

**(SUPPORT FOR SEVERE ME SUFFERERS)
NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
TO BE HELD ON 1ST SEPTEMBER 2015**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

GROUP DEVELOPMENTS

As stated in the previous Report, we have had to rely on core funding and some smaller grants and donations from various individuals and organisations, these funds have allowed us to continue to employ (and indeed increase the hours) of the advocacy worker for the group and this allowed us to continue to achieve a wider range of services for our members and provide them with much-needed practical assistance in order that they continue to reside independently within their own homes. The Group's Advocacy Worker is in high demand for the service particularly in light of the benefit reforms taking place at the moment. This has proved to be a well utilised service and we are very pleased to be able to offer this exclusive service to our members.

We also managed to finance rental of an upgraded photocopier to help the group administrator to meet the demands of printing all newsletters and other publications in house.

We managed to attract 60 new members last year, most of whom joined the group online. The Group's Facebook page continues to grow in number with around 1,000 members.

Salaries and all other expenditure continue to be met from core funds. At present the annual expenditure for running the charity i.e. salaries, rent and general running costs is approximately £1000 per week. Although, this is now financed out of core funds, we feel it is important in order to carry out, as well as the services mentioned above, other vital functions within the group and its operations, especially allowing us to continue to attend more conferences and seminars organised by the Department for Work and Pensions, Social Work Department, local health authorities, various local and regional M.E. Support Groups and other voluntary agencies dealing with disability issues.

As in previous years, we have been able to attend various meetings and be pro-active in delivering various presentations relating to the group's services to other M.E. support groups. Attendance at such events provides the Group with an opportunity to have its articles published and promoted via their newsletters and websites. This has helped promote our services and allowed us to reach many more severely affected sufferers.

We have produced various documents and press releases in order to highlight the plight of the severely affected and to campaign for biomedical research to be undertaken by the UK Government as well as issues relating to carers. In addition we have prepared reports and press releases outlining our concerns and the possible detrimental effects upon our clients in relation to the benefit reforms.

CAMPAIGNING

M.E. AWARENESS WEEK MAY 2015: ME Awareness Packs to members, carers, 300 ME Networks and support organisations, as well as online ME related message boards. Members were encouraged to send our awareness letter to their newly elected MP/MSP following this year's General Election; the focus of this year's campaign was changing public services for the better to better meet the needs of the severely affected.

FUNDRAISING

We received a substantial legacy of £25,000 which has helped immensely with running costs and to increase the hours of the advocacy worker to help meet demand.

Various fundraising events and initiatives were organised throughout the year, producing greeting and Christmas cards, attendance at car-boot sales, to hiring of stalls at local fairs and coffee mornings. One member also organised a Victorian Tea Party to raise awareness and funds for the group.

These ventures proved to be extremely popular and fruitful for the Group particularly with regard to local recognition and development.

Special thanks go to all Group Members who donated funds and participated in numerous fundraising events and activities

FUTURE PLANS

AWARENESS DAY FOR THE SEVERLY AFFECTED

We are pleased and proud to announce that the launch of a separate Awareness Day just for the severely affected has grown in strength and we continue to hold this each year on 8th August. Many other ME Support Groups have joined us in this venture and help to promote our campaign each year.