

MOBILE REPAIR SERVICE LIMITED
A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
Trading as MRS Independent Living



REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS
for the Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2013

The directors present their report with the financial statements of the company for the year ended 31 March 2013.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Number: 801419

Company Number: 2086284

Principal Office: Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19 3RQ

Auditors Hewitt Warin, Chartered Accountants
Harlow Enterprise Hub
Edinburgh Way
Harlow , Essex CM20 2NQ

Bankers Cooperative Bank
1 Islington High Street London N1 9TR

Directors and Trustees

The directors of the charitable company (the charity) are its trustees for the purpose of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the trustees.

The trustees serving during the year and since the year end were as follows:

Ken Bodden (Vice-Chair) (Deceased October 2013)
Rebecca Henderson (Chair)
John Miles
Stephen Steppens
Jane Tilston (Treasurer)
Des Hardiman
Sivakalyan Patil

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

MRS Independent Living a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 30th December 1986. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. At the start of the year it had 30 organisational members, each of whom agree to contribute £1 in the event of the charity winding up.

Its Area of Benefit is the London Boroughs of Islington, Hackney, Camden and City of London and other London boroughs.

Membership: Any disabled person or pensioner living in one of the boroughs where MRS is currently working and any other person who supports the aims and objectives of MRS can become a member of the organisation. Two thirds of the membership

and a majority of Trustees must be people with disabilities and older people, reflecting the organisation's intention to remain a user-led organisation.



Appointment of trustees

At the AGM members are able to elect up to 12 trustees, and where there are fewer than 12, trustees may co-opt further trustees as long as co-opted members are never more than one third of the Trustees.

Trustee induction and training New Trustees are invited to attend a meeting as an observer before attending an induction meeting with the director and a Trustee before the next meeting. New Trustees are encouraged to take on activities that will give them insight into the work of the organisation, although this varies according to the nature of contribution they wish to make.

Public Benefit In managing the work of the organisation and drawing up this report, the Trustees have considered the new requirements under section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to both to the public benefit of MRS Independent Living and to ensure that this is reflected in their report.

Our mission statement

Mobile works with disadvantaged and socially-excluded sections of the community to identify technical solutions and provide innovative services to support individuals, their family carers and care workers.

Principal Activities

The principal activity of MRS Independent Living is that of providing free or low-cost practical help for older and disabled people. This was achieved by:

- undertaking repairs and modifications in the home for older and for disabled people in Hackney, Islington and the City of London.
- undertaking a range of accident prevention programmes, mainly with older people.
- Providing and installing disability aids including small aids and telecare.

The results for the year and financial position of MRS are as shown in the annexed financial statements.

Objectives

To provide a range of services for older people, people with disabilities and other vulnerable sections of the community to enable them to live independently and with dignity and choice.

To promote the development of new products and services needed by older and by disabled people.

Policies

To provide services that meet the special needs of the users of MRS:-

- a) To reduce financial anxiety by minimising cost.
- b) To reduce stress by ensuring services meet special needs, eg.
 - specific and clear appointment times.
 - arrangements designed to prevent bogus callers being let in.
 - working practice that avoids risks of falls for those with mobility or visual disabilities.
- c) To support vulnerable people and those caring for them maintain and modify equipment important to their independence.
- d) To ensure the service is accessible to all users, eg.

- 
- information available in a range of languages and media.
 - special arrangements made where access is difficult.
 - e) To support care workers and family carers. Therefore appointments are made to fit in with carers' arrangements.
 - f) To complement the work of statutory and other agencies by providing a complete service. Other agencies who are themselves over-stretched want us to find and deliver complete solutions to problems. We work closely with those agencies and work to reduce the impact of clients' practical problems. For example, involving our service usually relieves the carer of the need to supervise the work.
 - g) To adapt existing services and develop new ones to ensure that we are meeting unmet needs and reaching out to excluded service users.

Description of the charity's organisation

- MRS is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.
- Members can be any person or organisation supporting the aims and objectives of the organisation, but a minimum of 2/3rds of members must be people eligible to be users of Mobile's services in the boroughs in which it is working. Members elect directors who form a management committee. At least 51% of Trustees are required to be service users.
- The Director is responsible for implementation of policy and for day-to-day management of the organisation. The current management team comprises the Director and the Hackney Manager who plan and coordinate work across the organisation.

The management committee meets at least quarterly to review work and discuss future plans. In the past year, each Trustee has taken on responsibility for oversight of different areas of the organisation's service provision and development so that at least one Trustee is in a position to provide informed comment to colleagues across all areas of our work.

Development, activities and achievements of MRS during the year.

• Repair services

Mobile Repair has continued to provide a wide range of home repairs to elderly people and people with disabilities. It currently works in Islington and Hackney.

However In August 2014, Islington Council informed us that they would be decommissioning our service from April 1st 2015 and providing a handyman service themselves. MRS has provided a low-cost handyman service continuously since 1985.

Last year in Hackney and Islington it carried out repairs ranging from putting up shelves to repairing gas boilers.

For a nominal labour charge, engineers repair:

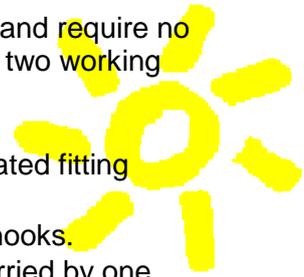
- appliances, such as washing machines and fridges,
- gas and heating appliances,
- domestic electrical installations
- plumbing problems
- carpentry and home maintenance items.

Users generally pay for materials. Where the costs of materials are high, Mobile provides information about how to obtain financial support from statutory and charitable sources.

Demand on services is always high. In most cases Mobile gives priority to the needs of those who have had a community care assessment or where there are other indications of a user's high care needs: for example, people over 80, those coming out of hospital and those being cared for by friends and relatives. Most funding comes now from local or health authority service agreements and contracts rather than from grants.

The labour charges are a small contribution to costs and range from £0-7 per half hour. These charges include VAT.

- **QuickFix**
 - Requests for work that will take up to 20 minutes and require no specialist skills or equipment are dealt with within two working days and currently at no charge.
 - Examples of jobs that are included are:
 - Changing a light bulb in a high or complicated fitting
 - Hanging up or taking down curtains
 - Hanging one or more pictures on picture hooks.
 - Moving an item of furniture that can be carried by one person.
 - The organisation makes this quick response by asking any engineer in the area to call in and fit the job into their day's schedule.
 - This addition to our service was added in response to repeated requests from users and other service though requests remain at a low level.
- **Emergency Equipment**
 - We provide emergency replacement equipment:
 - up to two loan electric heaters for people whose heating has broken down or who are simply too cold.
 - A double ring hotplate and/ or an oven for people with no means to cook.
 - In Hackney heaters is available to any of our users. In Islington the service is available to owner occupiers and leaseholders as well as private tenants as social landlords have their own arrangements.
 - The sockets being used are tested and information is left with the clients. Users can purchase their appliances if they wish.
 - During cold periods the service is available at weekends via a special phone number.
 - There is no charge for heating equipment. For the other equipment we charge a £10 deposit and a small weekly charge.
- **Aids and adaptations**
 - **Transforming Community Equipment Service (TCES)**
 - MRS is an accredited provider of smalls aids and equipment in Islington and Hackney to people who have prescriptions from a community health professional for a list of aids and adaptations. As one of the three approved "mobile" providers, it deals with equipment that is too large to deliver or which requires installation.
 - Our move to a ground floor office now allows us to offer a place where Islington residents can collect and try out equipment they may wish to collect or purchase.



- **Projects promoting health and reducing risk.**

MRS works in a number of ways to remove the causes of ill-health and personal risk. These include improvements to domestic security and projects to reduce risk of accidents, in particular falls for older people.

- **Falls Prevention for Older People**

- **Hackney Community Falls Prevention “Staying Steady” (formerly “Stop Falls”)**

In Hackney MRS Independent Living continues to provide a network of services supported by the manager and senior exercise practitioner, Anstey Bligh. It aims to support people to access Falls and Bone Health Pathway services and to provide the necessary support to increase their confidence, strength and balance after they have been seen by the Falls Clinic and other community health interventions. Services provided in the last year included:

- **Specialist strength and balance training in the community**

The project organises tutors with specialist training in exercise for frail older people. Last year we provided 13 weekly strength and balance classes in a number of venues around the borough. Service users are assessed at the start and end of the program which continues for 24 weeks. On completion of the program they are given a certificate of attendance and encouraged to move into community classes or take advantage of our continuation classes.

- **Classes for clients with a diagnosis of osteoporosis or osteopenia**

We provide two specialist classes addressing the needs of older people suffering from osteoporosis and who are at even higher risk of fractures resulting from any fall. 50% of the female Caucasian population over 50 develop the condition and often do not know that targeted exercise can help to improve their bone health and help reduce risk of fracture.

- **Classes for people with early stage dementia**

All our classes have provision for those with early stage dementia and their carers in line with the changes in the borough which have seen those with early stage dementia being seen more in the community as opposed to a hospital setting for strength and balance training.

- **Classes for people effected by Stroke**

We provide a specialist class for people that have been affected by Stroke. This group is run in partnership with The Stroke Project and aims to provide targeted exercise for clients that are suffering from the effects of a Stroke and feel more confident exercising with those that have had similar experiences and gain confidence and support from both the instructor and their peers.

- **Partnership classes with Family Mosaic**

Staying Steady has worked closely this year with Family Mosaic to provided specialist sessions for their older clients. The classes have been hugely successful in both Hackney and Islington and Family Mosaic plan to commission more for 2015.

- **1:1 “Otago” home exercises, mainly to frailer housebound people aged 75 and over**

Staying Steady provides a home based tailored strength and balance programme to clients who cannot travel or are frightened to leave their home, but who are motivated and cognitively able to keep up a daily routine at home. This programme has been evaluated and shown to be extremely effective for those who are successful in keeping to the programme.

- **Continuation Classes**

Staying Steady runs two continuation classes for clients to attend after completing their initial 24 weeks of strength and balance training or the Otago programme.

One class is run on an ongoing basis at a local community centre and offers clients the chance to continue to develop their strength and balance. The other is a walking group run in Clissold Park from late spring to early autumn with 2 specialist instructors and at least 2 volunteers. This level of support enables Staying Steady to offer this class to our very frailest clients who would like to walk outside but can't usually as they don't have the confidence or support. This class is run in partnership with the Stroke Project.

- **Provision of free Home Safety Checks with small aids fitting**

We provide free safety checks for older people subject to screening. Some free equipment is fitted and all labour is free. The checks focus on dealing with those areas shown to be associated with falls risk such as trip hazards, poor lighting and clutter.

- **Partnership working**

The team has established excellent cross sector working with the Falls Clinic, with the Community Rehab team and with Hackney's Access team. The team has helped produce a protocol to ensure that all older people identified as having a falls risk are referred on appropriately to their GP or to one of their three services.

- **Training for front-line staff / Awareness raising**

The team provides training for front-line staff in the statutory and voluntary sector, helping them to understand the value of identifying older people who are at risk of a fall, how to screen for those at risk and how to make appropriate referrals to services within the Falls Care Pathway. Where front-line staff are unsure what to do, they can refer users to the **Staying Steady** team who may visit them or refer them to other services as appropriate.

- **The Falls and Bone Health Care Pathway in Hackney:**

Following ongoing discussions within primary care and social services, Staying Steady is now being used more by other agencies as part of the care pathway. The Falls Clinic, GPs, the Community Rehabilitation Service and other agencies are referring:

- people who have been assessed and treated within their services but now need some ongoing support.
- People who need a fast response regarding specific attention to home safety concerns

- People who have no current need of more formal falls services but who need support to improve confidence and to continue exercising to improve strength and balance.

- **Exercise Book**

The team produces a popular exercise book which includes exercises that are used both in the strength and balance classes as well as those used on the home based program. Each client taking part in the home based program receives a copy free of charge so they are able to carry out the exercises correctly at home.

- **Health and Wellbeing DVD, online film clips and podcasts**

MRS is part of Take Care of the Pennies a consortia of local charities working with older people providing support on physical, mental and financial health. MRS has lead on the production of a Health and Wellbeing DVD which to date includes our service users demonstrating a range of exercises. Currently the film clips showing the exercises are available on our website www.mrsindependentliving.org along with a number of podcasts focusing on culturally specific eating.

In 2015 other members of the consortia plan to add to the DVD's content with the end product providing support on benefits, and signposting from the Borough's older people's commissioner Eve Oldham.

- **Information Booklet**

The team produces a useful information booklet, "**Get Up, Stand Up, Don't Fall Down**". It gives tips on the risks, on how to prevent falls and about services that can help fallers. It is designed to be used by older people and front-line staff and 2014 has seen a complete update of content with significant input from the Adult Community Rehabilitation Team.

- **Leaflet for Carers**

The team produces a leaflet with information about the Falls Care Pathway and how to refer, giving clear practical examples.

- **National Falls Awareness Day**

Sadly this year Age UK decided not to run the annual Falls Awareness Day, however Staying Steady in conjunction with Homerton Hospital ran their own awareness campaign in the summer.

Website

Our new website www.mrsindependentliving.org provides a wide range of information, screening tools and forms for older people and for the professionals who support them.

Home Improvement Agency services

Since April 2013, MRS has been providing a range of services to support older and disabled people in Hackney repair and adapt their homes, generally with the support of grants. National evidence is strong that such services are extremely cost-effective by extending how long people are able to live independently despite the challenges of disability and the frailty of old age. The service is part-paid through a fee based on the cost of works and includes:

- A housing options visit to support service users to look at the full range of choices they have, whether they remain within their current home or move. Those needing financial advice are passed to a one of range of regulated national and local providers.
- Help gathering information and permissions and completing grant application forms.
- Management of schedules, contracts and liaison with contractors, grants officers and Occupational Therapists. Supervision and signing off work.

When we took on the work, the systems were largely paper-based and the time taken from initial enquiry to completion extremely long. This generated additional work in dealing with calls from clients and other services enquiring about progress. We have focussed on improving communication and improving time taken for applications to be submitted and for work to be done.

We moved all information onto web-based storage systems, accessible by all staff wherever they are and on all devices and have looked to change arrangements where possible to reduce delays. We have also developed a range of fact sheets for services users and those supporting them to make sure they understand how the process works and what they need to do to help reduce delays. We have also had a number of discussions with partners to reduce errors and delays.

We have been successful in improving communication with all partners, in ensuring that straightforward jobs are done more quickly and are getting very high satisfaction levels from our clients and good feedback from our partners. We still need to do more internally and with those we work with to reduce delays still further.

Home from Hospital service

This service helps older people and people with disabilities and long-term conditions who live in Hackney when they are unable to leave hospital for practical reasons and have no family or friends to help them sort these issues out.

Requests range from the very quick and simple to extremely challenging and complex. For example they may need to move back to a room on the ground floor, requiring moving their bed and other furniture, they may need a door bell repairing or a key safe and extra sets of keys for the care services they will need. Because of illness, disability and lack of adequate support, people's homes may be very cluttered and clutter clearance has been a component of many requests.

The service also helps people who might otherwise have to come into hospital because, for example, heating is not working, carers cannot gain access or some adaptation needs to be made to enable them to continue living independently.

We respond quickly to all requests, on the same day if necessary since any delay may cause considerable inconvenience for the client and those supporting them and because of the cost to the NHS of delayed discharges and unnecessary admissions. Quite often we will need to send more than one person. We have been able to respond successfully to nearly all requests made. The main challenges have been around access to properties and coordination with family and with other services.

The majority of requests come mainly from the First Response Duty team and Occupational Therapy, Bryning Day Unit, the Elders Care Unit and the Elders team.

“Making Room” service

Hoarders are people who cannot use at least some of the key functions of their home because of the quantity of possessions in them. Their lifestyle exposes them to a range of health risks including injury, lack of access to health services and the consequences of isolation. It seems clear to us that the traditional responses of “blitz cleans” and evictions do not work and often have traumatic consequences for the client. We have been developing a number of approaches to providing practical and effective service to this client group. Working in close partnership with staff from Community Mental Health teams (CMHT), our response is to assess, agree a work programme and work with hoarders to de-clutter their homes in a way that keeps them in charge of the process.

We are now in touch with over 125 people who are hoarders – research indicates that there may be 1,900 hoarders in a borough the size of Hackney - but do not currently have the resources to meet the needs of more than a few of them at any one time. We are implementing a business plan to create a multi-agency approach to provide a sustainable and cost-effective response to the needs of hoarders and are looking for funding and partnership opportunities. In September 2014 in response to the increasing number of enquiries we appointed a Development Manager who is offering training for front-line staff to a range of providers in Hackney and neighbouring boroughs but also has a small team of Hoarding Recovery Assistants providing support to at least 6 hoarders at any one time and is developing a number of approaches to funding work with this client group.

Premises

Our main office at Caxton House continues to be a good base for the service, in the centre of the area we serve, with relatively easy parking and storage. **Our Hackney office** had to move when we very suddenly had to leave our old offices. We were lucky in finding a fully accessible office in Bradbury Street run by Hackney Cooperative Developments with a meeting room that is often available for hire as well.

Quality Assurance

We are currently working toward Foundations Home Improvement Agency Quality Standard assessment around April/ May 2015.

Review of the transactions and financial position of MRS

After the difficulties of the previous year, 2013/4 has been a more straightforward. This enabled the Trustees to give the further small increases in pay to most permanent staff. The funding environment for all smaller independent charities is challenging but the Trustees think there are also opportunities for organisations with a track record of successful service delivery and innovation. One key will be to reduce administrative costs, in particular through use of new technology.

Fund by fund basis and confirmation that MRS can fulfil its obligations

Mobile had reserves to meet current obligations in relation to contracts and to its statutory obligations as an employer.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees current policy is that unrestricted funds held by the company and not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets ('the free reserves') should be equivalent to between 3 and 6 months of expenditure. At this level, the directors feel that they would be able to continue the current activities of the company in the event of a significant drop in funding.

This policy equated to a target of holding between £121,132 and £242,265 in 2013/14 in general funds. At 31st March 2014 the free reserves amount to £140,470, so the organisation is meeting its target.

We have revised staff redundancy liabilities and made additional provision for this. We have not made any additional provision for capital purchases. Our move to “cloud” computing has currently reduced our need to invest in computer hardware, but impending changes to legislation and the age of our current vans mean that we are likely to have to spend in this area in the coming year.

Risk Management

The Trustees have considered major risks to which the charity is exposed and the strategies designed to mitigate them. Improvements have and are being made to the organisation's structure to minimise staff turnover and retain staff. We have improved personnel practice across our large and diverse workforce. Pricing policy and the melding of accounting, budgetary and operational systems are subject to constant review. Our financial systems grow more robust each year and allow us to monitor and control costs of each project more closely.

Partnership in the areas we work and with other charities

MRS Independent Living continues to work with a range of other local charitable organisations and networks working with people with disabilities and with pensioners. We also work to find improvements for our service users within a range of local authority and health and voluntary sector forums. Without their support and services Mobile's work would not be possible. Mobile is a participating member of the following organisations and networks:

Age UK Hackney	Hackney Supporting People Forum
Hackney Health & Social Care Forum	Take Care of the Pennies
Hackney Older Peoples Special Interest Group	
Hackney Strokes and Falls Group	Disability Action in Islington
Hackney Council for Voluntary Service	London Voluntary Services Council
Hackney Voluntary Action	Voluntary Action Islington
Connect Hackney	One Hackney
City & Hackney Mental Health Alliance	Islington Carers Hub