



20
20 | 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



The Annual Report 2020 gives a brief overview of the Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre (MS Centre) and its services delivered through the Operational Plan 2020. The report also sets out the activities and plans for 2020/21 through the Strategic Plan – Mid Term Review.

The Financial Statements for 2020 will be presented to the Board of Directors for sign-off at the upcoming AGM.

The report includes an overview from our dedicated health care professionals on the services and activities during 2020.

2020 was a year like no other due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) which causes severe acute respiratory syndrome reached Ireland in late February 2020 and within three weeks, cases had been confirmed in all counties. The pandemic affected many aspects of society and that included the services provided by our organisation. COVID-19 has impacted our services with long periods of closure since March 2020 including our shops and Woodhaven. In addition, we had to cease and reduce some services and completely reconfigure some of our Centre based services.

An excellent team consisting of management and staff worked tirelessly behind closed doors to develop robust COVID response plans, policies, procedures and protocols in line with public health requirements, for staff to follow so we could safely reopen our doors to our clients. In addition the team began exploring the possibility of introducing Telehealth in 2021.

Throughout the pandemic, which has unfortunately decimated our ability to fundraise, we are extremely thankful to our Clients who have continued to support our monthly Club Draw. We are always looking to increase our subscribers so if you want to join at a nominal cost of just €10 per month please contact the MS Centre.

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 assure all stake-holders that costs are very tightly managed and controlled. Every euro is put to good use. Woodhaven, our state of the art holiday facility at Sea Road, aims to provide short-term breaks for people with MS and related conditions. We are appreciative to POBAL for their continued funding contribution for this wonderful facility. We are also very thankful to the HSE for their continued support and funding to enable us to deliver services albeit reduced to our Clients attending the MS Centre.



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 for 2021 with majority of our fundraising activities planned to be executed virtually.

I wish to thank the Board members for their continued commitment and dedication towards achieving the goals of the MS Centre during the year.

We very sadly lost our highly esteemed friend and staff member Mary Walsh to illness in June 2020. The contribution that Mary made to this organisation over the last number of years is immeasurable. Her knowledge, wisdom and loyalty was invaluable to the organisation and she is deeply missed by all of her colleagues. We extend our deepest sympathies to her family and many friends. May her gentle spirit Rest in Peace.

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. We wish staff members Brian O'Donnell and Vincent Hunt all the best in the future endeavours as they move on to pastures new.

The main governance programmes; Quality Assurance, Charities Governance Code, Health and Safety and Safeguarding continue to maintain our standards at the highest possible level. We look forward to a brighter year ahead in 2021 where we will hopefully see our service returning to levels seen prior to COVID.

Yours Sincerely,

Geraldine Gordon

Chairperson



SERVICE MANAGER'S REPORT



To say the least, 2020 was a challenging year for all voluntary disability organisations including the MS North West Therapy Centre (MS Centre). As we look back at the timeline of events throughout 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic has had a severe impact on the overall organisation.

On the 12th March 2020, the MS Centre ceased all services in line with COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines; MS Centre Day Service, Woodhaven and Charity Shops Sligo and Ballymote. Thereafter, members of the Physiotherapy MS Centre team were quickly redeployed to work in Sligo University Hospital on a full-time basis. Upon request by the HSE, Woodhaven reopened to provide long term residential services to two people from the community in collaboration with the Physical and Sensory Department of the HSE. MS Centre employees were re-deployed to work in Woodhaven during this time.

As the weeks and months passed, we were so cognisant of the fact that our Clients were without essential services since March 2020. Therefore, from behind closed doors we worked tirelessly to develop COVID response plans, new patient related policies and procedures to enable us to safely and successfully reopen the MS Centre on the 13th July 2020. Services returned at the MS Centre, albeit at a reduced level with Physiotherapy being the first to resume, Counselling and Holistic services a number of weeks later diligently operating in line with public health guidelines. In July 2020, we were also delighted to be able to reopen both of our charity shops which are a lifeline in bridging the gap in our funding to provide services to our Clients with MS on an annual basis.

Unfortunately, in addition to reduced level of services being provided by the MS Centre and respite services suspended in Woodhaven, our HBO service was also ceased in line with public health guidelines and our own capacity regarding staff numbers to run the service. Access to the hydrotherapy pool in Cregg House has also been suspended due to COVID-19 pertaining to concerns contained within Infection, Prevention and Control guidelines.

In October 2020, the Government announced a national move to Level 5 on the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19. Under this plan only essential services were to remain open. Guidance from the Minister for Health advised that disability services are considered an essential service and would remain open which thankfully included services provided by the MS Centre. Both Essential Seconds charity shops in Sligo and Ballymote were closed once again and reopened on the 1st December 2020.

The MS Centre continues to be the only organisation providing essential rehabilitative and support services to people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other related neurological condition in the North West. In 2020, people with MS attended for treatment from Sligo and eight neighbouring counties from Longford to Donegal with a total of 2000 (2019 – 6437)



services delivered by the MS Centre. Services at the MS Centre including Physiotherapy Counselling, Complimentary Therapies, Foot Care Clinic, and access to HSE community based services, continue to experience increasing demand with 15 new Clients registering throughout 2020.

2020 was challenging in more ways than one, with our funding shortfall as usual on the top of the agenda, normal streams of income via traded income and fundraising has reduced significantly since March 2020. However, HSE core funding has thankfully continued as per Service Arrangement in respect of HSE Sligo/Leitrim/Roscommon/Mayo as well as Pobal funding that contributes towards staff costs at Woodhaven. In addition, the MS Centre has been fortunate enough to be awarded COVID specific grants (Stability and Restart Grants) designed to support organisations with their operational costs due to reduced income as a result of the global pandemic. Since March 2020, MS Centre has availed of two Employment support schemes namely the Temporary Wage Support Scheme (TWSS) and Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme.

Throughout 2020, our wonderful organisation has been hit with service closures, implemented regrettable but necessary staff lay-offs and redundancies, ceased a number of services including our bus service which were very difficult decisions and unfortunately in many respects outside of our control. However, in the face of adversity, we have adapted, reconfigured our services and are making firm plans for 2021 where we foresee further changes to the services we provide and are researching possibilities of transitioning our services to an online platform via the introduction of Telehealth. We also foresee a number of traditional forms of fundraising replaced by online activities and events. This together, with the rollout of a nationwide vaccination programme against COVID-19 will hopefully see brighter days ahead for us in 2021 in the MS Centre and Woodhaven and indeed society as a whole.

As 2020 brought a lot of normal activities to a stand-still, from 2021 we are excited to get back into enhancing service quality, and refocusing our attention into our 'Improving Quality' scheme which centres on four core elements:

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.



In addition, going into 2021 we are excited to resume work around the implementation of the Charities Governance Code which came to a standstill due to the disruption brought by COVID-19. The code consists of six principles of governance namely advancing charitable purpose; behaving with integrity; leading people; exercising control; working effectively; being accountable and transparent. Through our reporting with the Charity Regulatory Authority, we continue to maintain the highest levels of governance, transparency and accountability in everything we do.

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, maintenance and administration personnel via their Community Employment projects. Without the collaboration of the aforementioned groups, service delivery could not be maintained. In addition, we would like to acknowledge and thank POBAL, the main funding stream for provision of services at Woodhaven which we hope will resume normal services in 2021 subject to public health guidelines.

Finally, 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 and the success of its services. In addition, much gratitude has to be given to MS Centre and Woodhaven staff who have remained loyal to the organisation throughout the pandemic, were redeployed to Woodhaven to care for vulnerable patients from the community at a time where high numbers of COVID were projected nationwide. Thereafter, Woodhaven staff were redeployed to the Charity shops without any question even though their roles had inherently changed. We are thankful to our wonderful clients who have contributed in so many ways and have been so supportive and patient throughout a most difficult and challenging year.

For 2021, we are again wholly committed to constant improvement in everything we do and hope that our stakeholders will continue to support the MS Centre and the MS Community in any way they can.

Tamara Mulhern



MS Centre, Management & Staff



Financial





AUDITED ACCOUNTS

Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Centre Limited (A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having Share Capital)

Balance Sheet

As at 31st December 2020

	Note	2020	2019	€
		€	€	€
Fixed Assets	8	<u>696,695</u>	<u>737,387</u>	
Tangible assets				737,387
Current Assets				
Debtors	9	14,949	15,429	
Cash at bank		<u>565,161</u>	<u>371,588</u>	
		580,110	387,017	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	<u>(95,651)</u>	<u>(44,858)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>484,459</u>	<u>342,159</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			1,181,154	1,079,546
Deferred Income	11		(152,922)	(153,210)
Net assets			<u>1,028,232</u>	<u>926,336</u>
Reserves	12		32,660	27,400
Capital contributions	13		291,881	190,444
Contingency reserve	15		703,691	708,492
Income and expenditure account			<u>1,028,232</u>	<u>926,336</u>

There financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Small Companies' Regime.



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 2020:

- 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.
- 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 three 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 2020, the Board agreed that the most appropriate level of reserves should be kept at the level of 3 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.

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 27th August 2020

OFFICERS:

Chairperson: Geraldine Gordon

Vice Chairperson: Mary Henry

Treasurer: Lorraine Dempsey

Company Secretary: Paula Lahiff (resigned role as Company Secretary 27/08/2020)

DIRECTORS:

Rosaleen O'Grady

Denis Joyce

Leo McNally

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE:

Geraldine Gordon

Mary Henry

Tamara Mulhern, Mairead Martin

Gina Gartlan (Front Office Manager)

MANAGERS:

Tamara Mulhern, General Manager

Mairead Martin, Woodhaven Manager



SECRETARY'S REPORT

The following legal obligations have been carried out for the year 2020:

- 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 27th August 2020. Notice of the AGM was given 3 weeks beforehand as is required.
- Only three full Board Meetings and an AGM were held in 2020 due to the global pandemic, notice and agenda for these meetings were given seven days in advance.
- The Register of Directors has been kept updated during the year 2020.
- Minutes of all Board Meetings were proposed and seconded as true accounts and signed by the Chairperson. They are filed in a locked cabinet in secretary's office with an online copy on the internet server.
- Updated B10 forms relating to director changes have been lodged with the CRO.

Board Members resigned during the year:

- Paula Lahiff – 27th August 2020



ATTENDANCE AT BOARD MEETINGS 2020

Three full Board Meetings and an AGM held in 2020. Meetings scheduled for March and June 2020 could not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions.

BOARD MEETING

30th January 2020: Attendance:

Geraldine Gordon

Mary Henry

Leo Mc Nally

Paula Lahiff

Denis Joyce

Apologies: All in attendance

AGM followed by BOARD MEETING

27th August 2020: Attendance via Zoom:

Geraldine Gordon

Mary Henry

Rosaleen O'Grady

Denis Joyce

Leo McNally

Apologies: All in attendance

BOARD MEETING

9th December 2020: Attendance via Zoom

Geraldine Gordon

Mary Henry

Denis Joyce

Lorraine Dempsey

Apologies: Rosaleen O'Grady, Leo McNally



MEET THE DIRECTORS



Geraldine Gordon (Chairperson)

Geraldine has a background in banking and was elected as a Director 4 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.



Paula Lahiff (Company Secretary)

Paula has served as Company Secretary to the Board for the past 4 years. She comes from an occupational therapy/advocacy background from her work in mental health services, and more recently has been self-employed in the business sector, providing computer training and secretarial services. Her role includes making sure that all legal obligations of the Board have been carried out according to best practice. She also assists the Services Manager from a governance perspective on the management sub-committee.



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.



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.



Denis Joyce (Director)

Denis has spent thirty-six years working within An Garda Siochana 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.



Leo McNally (Director)

Leo is a local businessman specialising in the area of medical laboratories equipment largely the manufacture of medical and dental instruments and supplies.



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 Mulhern (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 14 years. Tamara has a great interest in 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 its services at Woodhaven and retail base Essential Seconds in Sligo town and Ballymote.



Mairead Martin (Woodhaven Manager)

Mairead Martin joined the MS North West Therapy Centre as Woodhaven Manager in 2014. Mairead has over ten 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. Central to Mairead's role is the provision of an individual holiday based experience for each and every guest that visits Woodhaven.





SAFEGUARDING REPORT

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

The MS Centre has three Safeguarding Designated Officers as follows:

Claire Smyth (Physiotherapist)

Mairead Martin (Woodhaven Manager)

Tamara Mulhern (Services Manager)

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 both the MS Centre and Woodhaven.

No Safeguarding matters have been reported in 2020.

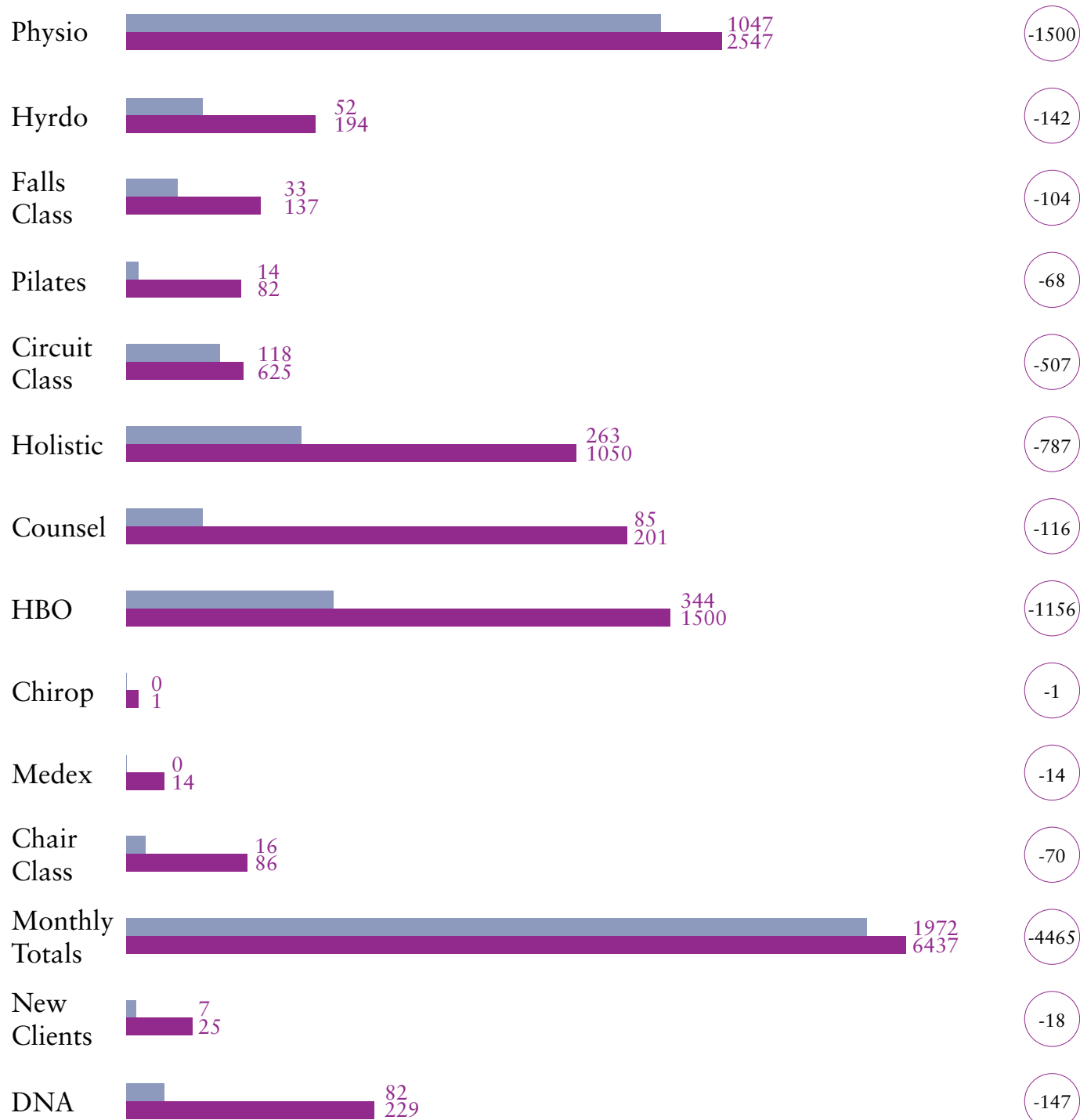


Services





MS CENTRE SERVICES STATS 2020



2019 Total 2020 Total



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Purpose and Vision

The Physiotherapists working in the MS Northwest 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 symptom management, and by offering a range of classes that help service-users introduce 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.

COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020

The year 2020 was dominated by the emergence of a new global virus, called COVID-19. The first cases of the disease were announced in China in early January, but within a matter of months the disease had spread world-wide. Ireland had it's first known case at the end of February, and within two weeks the Irish government made the decision to put the country in to lock-down, in order to reduce spread of the disease. Whilst the measure was introduced to save lives, it had a detrimental effect on all aspects of society, including the provision of health services, which unfortunately included those provided by the MS Therapy Centre.

- The MS Centre closed it's doors on 13th March 2020 in line with national guidelines, and remained closed until 7th July 2020. Two of the physiotherapy staff were re-deployed to Sligo University Hospital, whilst the rest went to work in Woodhaven Respite Unit.
- Prior to the re-opening of the MS Centre in July, extensive work was completed by the Management team and by the Physiotherapy Department to create and implement stringent operational policies and procedures to allow services recommence safely, in line with national COVID-19 guidelines. This allowed a limited number of clients to be seen face-to-face in the MS Centre, but unfortunately did not allow for exercise classes, which could not comply with social distancing guidelines.
- This was an extremely challenging year for everyone involved, staff and clients alike, and we would like to acknowledge the huge amount of work done by all involved to allow the MS Centre re-open in July 2020, when many other day service units were unable to do so.

Service Trends in 2020

- Despite the MS Centre closing for almost 4 months during the year, and despite restricted numbers of clients being allowed to attend the Centre once re-opened, a total of 947 one-to-one physiotherapy treatment sessions were delivered in 2020.



- 110 exercise class attendances were recorded between January and the start of lock-down in March. Classes included hydrotherapy, chair-based exercise, circuit-training and otago-based strength and balance exercise.
- 117 cancelled appointments were recorded during 2020, with a further 75 recorded as 'did not attend'.
- 15 new referrals were made to the MS Centre in 2020. 14 had a diagnosis of MS, whilst 1 had a neurological condition related to MS. 8 clients lived in Sligo, 4 were from Mayo, and the remaining 3 were from Donegal, Leitrim and Galway. 14 clients were aged 18-65, whilst 1 was over 65.

New Developments / Quality Initiatives in 2020

- Due to service disruption associated with COVID-19 most Physiotherapy service development plans for the year had to be postponed or abandoned altogether. However two significant pieces of work were completed, which are as follows.
- PT Hannah Gordon embraced the role of improving the MS Centre's social media profile on Facebook. She attending training with media advisor, Conor Lynch, who provided on-going support throughout the year. Hannah's goal was to make the MS Centre's Facebook page more relevant and up-to-date. She achieved this by uploading regular posts about what was going on in the centre, about services that were available to clients, and also added some personal posts such as staff birthdays.
- Feedback regarding the MS Centre's Facebook page has been very positive to date, with an increase in 'likes' and 'followers', and more interactions on posts.
- Hannah, on behalf of the MS Centre, also applied for a Facebook 'Donate' button which was introduced during the latter part of the year. This has allowed people donate more easily to the MS Centre, as well as allowing fund-raising events to be set up on Facebook, such as birthday fund-raisers. This has proved invaluable, especially as the MS Centre's usual sources of fund-raising had been almost decimated in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Hannah's next venture is to update the MS Centre's Webpage and make it more user-friendly. This should hopefully be completed by the end of 2021.
- All Physiotherapists were involved in collecting and submitting data to the newly established HSE national database for neurological conditions 'NASS'. This database aims to identify current service provision as well as identifying unmet needs, so hopefully will prove fruitful over the next few years in terms of securing funding and service provision.



Education/Continuous Professional Development in 2020

- PT Shane Sweeney completed a Vestibular Rehabilitation course online.
- PT Claire Smyth continued work on her Masters research programme 'Neuroplasticity in Stroke' in Sligo IT. Claire had some of her research findings published in the medical journal 'Practical Neurology', as well as having 3 poster presentations submissions.

Plans for Future Development in 2021

- The Physiotherapy Department plan to develop Tele-health services to facilitate delivery of exercise classes via Zoom. 4 potential classes have been discussed; standing circuit classes, chair-based classes, upper limb strengthening classes and meditation classes. These will hopefully offer clients of all levels of ability the opportunity to partake in regular exercise in the comfort of their own home, whilst still linking in with old friends.
- The Physiotherapy Department will continue its involvement in the MS Centre's quality assurance process through participation in the 'Improving Quality' programme, which has replaced PQASSO. It is hoped that the MS Centre will go forward for accreditation towards the end of 2021.
- The Physiotherapy Department plans to purchase a new Functional Electrical Stimulator in 2021, with money kindly donated by the Roscommon branch of MS Ireland.
- As previously mentioned, PT Hannah Gordon plans to update the MS Centre's Website, with a view to making it more user-friendly.



Aideen Melanaphy
Senior Physiotherapist



Claire Smyth
Physiotherapist



Shane Sweeney
Physiotherapist



Hannah Gordon



Dry Needling - *Hannah Gordon*



Hannah, one of our physiotherapists completed a course to become qualified in dry needling. She continues to offer this as a treatment option to clients of the MS Centre.

The aim of Dry Needling is to reduce muscle pain and dysfunction by releasing tight areas in the muscle known as myofascial trigger points. Trigger points are tender nodules within taut bands of muscle. Normal muscle does not contain these taut bands. 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 utilises the hydrotherapy Pool in Cregg House for its hydrotherapy service. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the related risks outlined in HSE Infection, Prevention and Control guidelines, Cregg House had to make the unfortunate but necessary decision to suspend access to their hydrotherapy pool which included MS Centre Clients.

It is unknown when and if this fantastic service is to resume.





OXYGEN TREATMENT (O2T)



The Oxygen Treatment (O2T) has been provided to people with MS and other related neurological conditions for the past 26 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 in order for us to continue delivering the service to MS Clients.

From March of this year, our oxygen treatment service was suspended in line with public health guidelines and unfortunately did not resume for the remainder of 2020.



HOLISTIC THERAPY



Holistic services at the MS North West Therapy Centre continued to be provided in 2020 by the holistic team Jacqueline Hanly, Catherine Rutledge, and Deirdre Murray.

The full range of treatments including Reflexology, Shiatsu, and Massage were offered to the ever increasing service user base, with Reflexology being the most requested treatment by the majority attending for services. As in previous years treatments were available at both the MS Therapy Centre in Ballytivnan and also Woodhaven Holiday facility on First Sea Road Sligo.

At the beginning of the year, the demand for holistic treatments continued to be high as in other years from existing service users and also from newly diagnosed attending for services for the first time. Services continued as normal at both centres until mid March 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic brought an immediate stop to all services with the instant closure of the centre in line with the unprecedented government directive. As holistic treatments are a 'touch therapy' they were hit extremely hard due to the level of contact required during the treatment, and added to this was the vulnerability of the service user base due to their diagnosis of an autoimmune condition.

The following is the comparative between 2020 and (2019)

- January – March 2020 - 192 holistic treatments provided (241 in 2019)
- April – September 2020 - 0 holistic treatments provided (592 in 2019)
- October – December 2020 - 67 holistic treatments provided (261 in 2019)
- **Total Holistic 2020 - 259 holistic treatments provided (1094 in 2019) -76.3%**

During the time the centre was closed, the holistic team contributed to provide a set of comprehensive Guidelines and Standard Operational Procedures on Infection Prevention and Control on returning to work for their representative organisation the Irish Reflexologists Institute Limited. These guidelines and SOP's were invaluable in equipping each member of the holistic team with the necessary information to support them on returning to work safely.

In addition to the above the holistic team undertook specific up-skilling and training programmes in the following

- First Aid - Covid Up-skilling
- WHO – Standard precautions: Hand hygiene
- WHO – Covid-19: How to put on and remove personal protective equipment (PPE)
- WHO – Standard precautions: Environmental cleaning & disinfecting



- WHO – Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) for Covid-19

Deirdre Murray / June 2021





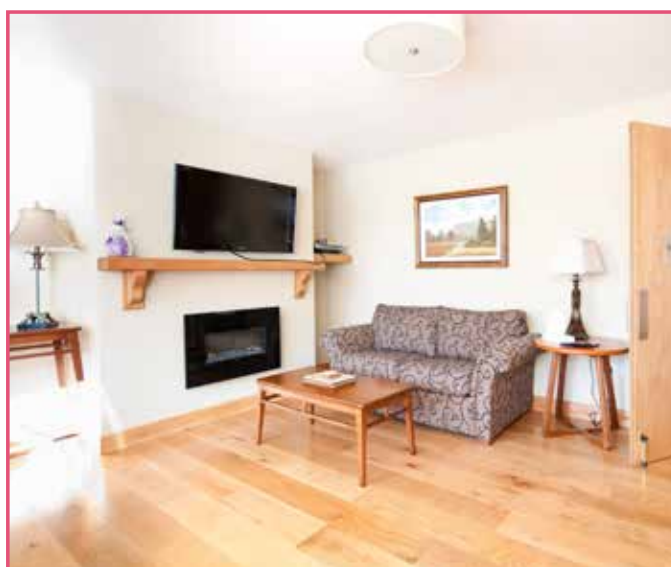
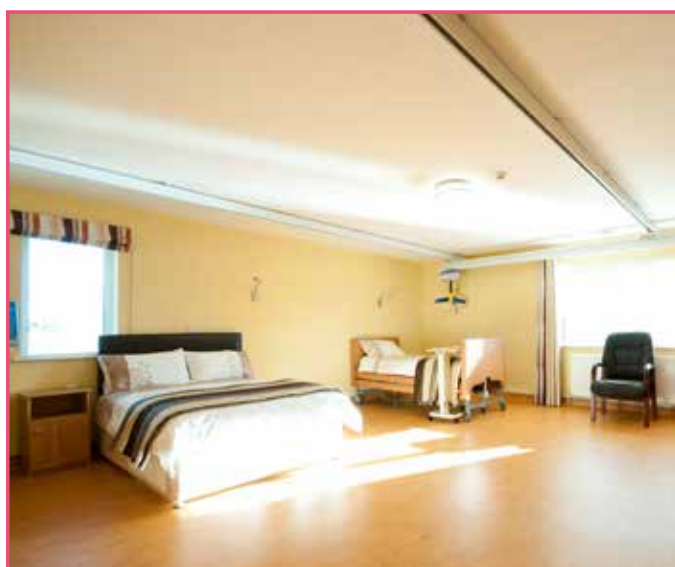
Woodhaven





Woodhaven Staff

WOODHAVEN FACILITY





WOODHAVEN REPORT

Woodhaven our accessible and supported holiday facility is now in its fifth year of operations. We moved into 2020 with high expectations of providing even more beds nights to our wonderful guests. However like so many other organisations we were required to cease provision of services on the 19th March 2020 due to the necessary Covid-19 government restrictions. Covid-19 has had a drastic effect on Woodhaven's bookings both from the perspective of guest numbers and conference room bookings.

While Woodhaven reopened from the 1st April to 11th May as a result of collaboration with the local Physical and Sensory Dept. HSE to provide a long term residential service to people from the community who were high risk of contracting the virus. We have since unfortunately but necessarily remained closed.

Woodhaven did re-open the conference room for hire on the 4th August 2020 however bookings are reduced to adhere to social distancing guidelines coupled with very little demand.

While 2020 has had a drastic effect on Woodhaven we are very optimistic about the future. The national Covid-19 vaccination programme will no doubt enable us to recommence our service delivery once our guests and staff have been vaccinated in conjunction with our robust covid response plan.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Woodhaven which has a choice of five beautifully appointed private bedrooms all ensuite with a choice of profiling beds and overhead hoists if required. We provide 24 hour personal assistant supports from our highly skilled and qualified staff. Another option Guests can avail of includes having a friend or carer to accompany them on their stay. In addition our spacious family room allows Guests and their families to enjoy all that Sligo has to offer. Our onsite treatment room ensures that Guests can enjoy some luxurious, well deserved, pampering in the form of reflexology and massage. Woodhaven also has a conference room on site for hire which is ideal for groups meetings and training courses with white boards, projector and kitchenette. Our conference room also has equipment including a profiling bed and hoist which makes it ideal for training groups that require equipment for demonstration purposes. We also have parking available and the building is also wheelchair accessible.

Woodhaven has been very fortunate to secure continued funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Pobal, Community Services Programme since 2015. This funding is a contribution toward our Manager and four full time frontline staff which allows us to grow Woodhaven as a social enterprise. The absence of this funding would leave Woodhaven in a very precarious position as staffing for delivery of service would not be possible. We would like to thank Pobal for their invaluable support over the



past year.

In addition, Woodhaven thankfully continues to engage with the Sligo Social Services, Community Employment Project, training programme.

Woodhaven, as we further establish as a social enterprise, continues to heavily rely on our traded income generated from the Multiple Sclerosis North West Therapy Charity Shops, Essential Seconds, that are located in Sligo and Ballymote.

The continued support of the Sligo community and surrounding counties is fundamental to Woodhaven's success and for your support we sincerely thank you. Woodhaven would like to thank all our Guests who stayed with us throughout the year and we look forward to providing more unique holiday experiences in 2021.

If you are interested in booking a stay in Woodhaven or booking our conference room please call **071 91 54991** or email ***reception@woodhaven.ie*** or you can visit our website ***www.woodhaven.ie*** for further information.





TESTIMONIALS FROM WOODHAVEN GUESTS

"It wasn't really any place, it was somewhere else instead. It was between the sea, the oyster beds and the grassy beach over which you looked. But it was beautiful none the less and it was just the place where Countess Markievicz spent her days and as far as any of us know, enjoyed it very well"

-W. B. Yeats

All of this is about my experience of Woodhaven, not so far from that described above, but by the same token, a place instinctively of its own. Lovely lay out in order to accommodate five deserving guests and treat them to the best fare, joy and comfort befitting any Lord or Lady and not ever looked down upon.

The house would be nothing if it were not for the staff, who care for and keep dearly in their hearts, so that it can in turn give a fully open welcome to the people who come and spend their time in Woodhaven. It is a wonderful place of calm, quiet to enable them to return again and again.

- Bob Potter-Cogan

I have been availing of respite breaks at Woodhaven for the past three years. It is a state of the art facility but more importantly the staff make me feel so welcome - it's like "home away from home". I enjoy having the craic with both residents and staff playing cards, listening to music and chatting of course. Another plus is having a reflexology treatment which is arranged prior to arrival.

- Elena



Essential Seconds Charity Shop





ESSENTIAL SECONDS CHARITY SHOP

The MS NW Therapy Centre has two charity shops which are located in Wine Street Car Park, Sligo and Teeling Street, Ballymote. The funds raised by our shops goes directly into providing services at The MS Centre and Woodhaven for people living with MS and other neurological conditions.



The necessary restrictions imposed on the retail sector by Government as a result of the global covid-19 pandemic had a drastic impact on our charity shops. While all attempts were made to adapt in that we introduced social distancing in our shops, stringent cleaning protocols, robust covid response plans and then a move to click and collect unfortunately we were closed more than we were open throughout the year. The closures resulted in a significant loss of income from both shops in 2020.

The shops continue to be essential in broaching our €100,000 annual deficit of which the MS Centre must secure through income from fundraising and our charity shops in order for us to continue providing essential services to people with MS.

This year more than ever we would like to thank all our customers who have supported our shops throughout the year be it either with donations, shopping with us or utilising our click and collect service when it was in operation.

Most importantly we would like to thank our dedicated Volunteers, without whom the shops would not be in operation. We would like to thank them for their time, commitment and support of the shops and the MS Centre. Their unwavering support in what can only be described as an incredibly turbulent year is truly invaluable.

We would also like to thank Sligo Leader, Abbeyquater, and Sligo Social Services who sponsor Volunteers who participate in the TUS and CE schemes and who work in Essential Seconds Charity Shops.

As we look forward to another year we are hopeful that the year ahead will bring brighter days and we look forward to welcoming you all to Essential Seconds once it is safe for us to do so.



Fundraising





FUNDRAISING

In order to ensure the ongoing operation of providing services at MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo there is a huge reliance on fundraising events. There is a gap of approx. €100,000 between the funding we receive and the cost of keeping the MS Centre up and running. The pandemic mandated that all events for 2020 become virtual events. With the roll out of vaccinations and the lifting of restrictions there will undoubtedly be a return to in person events, but likely not as we remembered them. While we look forward to the day we can meet and gather with volunteers and donors in person again we feel virtual methods of fundraising is here to stay and as a result the MS North West Therapy Centre has looked into the many different ways the public can continue their support.

Covid-19 had a massive impact on our fundraising drives in 2020. Annual events such as flag day, church gate collections, Glencar Swin and much more were all cancelled. To adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of fundraising brought about by covid-19, the MS Centre worked tirelessly to move our activities of fundraising online. We have grown our social media presence and added a donate button to our Facebook page which allows you to raise monies for the Centre through events such as birthday campaigns or stepathons. We also have our own GoFund me and JustGiving pages which also can be used for virtual fundraising campaigns. Virtual events allow us to extend our reach and help us link in with others who may benefit from our services.

The transition to online fundraising is a steep learning curve for the organisation, however we are also very cognisant that we must adapt to survive. Therefore, we would like to extend a our thanks to our Voluntary Fundraising Committee, staff and supporters of the Centre who worked tirelessly to assist in our new virtual fundraising platform and organised virtual events on our behalf. Below is a flavour of some the many events which took place throughout 2020.





FUNDRAISING EVENTS

A massive thank you is due to our Voluntary Fundraising Committee who works tirelessly organising fundraising events on our behalf and for assisting others who held events in aid of the MS Centre during the year. Our heartfelt thanks and gratitude goes to each and every one of you. Below is a flavour of some the many events which took place throughout 2020.

January 2020

Carol Services
Christmas Cards
Christmas Mailing Campaign
Christmas Raffle

February 2020

Collection Boxes
ICU Medical – in house fundraising event

March 2020

Caroline Moran – From Kiltybardon to Kilmanjardo

June 2020

Virtual VHI Mini Marathon

October 2020

Andy Kearns Captains Day

November 2020

Students of Corran College – Fairy Garden
Ballymote

December 2020

Annual Donations

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

All members of the Fundraising Committee undertake to:

- Work with colleagues, Board of Directors and Management and others to achieve fundraising objectives.
- Conduct themselves at all times with complete integrity, honesty and trustfulness.
- Respect the dignity of their position and ensure that their actions enhance the reputation of themselves and the MS Centre
- Adhere to all applicable laws and regulations.
- Report any criminal offence of professional misconduct.

THEY SHALL:

- Not misuse their authority for personal gain.
- Not exploit any relationship with a donor, prospect, volunteer or employee for personal benefit.
- Not knowingly or recklessly disseminate false or misleading information in the course of their duties, nor permit their fellow fundraisers to do so.
- Not represent conflicting or competing interests without consent of the parties concerned after full disclosure of the facts.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Members shall:

- Not disclose (except as may be required by statute of law) or make use of information given or obtained in confidence from their employers or clients the donating public or any other source without prior express consent.
- Adhere to the principle that all information created by or on behalf of, the MS Centre is the property of the MS Centre and shall not be transferred or utilised except on behalf of that organisation.



FROM KILTYBARDON TO KILIMANJARO

In February 2020 Caroline Moran undertook the massive task of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa in aid of the MS Centre. Caroline's mother has MS and was a client of the MS Therapy Centre. Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest free standing mountain in the world. Caroline climbed it over 7 days up the Machame route to the summit. She ascended through five different ecosystems during her climb – farmland, rainforest, an alpine region and then a lunar landscape before she reached the arctic region of the summit. All expenses for flights accommodation were paid by Caroline directly so all funds she raised went directly to the MS Centre. Caroline raised a massive €4,280. We cannot thank Caroline enough for helping us to continue support people with MS every day at our Centre and Woodhaven.





MS CLUB DRAW 2020

In 2020 the MS Club Draw enjoyed another year of a sustainable fundraising event reporting a successful 5th year since the draw started in 2015. Despite the closure of the Centre due to Covid, the draw continued to take place each month.

Standing order payments continue to be the preferred method of payment. Members that availed of standing order had the security of knowing they were included in each draw even with the closure of the Centre due to Covid. Cash members continued to be included until they requested otherwise. There are now approximately 80% of our members enjoying standing order payments. This method is also less time consuming on the volunteers who administer the payments.

Due to a variety of reasons, the membership of the Club Draw fluctuated each month, but it was supported by between 182 and 212 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 2020 was €22,735, down €1,215 on 2019, this was due to some cash members payments for 2020 being received in 2021. Prize money of €3,600 was paid out to the lucky winners for the year, leaving a net balance of €19,135. This brings the total intake to €116,635 over the past five years. Of this, €18,000 was paid out in prize money, leaving a net total of €98,635.

The draw took place on the last week of every month in the MS Therapy Centre. Each draw was overseen by a member of the fundraising committee and a company director. The results of each draw we notified to the lucky winners, along with their winnings, the day after the draw took place.

We are hoping to grow our monthly club draw and aim to have up to 80 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. 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 Helen Kilcullen
2nd Prize €50 Niamh Duffy
3rd Prize €25 Ita Scanlon
4th Prize €25 Catherine Clerkin

February

1st Prize €200 Teresa Cahill
2nd Prize €50 Terry & Mary Gannon
3rd Prize €25 Joe Campbell
4th Prize €25 Maria O Halloran

March

1st Prize €200 Karen McKenna
2nd Prize €50 Bernie Shannon
3rd Prize €25 Noel Hunt
4th Prize €25 Malcolm O Dwyer

April

1st Prize €200 Teresa Cahill
2nd Prize €50 Joe Bradley
3rd Prize €25 Curran Altranais
4th Prize €25 Eugene Rooney

May

1st Prize €200 Annette Kilcullen
2nd Prize €50 Claire Owens
3rd Prize €25 Brendan & Annie Cullen
4th Prize €25 Jess Deering

June

1st Prize €200 Joe Campbell
2nd Prize €50 Eileen Keenahan
3rd Prize €25 Justin Henry
4th Prize €25 Barbara Lowry

July

1st Prize €200 Michael Hallinan
2nd Prize €50 Martin & Donna McNulty
3rd Prize €25 Tina Horton
4th Prize €25 Evy Gallagher

August

1st Prize €200 Jess Deering
2nd Prize €50 Gina Gartlan
3rd Prize €25 Curran Altranais
4th Prize €25 Jervis McGowan

September

1st Prize €200 Breege Kilcullen
2nd Prize €50 Jess Deering
3rd Prize €25 Noel Hennessy
4th Prize €25 Sinead Rooney Wims

October

1st Prize €200 Patrick Dolan
2nd Prize €50 Malcolm O Dwyer
3rd Prize €25 Terry and Mary Gannon
4th Prize €25 Lorraine Dempsey

November

1st Prize €200 Pauline Murphy
2nd Prize €50 Bridie McLean
3rd Prize €25 Brendan & Annie Cullen
4th Prize €25 Catherine Beirne

December

1st Prize €200 Claudette Murphy
2nd Prize €50 Mary McWeeney
3rd Prize €25 Leonie Hogge
4th Prize €25 Lucy O Hara





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 Charities Governance Code is

- six principles of governance which all charities should apply
- core standards that all charities are expected to meet when putting the principles into action
- additional standards that reflect best practice for charities with high levels of income and/or complex organisational and funding structures and/or significant numbers of employees.

2020 is the first year that registered charities were expected to comply with the Code. The MS Centre has complied with the Code and has completed the required the Compliance Record Form. This involves recording the actions that we have taken to meet each standard of the Code and a reference of the evidence that backs this up.



Improving Quality (IQ)





IMPROVING QUALITY (IQ)

Improving Quality (IQ) is the quality scheme written to be used both as a self-assessment tool as well as external assessment. Its focus is on elements that all not for profit organisations need. IQ is supported by DFI/ SOLA. 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 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 MS Centre, Woodhaven and Essential Seconds Charity Shops have completed the first Element Accountable and plan to complete the three additional elements in 2021 with a view to securing accreditation in 2022.



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 prove why funding is needed for disability services and supports. The MS Centre has fully engaged with the NASS in 2020 and has ensured all clients are accurately captured.



Future Plans and Activities





FUTURE PLANS AND ACTIVITIES



Going forward into 2021, The MS Centre is committed to continually develop and improve the quality of its services. Please see below a sample of our future plans going into 2021. As many events were cancelled in 2020 due to the global pandemic, it is planned that World MS Day 2021 will take place in May 2021 as an online event with some reputable guest speakers invited to join us on the day.

We are hopeful that by the end of 2021, we will see services at Woodhaven resume in line with public health guidelines and continue to provide accessible, supported holiday-type accommodation and short-term breaks for people with disabilities, their families and carers. We are aware that Covid-19 will be very much still with us going into 2021. However we remain positive that our charity shops are not subject additional necessary closures and continue the good work in supplementing the services of the MS Centre and Woodhaven. The income from the shops continues to decrease year after year due to increased competition and consumer spending in regular retail shops. However, we are certain 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 continuing on expanding the scope of its Audit, Finance and Risk committee in its commitment to good governance on behalf of the organisation.

For 2021, in line with our Strategic Plan, Woodhaven will endeavour to broaden the scope of its services by connecting with other groups and statutory bodies to potentially sub-let the building when not in use by our Woodhaven guests.

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. While work on the system took a necessary break throughout 2020 due to covid-19, the system has been greatly welcomed with involvement and input from all key stakeholders including –Management, Board directors, staff from all departments, clients and volunteers who form the core IQ working team. It is endeavoured that the IQ core team will resume their good work in early 2021.

In addition, the MS Centre is adopting 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 will be the first year that registered charities are expected to report on their compliance with the Code.

Finally the MS Centre is happy to report that we are fully compliant with the Charities Regulatory Authority and have submitted all required returns for 2020.





MS North West Therapy Centre Sligo

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

Multiple Sclerosis North West Therpay Centre Ltd

A company limited by guarantee

Ballytivnan, Sligo

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