

## **THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE BRANCH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE ASSOCIATION 2023**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

This year has been, once again, a real challenge for the South Yorkshire Branch (SYB). There have been a mixture of significant successes, some of which I will celebrate and share with you, and sadly some low points. I will discuss the latter first. The sad passing of Geoff Bland and Dave Booker within a few short months of each other has been devastating first and foremost for their families, but also for their friends, which of course includes the extended members of the South Yorkshire Branch. Geoff and Dave gave their all to the cause of helping to fight MND both locally and beyond. They will be so badly missed within the MND community as we move into 2024 and beyond. Their passing leaves a huge loss for the SYB team, which we will need to rebuild in the year ahead in order to continue our support efforts which I am sure both Geoff and Dave would want us to do. They leave a tremendous legacy of unerring support for those in South Yorkshire living with MND.

The first part of the 2023/4 brought us a significant financial challenge. We were in a relatively poor position with the combination of low income and record grant requests. This, in hindsight, was due to the combination of a general cost of living crisis and specifically the energy bill increases which affected both donations and also triggered the increased needs of people living with MND. This meant that, for the first time in the branch's history we were forced to reduce the percentage of our contribution to grants from 100% to 50% with central office thankfully making up the remainder. This was a difficult decision for us but necessary at the time. However, this position did not last that long. Due to the phenomenal generosity of our regional supporters and the tremendous energy of the branch volunteers we have transformed the financial position and are now once again funding all the grant request at 100%. Our Treasurer's Report describes this transformation in some detail.

Some of the highlights of the many events supported in the last year do need a mention. The donations from the Concrete Society and the very successful SMH Golf Day totalled almost £10,000 and the SYB newly created Grants and Trusts team secured almost £5,000 in funding sourced from donors and foundation grants. A special mention also goes to Lloyds Bank for working with the SYB on their matched funding scheme which has been a real success. We again supported well over 100 people living with MND on a family day out at Gulliver's Valley Theme Park which was a highlight and an event we are planning to hold again in 2024. In addition, we continued to book talented musicians to entertain our loyal supporters with a number of events which catered for all tastes. It is clear that the SYB is particularly successful in this area and should be noted as an exemplar in this regard. Finally, I want to pay tribute to the fantastic team that is the SYB who once again have given their all to support people living with MND in our region. They are inspirational and an absolute pleasure to work with. Thankyou.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Our financial year ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, and once again, I wish to express my thanks to my Assistant Treasurer, Kirsteen Booy, who prepares the cash book so efficiently and makes my work as Treasurer so much easier. We commenced the year with reserves at a relatively low level, which gave us the impetus to push for additional fundraising during 2023. I am pleased to report that our efforts were rewarded and the Branch finished the year in a much stronger financial position.

Our income for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 amounted to £64,755 (2022 £45,969), reversing the fall in income of the previous two years. Both donations and fundraising increased in achieving this great result. I should also mention the new Grants and Trusts Team who commenced work during the year, applying for grants from various foundations, and produced income of £4,640. SMH Group also require a special mention. Their golf day raised over £7,000 and on top of that, they pay for the printing and postage of our quarterly newsletter. There are others, too many to mention, who have contributed to this successful year. Thank you all.

Expenditure on care, equipment and support was at an all-time high of £53,853, (exceeding the 2022 figure of £47,265), which was also a record. The current economic climate means people need more support, but we are also trying hard, and succeeding, to reach and help as many people as possible. We support not just the person with MND, but the whole family, and do make grants to young people. If we can help in whatever way is needed, we will.

I remain optimistic, but expect that the needs of those people living with MND will continue to increase beyond last year's record level. We have a great team of people on the committee, and many dedicated supporters, so I remain confident that we will continue to be able to support all those who need our help in 2024.

The Financial Accounts for the Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 were presented at the Full Committee Branch Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and were accepted, approved and signed.

## **CARE REPORT**

The Branch has continued to support people affected by MND in a variety of ways over the past 12 months. There are face-to-face peer Support Meetings held in Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. They are attended by both people newly diagnosed with MND, and people who have been living with the disease for some years. There is a separate Carers' Group and a Past Carers' Group is just starting up again. There is also a periodic online Support Group Meeting which has now been running for four years.

The Association Visitor AV team has had some changes this year with the sad loss and retirement of some AVs and some new members joining too. Jayne Thompson, our Area Support Coordinator is still advertising for new volunteers and arranging recruitment and training of the applicants. The AVs telephone, text, email or visit families living with MND as requested and provide both support and information.

Brian Jackson has been administering a steadily increasing number of financial grants. Support Grants are mainly used towards equipment and adaptations, but the Branch Quality of Life, Carers and Young Persons Grants are helping with transport, short breaks, school uniforms and a variety of household needs. The Association has continued with Cost of Living grants this year taking into account the continuing economic constraints and rising costs experienced by people affected by MND.

Branch funding support for Counselling and Complementary therapies has also increased. The Cavendish Centre in Sheffield and the home-based support at Aurora Doncaster offer a

range of therapies to people with MND and their main Carer. They provide a confidential, friendly service and the talk and touch treatments help people with issues of the mind and body which in turn can help mood. We continue to encourage people to refer themselves for this support and we're delighted to be able to work in partnership with these teams of skilled practitioners.

## **GRANTS**

For the year ending 31/12/23, South Yorkshire Branch awarded 169 grants which was the highest total for many years. Of this, £53,159 was awarded to people affected by mnd, of which £23,226 came from the Branch. This was made up of mostly Quality of Life grants and the rest was almost equally shared between the Carers' and Young Carers' and Children and Young People grants.

After the success of the Family Fun Day at Gulliver's Valley in 2022, it was repeated in June of 2023 and it was attended by 75 adults and 47 children – double that of 2022. It has been decided to hold another Fun Day this year, again in June.

## **COMMUNICATION REPORT**

The Communication Sub Committee, now down to just two volunteers, have continued to raise awareness by publicising the Branch as widely as possible. The Branch Newsletter is sent out to some 400 people, either via a hard copy or e-mail and includes articles of forthcoming events, fund raisers' experiences and up-to-date information about latest news relating to MND. Social Media platforms such as the branch website, twitter etc are also used to highlight the work of the Branch and how it supports plwmnd.

Information Leaflets and Newsletters are also set out at all fund-raising events, enabling us to reach a different wider audience.

The Secretary has now taken on the role-sharing of Branch Contact to handle telephone queries. She continues to send Welcome Letters to newly diagnosed people living with MND, via the information received on the FCH Information Portal. These welcome letters inform on the Support Group Meeting dates and venues, and include an information leaflet entitled "What We Do" which gives further details of the support we offer, grant information and about the South Yorkshire Branch in general. A Branch Newsletter is also included with the welcome letter. The Secretary also makes verbal contact wherever possible, answering any queries newly diagnosed people or carers may have and giving them as much information about the Branch. This means of communication is an important one as it can clarify the support the Branch offers and encourages people to attend the peer group meetings.

As part of the Branch's Action Plan, the Committee are continuing to work with the ASC towards recruiting volunteers to the Communication Sub Committee, managing Facebook/Twitter/Website and with forward planning in mind, someone to assist the Secretary.

## **FUNDRAISING REPORT**

### **Geoff Bland and Dave Booker**

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of our Fundraising Lead, Geoff Bland and our Deputy Fundraising Lead Dave Booker. Geoff and Dave both joined the Association following the loss of their wives to MND. They were both totally committed to fundraising and raising awareness of MND in their local communities. They also trained to be Association Visitors, supporting countless families throughout their MND journeys. It would be impossible to meet two more enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. They were the powerhouse behind our local branch fundraising activities, were friends as well as colleagues and both will be greatly missed.

### **Events**

2023 was a very busy year. In fact, 2023 was the second-best fundraising year in the past twenty years, so a huge thank you to our tireless volunteers and generous donors for everything they have done to bring this about.

Our thanks go to Trevor and Doreen Peacock for organising our highly successful range of musical concerts, featuring the Unite Brass Band, Woodhouse Prize Band, Stannington Brass Band and the concert by Julian Jones.

Paul Hebblethwaite, Branch Treasurer is the driving force (forgive the pun!) behind our Golf Days, which are making an increasingly important contribution to Branch funds.

September saw Brian Jackson, our Branch Committee member and Association Visitor take to the road, at the young age of 80 years, raising over £6000 by cycling from London to Paris.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to Mel White and Chris Dyson for the Denby Folk Day held in what must have been the wettest-ever June day in history and the Featherstone Ceili, which was a fun way to bring our fundraising activities to a close at the end of November.

### **Working in Partnership with Lloyds Bank**

We are delighted to be working in partnership with Lloyds Bank in Sheffield to raise funds for supporting those living with MND in the South Yorkshire area. Each year employees from Lloyds Bank spend thousands of hours volunteering in their local communities.

**Matched Funding** - the South Yorkshire Branch of the MNDA has benefited through matched funding, so for most of the money raised by our fundraising events, Lloyds has matched this, significantly increasing the funds we have generated.

**Volunteer Funding** - the Branch has also benefited from Lloyds Bank funding the hours spent by volunteers on fundraising, raising awareness and providing support through meetings and association visitors.

**Day to Make a Difference** - Lloyds Bank also has their *Day to Make a Difference Scheme*, so we will receive £500 for every employee who chooses to help with one of our fundraising events.

**An Awareness Raising Day** was held in the Lloyds Bank Sheffield Branch in April, raising £450 for the MNDA South Yorkshire Branch.

### **Grants Team**

Our new Grants Team is now very much established and getting into their stride. Team members Daisy Joustra and Esme Harvard, Team Leader Siobhan Taylor and Team Mentor Vanessa Kirby-Firth, already have successful grant applications under their belts and are currently working on a grant application to the National Lottery. These grants are contributing to the cost of running the Support Groups held across the whole of South Yorkshire, as well as ensuring continued access to complementary services funded by the Branch and provided by the Cavendish Centre in Sheffield and the Aurora Centre in Doncaster.

### **Looking Forward in 2024**

The Branch are in the midst of preparing our programme of events for 2024. We are greatly looking forward to getting out and meeting our South Yorkshire MND community, working with them to ensure that no one must face their MND journey alone.

I am pleased to confirm that all members of the Branch Committee remain enthusiastic and committed to working together in their current roles to raise awareness, fund-raise, and support people living with MND and the Association as a whole.



Dr Andrew Gibson  
Chair  
MNDA South Yorkshire  
March 2024