



20
23 | Annual
Report



MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo

Providing essential services to people with Multiple Sclerosis,
related conditions and their families.





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MISSION STATEMENT



MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo

Providing essential services to people with Multiple Sclerosis,
related conditions and their families.

The Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre exists to enrich the lives of people with Multiple Sclerosis and other neurological conditions by providing essential services and supports to clients and their families.



Chairpersons Welcome





CHAIRPERSONS WELCOME



On behalf of the Board of Directors of the MS North West Therapy Centre I am delighted to present the Annual Report for 2023. The report gives a brief overview of the Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre (MS Centre) and its services delivered through the Operational Plan 2023.

The Financial Statements for 2023 will be presented to the Board of Directors for sign-off at the AGM scheduled for May 2024.

The report includes an overview from our dedicated staff and health care professionals on the services and activities delivered throughout the year.

2023 saw a welcome move to working towards our pre COVID-19 levels of service delivery. There have been exceptional challenges during 2023 regarding the national recruitment and retention crisis which had a major impact on our strategic goals during 2023, coupled with no increase allocated in HSE core funding for the provision of services. Despite the challenging landscape, management and staff have managed to prioritise specific services and increase service delivery throughout the year.

In August 2023, we had the honour of celebrating 30 years providing services to the MS Community across the North West, it was a very special day where we had the privilege of having some of our founding members and their families in attendance.

We are extremely thankful to our Clients who have continued to support our monthly Club Draw. We are always looking to increase our subscribers to the draw which comes at a nominal cost of just €10 per month.

We are deeply grateful to all our donors for their generosity in making donations and running fundraising events online during the year. Every euro donated goes towards the running of the services. I would like to take this opportunity to ensure all stake-holders that costs are very tightly managed and controlled.

The risks for the MS Centre, both financial and physical are set out in a realistic fashion. The gap between HSE funding and the cost of running the MS Centre is a cause of ongoing concern. The income from Essential Seconds Charity Shops and the MS 300 Club Draw is critical. Our fundraising goal remains ambitious, we also hope to see a return to the more organic events.

The Board and Management look for the support of the HSE and other voluntary organisations for the provision of funding and staffing to support the continuation of our services. We would like to thank Sligo Social Services and Sligo Leader Project for the provision of care staff and administration personnel via their Community Employment projects. Without the collaboration of the aforementioned groups, service delivery could not be maintained.



I wish to thank the Board members for their continued commitment and dedication towards achieving the goals of the MS Centre during the year. I would like to express our gratitude to the board members that retired in 2023, your commitment throughout your tenure is very much appreciated. I would also like to welcome our new board members and I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

I thank our managers, staff and volunteers for their excellent work during the year. We are very fortunate in having a team of dedicated caring professionals.

The main governance programmes; Improving Quality (IQ), Charities Governance Code, Health and Safety and Safeguarding continue to maintain our standards at the highest possible level. We look forward to the year ahead where we will continue to work toward increased service delivery to all our clients..

Yours Sincerely,
Geraldine Gordon
Chairperson



SERVICE MANAGER'S REPORT



2023 was another challenging year for the MS Centre as the journey of recovery post-covid continued to affect the services delivered to people with MS and other related neurological conditions. In addition, the organisation experienced reduced service capacity due to serious challenges relating to staff recruitment and retention.

The MS Centre has been in receipt of Community Services Programme (CSP) funding, administered by Pobal from the Department of Rural and Community Development since 2015 as a contribution towards payroll for the provision of services in Woodhaven, our accessible and supported holiday respite facility on the First Sea Road, Sligo. This service ceased due to lack of financial and human resources in May 2020 and was subsequently leased to the ICTOP service operated by the HSE. In 2023, The Board submitted a business case to Pobal to reallocate the funding (which was originally awarded to Woodhaven) to the MS Centre day service to enable us to resume our HBO service which has remained closed since May 2020. Unfortunately, the application was unsuccessful and after many lobbying attempts through local and national political representation, Pobal decided to exit the organisation from the Pobal Community Services Programme in September 2023.

On a positive note, for the first time since the pandemic, the MS Centre were delighted to reintroduce exercise classes in the centre, classes include circuit classes and pilates classes each week. Midday Meditation was re-introduced online in 2023 and was led out by the Physiotherapy Department.

The MS Centre has hosted Information Sessions for clients of the MS Centre and staff with persons from outside the organisation attending and giving presentations on their area of expertise. In 2023, talks included: 'Carers Rights & Entitlements' by Tricia Blee, Support Manager Community, Sligo, Leitrim & Donegal from Family Carers Ireland; 'Do you know your rights and entitlements? How will the recent budget 2024 affect your pocket?' by Orla Barry, Development Manager, Sligo/North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Services; and also, a Demo Day for staff from Gavin Horan Living Comfort Support.

The MS Centre continued to strengthen its links with Professor Susan Coote and MS Ireland in 2023. All Physiotherapists (PT) from the MS Centre attend fortnightly online in-service training with PTs working with MS Ireland. The Physiotherapy Department has been successful in establishing a pathway for the purchase of specialised physiotherapy equipment for clients through the HSE in Roscommon and Mayo. The MS Centre Senior Physiotherapist is now a qualified 'Hand Hygiene Trainer' following completion of the IPC Course 12-16th June 2023.



Unfortunately, the MS Centre service faced a number of barriers in 2023 which prohibited us from achieving all the objectives set out for the year. The biggest of these barriers was the loss of staffing and the difficulties in recruitment followed by the inability to retain staff due to lack of pay parity with our counterparts working in the HSE.

The MS Centre has linked in with parent groups to jointly lobby local political representatives to reopen the hydrotherapy pool in Cregg House. The service has not been in operation since COVID which has had a huge impact on the overall wellbeing of MS Clients and many other groups and individuals with disabilities who benefitted from using the hydrotherapy pool.

During 2023, the MS Centre engaged with umbrella bodies, The Wheel, the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) and have lobbied to our local political representatives with a view to highlighting the ongoing challenges we are facing pertaining to staff recruitment and retention crisis and pay disparity with the HSE. The crisis stems from the stark pay gap between staff working in these organisations and those in the public sector who perform similar, often identical, roles. An agreement was reached between trade unions and Government regarding a pay proposal of 8% for Section 39 Organisations.

In late August 2023, the Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre, Sligo were delighted to celebrate 30 years of providing essential services to people with Multiple Sclerosis and other related neurological conditions. The Board of Directors, Management and staff are deeply appreciative of all those who were involved in the planning of our milestone event, our sponsors and suppliers, in particular our wonderful clients and all those who provided presentations on the day.

The MS Centre Board of Directors understands that significant investment in resources and people will be necessary for services at the MS Centre to develop the service and for which they have firm plans to increase service capacity to meet the ever-growing demands for the service. Coupled with costs associated with recruiting and retaining staff, there is a significant rise in the costs of living such as light, heat and a general increase in servicing, sub-contractors and maintenance costs which going forward will be very challenging for the MS Centre to meet funding shortfalls by means of raising funds via grants and fundraising.

We would like to thank the voluntary Board of Directors for successfully driving the Organisation to achieve its goal, the wonderful staff, project workers, volunteers and clients who are dedicated and committed to the MS Centre, Woodhaven and Essential Seconds Charity Shops.

Tamara Mulhern



Financial





AUDITED ACCOUNTS


Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre Company Limited by Guarantee

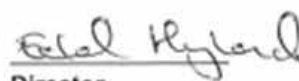
Balance Sheet As at 31st December 2023

	Note	2023 €	€	2022 €	€
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	8	561,939		604,440	
			561,939		604,440
Current assets					
Debtors	9	22,881		19,641	
Cash at bank		623,312		610,284	
		646,193		629,925	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(34,603)		(67,038)	
Net current assets		611,590		562,887	
Total assets less current liabilities		1,173,529		1,167,327	
Deferred income	11	(121,916)		(131,744)	
Net assets		1,051,613		1,035,583	
Reserves					
Capital contribution	12	40,900		38,900	
Contingency reserve	13	271,881		271,881	
Income and expenditure account	15	738,832		724,802	
		1,051,613		1,035,583	

These Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the Small Companies' Regime.

These Financial Statements were approved by the board of directors on 15th May 2024 and signed on behalf of the board by:


Director


Director



RESERVES POLICY

A formal policy on reserves was agreed by the Board of Directors as follows:

It states: The Board has set a reserves policy which requires:

- Reserves be maintained at a level which ensures that the MS North West Therapy Centre's core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty..
- A proportion of reserves be maintained in a readily realisable form.

The calculation of the required level of reserves is an integral part of the organisation's planning, budget and forecast cycle.

It takes into account:

- Risks associated with each stream of income and expenditure being different from that budgeted.
- Planned activity level.
- Organisation's commitments.

The following expenditure was considered for 2024:

- Working capital – Reserves up to 12 weeks to cover all operational costs for all MS North West Therapy services
- Capital Costs – €10,000 has been projected as a contingency figure to cover unforeseen repairs, breakages and equipment maintenance
- Developments – A provision of €5000 has been made to facilitate the costs incurred with staff training, advertising, marketing promotional material regarding services provided by new service at Woodhaven.
- Repairs and Maintenance – In line with Health and Safety concerns, a provision of €15,000 has been made to facilitate necessary repairs and maintenance to the interior and exterior of the MS Centre building in Ballytivnan.
- Other Contingencies – covered above under working capital
- Restricted funds – there are no restricted funds in our reserves

Summary

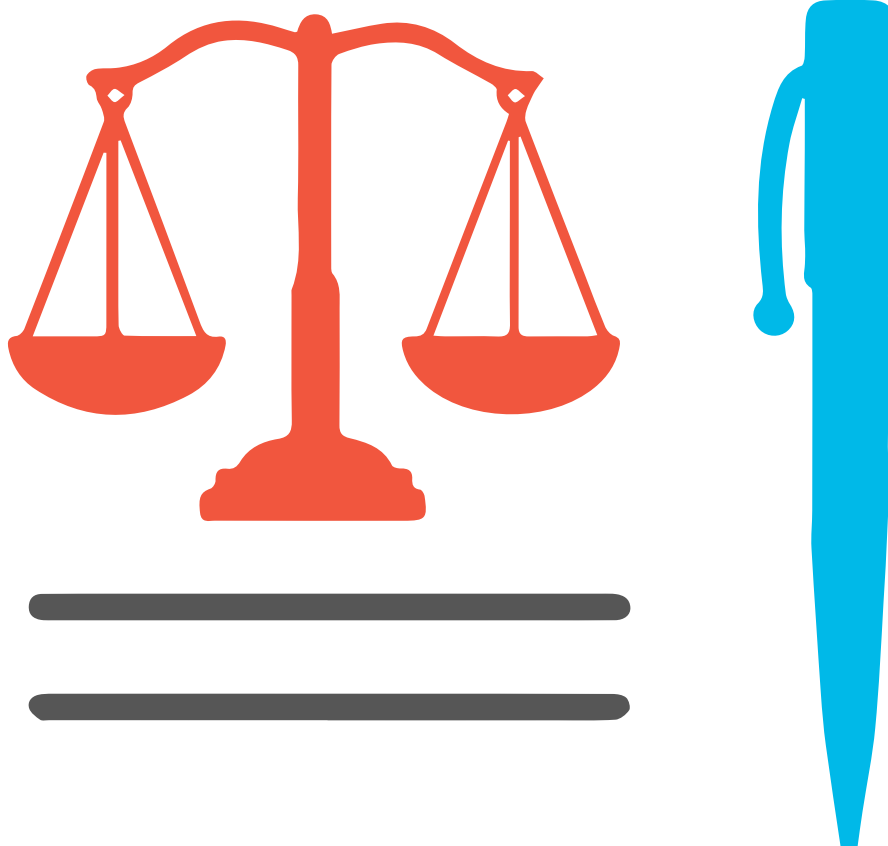
The reserves are in place to provide matching funds for projects that require funding such as and any other such projects should they arise. They are also required for working capital purposes on a day to day basis and to provide bridging finance for programmes where grant aid is paid in arrears, as per banking requirements and good practice.



The Board proposes to maintain the charity's reserves at a level which is at least equivalent to four months operational expenditure.

The monies contained in the reserves account is unrestricted, therefore the Board have the right to allocate funding to where it may be required to fund service delivery.

For 2023 and going forward, the Board agreed that the most appropriate level of reserves should be kept at the level of 4 months operational costs.





RISK MANAGEMENT

In Community and Voluntary Organisations, risk is inevitable and therefore, a process must be implemented to anticipate and develop a plan to mitigate risk.

The MS North West Therapy Centre (MS Centre) like many other charities operate in high risk environments, from coping with changeable funding streams every year to their heavy reliance on voluntary input to bridge funding gaps. Therefore, the MS Centre Board of Directors must be very aware of these risks and must deal with them in the best way they can on an annual basis. The MS Centre takes a very proactive approach to risk management aiming to avoid bad risks but also identify areas for potential development.

A Risk Register is maintained and reviewed by the Board of Directors at all bi-monthly Board meetings. A full record has been retained for 2023.

The Board of Directors have a remit in reviewing the following categories of risks facing our organisation:

- Compliance
- External
- Financial
- Governance
- Operational
- Reputational
- Strategic



Governance





DIRECTORS ELECTED

Board of Directors elected 24th May 2023:

OFFICERS

Chairperson: Geraldine Gordon

Vice Chairperson: Denis Joyce

Treasurer: Lorraine Dempsey

Company Secretary: Mary Henry

DIRECTORS

Gordon Baret

Caradh O'Donovan

MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Geraldine Gordon

Mary Henry

Tamara Mulhern, Mairead Martin

Gina Gartlan (Front Office Manager)

MANAGERS

Tamara Mulhern, General Manager

Mairéad Martin, CSP Manager



SECRETARY'S REPORT

The following legal obligations have been carried out for the year 2023:

- The Annual Report and Financial Statement of the MS North West Therapy Centre Ltd. have been signed and will be lodged with the Company Registration Office (CRO) by the date due.
- The Annual General Meeting was held on 24th May 2023. Notice of the AGM was given 3 weeks beforehand as is required.
- Five full Board Meetings and an AGM were held in 2023, notice and agenda for these meetings were given seven days in advance.
- The Register of Directors has been kept updated during the year 2023.
- Minutes of all Board Meetings were proposed and seconded as true accounts and signed by the Chairperson. They are saved as an online copy on the organisation's server.
- Updated B10 forms relating to director changes have been lodged with the CRO.

Board Members resigned during the year:

Rosaleen O'Grady resigned on the 24th May 2023.

Lorraine Dempsey resigned on the 5th December 2023.

New Board Members nominated and elected:

Edel Hyland – 5th December 2023.

Orla Ward – 5th December 2023.



ATTENDANCE AT BOARDS MEETINGS 2023

Five full Board Meetings and an AGM held in 2023.

Board Meeting 22nd March 2023

Attendance:

Geraldine Gordon
Gordon Barrett
Sr. Mary Henry
Lorraine Dempsey
Denis Joyce
Caradh O'Donovan

DNA: Leo Mc Nally

Board Meeting 24th May 2023

Attendance:

Gordon Barrett
Caradh O'Donovan
Denis Joyce
Lorraine Dempsey.

Apologies: Geraldine Gordon, Sr. Mary Henry

Resignation: Rosaleen O'Grady

Board Meeting 21st June 2023

Attendance:

Lorraine Dempsey
Denis Joyce
Sr. Mary Henry
Gordon Barrett

Apologies: Geraldine Gordon,
Caradh O'Donovan

Board Meeting 8th November 2023

Attendance:

Geraldine Gordon
Lorraine Dempsey
Sr. Mary Henry
Denis Joyce
Caradh O'Donovan

Apologies: Gordon Barrett

Board Meeting 5th December 2023

Attendance:

Geraldine Gordon
Lorraine Dempsey
Denis Joyce
Caradh O'Donovan
Sr. Mary Henry
Gordon Barrett
Orla Ward
Edel Hyland

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

AGM 24th May 2023

Attendance:

Gordon Barrett
Lorraine Dempsey
Caradh O'Donovan
Denis Joyce

Gilroy Gannon Accountants

Apologies: Sr. Mary Henry, Geraldine Gordon.



MEET THE DIRECTORS



Geraldine Gordon (Chairperson)

Geraldine has a background in banking and was elected as a Director 6 years ago. She acts as director with special responsibility for fundraising and has provided assistance to the fundraising committee in setting up and monitoring the MS Club Draw.



Edel Hyland (Director - Treasurer)

I completed a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce in the National University of Ireland, Galway. I trained as a Chartered Accountant in Gilroy Gannon, Sligo qualifying in 2007. I spent 4 years in KPMG in Dublin working as audit manager on a wide range of Irish indigenous companies and PLCs both Irish and International. I have been working in Kerry Group plc since 2013. I have performed various roles throughout my tenure with the current role being Finance Director responsible for the Group Consolidation and Reporting. I am an avid supporter of the Mayo football team and like to travel in my spare time.



Mary Henry (Director)

Mary comes from a background in Occupational Therapy and was Physical and Sensory Disabilities Manager in HSE before her retirement. She was an integral part of the group that set up the MS Centre and was involved both in the original building and fundraising effort. More recently she coordinated the building of our supported holiday facility Woodhaven.



Orla Ward (Director)

Orla has worked in the social enterprise sector for 25 years and her experience includes project management, communications and fundraising. She is currently working in the education and training sector as a Commercial Director. Orla has also worked in the private sector and is a qualified bid manager with experience working on multi-million-pound tenders to government. She has a special interest in organisational strategy and sustainability. Orla joined the board at the end of 2023.



Denis Joyce (Director)

Denis has spent thirty-six years working within An Garda Síochána in a variety of roles. Denis has a diploma in Industrial Relations, Degree in Leadership and a Post Grad in Governance. He is currently Chair of North Connaught/Ulster Citizens Information service and Child Safety Officer for Collera Community games and Collera GAA club.



Gordon Barrett (Director)

Gordon worked as a Social Worker for the NWHB and then the HSE for nearly 40 years mainly with Older People and also as a Medical Social Worker. The increasingly complex issues arising in Health and Social care prompted Gordon to complete a Masters degree in Health Care Ethics and Law in the RCSI in 2007 which proved to be invaluable in his and his Team's work.



Caradh O'Donovan (Director)

Caradh works as Head of Governance for Coimisiún na Meán, the regulator of broadcasting and online media in Ireland. Prior to this Caradh held senior management roles with Boardmatch Ireland, the Irish Athletic Boxing Association and Triathlon Ireland.

Caradh completed her BSc in Sports Management UCD before continuing to a MA Sport & Exercise Psychology at WIT. She holds a Professional Diploma in Corporate Governance from Smurfit Graduate Business School. She joined the Board of the MS Centre in October 2022.



Rosaleen O'Grady (Director)

Rosaleen comes from a background in health. She is a former senior clinical nurse manager with HSE West. She has been a public representative since 1999. She was elected to the Board of the MS Centre in 2014 with special responsibility to assist Woodhaven Manager when needed.



DIRECTOR'S CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the responsibility of Board Members to:

1. Act within the governing document and the law – being aware of the contents of the organisation's governing document and the law as it applies to MS North West Therapy Centre Ltd. This is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.
2. Act in the best interests of the MS North West Therapy Centre as a whole – considering what is best for the organisation and its beneficiaries.
3. Manage conflicts of interest effectively by abiding with the MS North West Therapy Centre's declaration of interests policy.
4. Respect confidentiality – understanding what confidentiality means in practice for MS North West Therapy Centre, its Board and the individuals involved with it.
5. Attend meetings and other appointments on time or give apologies. If three consecutive meetings are missed without apology, you may be asked to step down from the Board.
6. Prepare fully for board meetings – reading papers, querying anything you don't understand and thinking through issues in good time before meetings.
7. Actively engage in discussion, debate and voting in meetings – contributing positively, listening carefully, challenging sensitively and avoiding conflict.
8. Act jointly and accept a majority decision – making decisions collectively, standing by them and not acting individually unless specifically authorised to do so.
9. Work considerately and respectfully with all – respecting diversity, different roles and boundaries, and avoiding giving offence.
10. Work to protect the good name of the MS North West Therapy Centre at all times – avoiding bringing the organisation into disrepute.
11. Directors should not accept gifts and hospitality from stakeholders as set out in the Policy Folder.

Board members are expected to honour the content and spirit of this code.



MEET THE MANAGERS

Tamara Gormley (Manager)

Tamara joined the MS Centre as Services Manager in 2011. Her background includes working in the private sector but primarily in the Voluntary and Disability Sector for the past 17+ years. Tamara has a great passion for the voluntary sector and completed a Masters in Leadership and Management for the Community and Public Sector. Currently her main role encompasses the overall management and co-ordination of services provided by the MS Centre, and retail base Essential Seconds, Charity Shops in Sligo town and Ballymote..



Mairéad Martin (CSP Manager)

Mairéad Martin joined the MS North West Therapy Centre as Woodhaven Manager in 2014. Mairead has over 15 years' experience of working in the community and voluntary sector. Mairead has a BA in Applied Social Studies and has also completed an MA in Leadership and Management for the Community and Public Sector. Mairead's primary role focuses on the quality, compliance for the organisation and management of both charity shops.





SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The MS Therapy Centre has adopted the Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy & Procedures..

The MS Centre has three Safeguarding Designated Officers as follows:

Mairéad Martin (Quality and Development Manager)

Tamara Mulhern (Services Manager)

Gina Gartlan (Front Office)

The MS Centre and Woodhaven continue to have a Zero Tolerance approach to any form of abuse and this is publicly declared by a post at the entrance at the MS Centre.

No Safeguarding matters have been reported in 2023.

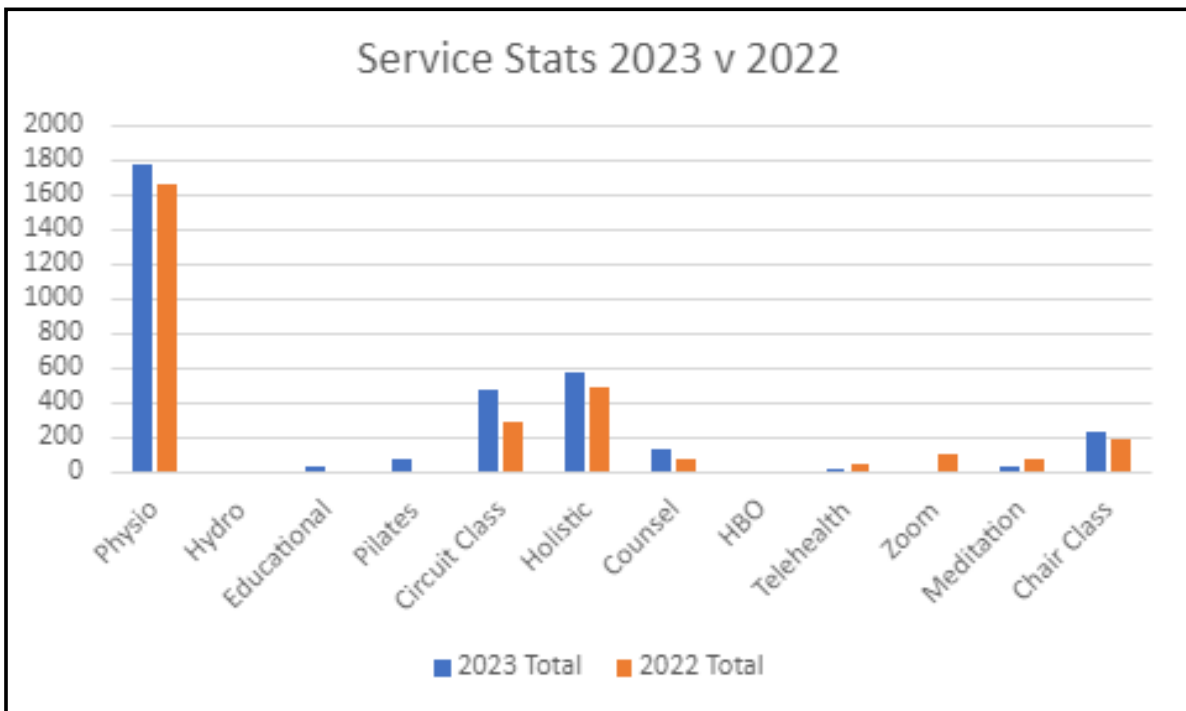
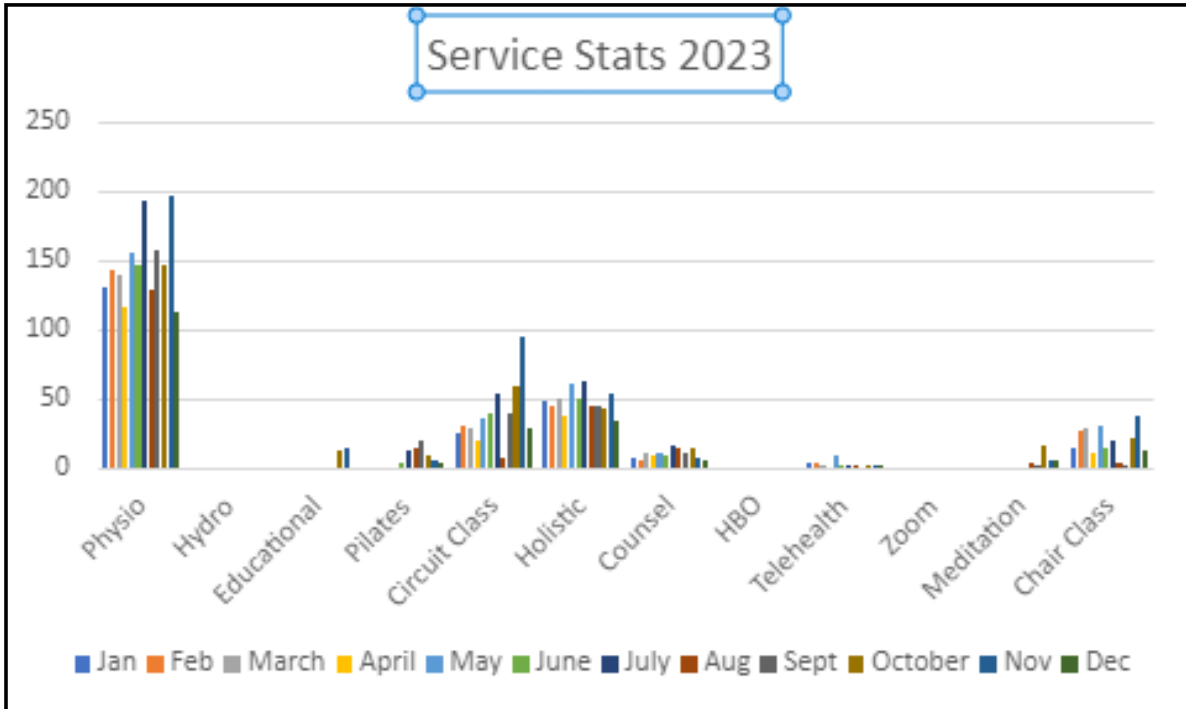


Services





MS CENTRE SERVICES STATS 2023





PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT MS NORTHWEST THERAPY CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Purpose and Vision

The Physiotherapists working in the MS North West Therapy Centre continue in their endeavour to support their clients as they live with a life-long chronic progressive neurological condition. We aim to promote health and well-being by offering appropriate and timely advice on symptom management, by delivering evidence-based treatment, and by offering a range of on-line and in-person classes to help service-users introduce regular exercise into their daily routine. Our goal is to help clients self-manage their condition, and we hope that through a holistic approach to care we can help them improve their quality of life.

The Physiotherapy Department in 2023

- The Physiotherapy Department is made up of 2.3 whole time equivalent PTs; 2 Senior Grade and 2 Staff-Grade PT.
- The MS Centre continued to have a high turnover of PT staff due to the huge surge in recruitment in the HSE which has caused exceptional pressure in the co-ordination and delivery of services. Aideen Melanaphy departed the MS Centre in March 2023 after 19 years as she was offered an amazing opportunity to become clinical lead in A&E in SUH. This post remained empty for the remainder of the year. After many rounds of unsuccessful interviews, a suitable candidate has finally been found and accepted the position. They will start in 2024.
- Zach McGirr departed in May to move to SUH full time as he wished to complete his rotations as he was newly graduated and had not yet experienced all rotations. He was replaced by Lisa Melly. Lisa then departed in October due to issues with CORU Registration. This post was not re-filled before the end of 2023; however, interviews have been scheduled for 2nd of May.
- Megan O'Dowd started working in the 30-hour post in May and stayed in post throughout the rest of 2023.
- There are 3 Physiotherapist Assistants (PTAs), trained to QQI (Fetac) Level 5 – Paula Moran, Margaret Fallon and Lorraine McDermott. We also had the addition of a HCA through the CE Scheme – Olive Mullaney.

Service Trends in 2023

- 31 new referrals were made to the MS Centre in 2023. Of these, 1 client was inappropriate as they were in hospital awaiting other medical intervention, 2 were unable to attend as 1 had moved away and the other had transport issues, and 2 DNA'd various appointments. Of the 26 who did attend, 25 had a diagnosis of MS and 1 had a diagnosis



of Leukoencephalopathy. 18 clients lived in Sligo, 0 were from Mayo, 3 were from Donegal, 4 were from Leitrim and 1 was from Roscommon. 20 clients were aged 18-65, whilst 6 were aged over 65. Of these 26, 9 were previously known to the MS Centre.

- The number of face-to-face physiotherapy treatment sessions delivered in 2023 was 1676, which had increased from 2022, 2021 and 2020, but which was lower than data collected pre-COVID, e.g., 2534 attendances in 2018 and 2575 in 2019. This can be accounted for by ongoing staffing issues plus the change in appointment times from 45mins to 1 hour.
- 213 cancelled appointments were recorded during 2023, with a further 154 recorded as 'did not attend'.
- There were 793 attendances at exercise classes during 2023, which was a big increase from 601 in 2022. Classes were delivered both in-person and on-line, due to lifting of social distancing guidelines.

New Developments / Quality Initiatives in 2023

- Following on from our 2022 goal to up-skill in Foot-drop symptom management and the completion of Odstock Pace FES Online Accreditation Course by Senior PT Hannah Gordon, the MS Centre bought 2 FES from Odstock. These arrived in early 2023 and have been in regular use since. One FES stays in the centre for assessment. The second FES is loaned to clients in the community for trial purposes. Senior PT Hannah has been successful in applying for funding for many clients to have an FES purchased through the HSE and so the MS Centre now has a number of clients using this device as part of their daily lives.
- The PT Department re-instated the in-person exercise classes in the MS Centre. This initiative was led out by PT Megan O'Dowd. There are now 2 circuit classes – on Wednesday (8 attendees) and Thursday (10 attendees) at 12.30 pm each day. There is also a pilates class on Monday at 3.30pm with 8 attendees in a 10-week block.
- Online Midday Meditation was re-introduced by PT Megan O'Dowd.
- Senior PT Hannah Gordon applied for ethical approval to take part in a research study trialling the efficacy of the 'Exoband' as an aid for people with MS. This was a multi-centre study to include the MS Centre, MS Ireland, Axon Rehab and St James Hospital. Ethical approval was granted and testing took place in the MS Centre with the help of PT Megan O'Dowd. A total of 6 clients of the MS Centre took part. The data has been submitted for analysis.
- A goal of 2022 had been to re-introduce the 'Lunch Time Talks'. Due to staffing issues, this was not possible. However, we improvised by organising guest speakers to attend the MS Centre and present on different topics. These sessions had a good attendance from clients and received excellent feedback. Talks included: 'Carers Rights & Entitlements' by Tricia Blee, Support Manager Community, Sligo, Leitrim & Donegal from Family Carers Ireland; 'Do you know your rights and entitlements? How will the recent budget 2024 affect your



pocket?’ by Orla Barry, Development Manager, Sligo/North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Services; and also, a Demo Day for staff from Gavin Horan Living Comfort Support

Education/Continuous Professional Development in 2023

- PTA staff Paula Moran, Margaret Fallon and Olive Mullaney attended an on-line course in ‘Understanding MS,’ which was delivered by the Menzies Institute for Medical Research in New Zealand. This had previously been completed by Senior PT Hannah Gordon, PT Megan O’Dowd and PTA Lorraine McDermott who highly recommended all staff to complete it.
- Senior PT Hannah Gordon attended a ‘Managing Continence in the Community Course’ ran by HSEland on 24th October and virtually attended the ISCP Conference on the 13th October.
- PT Megan O’Dowd is now a qualified in Dry Needling practitioner following completion of the Cohesive Therapy Basic Dry Needling Course in 22-23 September.
- Senior PT Hannah Gordon is now a qualified ‘Hand Hygiene Trainer’ following completion of the IPC Course 12-16th June. Senior PT Hannah has led out on Hand Hygiene training with a number of staff and will continue to do so in order to keep all staff up to date with training for same.
- The PTs continued to attend online in-service training with MS Ireland and sporadically attend in-service training in St John’s Hospital when applicable.
- Three PTs from the MS Centre – Hannah, Megan and Lisa – attended the MS Ireland Conference in Athlone on 15th September 2023.

Plans for Future Development in 2024

- We aim to increase the number of physiotherapy treatments at the MS Centre in 2024. Taking pre-COVID statistics, accounting for slots having changed from 45 mins to 1 hour, and based on a full complement of staff, the projected statistics for the physiotherapy department for 2024 are 2500.
- New PTs, Ciara Scanlon and Grainne Halligan, will start working in the MS Centre in May 2024. They will bring many new skills and interests and have a wealth of experience and knowledge working as physiotherapists in different settings.
- We plan hope to introduce a chair-based class and a new strength-based exercise class during 2024.
- We hope to continue to provide Lunch-time Talks/guest speakers and re-introduce online Midday Meditation. Both of these initiatives have received fantastic feedback previously.
- The PT Dept continue to work to further develop their clinical governance framework. Clinical governance is the system through which organisations are accountable for



continuously improving the quality of their services. It also safeguards high standards of care by creating an environment in which clinical excellence will flourish. The framework will ensure that all PTs keep their CORU registration up to date, that all PTs complete regular CPD, that regular audits take place – to include a ‘Peer Notes Audit,’ ‘PA Competency Review’ and ‘Online Class Review.’

- Senior PT Hannah Gordon aims to complete CPD in Vestibular Rehab in 2024
- Finally, the PT Department continues its involvement in the MS Centre’s quality assurance process through participation in the ‘Improving Quality’ programme. It is hoped that the MS Centre will go forward for accreditation in 2024.

Dry Needling – Annual Report 2023



We have two physiotherapists qualified in dry needling – Hannah and Megan. Megan completed her training in 2023. This is a physiotherapy adjunct that has become more popular with our clients since we first introduced it in 2019. We currently have 10 clients actively attending for dry needling. This number fluctuates constantly as people are discharged when their issue resolves and when new people are referred.

The aim of Dry Needling is to reduce muscle pain and dysfunction by releasing tight areas in the muscle known as myofascial trigger points. Normal muscle does not contain these trigger points. Trigger points may cause disturbed muscle function, muscle weakness and restricted range of motion, as well as local or referred pain. There are several reasons why trigger points develop in muscles. The most common are overuse, over stretch, over loading and trauma to muscles. Dry needling is one way that these trigger points can be treated.

Dry needling is a form of therapeutic approach in which fine solid filament needles are inserted into specific points on the body to relieve pain and improve function. These needles are the same as acupuncture needles, but it is not the same as acupuncture. Some of the physiological effects of needling are common in both, but the principles of assessment and treatment techniques are quite different.

If you are interested in dry needling or feel that it is something that may benefit you, then speak to your physiotherapist who can discuss it with you and refer you to Hannah if appropriate.



HYDROTHERAPY

In people with MS, research has shown that hydrotherapy (exercising in warm water) helps to improve muscle strength, fitness, gait and mobility, as well as quality of life and wellbeing and reduces spasticity, pain and swelling of the limbs.

The MS Centre utilised the hydrotherapy Pool in Cregg House for its hydrotherapy service up to March 2020 when it closed due to the pandemic. The MS Centre has actively lobbied with other groups and to the HSE for the reopening of this facility. The benefits of hydrotherapy are rated very highly and are missed by our Clients, therefore, the MS Centre Board of Directors will continue to engage with relevant parties so that we can once again offer this invaluable service to our Clients





OXYGEN TREATMENT (O2T)



The Oxygen Treatment (O2T) has been provided to people with MS and other related neurological conditions for the past 28 years. The treatment involves breathing in pure oxygen at higher than atmospheric pressure in an enclosed chamber. The increase flow of oxygen stimulates and assists repair of damaged cells throughout the body. It can be very beneficial for people with MS in overcoming fatigue, improving balance and eyesight as well as improving bladder control and general well-being. It is found to be useful in healing soft tissue injuries, sprains and bruising, leg ulcers and circulatory problems. Clients who use the Oxygen Treatment at the MS Centre generally present with MS and other related neurological conditions. However we do offer the service to non-MS clients who pay privately for the treatment. While people with MS are always a priority, our private clients provide much needed funding for us to continue delivering the service to MS Clients.

From March of 2020, our oxygen treatment service was suspended in line with public health guidelines and unfortunately has not resumed since for both financial and staffing constraints. The Board of Directors have worked tirelessly throughout 2023 researching alternative sources of funding and subject to a successful outcome of funding applications submitted in 2023 via the Hospital Saturday Fund, we are hopeful to see a return of this service for at least 1 day per week which will incur a nominal fee payable by Clients using the service. The Board are keen to resume this service which has been identified as a service highly valued by MS Centre Clients via our Review of services questionnaire completed in 2022.



HOLISTIC THERAPY



The provision of Holistic therapy continued to be provided at the MS Therapy Centre totalling almost 600 treatments throughout 2023 by one therapist on site. The main theory of reflexology is that there are reflex points all over the feet that correspond with different areas of the body. By working these points, reflexology can help to bring balance to the body, reduce tensions and improve your quality of sleep and overall wellbeing. Reflexology therapy for patients with multiple sclerosis can improve pain, fatigue, and quality of life. It can be used as an intervention to effectively treat the pain and fatigue of MS patients and improve the quality of life of MS patients.

The Benefits of Reflexology

- Reduces tension and helps with combating stress
- Improves circulation of blood and lymph throughout the body
- Promotes wellbeing and relaxation
- Helps to reduce toxins and impurities from the body
- Creates a space for the body to balance itself
- Strengthens the immune system and energises the body

Throughout the year there was a noticeable increase of newly diagnosed service users requesting holistic appointments.

There were a high volume of cancellations and no shows throughout the year and bearing in mind that non-attendance for a scheduled appointment results in another service user being unable to take up that appointment, a system of reminding the service users was introduced towards the end of the year and this was very successful in identifying possible no shows before they arose resulting in higher productivity and take up of the service.

If you are interested in booking a holistic treatment at the MS North West Therapy Centre, please contact us by phone or email and we will be happy to assist you.





30 Year Celebration





30 YEAR CELEBRATION

On the 17th August 2023 the MS Centre had the privilege of celebrating 30 years of providing essential services and the incredible 30 year journey it has been!

On a fabulously sunny summer day over 170 of our clients, families, staff, and friends gathered to celebrate and reflect upon 30 remarkable years of unwavering dedication and unrelenting commitment from so many people that has made the MS Centre what it is today.

We started the day with a lovely ecumenical service hosted by Reverend Bamber and Fr. Brian Conlon.

The speeches commenced with a warm welcome from our General Manager, Tamara Mulhern who was delighted to welcome everyone to the celebration. Tamara introduced all of the speakers who were selected to provide a representation of the many stakeholders that have been fundamental to the success and growth of the MS Centre for the past 30 years.

The MS Centre was founded in 1993 by a local group of people called the Yeats support group. We were lucky enough to have some of those founding members and their families with us on the day. We had fantastic presentations from Brian Kilcullen, son of Paraic Kilcullen, founding member and Eamon Carney who was instrumental in securing the premises which was then an old gate lodge. These speakers provided a historical overview and insight into the origins of the MS Centre.

Our other speakers on the day included our Vice Chairperson, Denis Joyce and Director Sr, Mary Henry who spoke of the longstanding history of the MS Centre and the Directors commitment to growing and developing the centres services and dedication to steering the MS Centre from a strategic and governance perspective to ensure optimum services are available to our clients.

We had amazing speeches from some of our wonderful clients; Joe Bradley, Eammon Considine and a reading was read out on behalf of Sinead Wims who couldn't be with us on the day.

Dr. Kevin Murphy, Consultant Neurologist, SUH and our own Senior Physiotherapist Aideen Melanaphy provided very insightful presentations on MS from a clinical perspective.

The speeches concluded with Eammon Creed, Solicitor and Friend of the MS Centre who praised the growth and expansion of the Centre over the past 30 years.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent enjoying the beautiful music provided by Noelle Carroll, a delicious buffet and most importantly catching up with clients and friends from the past 30 years.









Essential Seconds Charity Shop





ESSENTIAL SECONDS CHARITY SHOP

Essential Seconds Charity Shops Sligo and Ballymote

The MS NW Therapy Centre has two charity shops which are found in Wine Street Car Park, Sligo and Teeling Street, Ballymote.

The income generated by our shops is utilised to support the delivery of essential services for people living with MS. This income goes towards breaching our €100k annual deficit towards delivering our holistic services including reflexology and counselling and the running of the MS Centre.

We are delighted to report that 2023 was a successful year for our charity shops. Thanks to the generosity of the public's donations, we can ensure continued stock rotation so that there are always new bargains for our loyal customers.

We would like to thank all our customers who have supported our shops in Sligo and Ballymote be it either through your donations or shopping with us. Your continued support is integral to the ongoing success of our charity shops. We would also like to thank the landlords of both shops for their continued support over the years.

Most importantly we would like to thank all our dedicated Volunteers and Staff, without whom the shops would not operate so successfully. We are incredibly grateful of their time, commitment and support of the shops and the MS Centre.

We would also like to thank Sligo Leader and Sligo Social Services who support the participate on TUS and Community Employment Projects to work in Essential Seconds Charity Shops.

We look forward to welcoming you all to Essential Seconds Charity Shops in Sligo and Ballymote where you are guaranteed to find lots of great deals at magnificent prices.





Fundraising





FUNDRAISING

The MS Centre continues to rely heavily on the tireless dedication and enthusiasm of our fundraisers to enable us to continue to fund and support people with MS.

In order to ensure the ongoing operation of providing services at MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo there is a huge reliance on income generated from fundraising events. We continue to experience a gap of approx. €100,000 between the core statutory funding we receive and the cost of keeping the MS Centre up and running. The income generated through fundraising events goes towards delivering our holistic services including reflexology and counselling.

There are many ways in which you can get involved with fundraising and help to raise funds for the MS Centre such as:

- Join our Club Draw 10 euro a month-great cash prizes
- Support our Flag Day in September
- Join our fundraising Committee
- Run an event – coffee morning/sponsored walk or cycle
- Sell MS Centre Christmas Cards
- Make a donation
- Church gate collections
- Support our charity shops Essential Seconds Sligo and Ballymote
- Volunteer in our shops
- Get family and friends to run an event
- Facebook donations
- Link with company's under their Corporate Social Responsibility programme

If you want to talk about any fundraising ideas or get further information, please call the MS Centre and speak to Mairéad 085-8856148/ 071 91 44748.



FUNDRAISING EVENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our Voluntary Fundraising Committee, clients, staff and all our supporters of the MS Centre who worked tirelessly to assist in both our virtual fundraising platforms and organised virtual events in addition to the in-person events that were held throughout the year. Below is just a flavour of some the many events which took place throughout 2023.

January 2023

Donations
Sligo Fire Services
Facebook Campaign

February 2023

Donations

March 2023

Donations
Irish Court Services

April 2023

Tesco Community Support Fund
Donations
Facebook Campaign

May 2023

Donations
Facebook Campaign

July 2023

Evan Brennan Walk
Donations
Facebook Campaign

August 2023

Donations

September 2023

Donations
AIB Community Fund
MS Centre Flag Day

October 2023

Donations
Aurivo Staff and Friends Skydive

November 2023

Dawn Meats

December 2023

Christmas Cards
Sisters of Mercy
McLoughlin Family donation toward canopy
Sligo Pilates
MS Ireland







MS CLUB DRAW 2023

MS Club Draw 2023

In 2023 the MS Club Draw enjoyed another year of a sustainable fundraising event reporting a successful 8th year since the draw started in 2015.

Standing order payments continue to be the preferred method of payment. Cash members continued to be included until they requested otherwise. There are now approximately 95% of our members enjoying standing order payments.

Due to a variety of reasons, the membership of the Club Draw fluctuated each month, but it was supported by between 180 and 195 members for every draw throughout the year. This was mainly made up of past and present service users, past and present directors and staff, extended family members, and friends of the MS Therapy Centre.

The total intake in club draw payments for 2023 was €16,698, down €636 on 2022, this was due to some cash members payments for 2023 being received in 2024 and the loss of 9 members due to various reasons. Prize money of €4,850 was paid out to the lucky winners for the year, leaving a net balance of €11,848. This brings the total intake to €169,079 over the past seven years. Of this, €30,950 was paid out in prize money, leaving a net total of €138,129.

The draw took place on the last week of every month in the MS Therapy Centre. Each draw is overseen by a member of management and/or a company director. The results of each draw are notified to the lucky winners, along with their winnings, the day after the draw takes place and is also published on our Facebook page to ensure full transparency and accountability.

We are hoping to grow our monthly club draw and aim to have up to 50 new members in the next 12 months. We are extremely grateful to those who continue to support us, however we are now on a drive to ensure that everyone availing of our service is a member of the Club Draw. The monthly prizes are as follows – 1st prize €200, 2nd prize €100, 3rd prize €50 and 4th prize €50. This support is invaluable to us and would go a long way in bridging the gap which is a task set for the fundraising team each year. If you would like to support the MS Club Draw, please check with reception for a standing order form.



January

1st Prize €200 Ciara Couch
2nd Prize €100 Frances & Francis O'Brien
3rd Prize €50 Eileen Keenahan
4th prize €50 Margaret Kenny

February

1st Prize €200 Deirdre McCarthy
2nd Prize €100 Betty Kilfeather
3rd Prize €50 Terry & Mary Gannon
4th prize €50 Helena McCaughley

March

1st Prize €200 Sharon Foley
2nd Prize €100 Denis & Moria McGuinness
3rd Prize €50 Catherine McHugh
4th prize €50 Irene Reddington

April

1st Prize €200 Deirdre McCarthy
2nd Prize €100 Helen Philips
3rd Prize €50 Siobhan Tighe
4th prize €50 Lucy O'Hara

May

1st Prize €200 Noreen Gildea
2nd Prize €100 Joe Campbell
3rd Prize €50 Brian & June Aldridge
4th prize €50 Tracy Ward

June

1st Prize €200 Gloria McDonagh
2nd Prize €100 Bridie McLean
3rd Prize €50 Mary O'Connor
4th Prize €50 Justin Henry

July

1st Prize €200 Hugh Bennett
2nd Prize €100 Sinead Rooney Wims
3rd Prize €50 A Fagan & C Burke
4th Prize €50 Mary Gray

August

1st Prize €200 Betty Kilfeather
2nd Prize €100 Eileen Keenhan
3rd Prize €50 Damien McCormack
4th Prize €50 Thomas Dyer

September

1st Prize €200 Bridie McLean
2nd Prize €100 Gabrial Daly
3rd Prize €50 Barbara Lowry
4th Prize €50 Gillian Lucy

October

1st Prize €200 Justin Henry
2nd Prize €100 Mairead Martin
3rd Prize €50 Noel Hennessy
4th Prize €50 John & Eileen Duffy

November

1st Prize €200 Jess Deering
2nd Prize €100 Helin Kilcullen
3rd Prize €50 Paula Lahiff
4th Prize €50 Joan O Connor

December

1st Prize €200 Philomena Gilmartin
2nd Prize €100 Edel Deering
3rd Prize €50 Patrick Ryder
4th Prize €50 Mary McWeeney





Improving Quality (IQ)





IMPROVING QUALITY (IQ)

Improving Quality (IQ) is the quality scheme supported by DFI/Sola and is used both as a self-assessment tool as well as an external assessment tool. Its focus is on 4 elements that all not for profit organisations need.

There are two levels in IQ, foundation and progression. The MS Centre has embarked on the foundation level with a view to ensuring that we continue to uphold all regulatory, mandatory and best practice requirements throughout all departments in the organisation.

Core Principles

Improving Quality is built around 4 core principles as outlined below.

1. **Accountable-** This Element describes requirements for good governance, leadership and management
2. **Welcoming-** This Element is about people – involving service users, managing and developing staff and volunteers, equality and diversity, and working with others
3. **Effective-** This Element refers to the services that the organisation provides and the planning, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation that the organisation carries out
4. **Sustainable -** This Element covers how the organisation manages risk, money and the resources used to make service delivery happen.

The IQ team are continuing to implement the four principles throughout the MS Centre and Essential Seconds Charity Shops are working towards applying for accreditation in 2024.



The National Ability Supports System (NASS)





NATIONAL ABILITY SUPPORTS SYSTEM

The National Ability Supports System (NASS) collects and stores information about the disability-funded services that people use and need, such as:

- residential services
- respite care
- day services
- personal assistants
- specialist supports like occupational therapy or physiotherapy

The NASS is used to help plan, develop and organise disability services and supports, to tell other health professionals about the number and types of services that people with disabilities need and thereby prove why funding is needed for disability services and supports. NASS collects a range of data including demographic, socioeconomic and diagnostic data on service users in addition to details about the assistive technology and services they receive and/or require. The MS Centre has fully engaged with the NASS in 2023 and is committed to ensuring that information on the NASS is accurate and complete to inform disability policy and service planning of disability services in Ireland.



Charities Governance Code





Under the Charities Act 2009, every charity registered in the Republic of Ireland is required to submit an Annual Report to the Charities Regulator. When submitting this report Charities must declare their status regarding compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

This Charities Governance Code explains the minimum standards you should meet to effectively manage and control your charity. Good governance involves putting in place systems and processes to ensure that your charity achieves its charitable objectives with integrity and is managed in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent way.

The six principles of the Charities Governance Code are:

- Advancing Charitable Purpose.
- Behaving with Integrity.
- Leading People.
- Exercising Control.
- Working Effectively.
- Being Accountable & Transparent.

The Board of Directors of the MS Centre holds compliance with the Charities Governance Code high on the agenda in relation to governance and review the code at every Board meeting. The Compliance Record Form for 2023 has been completed and compliance reported to the Charities Regulatory Authority.



Future Plans and Activities





FUTURE PLANS AND ACTIVITIES



Going forward into 2024, The MS Centre is committed to continually develop and improve the quality of its services..

Throughout 2023, the organisation provided services within the parameters of what our core funding and generated funds from the Charity shops permit on an annual basis. For 2024, the Board of Directors are very eager to increase performance service delivery statistics ensuring to stay within tight budgetary guidelines and allocated core funding. In addition will carefully review the findings of the 'Review of services questionnaire' and endeavour to implement changes from the suggestions made by our clients subject to available resources to be reflected and included in the Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2026.

Within the Centre, The MS Centre will continue to offer Telehealth services which include one to one physio consults and online exercises which we plan to deliver up to 6 times per week. There is also a plan to return to in-person group classes, continued growth of our



online fundraising activities and events. Subject to funding, we would like to see the return of some of our services that discontinued in 2020 due to the pandemic, however, certain services may incur a nominal fee payable by the Client receiving the service.

The Board have also reviewed the overall risks facing the organisation and have highlighted the area of HR as a high and critical going forward pertaining to the challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly professional staff such as physiotherapists who can secure better pay and conditions with the Health Service Executive. The Board and have agreed to continually review this operational risk for the company by considering better terms and conditions for their employees such as maternity leave pay and pay increments.

We remain positive that our charity shops, fundraising and Club Draw will continue the vital role of income generation to support the service delivery in the MS Centre. We are hopeful that our Clients, friends and supporters will continue to support our shops into the future to help sustain the services we provide.

The Board of Directors are committed to ensuring the organisation meets all its obligations pertaining to Audit, Finance and Risk in its commitment to good governance on behalf of the organisation. In line with our Strategic Plan, we will be reviewing plans for the use of Woodhaven which is currently leased to the HSE keeping abreast of legislation relating to statutory respite funding which would permit the organisation to plan a return of respite services in Woodhaven.

The MS Centre is committed to providing optimum services to people with MS and other disabilities, their families and carers and have engaged in Improving Quality (IQ) – a highly recognised and reputable quality assurance system.

In addition, the MS Centre has adopted the new The Charities Governance Code. 2019 was the year of learning and preparation for charities and 2020 is the first year that registered charities are expected to comply with the Code. 2021 was the first year that registered charities are expected to report on their compliance with the Code. The MS Centre has complied with the Code and has completed the required compliance record form for 2023. The MS Centre is happy to report that we are fully compliant with the Charities Regulatory Authority and have submitted all required returns for 2023.



MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo

Providing essential services to people with Multiple Sclerosis,
related conditions and their families.

Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre Ltd

A company limited by guarantee

Ballytivnan, Sligo

Phone: 071 9144748

Email: info@mstherapycentre.ie

Website: www.mstherapycentre.ie