

MS Society North East News

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Welcome to the Spring Edition of MS NE News. Our 1st edition in 2007 includes a detailed calendar of upcoming events and current programmes organised by the NE regional team. Please keep a copy for future reference.

As many of you will know we now have a new and dynamic management team in national office headed by our new **CEO Anne Winslow**. We wish them all the best in designing a **New Strategic Plan** that will provide a road-map for the provision of a range of quality services into the future. The North East team has been busy in 2006 increasing the level and variety of supports we offer to members-we hope this trend will continue in 2007.

The Independent Advocacy Service for people with MS in the NE continues to provide one-to one advocacy to some of our most vulnerable members. This service has been running for over a year now and has been extremely successful. This post is part-funded by the **Citizen Information Board (CIB** formally Comhairle) and is due to finish in Dec 2007. We are hopeful however that our solid working arrangement with **CIB** will ensure that our members we will continue to have access to an Independent Advocacy services beyond that date (please see inside for details on regional survey). We look forward to **Pauline Mc Kenna** coming back from maternity leave and thank both **Clare O' Neill** and **Rosemary Mc Keown** for continuing and enhancing this essential work in 2006/7.

The services we have been able to deliver from our MS Regional Office were given a huge boost with the recruitment of **Aoife Keegan** Senior Community Physiotherapist and **Sue Mulligan** Administrator. They have been both working extremely hard to deliver physiotherapy programmes to our clients and support for carers locally throughout the region. This service has been funded through the Dept of Justice/Pobal with the working collaboration of the HSE and many voluntary organisations which we are indeed thankful.

As you will find in our programme of events for 2007, we are aiming to provide a wide range of supports to clients and their families in the NE region. Our casework continues to support over 360 clients including a large number of newly diagnosed members over the last 2 years. Our teenager and family programmes hope to support families and informal carers to deal with some of burden of caring for members with MS. Our weekend couples programme provides a valuable break and encouragement to clients and their partners living with this condition.

We hope to provide a quality service to all our members in 2007. With the support of our members, our local Branches and colleagues in the HSE, **CIB** and voluntary agencies we endeavour to increase the level and variety of support that members need to continue living and working independently in their own communities with dignity.

I would like to thank in advance both my colleagues **Tess** and **Lorna** and all of our members for their continued support -go raibh maith agaibh go leir.

Kevin Curran, MS North East Spring 2007.



Hi, my name is Aoife Keegan. I have been recently appointed as a Physiotherapist for people with Multiple Sclerosis in the North East region. My role is to implement the Optimise and Empower programme in partnership with the HSE. This project is funded by Pobal in a partnership arrangement between MS-Ireland and the HSE. An administrator - Sue Mulligan - has also been recruited to work on this project.

The Optimise part of the programme focuses on people with MS. In particular, it aims to target those with fairly active lives who find it difficult to access local services in a clinical setting. The classes will address common issues in Multiple Sclerosis such as flexibility, balance, fatigue, strength and co-ordination. The Empower part of the programme will focus on education of carers and also teach carers and families basic physiotherapy techniques. These classes are free of charge.

In November an open day was held for all MS clients in four areas in the northeast to invite participation. Referrals have also been received from the HSE physiotherapists. Assessments have been conducted throughout the region in partnership with the IWA, Rehab and the HSE day centres. The information collected will be used to examine the effectiveness of the exercise programme. Evening sessions commenced on 5th February and are being held in Dundalk, Drogheda, Monaghan, Cavan and Trim.

The next 8 week block of exercise classes will commence from Monday 23rd April and will continue in 8 week blocks until December 2007 (both day and evening classes). All MS clients are very welcome to attend and participate in these classes.

We have been very grateful for the level of interest and support from the local branches, and for the positive working relationship we have had with the HSE.

If you have any queries or require any information about the programme please do not hesitate to contact me at the number above or my email address akeegan@ms-society.ie.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Aoife Keegan MISC

ADVOCACY SERVICE

Just over a year ago the Advocacy Service for people with Multiple Sclerosis was launched in the North East Region. This is a free, confidential and impartial service funded by the Citizen Information Board (CIB formally Comhairle) in partnership with MS Ireland. Every case of MS is different and varied; each person will have different needs and problems and this is why this service is offered on a one to one basis.

Over the last year the work of the Advocacy Service for people with MS has uncovered a number of recurring issues that are of concern to us. Some of these include the following:

- High rate of applications refused for both Primary Medical Certificates and Disabled Persons Housing Grants.
- Problems getting both Mortgages and Life Assurance policies (excessive loading on premiums)

To find out how many of our clients are experiencing these difficulties throughout the region we are conducting a survey. With your help our Advocacy service will contact all our members by telephone or in person (over 360 members of MS North East Region) to find out how wide spread these issues are for people.

This is an important piece of work and is the first time that people with MS will be surveyed to find out the extent of how certain issues affect their quality of life and also to highlight any areas of discrimination. The topics we will cover in the survey are;

- A. Health
- B. Finance & Mortgages
- C. Employment
- D. Transport
- E. Information

Our Advocacy Officer will be in touch with you over the next few months and we would really appreciate your assistance in conducting the survey.

If you require any further information please contact MS Ireland, North East Region, 1 Church Lane, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. Tel. No 042-9664410 or Citizens Information Centre, Freephone 1890 777121. Web: www.citizensinformation.ie

RESPIRE CARE GRANT

The Respite Care Grant is paid by the Department of Social & Family Affairs to carers, aged 16 or over who are providing full-time care for at least six months (period must include the first Thursday in June). The grant has been increased from €1,200. to €1,500 payable in June '07. The full grant will be paid for each person being cared for and is **not** MEANS TESTED but you must apply for it. If you are in receipt of a carer's allowance/benefit payment or Domiciliary Care Allowance you do **not** have to apply as it will be paid automatically in June.

You are allowed to work 15 hours per week without affecting the grant.

Application forms are available from your local Social Welfare Office or www.welfare.ie or Citizens Information Centre. www.citizensinformation.ie

DISABLED PERSONS HOUSING GRANT

Special grants are available to adapt houses for people with disabilities. A grant may be given where an extra room or other structural changes are necessary to assist the needs of a person with a disability. This could include the building of an extra room, the provision of a downstairs bathroom or shower, a stair lift, the provision of ramps, widening of doors etc.

The local authority decides if the proposed work is necessary. The full cost of the work (up to a maximum of €20,320 in the case of a rented local authority house or flat may be granted. If you own your own home 90% of the cost (up to a maximum of €20,320) may be available. If you have difficulty in raising the other 10% required you may be able to get a small home improvement grant from your local authority. In the case of a new house or where the house is less than a year old the grant available is up to €12,700.

The grant will **not** be paid if work starts before the grant is approved.

Applications must be accompanied by a detailed itemised estimate of the cost of the work from the contractor, a specification of the proposed work and the contractor's income tax number and VAT number. Apply to your local authority.

2007 Events Calendar for the North East

Saturday/Sunday, 10th/11th
March

Newly Diagnosed Programme, Trim Castle
Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath

Tuesday/Wednesday, 3rd/4th
April

Teenagers Break, Tanagh Centre

Saturday, 5th May

MS Living Conference, RDS, Dublin

Friday through Sunday, 29, 30th
June and 1st July

Northeast Summer Shindig (Couples
Weekend), Cavan Crystal Hotel, Cavan

Summer

Optimise and Empower Physiotherapy Pro-
gramme (6 week Programme)

Autumn

Branch Forum

Autumn

Optimise and Empower Physiotherapy Pro-
gramme (6 week Programme)

Autumn

Teenagers Programme—Carlingford Cen-
tre

MS Helpline

1850 233 233

A lo-call helpline is available to people with MS, families, health professionals, etc. The helpline is open Monday to Friday from 10 am to 5 pm as well as Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 pm.

Useful websites:

www.citizensinformation.ie Citizens information is an Irish eGovernment Website provided by Comhairle. The site provides public service information for Ireland including information on Social Welfare payments, Education and Training, the current budget and many more topics.

www.revenue.ie Repayment can be claimed by disabled persons of the VAT paid on certain special aids and appliances. See this website for forms and details.



We would love to hear from you with news, articles, events, letters, etc. that might be of interest to the people with MS and Branch Members that receive our newsletter. Please contact the NE office or email us at northeast@ms-society.ie