



**Multiple Sclerosis Society**

8 February 2007

MS National Centre  
372 Edgware Road  
Cricklewood  
London NW2 6ND  
Phone: 020 8438 0700  
Fax: 020 8438 0701

email [info@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:info@mssociety.org.uk)  
[www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk)

Dear MS Society supporter,

In early January the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary of the MS Society Northern Ireland (MSSNI) wrote to me to say they had instructed the staff of MSSNI not to cooperate with colleagues in the rest of the MS Society. This action is part of a bigger picture of non-cooperation in the work of the MS Society by MSSNI officers and senior staff that is working against the interests of people with MS in Northern Ireland.

The practical consequences of this action are very damaging to people with MS in Northern Ireland both now and in the future, and are affecting our ability to properly serve members in Northern Ireland. Let me give you two examples, but there are many more:

- People with MS in Northern Ireland have not benefited from additional funding for projects that is available now and being used elsewhere in the UK.
- Funding for a MS nurse post has been delayed by the lack of cooperation.

Today, the Board of the MS Society – made up of volunteers elected by MS Society members across the UK – has looked very carefully at the serious situation that has developed in MSSNI. The Board was particularly concerned that the full extent of the problems may not have been fully disclosed to the Council of MSSNI, which has the ultimate responsibility for all the Society's actions in Northern Ireland.

The Board considered all of the issues, and the written comments from MSSNI. We had hoped to be able to hear the views of MSSNI's officers and Director but they declined our invitation to attend today's Board meeting. The Board also noted that the MSSNI officers had failed to attend a meeting arranged last Friday in Belfast when my Vice Chairs and I came to discuss how these problems might be solved.

*Founder* Sir Richard Cave KCVO CB DL  
*Chairman* Tony Kennan OBE  
*Chief Executive* Simon Gillespie

MS National Helpline 0800 800 8000  
Registered Charity 207496



The Board's prime duty is to ensure the MS Society and its constituent bodies, like MSSNI, act in the best interests of people with MS. The Board very reluctantly decided that the only course of action that would begin to deal with the situation was to temporarily suspend the powers of the Council of MSSNI. This means that you will notice no difference in the day-to-day work of MSSNI but we will be working to improve the way MSSNI is run in the longer-term.

I want to reassure you that we will make sure that services provided to the MS community in Northern Ireland, including those at the Resource Centre in Belfast, will continue to be provided as normal while we sort things out.

Colleagues from England, Wales and Scotland will be working with MSSNI staff and others over the coming weeks to start building for the future. The MS Society is working together to form ambitious plans for the next five years, and all of us need to be part of this process.

The MS Society will continue to provide its information and support services to people affected by MS in Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from the 10,000 publications (such as MS Essentials) that the MS Society supplies to people in Northern Ireland each month. People with MS in Northern Ireland will share in the outcomes of the £2.7 million that the MS Society is investing in research this year. Our website [www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk) and free MS helpline on 0808 800 8000 will continue to be available to people in Northern Ireland.

The Board is determined that the MS Society in Northern Ireland returns – as quickly as possible – to being an organisation run by local people, providing the best possible services to people with MS in Northern Ireland, and as part of a UK-wide MS Society which we can all be proud of. I will write to you again shortly about the interim arrangements we are putting in place to make sure our members and branches are fully consulted over how the MS Society in Northern Ireland is run in the future.

I am sure I can rely on your support so that we can keep on working to give the best possible service to everyone affected by MS in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,



Tony Kennan  
Chairman of the MS Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland