

BERKSHIRE MS THERAPY CENTRE NEWSLETTER

MAY 2025

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Welcome to the latest edition of the BMSTC Newsletter.

We are really pleased to be able to bring you a report from our Chairman, Neil Dawkins, on page 2. We hope to see as many of you as possible at our AGM on 19 June - details are on page 3. Many of our Trustees will be there and if you've ever wondered what a Trustee actually does, find out more on page 20.

You can find out about lots of interesting news on Pippa's Pages on pages 4-7, as well as reading about updates to our team and BMSTC family news on pages 8 and 9.

Please see pages 14-17 for more information about how the Centre is funded and how you can help.

Very many thanks to all our fundraisers who have been busy supporting the Centre. See pages 23-26 for details, plus the latest events organised by our Fundraising Team. Don't forget to buy your tickets for our Charity Ball and you can even take part in our Charity Firewalk!

Thank you to one of our members who sent in a recommendation for a useful product which you can read on page 21. Please continue to send me information for the 'BMSTC Family' pages and any other articles you think would be of interest to other members.

With best wishes

Gill

Claire

Gill Braid, Newsletter Editor, gill@bmstc.org

Claire Frew, Newsletter Editor, claire@bmstc.org

Deadline for contributions for next issue: 10 July 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Neil Dawkins

Hello and welcome everyone to the second BMSTC newsletter of 2025.

I hope you have been able to enjoy the better weather we have been having and have continued to benefit so far this year from the support and numerous activities BMSTC offers.



I'd like to start by thanking all our wonderful volunteers. We have over 60 and are so grateful for all the help and support they provide. We could also use some help occasionally with jobs around the Centre that would otherwise cost us money, such as jet washing the patio or sweeping up leaves. If you or a partner have some spare time and the relevant skills to be able to assist, please make yourself known to Pippa so she can help organise. Of course, the reward of a biscuit or two and a cup of tea awaits any helpers!

Another request is to reach out to Tamzin if you have any fundraising ideas. Of course we have our usual events, such as the London Marathon and ball, along with collections which raise vital funds, but there may be some ideas out there amongst our creative membership about other events, big or small, that we can put on to raise money. As I say please chat to the Fundraising Team if you have a brainwave. Our finances are forecast to be pretty tight in 2025 and anything we can do to stem this will be crucial.

The BMSTC AGM will be held in person at the Centre on Thursday 19 June. Please come along and celebrate the year. This is also a great occasion to hear your views and answer your questions should you have any. The AGM will give everyone a chance to meet Rachel George, our Treasurer, and she will present the 2024 accounts to you.

Many of you may be asking what is a Trustee and what do we do? Ros Hatt has written an excellent piece about our responsibilities and who we are on page 20.

Our Treasurer Rachel and our Accounts and HR Specialist Oumou have completed the accounting system migration from Sage to Xero at the start of March. This involved a lot of work but went seamlessly so thanks to everyone involved. The switch of our database from Donor Strategy to Beacon is progressing well, to be completed by the end of August. Penny Tillson, Pippa and others have worked tirelessly to get us into this position, so I am enormously grateful to them for all their ongoing work.

The Great Gatsby themed Ball is scheduled for 18 October at a new venue, The Wellington Arms in Stratfield Turgis, and it would be great to get behind the event and get as many people along as we can. Last year was fantastic and it will take some topping, so please buy a ticket or two if you can.

My email address is neil@bmstc.org if anyone wants to contact me about anything. I'd love to hear from you, good or bad! Or feel free to contact any of the other Trustees.

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR AGM!

Our AGM will take place in person at the Centre on Thursday 19 June at 2pm.



This is your chance to hear a review of last year, take a look at a summary of our annual report and accounts and find out about our future plans. It's your opportunity to ask questions about your Centre.

All are welcome to attend. To be able to vote at the AGM, you need to be signed up as a member paying £2 a month. If you are not sure if that's you, please email ms@bmstc.org and we can check our records!

Some of our members expressed an interest in having a speaker at this year's AGM so we're pleased to confirm that after the AGM itself, we will be having a talk from Dr Claire Winchester, from national charity, the MS Trust.

Claire says, "I have been with the MS Trust for seven years and head up the Information and Engagement team. My team delivers our Helpline, writes all our print and online information, and advocates for people with MS externally. We involve people affected by MS in all aspects of our work, from collaboration in designing new resources and services, engaging in research and clinical trials, and supporting them as expert patients explaining the impact of policy changes and new treatments to external stakeholders like the NHS, pharmaceutical companies and the Government Departments.



Having recently merged with another MS charity, MS Research, Education and Treatment, I'm looking forward to explaining how we see this new relationship working, and how we plan to boost the MS research community and focus them on the things that really matter to people with MS. I'll be listening to what you want as an MS community, and will be delighted to discuss this with you."

We're sure this will be a really interesting talk so please do attend. Afterwards, there will be drinks and light refreshments and the chance to chat and mingle.

If you are receiving this newsletter in hard copy, all the relevant forms will be included. Alternatively, you can find everything you need online at www.bmstc.org/agm2025

Please let us know by 17 June if you can attend the AGM as there are limited spaces available. You can do this online at www.bmstc.org/agm2025 or at Centre reception.

We look forward to seeing you on 19 June!

PIPPA'S PAGES

BANK HOLIDAYS

The Centre will be closed on the following bank holidays:

- Spring Bank Holiday: 26 May
- August Bank Holiday: 25 August



THE CENTRE JOINS INSTAGRAM

Berkshire MS Therapy Centre now has a page on Instagram. Follow us for updates and information.

[Follow the Centre on Instagram](#) @berksmstherapy

You can also find us on Facebook.

[Follow the Centre on Facebook](#) www.facebook.com/bmstc

And we are on LinkedIn.

[Follow the Centre on LinkedIn](#) berkshire-ms-therapy-centre



Please follow us, comment, like and share our posts. Social media is a great way for us to spread the word about the Centre to more people with MS who could benefit from our support. It can also encourage people to support the Centre through fundraising and volunteering.

NEW SURFACE PRESSURE OXYGEN THERAPY SESSION

Due to popular demand, we have launched a new surface pressure only oxygen therapy session at 3.15pm on a Wednesday, with space for up to eight people.



You will be sitting inside the chamber with the door open, wearing a mask and breathing oxygen as usual but this will not be pressurised. There will also be one surface pressure position on the outside of the chamber as during other oxygen sessions.

Some people are unable to go into the chamber – this could be due to claustrophobia, ear problems, sinus problems or being unable to commit to being in the chamber for up to 90 minutes. Whilst it may not be as beneficial as oxygen therapy within the chamber, many people find it is better than receiving no oxygen therapy at all.

To book this session, please email ms@bmstc.org, call 0118 901 6000 or ask at reception.

PIPPA'S PAGES CONT'D.

NOMINATED FOR THE KING'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE



The King's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK. The award is equivalent to an MBE and is awarded for life. It's announced every year on 14 November, the King's birthday.

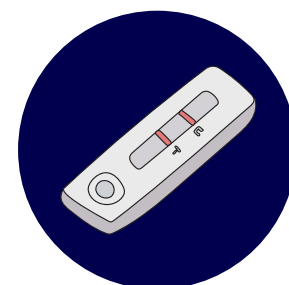
We are very grateful to our supporters Val, Graeme and Louise, who nominated the Centre to be considered for the King's Award due to our large number of amazing volunteers who do so much to keep our Centre running.

We were recently visited by two members of the Berkshire Lieutenancy, Sue Roberts and Rohit Tanna. They came to assess the Centre, to talk to Centre staff and volunteers and to gather information so a decision can be made about whether we will receive the Award. Thank you to everyone who took the time to chat to them. Sue and Rohit both stressed how impressive it is to reach even this stage of the Award process.

We will find out in November if the Centre has been successful in receiving the King's Award. But regardless of whether we receive it or not, we think our volunteers are all wonderful and they definitely deserve the highest honour!

COVID-19 SPRING BOOSTER VACCINE

Some people with MS across the UK can get a free COVID-19 vaccine booster this spring. The vaccine is available to the following groups;



- adults aged 75 years and over
- residents in a care home for older adults
- people who are 'immunosuppressed', which can include people who take certain DMTs (Disease Modifying Therapies) for MS.

If you are eligible for the spring booster, you do not need to wait for an invitation before booking an appointment. You can book in the NHS app, by calling 119 or on the NHS website. Full information at; www.bmstc.org/covid-19-spring-booster-vaccine/

NEW SIX WEEK ONLINE INTRODUCTORY RELAXATION AND MEDITATION COURSE

Join our next six week online Introduction to Relaxation and Meditation class starting on Tuesday 27 May at 11.30 am and led by our Yoga teacher Uddhava. The class will cover a range of different relaxation and meditation techniques designed to help calm the mind and reduce stress so that you can find what works best for you.

Visit www.bmstc.org/relaxationcourse to find out more.

PIPPA'S PAGES CONT'D.

CLADRIBINE TO BE AVAILABLE TO MORE PEOPLE WITH MS



More people with MS will have the option to take cladribine following a recommendation from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The new recommendation says anyone with relapsing remitting MS who is having relapses or new disease activity visible on MRI scans (known as active MS) may be eligible for cladribine. Previously, it was only prescribed to people with more severe active relapsing remitting MS (known as 'highly active' MS).

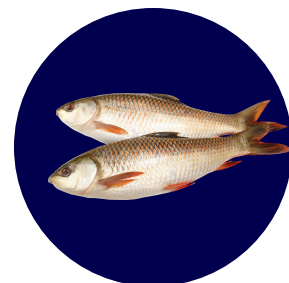
Cladribine is a disease modifying therapy (DMT) taken as a tablet. You take it as a tablet in two courses. Cladribine works by killing certain types of blood cells made by your immune system. These white blood cells (or lymphocytes) are called T and B cells.

If you're unsure if you'll be eligible for cladribine under the new guidance, speak to your MS specialist. The new guidance doesn't affect anyone already on a course of cladribine.

You can read the full details on the MS Society website. Alternatively, find the links at www.bmstc.org/cladribineupdate25

STUDY SHOWS EATING FISH CAN REDUCE MS PROGRESSION

A new study has shown that diets which are high in fish and fish oils may have a role to play in slowing MS progression.



Research showed that people that ate fish regularly experienced reduced MS progression. This result may be due to the nutrients that are found in lean and oily fish, such as taurine, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. These have antioxidative and anti-inflammatory properties.

The study team also asked about environmental exposures and lifestyle habits. These included other aspects of diet, alcohol consumption, exercise, sun exposure and vitamin D. They were careful to account for other factors that could have affected the results. These included age at diagnosis, obesity, ancestry, MS duration and type, and whether the study subjects were taking any disease modifying drugs.

Having high fish consumption at the time of diagnosis was associated with a reduced risk of confirmed disability worsening at the time of the follow-up questionnaire. This association remained consistent after adjusting for lifestyle factors. There was no measurable difference between lean and oily fish.

Read more on the MS Trust website or at www.bmstc.org/fishstudy25

PIPPA'S PAGES CONT'D.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO DISABILITY BENEFITS

The UK government recently announced proposed changes to disability benefits. They shared these in the Pathways to Work Green Paper which is an official document published by government with ideas of things they want to change. It is important to know that Green Papers do not set out final decisions and nothing is changing straightaway. Green Papers are a way for the government to explore options and get people's views before developing the final changes. There will be a consultation open until 30 June on some of the plans. Ideas explored in the paper.

Key proposals include:

Changing the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment criteria

Under the new plans, people would need to score at least 4 points in the 'daily living activities' to qualify for the daily living component of PIP. This could mean that people who need support to wash and dress themselves, or use aids to prepare food or to go to the toilet would find it harder to qualify for PIP. The criteria for the mobility component will not be changed. This would apply to all new claimants and existing claimants, if reassessed, from April 2026. This change won't be consulted on.

Scrapping the Work Capability Assessment (WCA)

The WCA currently decides whether people get additional disability-related support on Universal Credit (UC) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Under the new approach, people who get the daily living component of PIP would automatically get additional disability-related support on UC and ESA, instead of this being decided by the WCA. But with a tighter criteria for PIP, it's possible some people would get less support on UC and ESA. This change won't be consulted on.

Changing the rate of Universal Credit (UC) and additional allowances

From April 2026, the standard allowance of UC will increase by £7 a week. Disabled people who make a new claim to UC will only receive £50 additional disability-related support a week, on top of the standard allowance of this benefit – that is £47 a week less than under the previous system. Meanwhile current claimants will see their additional disability allowance frozen at £97 a week until 2029.

The government is also proposing that people with the most severe, life-long conditions receiving additional disability-related support on UC will receive an additional premium and will never be reassessed. However, it's not yet clear how many people with MS this would apply to. These changes also won't be consulted on.

Find out more

You can read full details of the proposed changes and the MS Society's response on the [MS Society website](https://www.ms-society.org/), or follow the link from <https://bmstc.org/proposed-changes>

BMSTC FAMILY

HAPPY CELEBRATIONS

We would like to send our very best wishes and huge congratulations to our members Robert and Suzanne Small, who are celebrating their Golden Wedding anniversary on 24 May!

They will be celebrating exactly fifty years to the day at the place they got married, with a vow renewal at St Andrews Church, South Stoke. Donations are kindly being requested for the Centre in lieu of presents.

Thank you for your support Robert and Suzanne and have a wonderful afternoon celebrating!



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2025

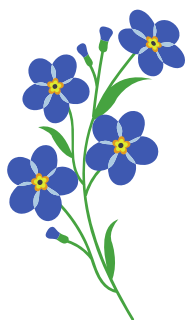
WITH DEEPEST REGRET

We send our condolences to the family of Peggy Ambrose, who passed away on 14 April after being unwell for several years.

Peggy was a former volunteer receptionist at the Centre and is fondly remembered.



Peggy with former Irish rugby player Jared Payne when he came to the Centre for oxygen therapy



We also send our condolences to the family of our member, Maria Castle, who recently passed away. Maria attended physiotherapy at the Centre over a number of years.



Maria

STAFF UPDATE

WELCOME

WELCOME TO OUMOOU

Oumou Bah started as our Accounts and HR specialist a couple of months ago, having been working as our bookkeeper on a freelance basis. We're thrilled to welcome her to the team permanently. She will be in the office most Wednesdays. Oumou says;

"I am thrilled to have recently joined BMSTC, working in Accounts and Human Resources. While I might not be at the front desk to meet most of our valued members, I am proud to provide behind-the-scenes support to help the Centre achieve its ultimate goals by ensuring that our finances are healthy and helping to promote a positive and supportive workplace for our team.



With over 30 years of experience in both the private and nonprofit sectors, I have worked across Accounts/Finance, Administration, and HR. Throughout my career, I've always been passionate about making a meaningful contribution to the teams I am part of. Outside of work, I find joy in nature, music, and dancing and I am endlessly fascinated by space and the universe beyond.

I am truly grateful to be part of BMSTC which is making a real difference in the community. I look forward to continuing this remarkable journey with you all."

CONGRATULATIONS TO SIMONE!

In early April, our Physiotherapy Assistant, Simone Milligan, celebrated twenty years of working at the Centre, an amazing achievement!

CONGRATS

Congratulations and thank you Simone for all your hard work over the years. And also for caring so much about our members and making us all laugh every day, it wouldn't be the same without you!



Marlene and Simone celebrating in the sun!



Simone and her class in last year's Go1984 Challenge!

PHYIOTHERAPY UPDATE

MS TRUST CONFERENCE

In March Anwen and Petra attended the MS Trust Conference. This is an annual conference for healthcare professionals working within the field of MS, attended by MS nurses, allied health care professionals and doctors from across the UK. Also attending were the MS nurses from the Royal Berkshire Hospital, therapists from the Community Based Neuro Rehab Team and Social Services within Berkshire and therapists from the other MS Therapy Centres. This meant we had lots of opportunities to share ideas and identify ways we could improve our working relationships to provide the best care for our members.



There were lots of lectures and talks throughout the conference, including talks on DMTs, falls prevention, cognitive function in MS and living well with MS. Petra and Anwen both came away with lots of new knowledge and feeling very inspired!

NAIDEX EXHIBITION

Members of our physiotherapy team enjoyed visiting the Naidex exhibition recently. Naidex is a leading UK event for disability, accessibility and independent living. Our team had the opportunity to explore new products, services and equipment that could be useful for our members, as well as attending seminars.



Anlyn tries out some equipment

A MESSAGE FROM EMILY

Emily, a second year physiotherapy student at Oxford Brooks University, recently spent six weeks on a placement with our physiotherapy team. Here's what she had to say when she left;

“These last 6 weeks have flown by and I have really enjoyed my time here and getting to know each and every one of the members and the friendly and accommodating staff. I am gutted to say my time here at BMSTC has come to an end but I wish everyone the best and it has been a pleasure to get to know you all. I cannot thank you all enough for the valuable lessons you have taught me :) I look forward to putting another update on the blog in a few months time when I fundraise by running the Oxford Half Marathon for the Centre.”



It was great to have you Emily and thank you for your continued support!

NEW IN-PERSON BALANCE CLASS

Our physiotherapy team are pleased to announce that they will be running a 12 week in person balance course starting in June.

Balance training involves tailored exercises which can help to improve stability, reduce falls, and enhance mobility. At the start of the 12 week programme attendees will complete a basic balance assessment and this will be repeated at the end.

The details of the class are;

- Wednesday 11 June to 27 August
- 1pm to 2pm
- In person at the Centre

Please note that the following criteria apply for attending the class:

- Able to stand unaided
- Able to walk with or without a stick
- Able to exercise for 30-45 minutes
- Can get on and off the floor with or without an aid
- Committed to regular attendance for the 12 weeks



If you would like a space on the class or if you have any questions, please email analyn@bmstc.org or call 0118 901 6000.

EXERCISE SURVEY

Have you attended physiotherapy or yoga in the last year? We are launching our annual feedback survey and we need your help. By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, you will help us improve the service, promote it to new people and play a crucial role in helping us to raise funds.

You will receive a link direct in your inbox from Pip and look out for posters at the Centre.

If you have any queries, please contact Sam on samantha@bmstc.org.

ORTHOTIST VISIT

We recently welcomed the Consultant Orthotist, Nick Gallogly in from the Royal Berkshire Hospital to see some of our members, along with two of his Orthotics students. It was really successful. As well as benefitting our members it was also a great learning opportunity for our physiotherapists. Working with services within the NHS, such as Orthotics and the MS nursing team enables us to provide better care to our members.



CARERS MANUAL HANDLING TRAINING COMING UP

Following positive feedback from our first carers manual handling training in January we are pleased to announce we will be running another session with Occupational Therapist Michelle Morley on Monday 23 June. The session will be three hours and will cover moving and handling techniques and efficient postures to look after yourself and prevent injuries associated with caring duties.

If you are interested in attending or would like a bit more information, please get in touch by emailing anwen@bmstc.org.

UPDATE ON THE MS SERVICE FROM THE RBH TEAM

Our members who come under the Royal Berkshire Hospital may be aware that MS consultant Dr Weir has now retired. Dr Pabeau has now joined the team on a permanent basis, supported by Dr Pisa and Dr Leim at weekends.

All appointments previously scheduled with Dr. Weir will be rescheduled with one of the above neurologists. Dr Pabeau has carried out a couple of clinics at the Centre.

WHEELCHAIR CLINIC

In April the Physiotherapy team held a joint clinic with the Wheelchair Services team from the Royal Berkshire Hospital at the Centre. We were able to see a number of our members who had been awaiting an assessment or review from the clinic and come up with some solutions to improve positioning and comfort in existing and new seating systems. Joint working like this is hugely beneficial and hopefully our members will feel the benefit during such clinics. We are finalising the date for the next clinic which we hope to be in June. If you have wheelchair concerns please speak to a member of the physio team to see if we can help.

JOIN OUR BMSTC SINGING GROUP

By member Ros Hatt

Did you know ...

... that singing relieves stress and tension plus it can also strengthen the immune system?

We know singing improves breathing – one of our members reports they have improved lung function after a singing session.

PLUS, singing is an aerobic activity and increases overall health AND stimulates the vagus nerve (which influences breathing, digestion and heart rate among other things).

What is there to lose? Oh yes, pain – singing helps people suffering chronic pain, and not just immediately afterwards, but for up to six months later.

There is no audition – just turn up, warm-up and join in!

Can't sing? We don't mind, it's all about the joy of singing, enjoying yourself together with a spot of socialising. Sing the whole track, the chorus, the harmonies – just come and sing.

We play popular tracks from YouTube with the original vocals and the lyrics displayed on a big screen. Think Abba to Ed Sheeran; John Denver to Bob Marley.

Join our informal sing-alongs from 11.35–12.45 on Mondays at the Centre in the Zoom Room.

It is free to join in (donations are welcomed).

Interested?

Email Ros on ros@bmstc.org



FUNDING THE CENTRE

2024 was a very busy year for the Centre. In February's newsletter we spoke about treatment numbers, this time we are going to look deeper into how it was funded.

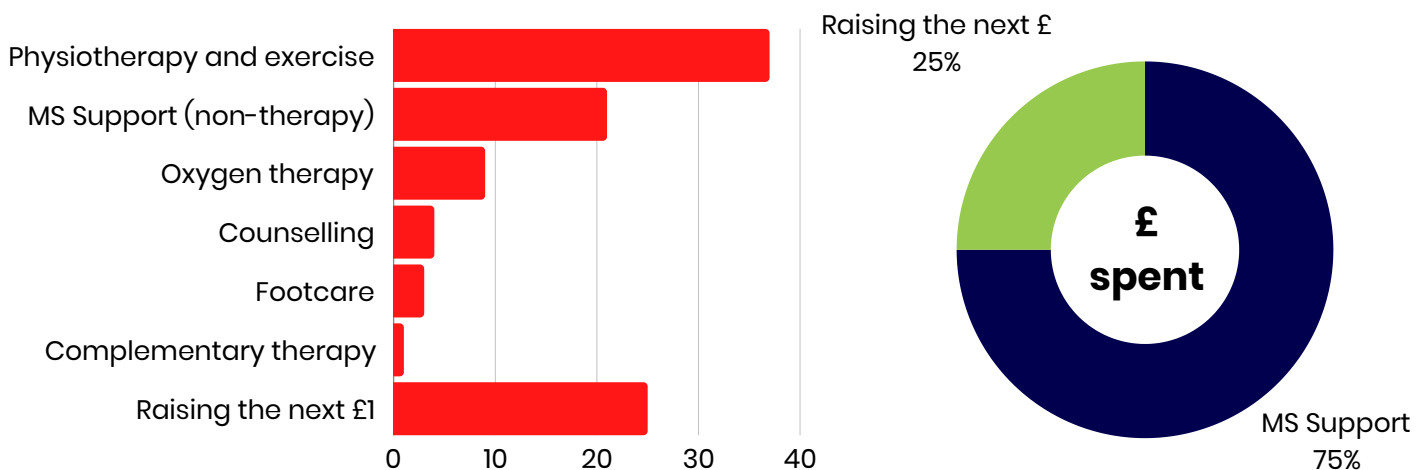
During the AGM on Thursday 19 June we will be reviewing the 2024 accounts and looking at the challenges and opportunities ahead.

For our MS members, our core services are provided on a donation basis and our complementary therapies are highly subsidised. Whilst these are free of charge/reduced at the point of service, there is a cost to the Centre.

In 2024 we provided 14,920 treatments and the Centre cost £698,594 to run.

For every £1 spent:

- 37p was spent on physiotherapy and exercise
- 21p was spent providing MS support (non-therapy)
- 9p was spent on oxygen therapy
- 4p was spent on counselling
- 3p was spent on footcare
- 1p was spent on providing the space for complementary therapies
- 25p was spent on raising the next pound and promoting the Centre



Like many others, we're feeling the pressure of a tough economic climate. Although we're a charity, we're not immune to rising costs. Many of our core expenses have increased significantly – for example, our insurance jumped from £5,500 in 2019 to £24,000 in 2024.

At the same time, demand for our services has soared. Since the pandemic, the number of people we support has grown by 37%. We're proud to be helping more people than ever, but it also means our running costs have gone up.

On the next page, you'll see how we're funded.

FUNDING THE CENTRE



Last year our income was £818,632.

This included some special one-off donations totalling £260,000. Without these, we would need to make some very difficult decisions about the support we can provide.

We received no financial support from the NHS or other MS organisations. This was made possible by the people and organisations who supported the Centre.

For every £1 raised,

31p

came from donations and Gift Aid

10p

came from fundraising events

4p

came from being remembered in people's Wills

1p

came from collections

5p

came from business partnerships

44p

came from grants and trusts

2p

came from people without MS having oxygen

3p

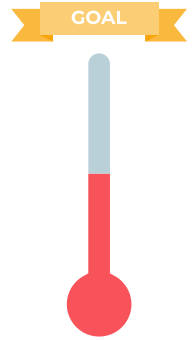
came from other sources

There is something really important missing from here: the incredible contribution of our amazing volunteers. They make a huge difference to the running of the Centre. Last year they donated more than 6,500 hours and their expertise and energy add so much. We simply couldn't do it without them and we are very grateful for everything they do.



For more details, see our full accounts which will be available at our AGM, from the Centre or our website at www.bmstc.org/agm2025. If you have any questions please talk to Sam or Pip in the office. On the next page you can find out how you can help.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



This year we will need to raise £717,707. We need your help.

There are so many ways to support the Centre; whether it's time, money or spreading the word. Every little action helps us keep going strong.

Here are just a few ways you can help:



Could you review your donation? If you're able to increase your regular gift, it would make a big difference to the support we can offer. If you pay tax, don't forget to fill in a Gift Aid form so we can claim an extra 25% from the government.



Join us for an event and/or encourage your friends to join us. Do you know somewhere we can place a poster to advertise our upcoming events? You can find details about our Firewalk and our Charity Ball on pages 25-26 of this newsletter.



Fundraise for us. From coffee mornings to skydives, fundraising is a fun way to support the Centre. We'll cheer you on every step of the way! Our friendly fundraising team is here to help.



Do you or a family member work for a company that might support us? We're always looking to build new partnerships. Introductions are a very important first step.



Please help us by collecting a poster from reception to take to your local GP surgery, hospital, community board or local supermarket to put up and help to raise awareness of the Centre.



Could you volunteer? There are so many great ways to give your time. We're especially looking for oxygen operators and people to help with bucket collections.

**Come and talk to us in the office, call us on 0118 901 6000
or email ms@bmstc.org**

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Are you a member?

Have you paid your annual membership of £24? It might not seem like much but becoming a member shows that you truly care about the Centre and want to be part of what keeps it going. It helps us plan ahead, gives you a say in how we're run and shows funders that our community is right behind us. If you haven't renewed yet – or if you'd like to become a member for the first time – we'd love you to join us.



Nominating us for something?

We're always thrilled when people put us forward for awards, funding schemes or local initiatives – it really means a lot. Sometimes people think they are nominating us but they have given the wrong charity name. We're the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre and we're not part of the MS Society. If you're ever filling in a form, do double-check the name and you can always check with us if you are unsure. Thank you for thinking of us.

Remember the Centre in your Will

Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most powerful ways to support the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre and will help make sure we will be here for years to come.

After you have taken care of your loved ones please think about remembering your MS Centre. It is very simple to do.

For more information please visit

www.bmstc.org/legacy

or contact Sam on 0118 901 6000 or email samantha@bmstc.org



NIKKI'S PAGES

Celebrating our Volunteers

This year we have three volunteers – Gail Davies, Sheila Rose and Sue Rixon – celebrating some significant milestones in their volunteering! I nominated all three of them to receive a Hidden Hero's Room to Reward (R2R) two night hotel break in recognition of their years of volunteer service. They were all successful and approved by the R2R charity.

I am sure you will all join me in thanking them for their incredible commitment to the Centre over the years and we hope they all enjoy their well deserved break!

Gail Davies is celebrating 23 years of volunteering! During her time here Gail has been a volunteer oxygen operator, a charity collector and she has also been our volunteer receptionist every Friday morning for many years. Gail is always upbeat, cheerful and funny and we thought she thoroughly deserves a special treat in recognition of her 23 years of service.



Gail and Nikki

Sheila Rose is celebrating 20 years of volunteering. Sheila has been a volunteer receptionist for all these years coming in to cover reception every Wednesday morning. Sheila says that she really enjoys volunteering for the Centre because once you reach retirement age you tend to meet with friends of the same age as you. She really enjoys being able to meet and chat with lots of different people of different ages and particularly meeting younger members. Thank you Sheila for your twenty year commitment.



Pip, Sheila and Nikki

Sue Rixon is also celebrating 20 years of volunteering. Over the years Sue has volunteered in a number of different ways. She is a volunteer receptionist on a Tuesday morning. She also heads up the volunteer receptionists' team and trains any new volunteer receptionists coming on board. Previously she volunteered at events and as a charity fundraising collector.

More recently Sue has been part of our events committee gaining raffle prizes for events such as our annual Winter Ball and Afternoon Tea. Sue is very warm and bubbly and we are very grateful to have had her support for so many years.



Nikki and Sue

NIKKI'S PAGES CONT.

New members' pack

Last summer we had two students from Reading University complete an internship with us. Emily, one of the students, helped us to create the graphic design for our new Members Welcome Pack and leaflets. Once her internship had finished, Claire and I have carried on working away behind the scenes to finalise the pack.

The idea of the welcome pack is that it will be given out to people who visit the Centre for the first time when they come for a tour. We hope it will be useful for new members to take away with them and refer back to, as we understand that visiting the Centre for the first time can sometimes feel a little overwhelming and there is a lot of information to take in. Depending on the therapies that a member is interested in they will also be given individual leaflets on those specific therapies.

We are really proud of the pack and hope that it will be well used! The pages are bright and colourful with lots of lovely quotes and photos of our members. I also asked eight people who have joined the Centre in the last year to give feedback on the pack and to see if there was anything else that we should have included. Thanks so much to Emily for the graphic design and to all the members who took the time to give us feedback about the pack to help us improve it even further.

Citizens Advice

In March I organised a visit from Reading Citizens Advice. John came along to provide advice regarding saving energy in the home, explaining how energy bills are calculated, looking whether switching tariffs may help with energy bills and investigating any fuel debts/liability. He also offered further appointments to explore budgeting and referral to debt team if required. Thank you John for coming along and giving advice to some of our members and volunteers.



Social activities questionnaire

Thank you to the 25 members who took the time to fill out the questionnaire to discover what kind of social activities people would like to take part in at the Centre. I am currently reviewing the feedback and hope to create a programme of activities based on the results, more to follow soon!

If you know of anyone who would like to come for a tour, become a member, or to volunteer at the Centre, please give them my contact details and I will be happy to get in touch with them.

NIKKI

nikki@bmstc.org 0118 901 6000



WHAT IS A TRUSTEE?

BY ROS HATT, BMSTC TRUSTEE AND MEMBER

I was asked the other day what Trustees actually do... so I thought I'd take this opportunity to give an overview.

Charity trustees play a very important role in making sure that the charity is run in the interests of the people it is there to support. They strategically oversee the management and administration of the organisation. A trustee's role in a charity is to be the 'guardians of purpose', making sure that all decisions put the needs of the beneficiaries first.

Trustees safeguard the charity's assets – both physical assets and intangible ones, such as its reputation. They make sure these are used well, and that the charity is run sustainably.

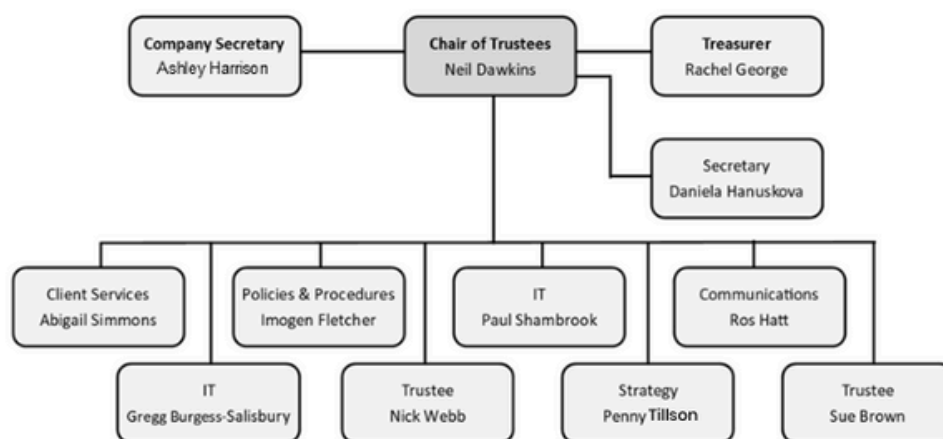
Trustees don't usually do the day-to-day running of the charity, rather they play the role of a 'critical friend' by giving support and by challenging in a supportive way. However, in smaller charities with few staff, trustees may take hands-on roles too. Some of our BMSTC trustees are working directly with staff on the project to replace the database with Beacon. I am the communications lead for this project, you might have seen Beacon mentioned on the big screen in the coffee area?

Our trustees may have an area of focus, as shown below, largely based on their professional skills and life experience. Many of our trustees are also part of a sub-committee which focuses on achieving elements of our strategic plan.

As a trustee you have the chance to support and shape the work and strategic direction of an organisation. You make a significant difference to a cause that matters to you. You'll be part of a team and will have the opportunity to apply your skills and experience while learning from the other trustees, each bringing a different perspective.

Ros Hatt

P.S. We are currently looking for a trustee with fundraising experience – if you know someone suitable please ask them to contact Neil Dawkins on neil@bmstc.org.



Berkshire MS Therapy Centre Board of Trustees March 2025

A RECOMMENDATION FROM ONE OF OUR MEMBERS

By Ian Langrish

When I was first diagnosed with MS, way back in 1991 (MRI at the Royal Berks), I was walking and working quite normally. Over several years things gradually became more awkward. I walked with a stick and then an elbow crutch. Eventually I had a manual wheelchair which I was able to push myself, until I noticed problems developing when I began to lose power in my left arm. I found myself almost going round in circles!

So I investigated powered wheelchairs. At first driving this using my right hand was fine. But again things gradually declined further.

Through a chance conversation at Sun Mobility about the problems I was having I was told to speak to Matt Tennent but told he didn't work in Reading any more. I thought that would mean travelling to heaven knows where! But in fact it was Yattendon, between Reading and Newbury.

Matt Tennent works for Smile Smart Technology. He very quickly assessed the problem and solution. A few weeks later my "magic arm" was fitted and I can now drive my powered wheelchair using mouth controls if needed. It can control all the things the powered chair is able to. I try not to use the kit all the time as I don't want to totally lose use of my right arm as I did on my left probably 20 years ago.

Smile Technology may not have the ideal solution in every case. But they might be able to help you. I would happily recommend them. They are on 01635 37550. It really is only 5 numbers. I've lost most of my marbles but not quite all!

Thank you for sharing this useful information Ian.

If you would like to share anything in the next newsletter, please email gill@bmstc.org or claire@bmstc.org. We'd love to hear from you.

THANK YOU TO REDLAND MOBILITY

A big thank you to the team from Redland Mobility, who recently spent a busy day at the Centre checking over wheelchairs, scooters and rollators for our members. They also checked over some of our gym equipment. We really appreciate their time and expertise!

If you missed the check up, don't worry as Redland Mobility offer a free check up service every second Friday of every month between 10am and 2pm at their showroom on the Oxford Road, a short distance from the Centre. Parking is available nearby. To find out more, contact Redland Mobility on 0118 9560800 or visit www.redlandmobility.co.uk



We are very grateful to Redland Mobility for sponsoring our Afternoon Tea this year.



Redland Mobility

0118 956 0800

-  Free Home Demonstrations
-  Incontinence Products
-  Wheelchairs
-  Mobility Scooters
-  Wide Fitting Footwear
-  Walking Aids
-  Riser Recliner Chairs
-  Motability



VISIT US

6 Cholsey House,
Oxford Road, Reading,
RG30 1AP

www.redlandmobility.co.uk

@Redlandmobility

SALES - SERVICE - REPAIR - ADVICE



THANK YOU... FUNDRAISING



We'd like to say a big thank you to Pangbourne soulies for their fantastic donation of £400 to the Centre. Your support really is appreciated and will make a big difference to our work.

A huge thank you and well done to our amazing London Marathon team who took part in the race on 27 April. So far they've raised over £23,000 with more coming in!



Lee



Olek and Archie



Charlotte and Amy

If you or someone you know has been inspired to try running a marathon, please visit www.bmstc.org/londonmarathon to find out more about running for us in 2026.

A big thank you to everyone who bought tickets and donated items for our Easter Hamper Raffle. Your support is greatly appreciated.

The raffle raised an amazing £1,360 for the Centre, which will make a big difference to our work. We had so many lovely donations that we were able to make up five hampers, rather than the original expected four, so thank you again for your support.

Thank you also to Suttons Seeds, Greggs, Boots, Longdog Brewery, Lindt, Great British Food Festival and John Lewis & Partners Reading for providing items for our hampers.



Michelle, one of our lucky hamper winners

Whatever your fundraising ideas please talk to Tamzin and she'll give you the support you need. You can email her on tamzin@bmstc.org or call her on 0118 901 6000. She is usually in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays. Thank you.

THANKYOU



FUNDRAISING



JOIN OUR GO CHALLENGE 2025 - THE MUSICALS!

Last year, you donned your ra-ra skirts and raised an incredible £11,000 by taking part in our Go1984 Challenge. This year, for our eighth challenge, we're going to the musicals!

You will embark on an exciting journey of approximately 3,000 kilometres (1864 miles!), celebrating various musicals along the way.

Your adventure begins far from the Centre in Easington, the home of Billy Elliot! If you were 'Born to Boogie' (or eager to accumulate kilometres on this incredible journey), this challenge is perfect for you!

Next, you'll make your way to London, entering the realm of Cats to jog your 'Memory' of what makes a musical truly pur-fect.

Afterwards, you'll travel to Austria to revel in all things 'The Sound of Music,' before bidding 'So Long, Farewell' as you head to our final destination – Kalokairi in Greece.

Here, you'll soak up the enchanting atmosphere of Mamma Mia and celebrate the 'Money, Money, Money' you've collectively raised on this remarkable journey.

You can help cover the kilometres between Monday 16 June and Saturday 5 July by:

- using the bikes in the gym
- adding kilometres from activity that you do from home
- attending our online classes and earn kilometres that way too

While fundraising isn't compulsory, we encourage you to raise as much as possible, every contribution counts. Those who raise £50 or more will be entered into a draw for a mystery prize. As ever, fancy dress costumes are not compulsory but are very welcome!

Sign up now to join the Go Challenge by speaking to a member of the physiotherapy team or email tamzin@bmstc.org if you have any queries.



FUNDRAISING



SIGN UP FOR OUR FIREWALK!

Calling all thrill-seekers and adrenaline junkies! Are you ready for your next challenge? Or do you just want to push the boundaries and boost your self-belief? Either way BMSTC's brand new Firewalk Challenge on 4 October is for you!

It's the ultimate test of mind over matter. You will walk barefoot across glowing embers whilst being guided by expert coaches from Firewalk UK.

Registration costs just £40 per person plus a pledge to raise £150 sponsorship for the Centre.

Find out more and sign up to join our Firewalk Team at www.bmstc.org/firewalk25



If you have MS or another disability and would like to take part, please get in touch with Tamzin in the first instance. Many people with MS will be able to participate depending on their mobility and we will do what we can to support you. You can contact Tamzin at tamzin@bmstc.org or call 0118 901 6000.

JOIN OUR COLLECTIONS TEAM!

Thank you to everyone who has collected for us recently. We raised the following fantastic amounts;

- £550.69 at Tesco Portman Road on 21 Feb
- £957.66 at Tesco Windsor on 15 March
- £1843.40 at Reading Station on 1 May

It's a lot of fun being a collector and a great way to support the Centre. Our next collections are;

- The Meadows, Saturday 14 June
- Reading Station, Friday 4 July
- Windsor Races, Monday 4 August
- Reading Station, Friday 19 September
- Reading Station, Friday 10 October

If you can help, please contact Jackie at jackie@bmstc.org.



Collectors Rovshan and Petra

FUNDRAISING



BUY YOUR TICKETS FOR OUR GREAT GATSBY CHARITY BALL!

Our third charity ball on Saturday 18 October, featuring a dazzling 1920s Great Gatsby theme, is being held at the Wellington Arms Hotel, Stratfield Turgis.

This event offers a fantastic opportunity to dress to impress and make lasting memories with your family and friends, while helping to fund the vital work of the Centre, supporting local people living with MS.

For just £75, you'll be greeted with a complimentary drink followed by a delicious three-course meal. The evening promises entertainment, including enchanting magic, a luxury raffle, and a disco, giving you the chance to dance the night away and relax. Plus, there will be a selfie booth to capture memories of this fun-filled night.

Why not consider gathering your friends and reserving a table for a special rate of £700 for a table of 10?

Buy your tickets now at www.bmstc.org/charityball25 or use the QR code below



MEETING DIARY FOR MS GROUPS

These activities are not organised by BMSTC.
Please contact them directly for more information.

MS NURSE

If you see an MS Nurse from the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust you can have your appointment at the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. Please book your appointment directly with the nurses on 0118 322 5369. They are at the Centre on the third Monday of each month.



Please note, it is not possible for the MS Nurse to see members who are not eligible to be seen by consultants within the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust.

If you are unable to keep your appointment with the Nurse at the Centre please call her on the number above or contact the Centre on 0118 901 6000 on the day.

THE MS CARERS SUPPORT GROUP



The MS Carers Group meets for lunch at various pubs and restaurants at 12.30pm on the second Thursday of each month. It is funded by Reading, Wokingham and Districts MS Society Branch.

New members are always welcome. If you would like to join please email Marianne on mcross@ntlworld.com

MEETING DIARY FOR MS GROUPS CONT'D.

READING WOKINGHAM AND DISTRICT MSQUARED

MSquared is part of the MS Society and is a social group for people diagnosed with MS, their family members and friends.

The meetings are arranged at the request of the attendees and there are regular social events. For more information email: msquaredrwd@gmail.com



READING, WOKINGHAM AND DISTRICTS MS SOCIETY DROP-IN

Earley Crescent Resource Centre, Warbler Drive, Lower Earley, Reading RG6 4HB on Wednesdays 10.30am-1.30pm.

Contact Janet Turner on 0118 941 2315 or visit www.msreading.org.uk for more information.



EAST BERKSHIRE MS SOCIETY

Activities include Pilates on the first Friday of the month in Crowthorne, Thursday coffee club in Maidenhead and coffee morning on the third Friday of the month in Windsor.



For full details of all events, see <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/support-and-community/local-support/local-groups/east-berkshire-group>

Email eastberkshire@mssociety.org.uk or call 07395 465993

THE HENLEY MS SUPPORT GROUP

The Henley MS Support Group meets socially for lunch on the third Wednesday of every month. If you would like to go along, please contact organiser, Maddie, directly by email: maddie@starames.co.uk

THERAPIES AT THE BERKSHIRE MS THERAPY CENTRE



Physiotherapy sessions and exercise classes

We run a variety of 1:1 sessions and classes as well as APS, FES, re-assessments and new assessments. Yoga is available online.

Please contact the physiotherapy team on 0118 901 6000 to find out more.

Oxygen Treatment

Monday–Saturday

To arrange a session or seek more information, please contact the Centre on 0118 901 6000

Counselling

Counselling is available online, by telephone and face-to-face. Call the Centre on 0118 901 6000.

Footcare

Available every Thursday.

Call the Centre on 0118 901 6000 to book.



Complementary Therapies

The following therapies are available at the Centre:

Spinal Reflexology (£18)

Acupuncture/acupressure (£18)

Reiki (£18)

Massage (From £30)

Appointments can be made by telephoning the BMSTC reception on 0118 901 6000. With your permission, your contact details will then be given to the therapist you request who will then make appointments directly with you. Please note that you will pay your therapist directly for these treatments.





EVENTS COMING SOON AND USEFUL DATES

- **27 May to 1 July (see page 5)**
Introductory relaxation and meditation course
Email ms@bmstc.org
- **11 June to 27 August**
Balance class (see page 11)
Email analy@bmstc.org or speak to Analy
- **16 June to 5 July**
Go Challenge (see page 24)
Sign up via your physiotherapist
- **19 June 2025**
AGM (see page 3)
Sign up to attend at www.bmstc.org/agm2025
- **23 June 2025 (see page 12)**
Manual handling training for carers
Email anwen@bmstc.org for more details
- **4 October 2025**
Firewalk! (see page 25)
Sign up at www.bmstc.org/firewalk25
- **18 October 2025**
Great Gatsby Charity Ball (see page 26)
Buy your tickets at www.bmstc.org/charityball25



NEXT TIME...

Our next newsletter is due in August and we want to hear from you! Have you got any advice to share? Have a celebration you want us to join in or anything else you want us to share?

Please email gill@bmstc.org or claire@bmstc.org or call Claire on 0118 901 6000 (usual working days Mondays to Wednesdays).

Deadline is 10 July 2025 and we look forward to hearing from you!

Centre closed for Bank
Holidays on:
26 May
25 August

For details of any of our forthcoming events, please go to www.bmstc.org/events, email ms@bmstc.org or call 0118 901 6000.

Berkshire MS Therapy Centre

Bradbury House, 23a August End, Brock Gardens,
Reading RG30 2JP

Email: ms@bmstc.org Website: www.bmstc.org

0118 901 6000 (please leave a message if we are not there)