

# SWINDON MS & NEURO THERAPY CENTRE

Supporting those with Neurological Conditions



## Spring 2020 Newsletter

# WELCOME

Hello everyone

It's always a bit hard to know how to start an introduction to these newsletters...but I've never found it as tricky as this time! Who could have seen that coming??! All involved in writing this newsletter and in running the Centre (our brilliant staff team, therapists, volunteers and other supporters) hope you are coping well. It is a very worrying time for everyone. The very time when we need to pull together but have to remain physically apart.

We had hoped to keep the Centre open for longer than we were able to in the end, but by the time we closed on 17th March, we really had no choice but to close our physical doors for a while.

Louise, Amanda and the Trustees met in a Video Call after we closed to talk about how we can continue providing our members with some kind of 'virtual' support during the crisis and also to look at our financial position and take steps to ensure that we navigate a safe path through this very strange time.

One of the hardest decisions we took during that meeting was to agree to place all but one of our staff and self-employed team members on "Furlough Leave" with effect from 28th February 2020. Doing this is one of a number of ways we're creating a 'financial security plan' to ensure that we can remain financially strong through and after this crisis.

The one person not on furlough (for the time being at least) will be Sarah Heppenstall who, along with the Trustees, will work to ensure that we remain contactable and in contact with our wider community.

We want to do our very best to keep in touch with you all during this very difficult time. We've already been helping people to continue exercising at home – Sarah ran an online class and Carol is sharing weekly emails to

## ***Our first ever video Trustee Meeting***

Puzzled expressions reflect the strange world we find ourselves in right now!



help. We are pulling together a group of volunteers who will start to contact our members to check that all is OK. Our answer machine is still on in the Centre and will be regularly checked, so do please feel free to leave us a message on 01793 481700 and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We have information and updates on our Website and Facebook and from time to time we will email those who have indicated they are happy to receive contact that way with further information.

Already, since closure, a number of members have been in touch about donations. A lot of people have told us they will continue to make the donations they would usually give when they come into the Centre and we are very grateful for such continued support.

Over the next few weeks and months we will be doing all we can to ensure that our wonderful Centre is in as strong a position as possible for when we re-open. We begin this period with a strong financial position but the funds we have, and the kind donations that our wonderful members continue to make, won't last forever. So, we are launching an emergency fundraising appeal. See the next page for details of where and how you can support us further. Any and all donations will be most welcome and very gratefully received.

Some of you have told us that you are concerned because you are no longer in a position to donate. If you find yourself in this position, please don't worry. We understand. Please stop your standing order if you have one and we hope to have your support again in brighter days.

We want to stay in touch to make sure you are OK and so our regular members can expect a phone call (it may be a hidden number) or an email soon. If you'd rather not hear from us just let us know. We want to stay in touch and look forward to talking to you soon.

Stay Safe. Stay Healthy. And we look forward to seeing you on the other side of all this! To quote Her Majesty, "We will meet again".

Warm wishes

**Tim Culling**, Chair of Trustee

# SUPPORT US

## Support the Swindon Therapy Centre

The Swindon MS & Neuro Therapy Centre has temporarily closed its doors due to government advice to reduce the spread of COVID-19. While the Centre may be shut we are determined to continue to support our members living with Multiple Sclerosis and other Neurological conditions.

The health and wellbeing of our Centre Members is always our number one priority. However fundraising income has already been greatly affected by COVID-19 as many of our events have been cancelled or postponed and Centre-based services can no longer take place for the foreseeable future which means income from voluntary donations have declined dramatically. Whilst some of our expenditure will fall, our income will fall faster.

That is why we are asking for your support now. We want to ensure the financial sustainability of our Centre through these uncertain times to so that we can continue to provide the high level of service that all our current and future members depend upon. There is no other facility like ours within a 35 mile radius, therefore, it is crucial that we continue supporting our members physical, social and mental well-being now more than ever.

We urgently need to plug the funding gap caused by the recent events. We are an independent charity and we do not receive any central government or NHS funding. We will of course be working hard and creatively to find alternative ways of income generation and we will continue to approach Trusts and seek donations but so is every other charity which is why we need our friends and supporters to consider us a this time.

We will be doing everything we can and look forward to re-opening our doors. Please support our cause to make sure we can. Together we can get through this.

[www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SupportSTC2020](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SupportSTC2020)

# SUPPORT WORKERS

While the Centre is closed, we just wanted to start to give you some useful information and signposting to local services. We'll be in touch again, during the coming weeks, to keep you up to date with more local resources and with further information about our own plans to extend our voluntary services during this difficult time

## Phone calls

Whilst we are on "Furlough Leave", it seems that the requirements of the Government Scheme make it hard for us, even voluntarily, to remain in contact with you. Rest assured, though, we are looking for ways to ensure that you can stay in touch with your Centre. We are looking for ways that we can engage volunteers to make contact with those of you who need advice, help or just someone to talk to. We'll be in touch very soon with further details. Watch our social media pages (Facebook) and for emails, if you've said that you're happy to receive them.

## Livewell Swindon

The LiveWell Swindon Hub is a useful resource. For more details have a look at this website.

[https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20139/live\\_well\\_swindon\\_hub](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20139/live_well_swindon_hub)

You can contact Livewell Swindon 01793 465513 or email [livewell@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:livewell@swindon.gov.uk)

## Swindon Borough Council

Are also providing a wide range of support services. Their Website is here:

[https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20129/emergency\\_comms/1094/coronavirus\\_covid-19/2](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20129/emergency_comms/1094/coronavirus_covid-19/2)

We hope that you and your loved ones are coping with this current, very difficult situation. We're thinking of you all and hoping that you all stay safe and well. And we can't wait to see you again soon.

Please take care of yourselves.

**Sian and Julie**



## Welfare Benefits : Telephone advice

As many of you will know, Caroline, Welfare Benefits Adviser at Citizens Advice, regularly visits the MS & Neuro Therapy Centre to give welfare benefits advice, help with form filling, appeals etc.

Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), the MS & Neuro Therapy Centre is currently closed, and Citizens Advice Swindon is changing the way that we give advice generally during this period, moving from face to face advice to telephone advice.

During this time, Caroline is able to give advice to our members over the phone, so please email her at [benefits@swindon.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:benefits@swindon.cabnet.org.uk) and she will reply to arrange a telephone appointment.

Caroline can advise on a range of issues including:

- Benefit entitlement and conditions
- Form filling
- Challenging decisions

If you are a Swindon resident seeking advice on other issues, please email the general Citizens Advice Swindon email address, which can be found through this link <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contact-us/>

In addition, Citizens Advice has produced information about the impacts of Coronavirus on various enquiry areas including employment, benefits and travelling, which you can find here:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>

# GRANTS UPDATE

## Significant gifts mark significant progress towards building works

We were thrilled to receive significant gifts from Sheepdrove Trust, Wiltshire Community Foundation and St James's Place Charitable Foundation towards the building works at Swindon Therapy Centre.

Wiltshire Community Foundation have kindly pledged to cover the full cost of installing 40 solar panels to our new roof. The gift comes from the Science Museum Group Wroughton Fund. The panels will reduce our electricity bill and carbon footprint, freeing up some of our income each year to spend on delivering services.

With the promise of solar panels in place, the race is now on to raise the remaining funds needed to replace our disintegrating roof before the end of the year. Thankfully generous gifts from Sheepdrove Trust and St James's Place Charitable Foundation bring us a step closer to this goal and we now have £12,600 left to raise. Several applications are now under consideration, and hopefully more good news will follow soon.

Swindon Borough Council have also granted planning permission to extend our car park by 17 spaces and fundraising for this can begin shortly.

Combined, these works make a vital contribution towards the future of the centre, and we are delighted to receive support and endorsement from local Trusts and Foundations.

**For more information, please contact Kathryn on [grants@msswindon.org.uk](mailto:grants@msswindon.org.uk)**



# OUR STARS



## Valentines Hamper

Thank you to all those that donate products for our fundraising, we were able to put together a Valentines Hamper that we could give everyone a chance to win at £1 per square. We made £65 from this and the winner was Cathy Bates. Dana added to our prizes with an Avon heart shaped box of goodies which was won by Debbie Walton. Thank you for the donations and to all those that took part.

## Clothing Sale and Bag Collection

We held our twice a year clothing sale prior to the Clothing bag collection, and sold £42.69 of clothing. We do keep new clothing for further sales so as soon as we can reopen and plan fundraising events we will hold another sale. The bag collectors collected 545.5kg of clothing from us which raised £272.75. Thank you to all those that donated clothing,

## Easter

Although our usual Centre activities have had to be postponed this year, Louise set up a table in her garden so that her neighbours could one at a time purchase the knitted bunnies and our donated eggs.



## Beauty Sale

Thank you Shirley Bowman who cleared out her Beauty supplies and donated lots of great new products for the Centre for us to sell. We



raised £79 which Shirley would like to go towards the purchase of another chair for the Oxygen. Thank you



# SHOPPING

## Amazon Smile



If you are an AmazonSmile customer, you can now support Swindon Therapy Centre For Multiple Sclerosis in the Amazon shopping app on your Android device! Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations.

1. If you have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping App, open the App on your Android device.
  2. View Settings and select AmazonSmile.
  3. Follow the in App instructions to complete the process.
- AmazonSmile is not currently available for iOS users.

## ONLINE SHOPPING



Thank you to our amazing supporters shopping online with easyfundraising. £96.23 was raised in the last 6 months for the Centre by people just clicking through the easy fundraising site before they do their online shopping. Your support really does make a difference, so don't forget there's 3,300 shops and sites you can raise free donations with including Sainsburys and other supermarkets. Please make sure you shop the easyfundraising way every time you buy something online:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/msswindon>

### JOIN US FOR THE MONTHLY DRAW

1st Prize £150

2nd Prize £45

3rd Prize £20

**Prizes are drawn on the 7th of each month (or nearest working day) with entry for only £1 per week paid in 4 instalments of £13 payable on 5th September, 5th December, 5th March and 5th June. Next draw entry point is for the June Draw so your application form and payment (by standing order or cheque) needs to be at the centre by 5th Nov.**

**Please contact the Centre for an application form or further information.**

# MS SOCIETY

We're pleased to announce the launch of our MS fatigue self-management course!.

Created with the help of people living with MS, the interactive e-learning course is now live on our website: <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-ms/signs-and-symptoms/fatigue/managing-fatigue/online-fatigue-management-course>

## **How we did it?**

The self-management course is based on fatigue management workshops (called FACETS) developed at Bournemouth University with members from the Bournemouth MS Society group. We translated their face-to-face courses into six accessible online sessions – each around 20 minutes long – that look at:

- the daily reality of life with MS fatigue;
- it's practical and psychological aspects;
- useful tips and strategies to manage it.

## **Who is it for?**

This course is for people with MS, and for Health Professionals to encourage people to try the sessions. The programme aims to normalise the effects of MS fatigue, using strategies and techniques – like the Cognitive Behavioural Model – to teach people to recognise unhelpful thought patterns and provides techniques to overcome these.

Putting the course online means we can reach more people. We can also cater for people with access needs, or who don't feel comfortable in groups.

## **Feedback from our community**

We developed the course with two test groups, iterating the session designs based on their responses. Over 25 people gave us invaluable feedback which helped us shape the user experience.

Here's what some of them had to say at the end of the course:

*“Very professional and polished without being patronising. Provided the course is easily accessible it will be very useful for everyone with MS. It was a privilege to be involved. Many thanks.”*

*“This module was full of helpful tips for managing fatigue, through following the guidance in the modules I now feel that I am better prepared to cope with fatigue and will no longer feel guilty about having to change plans if I have overstretched myself, I will certainly make use of the delegate tool. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to trial this course, I would definitely recommend this to anyone struggling to cope with fatigue.”*

*“Thank you for a wonderful course, I've told everyone about it and will recommend it to everyone once released. The pressure at work is the hardest thing to overcome but I have the notes from the course to help me. It's a work in progress but thanks to this course I have the tools to make my life better.”*

*“I think the course has been very good with lots of helpful explanations and ideas for managing fatigue. I have recognised several things about how I feel and didn't understand how they linked to my MS before.”*

### **Leila Middlehurst-Evans**

Regional External Relations Officer – MS Society South West Region

# FUNDRAISING

## Swindon Community Lottery

Swindon Community Lottery runs weekly and we are one of the good causes listed to benefit from this. The tickets, costing £1 each, will be available online at [swindon-lottery.co.uk](http://swindon-lottery.co.uk) or by phone at 01793 969123. When you buy your ticket you can select the good cause that will receive 50% of the ticket money.

Players will pick six digits between 0 and 9 in any combination. Matching all six in the right order will win a jackpot of £25,000. Matching five digits in order will win £2,000, matching four will win £250 and matching three will win £25. Prizes will not be split, so matches are guaranteed the full amount of the prize.

The more tickets that we can encourage our supporters to buy, the more money we will receive from this lottery each year.

<https://www.swindonlottery.co.uk/support/swindon-ms-and-neuro-therapy-centre>

## Store and Street Collections

All Store and Street Collections have now been cancelled until we can safely be out in the open again. Thank you to Claire Budden for all her hard work contacting every store to organise each collection and a follow up contact to thank the store and update them with the totals. We also thank our team of regular collectors and hope that we can be back out there soon meeting the public and relieving the from their loose change.

## Can your company support us?

There are many ways your company can help us fundraise through sponsorship of events or fundraising on our behalf. Do you have a prize that you could donate for a raffle? Or do you have a team of people that would like to come and help out for a day with some practical tasks.

Please contact Sarah at [fundraising@msswindon.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@msswindon.org.uk) if you think your company or you could help the centre.

# THANK YOU

The centre cannot survive without **your** support.

Over half of our income comes from donations from generous individuals and amazing fundraising efforts. Thank you so much to all those who have organised or hosted collections and run fundraising events. Thank you too to those who chose us as their charity partner this year, including....

TR Register, Kennet Valley Group

Blunsdon WI

Chippenham WI

Thamesdown Rotary

**Thank you to the following stores for allocating us a collection**

ASDA Haydon End

Wyvern Theatre

## Midweek Socialites

Thank you to Vicki Smy for hosting her last meeting in February before going on maternity leave. Thank you for all her hard work in overseeing mid week socialies – we wish her well.

# THANKS TO

With special thanks to the following Trusts, Foundations and companies. Without your support we simply would not be able to offer the range and scope of services that we do for people with MS and life limiting neurological conditions.



Douglas Arter Foundation

DNO Consulting

The Jack Lane Charitable Trust

Dr T C Wilson Charitable Trust

And finally, thanks to the following Trusts who have awarded grants to Swindon Therapy Centre's new roof or car park.



Openwork<sup>o</sup>

The John Rayner  
Charitable Trust





**Swindon  
Community  
Lottery**

supporting

**SWINDON  
MS & NEURO  
THERAPY CENTRE**



# WE'VE LAUNCHED OUR LOTTERY PAGE

**Buy Your Tickets From Our Page - We Get 50%**

- We now have a Swindon Community Lottery page!
- Support local causes and win prizes of up to £25,000!
- 50% of all tickets sold from our page go to us!
- PLUS 10% goes to other local good causes!
- Tickets only cost £1 per week!

To Start Supporting, Visit:

**[www.SwindonLottery.co.uk](http://www.SwindonLottery.co.uk)**

And Search For:

**MS and Neuro Therapy**

Get in touch with the centre, We're here to help

Please get in touch and tell us your ideas and feedback. We would love to hear from you.



[stcswindon@msswindon.org.uk](mailto:stcswindon@msswindon.org.uk)



01793 481700



Bradbury House, Westmead Drive, Swindon SN5 7ER