

Teamspirit

For branch volunteers and national support group committee members



Teamspirit is 200

Welcome to the 200th issue of Teamspirit! There's been a few changes over the years, as you can see from our montage above, but you – our branches, support groups and volunteers – have always been at its heart.

That's why we're dedicating this bumper issue to you, celebrating the achievements

of volunteers across the UK. Turn to the Nation pages to read about the fundraising initiatives, award-winning service provision, innovative social activities and much more that you're offering for people affected by MS every day. But this isn't just a one-off – we always want to hear your good news, so please do get in touch and let us know what you're up to:

teamspirit@mssociety.org.uk

Thank you.



News and events

Want to share your branch's good news?

Send your story ideas to us at teamspirit@mssociety.org.uk and we'll be in touch!

MS: Voice for change

The UK went to the polls on 7 May, choosing the politicians we want to represent us for the next five years. We may not know the outcome of the election at the time of writing, but we do know that over 1,000 of you have written to your candidates asking them to support people with MS if elected – thank you.

Every single candidate from the major parties heard from at least one person about the **MS: Voice for Change** campaign. This is a fantastic result, and gives us a strong platform to keep campaigning for our key asks with the next government.

If you've written to your candidates and received a response, please let us know by forwarding it to the email address below.

Share your feedback

We want to know what worked and what didn't when you spoke to party canvassers and candidates, to help us make our future campaigns as effective as possible.

Please take five minutes to complete our survey at <http://tiny.cc/GEsurvey>



Audience: All



Action: Share, act – give us your feedback



Contact: Emma Barnes,
Senior Campaigns Officer
election@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0870

Living with MS

There will be a number of Living with MS information days taking place across the UK in 2015. They will be held in the following locations

- Reading – 18 July
- Belfast – 12 September
- Nottingham – 17 October
- Northampton – 31 October
- Cardiff – 14 November

Living with MS information days are an ideal opportunity for people with MS, their partners, carers and families to come together to learn more about living with MS, as well as networking with one another and local services, including branches.

Please promote the events in your newsletters, blogs and on social media so we can encourage high attendance. For newsletter copy or more information about each event, please get in touch on the details below.

To book a place at an upcoming Living with MS information day please visit:

www.mssociety.org.uk/events



Audience: All



Action: Share, act – promote the events and book your place



Contact: Conferences team
conferenceadmin@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0891



News and events




Reviewing our local networks

We've previously told you about our commitment to reviewing and strengthening our local work across the UK, building on the feedback gathered as part of Working Locally. In March the Board of Trustees approved our plan and timetable for moving forward with this work.

We're proud of our branches and national support groups, and know that you provide a strong sense of community and activities that reduce social isolation, alongside a variety of valuable local services and support. But we're also facing a number of challenges which impact on our ability to meet the needs of people affected by MS, including the variability of local services and support, the fragmented nature of national and local services, falling branch income and falling volunteer numbers.

You've also told us about the frustrations and challenges you're facing locally; that you often feel like there are too many demands placed on you and that you sometimes don't have the support you need.

The review will be addressing all of these issues and challenges, with your help. Local Networks Managers and Officers are talking to volunteers at the Volunteer Forums and there will be further opportunities to contribute to the review in the coming months.

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Note
 **Contact:** Rebecca Pearce,
Improvement Programme Manager
rebecca.pearce@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0854

Carers Week 2015

Carers Week 2015 takes place from **8-14 June** and we're proud to be a partner organisation once again. Carers Week is an important opportunity to both celebrate the roles of families and carers for people with MS, and raise awareness of the support and information the MS Society provides for families and carers at national and local levels.

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise the profile of caring, highlight the challenges carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. It is brought to life by the individuals and organisations that come together to run activities and events across the country.

This year we're working with Carers UK, Age UK, Carers Trust, Independent Age, and Macmillan Cancer Support, focusing on **Building Carer Friendly Communities** – communities which help carers to support their partners, relatives and friends, while recognising that they are individuals with needs of their own.

If you'd like to get involved and hold a local Carers Week event, or attend an event near to you, visit the Carers Week website to register and find out what's happening in your area:

www.carersweek.org

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Share, act –
get involved with Carers Week
 **Contact:** Sue Allison,
Programme Lead – Carers
sue.allison@mssociety.org.uk
020 8827 0204



News and events

Maximus takes over WCA

In March a new company, Maximus, formally took over managing the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) from the heavily criticised Atos.

Claire Nurden, Policy Manager at the MS Society commented:

“The fitness for work test has failed people with MS for too long. For many it has been a cause of great stress and anxiety.

“Maximus taking over is a vital opportunity to address the problems with the WCA. However, changing providers is not the whole solution – a fundamental redesign is needed.

“Changes must be made urgently to stop disabled people suffering at the hands of the process as it currently stands.”

We’re working hard to put pressure on the new provider and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to make the much needed changes for people with MS.

If you or someone you know has had an assessment with Maximus, please get in touch and share your experience with us.

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Act – share your assessment experience
 **Contact:** Policy and External Relations team
campaigns@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0917

Effective treatments must remain available on NHS

Data gathered by the Risk Sharing Scheme (RSS) over six years has been released and proves that four treatments for relapsing remitting MS slow progression, and are cost effective.

The RSS was set up in 2002 to allow people with MS to get these licensed MS treatments on the NHS, after NICE decided they should not be made available.

This new data will help us put pressure on policymakers to protect and improve access to these treatments.

Effective treatments made available to thousands

The RSS treatments – beta interferon (Avonex, Rebif and Betaferon) and glatiramer acetate (Copaxone) – were shown to slow disease progression by between 24-40% compared to its natural course. They are four of 10 disease modifying treatments available on the NHS.

Through the RSS, 18,000 people were able to access these treatments on the NHS. Without it, they would have been forced to pay privately, or not have been able to take the treatments at all.

Ensuring access beyond 2015

The RSS is set to stop collecting data in summer 2015. We aim to secure a public commitment from policymakers that the treatments will continue to be provided on the NHS beyond this point. Further developments related to the RSS will be reported on our website.

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Note
 **Contact:** Policy and External Relations team
campaigns@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0700



Info and resources

Fitness risk management – professional insurance cover

Our fitness risk management system ensures that you can provide a safe environment for members and visitors taking part in fitness activities. This includes confirming that fitness instructors, therapists and other professionals who provide services to your branch have adequate insurance cover.

Service providers must hold £5m professional indemnity and public liability insurance cover. This matches the level of cover we hold and is the amount required by local authorities, who may be providing facilities or equipment for branch fitness activities.

This figure was reviewed in 2013 and all risk management paperwork was updated to reflect it. Please ensure you use the current versions available on the volunteer website: <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/risk-management>

If you are concerned that a service provider doesn't have adequate insurance cover, contact your Local Networks Officer for support, or get in touch with Andy on the details below.

-  **Audience:** All
-  **Action:** Share, act – review risk assessments and raise concerns
-  **Contact:** Andy Grant,
Branch Health and Safety Officer
andy.grant@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0924



Research

£2 million for Edinburgh Centre for MS Research

We're delighted to be renewing our funding of the Edinburgh Centre for MS Research (formally known as the Edinburgh Centre for Translational Research), investing £2 million over the next five years. We set up the Edinburgh Centre in 2007, with generous support from the Volant Trust, with the overall aim of discovering effective therapies for progressive MS.

Researchers have already made several breakthroughs, in collaboration with the MS Society funded Cambridge Centre for Myelin Repair, that are moving us closer to the first potential myelin repair therapies. They're now focussing their efforts on research using stem cells in order to speed up the translation of laboratory findings into treatments for people with MS. They hope that working with human tissue will provide a clearer idea of how MS develops, and a better method for modelling the condition and finding effective treatments for people with MS.

We wouldn't have been able to support the Edinburgh Centre over the last eight years, investing over £4 million, without you – thank you. We hope you're as excited as we are about what the next five years of research will bring.



Audience: All



Action: Share



Contact: Research team

research@mssociety.org.uk

020 8438 0822

Innovative clinical trial for secondary progressive MS underway

MS-SMART, a phase 2 clinical trial into progressive MS, has begun. It will investigate whether treatments that are already being used for other conditions could slow or halt disability progression in people with secondary progressive MS.

The trial is testing the safety and effectiveness of amiloride (licensed to treat heart disease), fluoxetine (licensed to treat depression) and riluzole (licensed to treat motor neurone disease) compared to a placebo (dummy) drug in 440 people. You can read more about the trial itself at www.mssociety.org.uk/research/ms-smart or by visiting the MS-SMART website: www.ms-smart.org

We're co-funding the trial, which is costing a total of £2.7 million, and also funded £500,000 of underpinning research to make it happen. Michelle Mitchell, our Chief Executive, said: "People with MS have lived for years in hope that one day we will find an effective treatment for secondary progressive MS; this trial takes us one step closer to making that hope a reality. Our goal is to ensure people with MS have access to effective treatments, including treatments which can slow, stop or reverse the accumulation of disability."



Audience: All



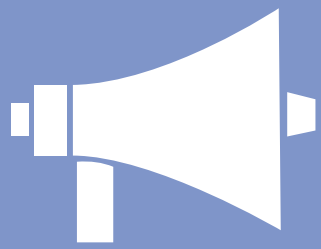
Action: Share



Contact: Research team

research@mssociety.org.uk

020 8438 0822



Fundraising

Keep calm and eat cake

Many of you will be holding your amazing Cake Break events this month – good luck! We hope that they're a huge success and look forward to hearing all about them and how the money raised can help people affected by MS in your local area.

Don't forget to let us know how much was raised at your Cake Break. It's also really important to tell us when you bank any Cake Break donations from supporters too, so we don't spend time and money following up with those who've already given their donation to your branch. Please send us full details of each donation banked – this will be a huge help.

Share your photos and Cake Break stories with the online MS community by posting on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag **#CakeBreak**, or post them in the Cake Break Event on Facebook: www.facebook.com/MSSociety We're also asking who inspires your Cake Break – tell us using the hashtag **#Ibakefor**

If you haven't registered for Cake Break yet, it's not too late – you can hold your event whenever works for you. You can still register by contacting Jemima on the details below.

Here's to a fabulous Cake Break!



Audience: All



Action: Share, act – let us know when you bank donations



Contact: Jemima Woolgar
cakebreak@mssociety.org.uk
0845 481 1577
www.cakebreak.org.uk

Funding your branch's work

Local branches are increasingly making successful applications to local charitable trusts and local authorities to fund their projects and activities.

Recently branches have achieved funding for activities as diverse as money advice, exercise classes, branch choirs and for individual support grants.

To be successful, applications need to be well planned, written with a clear purpose, properly costed and able to demonstrate why there is a need for the activity or project.

Ideas and guidance on making successful applications are in the fundraising section of the volunteer website, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/applying-local-trusts>, or available from your Area Fundraiser. Branches can apply to any local trust and we're happy to help with identifying suitable ones.

It's important to coordinate applications with your Area Fundraiser as most trusts will only make one grant at a time. We need to make sure that we maximise the chances of strong applications being successful and raise as much as we can to beat MS.



Audience: All, especially fundraisers



Action: Act – work with your Area Fundraiser to apply for local grants



Contact: Your Area Fundraiser or National Fundraising team



Fundraising

Appeals update

Thank you for all your support with our recent appeals.

In February we began our spring telemarketing campaigns, contacting supporters to see if they're able to help us regularly through a direct debit or perhaps kindly increase their existing gift. The response has been really positive and will provide vital long term support.

In March, many of you will have received the first direct mail appeal for 2015, focusing on our Short Breaks Grants. Take-up of these grants has more than doubled since the programme launched in 2011 and we want to be able to offer a grant to everyone who needs one. You can find more information and donate at www.mssociety.org.uk/break

In April, we launched our Spring raffle. We're hoping for a similar response to the record-breaking Christmas raffle – there's still plenty of time to play before the raffle closes on Friday 3 July.

In June, we'll also be launching an appeal focusing on fatigue in MS. At least 75% of people with MS experience fatigue and it's one of our research priorities. Trishna Bharadia, who talked openly on *The People's Strictly* about her battle with fatigue, will feature in the appeal when it's sent out on 6 June.



Audience: All



Action: Note



Contact: Direct Marketing team
marketing@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0700

Bike the UK for MS – show your support

On July 18 a group of brave and hardy cyclists will set off from John O'Groats aiming to end up at Lands' End on 2 August, some 1,006 hard miles later.

The group, Bike the UK for MS, is led by James Whateley, a student from the University of Bath. They're raising money for the exercise classes offered by Bath, Bristol and other branches, as well as research into the benefits of exercise for people living with MS.

Twenty riders have bravely signed up already but there is still room for more.

Most importantly, James is looking to arrange stops along their route to meet up with local branches to motivate the riders and help them understand the difference their support is making.

You can see their full route and find out more here: <http://biketheukforms.org>

If your branch can meet the group along the way and give them some much-needed cheer and support, then please do contact Andy on the details below.



Audience: All



Action: Share, act – cheer the riders on their journey



Contact: Andy Jarrett, Area Fundraiser
andy.jarrett@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0943



Support

Meeting the Need survey

A huge thank you to all the support volunteers and other grant committee members who completed our Meeting the Need survey last month.

Branches play an essential role in supporting people with MS locally, so hearing from volunteers with direct experience of grantmaking has been a vital part of this project. We know from previous feedback that the grants given by branches can be life-changing. The information you have provided will help to shape what the MS Society could offer to people affected by MS in the future, either on our own, or in partnership with others.

Meeting the Need is an evaluation and needs assessment project funded through a grant we obtained from Awards for All. The project will evaluate the grants we provide to people affected by MS through the Individual Support Grants (ISG) fund, and find out more about their specific financial support needs. This project will ensure that we can continue to make a real difference to people affected by MS.

We'll share the results of the survey with you in the coming months.



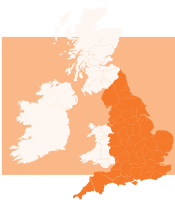
Audience: All



Action: Note



Contact: Julie Gilson, Grants Manager
grants@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0950



For England

Care Act now introduced

On 1 April the Care Act was introduced by local authorities across England, bringing together over 60 years of care and support legislation. The Act introduces a new national eligibility criteria and new rights for carers and people with MS to access care and support.

The Act also introduces a new emphasis on recognising fluctuating needs as part of the assessment process. It sets out that care and support plans should now make comprehensive provisions as to how a person's local authority will meet their needs if they change.

The guidance for local authorities also makes a key recommendation around ensuring that appropriate services are developed for working age adults, and that people are not pressurised into using services that are not appropriate for them.

The Care Act will also introduce a cap (a maximum amount a person has to pay) on care costs from April 2016. The Government recently consulted on these proposals. We responded calling for a cap lower than the Government's proposed £72,000 and investment in the overall care and support system.

If you have any experience of how the Care Act is working in your area – for example, if you have an assessment under the new eligibility criteria – please tell us about it.



Audience: England



Action: Share, act – tell us your experiences



Contact: Policy and External Relations team

campaigns@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0700

England Council Annual Meeting

The England Council Annual Meeting takes place from 10am – 3.30pm on **Saturday 6 June**. It will be held at MS National Centre in London.

The England Council works on behalf of people affected by MS in England. The 15 Council members are elected volunteers and meet four-to-five times a year. The Council members act as ambassadors, supporting the development of volunteers and ensuring the voices of everyone affected by MS are heard.

You're always welcome to get in touch with your local Council member to share your views, feedback, comments and questions on any topic. Attending the Annual Meeting is your opportunity to hear more about their work in person.

On the day, the meeting will be covering:

- our new strategy and progress so far
- the work of the England Council in 2014/15, and plans for the rest of the year
- an update on plans to raise the profile of MS following the General Election
- a research update focusing on secondary progressive MS

Attendance is free and anyone is welcome to attend. Lunch will be provided. To book your space and let us know about any dietary requirements, please contact Louraine on the details below.



Audience: England

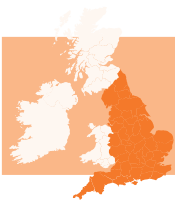


Action: Share, act – book your place



Contact: Louraine Palmer, EA to Executive Director of Services and Support

englandcouncil@mssociety.org.uk
020 8438 0757



For England

Wirral Wellbeing for MS

2015 is a landmark year for the Wirral branch as they celebrate both the tenth anniversary of their Aqua Therapy project and the fifth anniversary of their Wellbeing Exercise and Tai Chi provision. Together under the umbrella Wirral Wellbeing for MS, these therapies have made a huge difference to the lives of people with MS on the Wirral.

The first Aqua Therapy group was set up in 2005, soon expanding to a second weekly session with the help of an NHS grant. The Wellbeing Exercise and Tai Chi classes were also set up with grants from the Big Lottery Fund and Liverpool One Foundation in 2010. Overseen by lead support volunteer Berni Gallagher and her team, Wirral Wellbeing for MS has since gone from strength to strength, with over 3,500 attendances in 2014. Wellbeing Exercise classes are most popular, consisting of both standing and seated exercises, so all can get involved. The classes are followed by relaxation and refreshments, offering time for members to chat and support each other.

A recent evaluation of the Aqua Therapy project found that 81% of beneficiaries felt that the group was 'very important' or 'crucial' to their lives, with 73% reporting 'improvement' or 'major improvement' to their Health/Wellbeing and Condition/Lifestyle. These benefits include better balance, a reduction in symptoms and managed relapses, resulting in fewer GP visits. Equally significant, the social connection provided by the classes leaves attendees feeling more positive, and better able to tackle the rest of their week.



One new starter wrote: "Everybody has been so kind and welcoming. I can recommend this to anyone, it's such a tonic."

Wirral Wellbeing for MS has been such a success that in 2011, the Wirral branch won the Spirit of Merseyside Award for Health and Wellbeing. The award citation praised the project for "offering much needed respite and giving people a reason and incentive to get up and out each day."

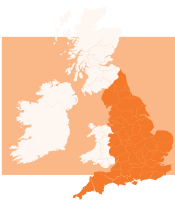
The Wirral branch offers a whole range of services and support on top of the therapies and has no plans to slow down – they're hoping to start providing a chiropody and podiatry service in the near future.



Audience: All



Action: Note



For England

MS Friends

Cheryl James (pictured) has a vision – she'd love to see every MS Society branch running their own lunch group like the one offered by her branch, North Herts.



The branch call the group MS Friends and it meets two Saturdays a month at different local restaurants to offer support, advice and friendship to anyone affected by MS. There are currently 87 members of the group who come together to enjoy informal lunches and chat about anything and everything. The North Herts branch subsidises the cost at £5 per head, including essential carers, as they believe it's an extremely valuable way for people to get involved with the MS community in a friendly, non-medical environment.

Over the years, many newly-diagnosed people have attended the group as a first step in joining the local branch and meet others in the same situation.

MS Friends provides a support network for people affected by MS in the local area and strong friendships have been formed by members. Recent feedback highlights how important the group is to those who find it difficult to get out very often, the diversity of people in attendance, and the positive impact social contact can have on mood and outlook.

Cheryl says: "MS Friends is making a real difference to the lives of those affected by MS in North Herts. It would be great to see this kind of activity running in as many branches as possible. I have also developed a step-by-step guide to setting up a group for anyone who would find it useful."

If you'd like to talk to Cheryl about the possibility of setting up a group like MS Friends at your branch, you can contact her at the details below.



Audience: All



Action: Note



Contact: Cheryl James

cheryljames2010@virginmedia.com



For Northern Ireland

Upcoming Events

Meet the Consultant

We're excited to announce that our 'Meet the Consultant' information event will take place on **Tuesday 16 June** from 6.30 – 9pm at Lisburn Civic Centre. This is an opportunity to meet Dr Gavin McDonnell, Consultant Neurologist with a special interest in MS, hear about the latest developments in MS treatments and services in Northern Ireland, and ask questions.

The event is free and anyone with an interest in MS is welcome to attend. Please get in touch for more information.

Carers Week 2015

Carers Week takes place from 8-14 June. This year, we're hosting a special Carers Week BBQ on **Saturday 13 June** from 1pm – 4pm at the MS Society Resource Centre, Belfast.

The event is an opportunity to get together as a family, relax and enjoy a BBQ. We'll have games, a bouncy castle and face-painting for the little ones, with information available on the support and services on offer for carers in Northern Ireland. Register your places by contacting NI Reception.

Support Volunteers Forum

Save the date for our Support Volunteers Forum, taking place on **Friday 5 June** at the Resource Centre, Belfast. More information about the day, and how to register, will be sent to branches shortly.



Audience: Northern Ireland



Action: Share, act – register for the events



Contact: NI Reception

nireception@mssociety.org.uk

028 90 802 802

Fundraising events

On Your Bike for MS

We're delighted to be supporting Ben Allister's *On Your Bike for MS* cycle challenge on **6 June** (see next article) – if you're a keen cyclist, why not get involved?

Starting in Enniskillen and finishing at Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle, the ride will travel through four counties – Fermanagh, Tyrone, Armagh and Down. Cyclists can choose to ride the full distance of 91.6 miles or the shorter routes of 29 or 31 miles. Cyclists must pledge to raise £150 which can be forwarded to us before or after the event.

Moonlight Walk

Take part in our magical Moonlight Walk on Slieve Donard on **16 August**. This is a fantastic opportunity to walk up Northern Ireland's highest peak with only the stars and a torch to guide you. A reasonable level of fitness and suitable walking shoes/clothing are required. Walkers will enjoy a breakfast BBQ upon their return. We ask that all participants pledge to raise sponsorship of £70 which can be forwarded to us before or after the event.

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah!

Get an adrenalin rush as you zip across Belfast's River Lagan at our Lagan Zip Slide on **19 or 20 September**. This is a great event for anyone looking for a bit of challenge. The event is for over 16s only. We ask that all participants pledge to raise sponsorship of £75 which can be forwarded to us before or after the event.



Audience: Northern Ireland



Action: Share, act – sign up



Contact: Samantha Creighton,
Community Fundraiser

samantha.creighton@mssociety.org.uk

028 90 802 802



For Northern Ireland

Four Counties Cycle

Ben Allister, volunteer and Young Person of the Year at the 2012 MS Awards, is organising an epic sponsored cycle to fundraise for the MS Society.

Inspired by his mum Siobhan, who was diagnosed with MS in 2009, 20 year old Ben (pictured) has organised a four county cycle from his home town Enniskillen to Newcastle, County Down on **Saturday 6 June**.



Ben said: "I organised my first cycling event in 2012 and raised £19,000 for the MS Society. Looking back, the thing that gave me most pride was the morning of the event, when the town was buzzing with 18 motorbikes marshalling the event and 34 cyclists. When they all took off I felt as if I had just arranged the Tour de France. It was such an amazing feeling so I'm hoping this year's cycle will be even bigger and better."

Find out how you can take part in Ben's cycle challenge in the Fundraising Events article.

 **Audience:** All

 **Action:** Note

Coleraine MS Self Help Group still going strong

The Coleraine and District Branch is celebrating 32 years of their successful MS Self Help Group this year.

The group was founded by MS Society volunteers Iris and Ian Cooke who worked tirelessly for 30 years to support and guide people living with MS in the Coleraine area. Unfortunately, due to ill health both Iris and Ian have had to resign from their volunteering roles within the branch. However, their dedication has inspired a new generation of volunteers who are committed to continuing the good work of the Self Help Group.

This includes 13 year old Joanna Ramsey. She volunteers at the Self Help Group every Thursday with her mum Jane, who has MS. Branch Chairman Alastair McAfee describes Joanna's impact on the group: "Joanna has learning difficulties and she started attending the group with her mum a few years ago. At the beginning she was very quiet and withdrawn but after a few months she started to feel more comfortable and knew that she wouldn't be judged here. It wasn't long before she started helping out, making tea and helping the branch committee with our quizzes and information service. She is a wonderful volunteer and brings great fun and joy to our support group. She has thrived in her role as a volunteer and we're all so proud of her".

 **Audience:** All

 **Action:** Note



For Scotland

Welcome to new Scotland Council members

We're delighted to welcome three new members to the Scotland Council:

Mary Douglas, Sue Polson and Judith Allison. Mary was elected as the Council's new Chair at the February meeting. We asked them to tell us more about themselves.

What is your connection to MS?

Mary: I was diagnosed in the 1980s so have been living with MS for 30 plus years.

Sue: I was diagnosed with relapsing/remitting MS in 1998 (now secondary progressive).

Judith: My mum has primary progressive MS.

Why did you stand for the Scotland Council?

Mary: I've found the MS Society very helpful and supportive so when I took early retirement from the NHS, where I had developed skills I felt would be useful to the work of Council, it was time to give something back.

Sue: After many years of working with the MS Society's Research Network and the last five on its Steering Group, I decided I was ready for a new challenge. So, crossing fingers, I applied and last September I discovered I had been elected!

Judith: I've been looking to get involved with a Board or Council for a while but hadn't found a charity I could really connect with. When the opportunity came up here, I jumped at the chance, given the personal experience I have with MS.

What do you hope to achieve for people living with MS in Scotland?

Mary: I think the Scotland Council has a vital role to play in raising the profile of MS and helping to improve access to services and support for people with MS.

Sue: I want to encourage people living with MS to take an interest in the exciting research (and those who carry it out) that is happening on our doorstep. I've found that learning about this disease has been the greatest weapon available.

Judith: Increased support for young people with MS and young carers.

What are you most looking forward to in your new role this year?

Mary: Working with fellow council members, the team at the Scotland office and branches to successfully start to implement the new strategy Together to Beat MS.

Sue: There's so much to learn about the Council's work but I am looking forward to meeting and listening to more people affected by MS, getting involved in campaigning and encouraging folk to volunteer, while continuing my work with the Research Network.

Judith: Learning more about MS, getting to know the staff and other Council members, and getting involved!



Audience: Scotland



Action: Note



Contact: Rosemary Hastie, Executive PA/Administration Manager

rosemary.hastie@mssociety.org.uk

0131 335 4050



For Scotland

Health and social care services joining up

The words 'health' and 'social care' are often coupled together, but although these services are complementary and co-dependent they have always operated as distinct and separate structures.

However, at the beginning of April an important milestone for Scottish health and care services was ushered in which changes that. With one year to go until integration goes live, Scottish health boards and local authorities submitted plans to the Scottish Government detailing how they intend to share, jointly and equally, the responsibility for managing the expertise and resources of both health and social care services for adults.

Why are services joining up?

The aim is to shift the focus of healthcare from hospitals to support within local communities, shaped by those same communities and locally led. It recognises that partnership working is the key to success in improving the health and wellbeing of people who are living longer and often with long-term conditions. It aims to support people to be as independent and healthy as possible, and to prevent complications that might result in a hospital stay. When people do need to be treated in hospital, the aim will be for integrated services to provide the necessary support for people to leave hospital quickly and recover in their home settings.

The Scottish Government hopes that integration will help reduce duplication and other inefficiencies, making health and care services in Scotland pro-active, preventative and focused on the person.

We'll be monitoring the implementation of health and social care integration and striving to work with each of the partnerships to help develop the best possible services for people affected by MS.

You can read more about integration at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Policy>

For more information and to share your views, please contact the Campaigns team.



Audience: Scotland



Action: Share



Contact: Scotland Campaigns team

scotlandcampaigns@mssociety.org.uk

0131 335 4050



For Scotland

Support in Fife

The committed volunteers at the Fife Branch do a fantastic job of providing local support to people living with MS, running an MS Support Group in Kirkcaldy, and a number of lunch groups who meet monthly in Glenrothes, Dunfermline and St Andrews.

Support volunteer Julienne Beaumont (pictured) runs the Kirkcaldy group, and told us what volunteering with the Fife Branch means to her.



“I was diagnosed with MS five years ago and initially felt very alone. After meeting some branch volunteers in the High Street I went along to one of their lunches. I asked them why there wasn’t anything in Kirkcaldy, where I live, and they suggested I might set something up! I hate speaking in public but I thought this group could really help people, and the branch has given me great support to run it.



“The group has been meeting for two years now and around 12 to 18 people come along each month. We meet in the evenings so people can come after work. I arrange speakers such as the MS nurse (who is very popular!) but the main thing about the group is that it provides people with the chance to talk to others who understand.

“Some members of the Kirkcaldy group have now signed up to be volunteers with the branch, which is great. Four of us have also formed an exercise and swimming group. We go to an active options class which is aimed at people with disabilities like MS (you can be referred to this through your GP).

“As part of the team of support volunteers at the branch I also take calls from people with MS. It could be someone with a specific question, or wanting to meet for a coffee and chat, and sometimes the MS nurse will call and ask if we’ll meet someone.

“Doing this role makes me feel like myself again. After being diagnosed I had to give up my work and now I’m doing something for the community.”

This year, the branch would like to start another evening Support Group in the Dunfermline area.

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Note



Developments at the Lanarkshire Branch



Our Lanarkshire Branch offers a range of support for people with MS, including six support/social groups that run across the area, and its dedicated volunteers work closely with the MS nurse who will refer people to the branch for support. The branch has a new Facebook page and newsletter and has been promoting exciting fundraising events such as skydiving. With new volunteers joining the branch and exercise classes, counselling services and therapy provision all in the pipeline, we asked new Chair Karen Henvey to tell us more.

“I was studying social work with psychology and sociology when I was diagnosed with MS in 2010, and as part of my course I started to explore gaps in local services for people with MS. Becoming a volunteer with the MS Society gave me an opportunity to start to address that. Local services are so vital to people with MS who may be socially isolated and lacking support.

“I trained as a MS Society support volunteer and then started up a support group in East Kilbride. Last year I put myself forward as Chair of the Lanarkshire Branch and am now enjoying working with the other volunteers at the branch to make positive change in the area.”

There have been lots of exciting developments. The branch is applying for funds, which they hope to put towards establishing a counselling service for people living with MS. They have also given MS awareness talks to fifth and sixth year students at the local high school, which has led to an interest from young people in fundraising and volunteering for the branch.

“We’re really keen to attract more new volunteers to help us expand our work providing a support services mechanism that links up over the whole of Lanarkshire,” Karen says. “It’s been great seeing the impact that our support groups are having, allowing people to meet others who understand and helping people develop a positive outlook on living with MS.”

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Note



TwoCann Tuesdays Support Group

When Swansea-based Paul Robinson was diagnosed with MS, he remembers feeling pretty low and isolated. Paul said; “I wanted to know that I wasn’t alone in this and I think I could really have benefited from having other like-minded people to talk to and reassure me.”

A few years later, Paul and another friend living with MS, Neil Roberts (both pictured), approached the Swansea branch, local MS specialist nurse and the owner of a local cafe with the idea of setting up an evening meeting. The TwoCann Cafe was kindly offered free of charge and the TwoCann Tuesdays MS Support Group is still going strong five years later.

Paul says “The group is intended to be a peer support group and a safety net for people recently diagnosed with MS, but it’s also really fun, vibrant and a whole range of people come along. I think the group’s success is fundamentally reliant on the Swansea Branch’s funding and support, as well as the Morriston Hospital’s neuro team, who refer people recently diagnosed with MS to our group.”



The meeting is free, runs from 7-9pm and welcomes 20-50 people every third Tuesday of the month. There’s no formal agenda and the atmosphere is very relaxed. Paul likes to meet and greet people at the front door and will introduce them to others, or let them have their own space if they’d like to talk in their own time.

“The most satisfying part of TwoCann Tuesdays is helping people who are feeling anxious by demystifying MS, helping them to understand what they may face in the future and showing them that they aren’t alone.”

 **Audience:** All

 **Action:** Note



For Wales

Cor aMaSing!

Cor aMaSing is a choir with a difference – all the members are affected by MS. Connected to the Gwynedd and Mon branch, the choir recently celebrated its second birthday with a concert in Bethesda commemorating a remarkable two years.



The choir was formed with the intention to integrate an isolated community of people living with or affected by MS in and around Gwynedd and Anglesey. Initially funded through the branch and a lottery grant, the choir is now autonomous and self-sustaining, raising money through performances. The 22 members have all taken on individual roles within the group, ranging from communications and music planning, to social media and fundraising.

All involved have found participating in Cor aMaSing to be a hugely uplifting and confidence-building experience. Many friendships have been formed and as the group has grown in strength, they've started providing extended support and activities beyond the choir meetings.



In the past two years the choir have chalked up a list of impressive achievements, including securing coverage in both local and national media and even appearing on the ITV news. Their proudest moments to date are being invited to perform at MS Life and the Llangollen International Eisteddfod.

Cor aMaSing will be appearing at a fair in South Gwynedd in July, and performing in Bangor in the Autumn.

 **Audience:** All
 **Action:** Note



New chapter for Llandrindod Wells branch

In 2003 Joan Morgan (pictured) responded to an article in the local paper advertising the role of Llandrindod Wells branch secretary. She was perfectly qualified, having worked in health and the third sector, and had particularly valued working with people with MS. As well as being a dynamic committee member, Joan has been at the forefront of the branch's campaign to improve services for people with MS in Powys. Now, after 12 years' tireless work, she has decided to take a well-earned rest and was presented with a Shining Star Award as she stepped down at the branch's AGM.



Joan says, "I could go on at length about my wonderful time with the MS Society. My summary would be how much fun it has been and how much I admire and respect the positive and determined attitude of the members and their carers. It also filled that big gap between leaving a busy career and adapting to retirement. I have gained more than I have given!"

Her retirement will leave a void and presented a dilemma for branch chair, Lindsay Davies – how to replace the irreplaceable? Lindsay has risen to the challenge by placing advertisements with the local volunteer service and community support officers. She seized the opportunity of a visit by volunteers with therapy dogs for an article and photo in the local County Times, as well as following up with a notice of the forthcoming AGM and appeal for volunteers. These proved successful and prompted a contact of Lindsay's to step forward for the role of secretary.

However, for Lindsay, "nothing is as effective as word of mouth." One of the dog handlers was so impressed by the work of the branch that she and a friend have agreed to become committee members and Lindsay has also succeeded in encouraging another of her friends to sign up. She says, "This heralds a new chapter for the branch and now Joan can come and enjoy branch meetings with her friends."

 **Audience:** All

 **Action:** Note



Branch contributions

Thank you to all branches for your contributions. They are all gratefully received.

Branch contributions 1 January to 31 March 2015

Branch Name	Earmarked Description	Earmarked	Research	General
Alton – Petersfield & District Branch			£1,000.00	
Black Country Branch			£1,100.00	
Borders (The) Branch			£3,000.00	
Bridgend & District Branch			£3,000.00	
Canterbury & District Branch			£1,500.00	
Castlederg Branch			£2,500.00	
Chesterfield & District Branch	MS Smart Project	£2,000.00		
Clydebank & District Branch			£1,500.00	
Coleraine & District Branch			£1,500.00	£1,000.00
Croydon Branch			£5,000.00	
Dereham & District Branch	Cambridge Myelin Repair Centre	£500.00	£500.00	
Dunoon & District Branch			£5,000.00	
Isle of Wight Branch			£2,000.00	
North Durham Branch				£500.00
North Hertfordshire Branch	Cambridge Myelin Repair Centre	£5,000.00		
Omagh Branch			£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Orkney Branch	Research in Edinburgh, Scotland	£5,000.00		
Scarborough & District Branch	Cambridge Myelin Repair Centre	£1,000.00		
Scarborough & District Branch	MS Nurses	£1,000.00		
St Helens & District Branch	Stem Cell Research	£10,000.00		
St Helens & District Branch	Cambridge Myelin Repair Centre	£5,000.00		
Sutton (London Borough of) Branch	Helpline	£2,000.00	£8,000.00	
Torfaen Branch				£1000.00
West Oxfordshire Branch			£6,000.00	
Yeovil & Sherborne District Branch	MS Nurses	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	
Total		£33,000.00	£45,100.00	£4,500.00



Classifieds

Accessible caravan

The North Surrey branch has a two-bed accessible caravan with full veranda and wheelchair ramp access available for holiday hire based at Church Farm in Pagham, West Sussex.

The Rio Willoughby is a comfortable and stylish caravan specifically designed with the needs of wheelchair users in mind. It has a spacious lounge/diner, a kitchen with lowered work surfaces, a bathroom with walk-in shower and two bedrooms.

Church Farm is a 5* Haven site with a great entertainment schedule and two swimming pools. For further information, please email mscaravanpagham@hotmail.co.uk

Holiday Lodge

The North Norfolk Branch has acquired a new Boston Lodge at Burgh Castle, near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, for people with MS, families and carers. The lodge sleeps six with a bed-settee in the lounge, a twin room with en-suite shower and a double room with overhead hoists running into a wet room.

The cost is from £200 from Saturday to Saturday. For park amenities please visit www.parkdean.com. For availability ring Sue on 07951 928583 or email justbobandsue@yahoo.co.uk

Holiday lodge and bungalow

The Bexley & Dartford branch have a holiday lodge for people with MS and their families at Shorefield Holiday Village, Milford on Sea, near Lymington, Hampshire. The lodge is fully adapted for disabled people and wheelchair users, and has a master bedroom with en-suite shower room and hoist, a twin room, bathroom, and lounge/kitchen area with sofa bed.

The branch also have a detached two bedroom bungalow at Eastbourne, Sussex, on a peaceful private estate close to Sovereign Harbour. Fully equipped (no fixed hoist) for people with MS and their families and furnished for 4/6 people.

For enquiries or bookings for both properties, please contact the Bexley & Dartford branch on 0208 306 7050 or email bexley@mssociety.org.uk

Accessible caravan

Norwich & District Branch has a two bedroom accessible caravan for hire at Haven's Hopton Holiday Village which is 5 miles from both Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, Suffolk with a brilliant sea view. For park amenities please visit www.haven.com/hopton

The cost is from £250-£350 per week for 6 people, which includes passes for the leisure facilities. For availability or further information, please ring 01603 488561 or email msscentrenorwich@gmail.com

Mention or advertisement by the MS Society of products or services is not an endorsement by the MS Society, its officers or staff.



Teamspirit directory

Our offices

MS Society

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020 8438 0700

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Cardiff CF11 9HA
020 8438 0700

MS Society Northern Ireland

The Resource Centre
34 Annadale Avenue
Belfast BT7 3JJ
02890 802 802

MS Society Scotland

National Office
Ratho Park
88 Glasgow Road
Ratho Station
Newbridge EH28 8PP
0131 335 4050

Feedback on Teamspirit

Teamspirit

MS National Centre
372 Edgware Road
London NW2 6ND
020 8438 0848

teamspirit@mssociety.org.uk

Support groups

Asian MS

A national support group for Asian people with MS, their carers, friends and family
asianms@mssociety.org.uk

Mutual Support

For serving and ex-serving members of the Armed Forces and Reserves affected by MS, their dependants and carers.
support-team@mutual-support.org.uk

Find us online

www.mssociety.org.uk

<http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk>

www.facebook.com/mssociety

www.twitter.com/mssocietyuk

Grants

020 8438 0700

grants@mssociety.org.uk

(all nations)

Give us a call

National MS Helpline

0808 800 8000

Membership

020 8438 0759

Volunteering

020 8438 0944

Fundraising

0845 481 1577