Annual review of 2018
Foreword

2018 marked the end of a five year strategic plan for MS-UK and saw us support thousands of people affected by multiple sclerosis (MS).

MS is a condition that affects the central nervous system – the brain and spinal cord. There is currently no cure. The symptoms people experience vary greatly from person to person and over time. Such symptoms may include fatigue, pain, sensory problems, cognition difficulties and issues with bodily functions such as speech and swallowing and bladder and bowel.

People with MS have the right to make their own decisions about how to live with the condition. Through our professional services we have been able to offer people all the information and support they need to make their own choices.

MS-UK is here to make sure nobody faces these choices alone.

Now we welcome in a new strategic period and a truly community-led approach to supporting over 107,000 people in the UK affected by MS.

Our vision is a world where people affected by multiple sclerosis live healthier and happier lives.

Our mission is to make this possible by improving understanding of the condition and providing support where it is needed most.

We are proud to share our achievements from the past year with you in this review and invite you to join us as we embark on the next chapter of our journey.

Martin Hopkins,
Chair

Amy Woolf,
CEO
Our values

In 2018 we looked at all of our values as part of our new strategic plan development. All of the staff at MS-UK sign up to our values and actively use them in their day to day roles. These are the values that now guide our work...

Community-led
The voices of people affected by multiple sclerosis inform all our work

Unbiased
We will always be balanced in the information we share

Independent
We do not accept funding from sources that may, or can be perceived to, jeopardise our ability to act in the best interests of people affected by MS

Non-judgemental
We respect an individual’s right to make choices for themselves

Supportive
We treat everyone fairly, with respect, care and compassion

Professional
We are knowledgeable and provide high quality services
Sarah's story

Before I was diagnosed with MS, I was very keen on sport and was always very active participating in sports teams, such as when I joined Colchester Ladies Hockey Club and later on, a Colchester badminton team. I also started playing golf in my mid-thirties and was a very active gardener as I got older.

However, pre-diagnosis, I had an unexplained ‘attack’ which left me very fatigued with a tendency to quickly hit a ‘fatigue wall’ during any physical exercise, even just walking to the shop.

This meant that my very active lifestyle came to something of an abrupt end, even though my mind still thought of myself as fit and active. Suddenly, I just couldn’t do the things that I used to do.

It was a very scary time and I began to get scared of trying to carry on doing any physical activity.

Once I received my MS diagnosis, I was overwhelmed by so many fears, worries and confusion. I found it difficult to take in and understand all the advice and information I was given.

I didn’t ask about physical exercise or about many other things related to MS because I didn’t know enough to know what to ask, my mind was in a spin. All I remember was being told that ‘overdoing it’ could bring on a relapse, and to rest and pace myself or I would ‘pay for it’. This made me very worried about doing any physical exercise in case it brought on a relapse.

I joined Josephs Court two years ago and have been aiming to strengthen my arm and leg muscles to help compensate for my severe fatigue and to reduce the risk of falls. I’m really pleased with my progress and I’m now able to do a lot more than I was able to do before I hit my ‘fatigue wall’.

I’ve also learned how to pace myself better through the excellent coaching at Josephs Court and the MS-UK Mindfulness training.

Now, I can enjoy time with my family and friends without constantly feeling exhausted. “I don’t feel ‘ill’ anymore!”
A year in numbers

We celebrated **25 years** of **supporting people** affected by MS

We ended the year with **2,274** New Pathways **subscribers**

We had **8,545 exercise sessions** at Josephs Court

We answered **1,330 enquiries** through the MS-UK Helpline

We gave **598** telephone sessions through MS-UK Counselling

We held **3 mindfulness courses** during the year at our centre

2018
Over 100 community events were organised by our supporters.

Over 440 fantastic fundraisers supported our work!

Our online resources were downloaded over 80,000 times.

We published 168 blogs including 60 guest blogs throughout the year.

Over 100 volunteers supported our work across the charity.

Our first ever corporate 925 Challenge raised £16,700.

We welcomed 38 new clients to Josephs Court.

Our supporters raised over £436,720 through fundraising activities.

We followed the stories of 5 people for the entire year to learn about MS.
Glen and David after running the Virgin Money London Marathon
Glen and David's story

We moved onto our street in 2003 after taking a leap of faith in buying a new house in an area that we didn’t really know much about. Then, in 2004, a lovely young couple named Chris and Claire bought and moved into the house directly opposite to ours and right next door to our already great friends Helen and Jamie.

We were all of similar ages and starting out with our grown-up futures ahead of us. It wasn’t very long until we all struck up a great friendship and we started socialising together with dinner parties, drinks and silly karaoke discos!

Soon after moving in, Chris and Claire got married. They had a beautiful wedding ceremony and celebrations in France. It was their perfect day and the start of their married bliss.

Unfortunately, two weeks later their world was turned upside down and their future together took an unexpected turn after Claire was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis. For a couple who were just starting out on their planned journey, their future was having to be rewritten.

Fast forward to 2019, and we can now look back and share what their journey has been so far...and how MS has affected Claire, Chris, their families and us as friends.

Anyone who is diagnosed with MS will soon learn that no two journeys are the same. The body is a wondrous thing, but how MS takes over it, is different for everyone. We had never had anyone close to us have MS, so this was all new to us all.

We have witnessed Claire’s battle with MS and her battle with herself.

Both Claire and Chris have had to adapt to a life that neither of them planned for or ever wanted. Their love and strength for each other has been incredible.

Since the time Claire was first diagnosed, there has been huge progress made on the support people can get from having an early diagnosis.

This is where MS-UK come into their own. The work they do is helping many people in the same situation as Claire and Chris. It is an amazing charity which does great things.
Money matters

MS-UK ensures it works to a budget that enables us to provide our services in a sustainable way and to maintain adequate reserves for any unforeseeable needs.

Our income is derived from fundraising events, notably the Virgin Money London Marathon, as well as individual donations, legacies, trusts and foundations. We also gather income from donation schemes related to our services, such as magazine subscriptions and Josephs Court sessions.

Income

- Fundraising activities: £436,720
- Legacies: £66,723
- Grants: £54,275
- New Pathways: £18,875
- Other: £10,983
- Josephs Court: £56,093
- Donations: £226,160
- Gifts: £114,548
In 2018, our income was £984,377 and our expenditure was £930,177, resulting in a surplus of £54,200.

We are in a healthy position financially to fulfil our commitments over the next three year strategic period.
The difference we are making...

Thanks for the amazing service and support that it offers. This is a wonderful inclusive service. From my experience it has been impossible to access talking therapy through the GP. Whereas this service was available and the waiting list was manageable.

MS-UK Counselling client

Apart from being really helpful, it has been an eye opener for me as to what help there is available.

MS-UK Helpline client

I have been with you for all those years and read every word of your magazines. Today is the first time I have found you on the internet. You have got me through some dark times. I hope you will be around for many more years.

New Pathways reader

This service works so well, as you do not have to explain how MS affects you.

MS-UK Counselling client
As an individual with MS who has been reading your magazine for years I would like to say 'Thanks' for your great rewarding magazine you prepare regularly. A positive useful tool for all.

New Pathways reader

MS-UK is cutting edge, especially in its inclusion of the voices of people with MS. It means so much to me that I am involved with this process of providing materials for others, so they don’t have to feel so isolated.

Virtual Insight Panel member

I am feeling the impact of MS now like I have never before and it is very reassuring that I have MS-UK close by.

Josephs Court client

When my wife was diagnosed with MS in 2011 we turned to MS-UK for help. They were brilliant...I decided to do something to support the brilliant work they do for people living with MS.

MS-UK fundraiser
Looking to the future

MS-UK has always been at the forefront of promoting choice, of providing people with all the information and support they need to live life as they wish to with multiple sclerosis; whether that be through drugs, complementary therapies, lifestyle changes, a mixture of these or none at all.

Our new strategy builds upon the foundations created during our last strategic period – a charity that really listens to those we are here to support, provides professional services and is robust, efficient and effective.

As we look to the next three years we will be focusing on what the MS community told us would make the biggest difference to them today and is not available anywhere else.

Our strategic priorities
2019 - 2021

1. Supporting people affected by multiple sclerosis to be healthier and happier
2. Increasing understanding of multiple sclerosis
3. Managing our charity as efficiently and effectively as possible
Supporting people affected by multiple sclerosis to be healthier and happier

- We will provide more information and emotional support through the MS-UK Helpline and continue to write new Choices booklets
- We will secure funding for the next three years for MS-UK Counselling, offer this service to more people with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis and explore video delivery
- We will provide more complementary therapies at our wellness centre, Josephs Court and support more people every year
- We will conduct research into tackling loneliness and isolation so we can develop solutions for the future

Increasing understanding of multiple sclerosis

- We will create a new Communications Department to lead our work in this area, refreshing the MS-UK brand and investing in content planning
- We will increase the visibility of people's stories about living life with multiple sclerosis, as well as undertaking product reviews
- We will collaborate with other MS charities during campaigns such as MS Awareness Week
- We will carry out market research into a range of subjects including hidden symptoms and loneliness

Managing our charity as efficiently and effectively as possible

- We will continue to work to Trusted Charity standard for charity quality
- We will recruit new board members and update our governing document.
- We will work to a balanced budget and increase our return on investment for fundraising activities, while diversifying our income streams
- We will support the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and continue to meet the Wellbeing Charter standard
- We will invest in admin support
Thank you...

MS-UK is an unbiased and non-judgemental charity. We do not accept funding from sources that may, or can be perceived to jeopardise our ability to act in the best interests of people affected by multiple sclerosis. This means we can remain independent and deliver the services that the MS community want and need.

We are very lucky to be funded by some amazing trusts and foundations to help us do this. This support from these grant making bodies means even more people affected by MS are able to live healthier and happier lives.

Thank you to the Fowler, Smith and Jones Trust and the Essex Community Foundation for funding activities via our wellness centre, Josephs Court. The National Lottery Community Fund have also generously funded running costs of Josephs Court over five years.

We were thrilled to recently be awarded a grant from The Edward Gostling Foundation towards service delivery costs for MS-UK Counselling. Long term supporters of the charity include The Light Fund, Colchester Catalyst and Anglian Community Trust (ACT).

Thank you to every funder, fundraiser and donor that makes our work possible. We simply couldn't do it without your support.
Stay in touch

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