

# MS Society Foyle Branch

## Development Officer Report to AGM 26 May 2009

### Information and Advice

Since May 2008 the Branch has dealt with 2441 enquiries. Enquires vary from information on Multiple Sclerosis, the MS Society and MS Society literature to Foyle Branch services, social services and benefits. I carried out a total of 101 home visits during this period and a breakdown of the enquiries is listed below.

MS Information	378
MSS Information	738
Branch Services	549
Social Services	147
Benefits	164
Education/Training	18
Transport	159
MSS Belfast	114
Home Visits	101
Other	73
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<b>Total</b>	<b>2441</b>

### Support

We have continued providing support to people affected by MS in a variety of ways: home-visits, support groups and support grants are just some examples of this. A total of 101 home-visits were completed during this period and our work has complemented the excellent service provided by Fiona and Carol the MS Specialist Nurses.

Our support groups, yoga and physiotherapy exercise classes remain popular and continue to be a source of information and social interaction for people with MS. For those who cannot attend the classes the physiotherapy service is provided through our home visitation scheme. We're very grateful to Louise for her help and support.

Alongside our annual Christmas dinner the branch quiz remains one of our key social events of the year. The quiz continues to be as popular and competitive as ever and last year was once again a great success. This year's quiz will be held in September and will launch the inaugural Eimear Cunningham memorial cup.

After a recent survey carried out with residents in Spruce House the Committee agreed to install Digital Freeview and Sky TV. Work has commenced on this project and Sky TV has been installed in the dayroom. Money in lieu of flowers in memory of the late Eimear Cunningham will be going towards the costs of the Spruce House installation.

## **Development**

As a member of the Western Trusts Carer and Direct Payments Steering Group we will continue to ensure that the views of people affected by MS are represented. A Carer Support Development Worker has been employed by the Trust to develop support services for carers locally. Support groups are being established in Limavady, Derry and Strabane, which will ensure the involvement of Carers in all future developments.

Our new counselling service is up and running and is very much in demand. Due to the growing demand Pauline Ferry has kindly offered her services as a trainee counsellor and will work alongside our current counsellor, Madeline Callaghan. Our thanks to Madeline for her dedication and commitment in helping to develop this important service.

The Physiotherapy service received a welcome boost this year thanks to the support of Roger and Jean Jefcoate and Rosemary McCloskey at the Disability Fund. The grant aid received of £8,000 has enabled our Branch to provide weekly sessions of physiotherapy in Strabane, Derry and Limavady to people affected by MS as well as providing one to one sessions through our home visit scheme. As part of the process we also received guidance and training on fundraising techniques. The support we received from Roger Jean and Rosemary was considerable and very much appreciated.

## **Awareness**

Awareness and media coverage for our Branch over the last year has been very positive. Naomi, Shauna and other members have had their stories told in the local press. We continued to provide MS and MS Society awareness sessions throughout the year. Some examples include talks to trainee counsellors at the North West College and information briefings to our local politicians. Our Webmaster continues his excellent work with our website which remains an excellent source of information for our members and non-members alike. Our fund-raising efforts also increase awareness of our work through media coverage and our direct interaction with the general public on flag days.

## **Fundraising**

Our fundraising efforts have been very successful this year and the support we have received has been a reflection of the work and services provided by our many volunteers:

• The Nelson McGonagle/Roe Valley Golf Day	£6,800
• Kathleen Canning art/craft fair	£333.39
• Beechtree Bar	£900
• The Disability Fund	£8,000
• Stream	£1,250
• BT Charity Fund/ Wesley Boyd	£1,000
• Claudy Walk/Dance – Sandra Robinson	£888
• Ban Joes Bar, Dungiven	£1,200
• Derry Mid-week Cricket League	£300
• Loyal Orange Lodge No. 1 District	£750
• Tree Top Farm – McCrea Family	£3,040
• Jacqueline and Mark Gamble	£567
• Glendermott Presbyterian Bowling Club	£200
• University of Ulster Students Union	£400
• University of Ulster School of Nursing Staff	£700

The above is an example of some of our fundraising efforts over the last year and strong evidence of the volume of support the Foyle Branch has received. Many of the above initiatives received extensive media coverage, which promoted awareness of the work of the MS Society. Damien, our Treasurer will give a full financial report at the AGM.

## **Transport**

Our Branch minibus was kept busy throughout the year and our volunteer drivers and helpers have again done us proud. The Tuesday Club, people going on holiday/respite breaks are just some of the work undertaken.

## **Our Volunteers**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who have helped make our Branch a successful support structure for people affected by MS in this area. Without our dedicated volunteers the Foyle Branch would not exist.

Terry McNamee  
Development Officer