as well as real implications on health and wellbeing.

All this is the case despite all the resources that the NHS, and others, have applied to tackle those issues. More needs to be done, and it needs to be delivered in new and exciting ways that will engage with the communities across Forth Valley.

The strategy is founded on four key pillars. Each pillar supports the organisation in its journey over the coming years and each pillar is equally important in helping Braveheart fulfil its commitments. These pillars are:

* 1. **Funding**
  2. **Partnership Working**
  3. **Development of services**
  4. **Evaluation and communication**

# Funding

Braveheart, as with any third sector organisation, relies on external funding for its survival. Funding allows the organisation to employ the staff it needs to deliver and develop its services, allows volunteers to be supported and adequately reimbursed, and allows training and development activities to take place for Board members, staff and volunteers. Lastly, it is impossible to develop and deliver new services, projects or programmes without adequate resourcing.

Braveheart will develop an approach to funding which:

* Resources current programmes
* Sources and utilises resources to allow Braveheart to communicate effectively and efficiently with its target audiences
* Resources evaluation as part of core delivery
* Supports staff and volunteers
* Sources new funding opportunities to allow the development of new services
* Enable piloting interventions as a means of testing new ideas.

# Partnership Working

The delivery of efficient, useful, sustainable and cohesive services across Forth Valley to those with an existing, or at risk of developing, a long term condition, depends on partnership working and collaboration between a range of service providers. This is needed both because of the pressure on public funding, and the positive impact of offering co-ordinated services to those in need.

Braveheart has a proven track record in partnership working and has much to offer other service providers in offering services which are welcoming, open and which complement clinical interventions. Braveheart’s services are predicated on being user led, thereby assisting people to gain a greater degree of self-management of their condition and ensuring that services are more sustainable in the long term.

To achieve partnership working Braveheart has a focus on coordination and working collaboratively with other organisations to ensure that the activities developed address key health needs, and to ensure that the implementation of activities are as effective as possible. Current partners include NHS Forth Valley, other third sector organisations, local employers, our volunteers and possible funding organisations.

Braveheart has developed strong links with a range of community organisations and other community partners, including Community Learning and Development, in addition to having positive relationships with various health services. These links have ensured:

* There is a range of ways in which people can access Braveheart’s services

(through self-referral as well as formal referral routes)

* Braveheart’s services are open to a broad section of the community
* Braveheart is able to offer support in the communities in which people live.

Continued positive partnership working is crucial to Braveheart in that it brings referrals to Braveheart services, supports the sustainability of these services, helps develop new services and brings funding. It is important that a range of referral pathways are maintained – from clinicians and GPs to support those who may be viewed as most ‘medically’ in need, and from other community partners to support those at risk of developing long term conditions or those unlikely to accept a formal referral.

To support partnership working, Braveheart will:

* Maintain and develop relationships with a range of partners
* Actively promote the quality and value of the services it provides.

# Development of Services

No organisation wants to standstill. The Board of Braveheart believes that the services which Braveheart offers are effective, respond to the needs of those with a long term condition or at risk of developing one – and are efficient and sustainable at a time of increasing pressure on public expenditure.

Set beside the increasing pressure on public expenditure and the need to deliver services in a more sustainable fashion, is the growth in the number of older people and the pressure this will put on core NHS services. It is noted that partnership working as a key imperative is identified in the strategic plan for Forth Valley (NHS Forth Valley, Annual Plan and Local Delivery Plan, 2020).

Health inequalities are an ongoing priority within Scotland which the third sector is well placed to address. The third sector is closer to the communities that they serve and are more agile in the way they might deliver those services to meet local needs.

Braveheart will develop new services which respond to need and are creative in the way in which they are delivered through:

* Researching the unmet need which Braveheart could meet
* Piloting interventions to meet this need and show the value of the intervention
* Develop longer term provision and the funding to sustain it
* Search for and be ready to react to funding opportunities.

# Evaluation and Communication

Braveheart is committed to providing quality services which support those with a long term condition or those at risk of developing one. Those services need to be sustainable and of value to those taking part. It is also important that Braveheart can evidence to funders and potential funders, the value of the services it provides. Lastly, as an organisation committed to the delivery of quality services, Braveheart needs to have information which supports the continuance of good practice. All this must be communicated to all relevant stakeholders which will promote the benefits of the work we do. Communication is a two-way process so we must put in place regular “check points” where we engage with our stakeholders to receive feedback on what we are currently providing and could provide in the future.

Braveheart will develop a plan to ensure:

* Evaluation is embedded in to all that we do
* Evaluation must focus on meaningful outcome measures
* The results of our evaluation will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders, this is both internal and external audience
* The impact of our activities should be captured using qualitative and quantitative methodology.
* We must take time to receive and listen to feedback
* The board should develop the key messages that we wish to convey about Braveheart
* This should be communicated using a range of media, including social media

Braveheart Association Board

January 2019