

## **MS Society Foyle Branch**

### **Development Officer Report to AGM 16 Oct 2007**

#### **Information and Advice**

Since May 2006 the Branch has dealt with 3876 enquiries. Enquires vary from information on Multiple Sclerosis, the MS Society and MS Society literature to Foyle Branch services, social services and benefits. A total of 171 home visits were carried out during this period and a breakdown of the enquiries is listed below. The increase of 1340 enquiries is partially due to the changed timing of this year AGM.

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| MS Information     | 307  |
| MSS Information    | 1181 |
| Branch Services    | 901  |
| Social Services    | 367  |
| Benefits           | 227  |
| Education/Training | 56   |
| Transport          | 253  |
| MSS Belfast        | 304  |
| Home Visits        | 171  |
| Other              | 109  |

**Total 3876**

#### **Support**

The Foyle Branch has continued providing support to people affected by MS in areas such as information and advice, transport, home-visits, support grants and help with benefit claims. A total of 171 home-visits were completed during this period and our work has complemented the excellent service provided by Fiona Mullan, MS Nurse.

We organised and ran two health programmes, "Holistic Approach to Health and Healing" and "Caring For Me". These were well attended and included people with MS and Carers.

Our Support Groups, Yoga, Tai Chi and Exercise class remain popular and continue to be a source of information and social interaction for people with MS.

Our Branch quiz held at the Waterfoot Hotel, (now closed - new venue required), was again a great success. The turn out was fantastic and this

annual event has become very popular and competitive. Our thanks to Damian and Maurice (quizmaster) for their expertise and the craic!

### **Development**

Twenty-three new members have joined the Foyle Branch since our last AGM, which has seen our membership grow to 194. We now have Yoga classes in Derry, Claudy and a weekly Yoga class begins in Limavady on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

The Carers Forum has continued to meet and a Carer Support/Development Worker has been employed by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to help develop support services for carers locally.

Our Branch hosted the MS Society Northern Ireland's 50<sup>th</sup> AGM and Pritchard Lecture in the Tower Hotel in Derry last October. This was the first time that both the AGM and Pritchard Lecture had been held outside Belfast. The evaluation/feedback was excellent which is thanks to our Committee, drivers and other volunteers who helped make it a success.

The Listening Ear Service has been in demand and feedback from users has been very positive. This was a new service started by our Branch in 2006 after consulting our membership. Our thanks to Madeline for her work and support throughout the last year.

### **Awareness**

An MS awareness session was held with Carers employed by the Western Health and Social Care Trust. With the assistance of Marie and Raymond we aim to raise awareness of MS symptoms and issues faced by Carers.

Media coverage for our Branch over the last year has been very positive. Three members diagnosed with MS had their story of diagnosis and living with MS in the local press. Our Webmaster continues his excellent work with our website which has attracted some attention from the USA recently.

In recognition of the work of MS Society Foyle I, with a selection of other community leaders, was invited to lunch with the President of Ireland and her husband at Aras an Uachtarain. I had an opportunity to discuss the work of our Branch with the President, Mary McAleese and her husband Martin.

### **Administration**

This is an area that is time consuming but extremely important to the efficient running of our Branch. Membership is checked and updated on a regular

basis with information passed on to MSHQ Belfast and London. We currently have two members who give time on a voluntary basis helping out in the office, my thanks to Shauna and Pauline.

Telephone, e-mails and postage are just some of the daily tasks. Support is offered to all fundraisers and of course thank you letters are sent to everyone who donates.

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising has been excellent during 2006/2007. Our membership and friends have taken this task very serious and have even thrown themselves out of aeroplanes to raise money. Naomi O'Loughlin and friends raised £3201.35 and Daire Curran raised £506 with sky jumps.

Sandra Robinson has organised a sponsored walk and a dance in Claudy for the past two years. This raised £3771.32 in 2006, which was split between Friends of Spruce and our Branch. Sandra has repeated the event this year with funding still to come in.

Pat Brown held a lunch at her home to promote the activities of our Branch. This event was very well attended and produced a fantastic £520 funding as well as raising awareness of our work.

Damien, our Treasurer will give a full financial report to the AGM.

### **Transport**

Our Branch minibus was kept reasonable busy throughout the year and our volunteer drivers have again done us proud. The Tuesday Club, people going on holiday/respite breaks and moving vital equipment for our members is just some of the work undertaken.

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.

Terry McNamee  
Development Officer