

Mission Statement

'To enable and empower people affected by Multiple Sclerosis to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential.'

Aims

- to empower people with MS to control their lives and influence their environment
- to allow people with MS to live with dignity while participating in the community
- to provide support for the families and carers of people with MS
- to co-operate with the medical, scientific, social and caring professions
- to promote scientific research into the causes of MS
- to encourage the better management of MS and its symptoms
- to exchange and disseminate information on MS
- to develop an efficient, effective and caring organisation to serve the needs of people with MS

Services

The Society provides a wide range of services and programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of the MS community and to ensure that the fundamental objectives of the Society are achieved. Our key services are:

- 10 professionally-staffed Regional Offices
- Living with MS programmes, activities and workshops
- Confidential helpline – 1850 233 233
- Respite Care Centre
- 41 voluntary branches nationwide
- Professional counselling
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Publications and fact sheets
- MS News magazine and e-newsletter
- Website www.ms-society.ie
- Information and research
- National conferences

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Chairman's letter

In this review of the organisation's activities in 2007, you will see the further development of the Society under the leadership of our Chief Executive, Anne Winslow.

Your Board finalised its strategic plan to take the Society to 2012. It is an ambitious undertaking, but realisable if all strands of the organisation work together towards its implementation. Many of the items are already being addressed. The principal activity which required the most attention in the year was the setting up of the 'Getting the Balance Right' programme. This exercise-based, health promotion and research programme for people with MS is the first such national undertaking by the Society. It has been made possible by Tesco Ireland Charity of the Year programme funding, with the support of a grant from the Dormant Accounts Fund and backing from the HSE. There has been in-depth preparation to ensure that an efficient, equitable service will be provided. I will trespass for one moment into the territory of 2008, as I would like to share with you the fact that, as we go to print, there have been over 1,500 expressions of interest made to the Society in response to our call – a strong confirmation of the need for such a service.

Work on the accreditation of the Care Centre got under way. Thanks to much-needed funding, refurbishment of some areas was undertaken, among which was the redecoration of the dining-room, which now looks very swish indeed.

The management structure was tightened, with clear lines of authority put in place to enable a more efficient service.

The Society was represented at all European and International MS meetings, having input at some, with benefits accruing to us.

Thank you for your support throughout the year; we could not have achieved so much without you.

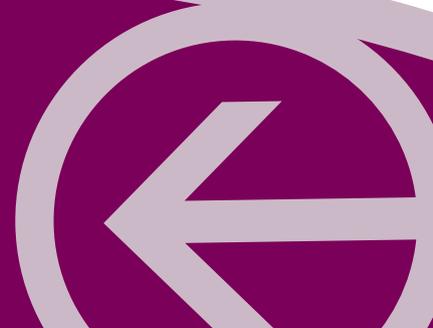
Yours sincerely,



Louise Wardell
Chairman



Multiple Sclerosis is a progressive, neurological disease of the Central Nervous System where the myelin surrounding the nerves becomes damaged and distorts the flow of messages.



Chief Executive's letter



In 2007 we showed leadership on many fronts:

Our MSLiving Convention in the RDS, Dublin attended by 1,200 people, was the largest gathering of people affected by MS in Ireland. The event addressed people's expressed need and interest in being enabled to access information, support, and up-to-date research on managing the condition and coping strategies for living with MS.

As the voice of people affected by MS, our concern about existing services not meeting needs was exacerbated when the HSE pulled back on resource commitments and introduced budget constraints in frontline services in September. Our 2007 campaign on areas for development of services also became one of advocating for the retention of existing services. The campaign included making representations directly to the HSE, meeting the ministers and officials and creating public awareness in the media, including participating on RTE's Prime Time.

Similar to previous years, we welcomed the appointment of neurologists to Sligo, Waterford and Limerick. This is progress but remains a long way from achieving the recommended number of 39 neurologists with supporting multi-disciplinary teams.

We designed and planned for MSI's first national programme, 'Getting The Balance Right', for delivery in every county simultaneously. 'Getting the Balance Right' will give people with MS opportunities to participate in guided exercise programmes. It will promote healthy living and will provide a profile of the physical needs of people with MS. It will enable learning about the impact of exercise on people with MS at various stages of the MS process.

Our first Regional Resource Centre was opened in October.

As over the years, in 2007 many people and organisations, national and international, worked with us. I believe that this collaborative working greatly assists progress to making a difference. That, allied to persistent and clearly defined goals, actions and measurable outcomes, enables us to deliver on our plans. In 2007 we commenced work on our strategic direction for 2008–2012 with the completion of our strategic plan 'Making It Happen'.

Work on future strengthening of our organisation has begun, with appropriate structures, systems and resources to deliver on the plan coming into place. The recognition and support of the State for our work remains critical, as does the need for fundraising.

Our staff and volunteers are the face of MS Ireland, their work towards enhancing lives and providing hope to people affected by MS continues to be vital, and together we will work to fulfil our responsibilities with commitment, energy, innovation and integrity.

Finally a special thank you to people affected by MS, members, supporters, staff, volunteers, sister community organisations, the HSE and other state bodies for working with us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Winslow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Winslow
Chief Executive



MS affects each person differently. While there are 4 types of MS the presence, severity and duration of symptoms varies from person to person. However, common symptoms include fatigue, visual problems, mobility and muscle strength.

Regional Services

MS Ireland has 10 Regional Offices around the country, providing professional services to the MS community. Our team of over 40 staff provides information and support to individuals, families and groups of people living with MS or working with people with MS.

In 2007 much work was done on defining the work of the regions and consolidating our core services. While there will always be services and resources particular to each region, the core services of all regions are:

- 1. Information service**
Information is provided on a number of topics including entitlements, life events and in particular MS as a condition and how it may affect the person or family.
- 2. Casework**
Regional Community Workers provide one-to-one support to the person or family living with MS. This allows the person or family to ask questions or talk about their concerns and allows the Regional Community Worker to inform, support and refer.
- 3. Living with MS programmes, workshops and activities**
A wide range of group support is available through programmes, workshops and activities covering such areas as health promotion, coping strategies, caring, personal development and support groups.
- 4. Referrals and advocacy**
Individuals and families living with MS continue to experience difficulties accessing local and community services such as housing, respite, personal assistants and neurology services, which have been further affected by HSE budget constraints. Regional Community Workers advocate on these and other issues on behalf of their clients and make referrals to other MS Ireland services, where necessary.
- 5. Links with external services and resources**
Regional Community Workers operate in close collaboration with many other local community services and organisations. Joint programmes and events, referrals to services and case conferences are a feature of collaborative regional work.
- 6. Counselling**
In order to meet the emotional and psychological challenges often experienced by people with MS, a confidential counselling service is available for the person or family members. The Regional Community Workers are responsible for referring people to the service and are sometimes called upon by the counsellors to follow up on certain issues arising from the counselling.

National statistics 2007

Number of people in contact with regional offices	4143
Number of newly diagnosed first contacts	210
Number of non-newly diagnosed first contacts	239
Number of counselling sessions conducted	401

Regional Services' Highlights 2007

North West Regional Office – covering Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim

Services and activities included:

- Residential breaks for carers, newly diagnosed and couples, run in conjunction with the TACTICS project, a cross-border initiative run with the support of MS Society Northern Ireland and Co-operation Ireland, funded by the Peace III programme.
- New courses, such as computer classes and a yoga programme, for people with MS,
- An information day in Letterkenny Hospital and a joint health professionals' day in Sligo with the Western Regional Office of MS Ireland and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland,
- MS Ireland's national conference, held in Bundoran in November, with over 250 people in attendance,
- MS Ireland staff were supported by Community Employment Participants (FÁS) who provided a befriending and support service to clients.

Western Regional Office – covering Galway, Mayo and Roscommon

Services and activities included:

- 'Soulfeast' – a residential weekend exploring ways to live a balanced, healthy and fulfilled lifestyle,
- A young person's support programme and self-care programme for carers,
- 'Photovoyage', a photo-based counselling tool, was run for the first time,
- A joint health professionals' day in Sligo with the North West Regional Office of MS Ireland and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland,
- MS Ireland staff were supported by CEP (FÁS) participants who provided a befriending and support services to clients.

Southern Regional Office – covering Cork and Kerry

Services and activities included:

- A well-being weekend and fatigue/symptom management programmes,
- A 'newly diagnosed' day, computer classes and a number of support groups,
- A new yoga programme was established in 2007,
- A number of educational sessions among students in nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

South East Regional Office – covering Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary

Services and activities included:

- A number of land and water-based exercise programmes,
- Two family days out,
- A new well-being and MS Support programme was run in a number of locations in the South East,
- A nine-week professional advice and information course was run for health professionals,
- A number of information days and presentations were run for a variety of professionals and officials.

Minister for Defence, Willie O'Dea T.D., officially opens the MS Resource Centre in Limerick. Pictured above from right to left; Gretta Allen, MS Ireland Regional Community Worker; Minister O'Dea; Louise Wardell, MS Ireland Chairman; Ger Fahy, Mayor of Limerick and Anne Winslow, MS Ireland Chief Executive.



Mid-West Regional Office – covering Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary

Services and activities included:

- The launch of the Tara Resource Centre by Minister of Defence Willie O’Dea TD. The centre is a services hub for the MS community in the Mid-West offering support and therapy sessions for people and families living with MS. The centre is also a base for the community work team. The centre was financially supported by the JP McManus Trust,
- A new stress management programme and a ‘newly diagnosed’ seminar,
- Computer training, peer counselling, chiropody,
- A Motomed machine for exercise and health promotion.

Midlands Regional Office – covering Longford, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath

Services and activities included:

- A 40% increase in participation on the National Physical and Sensory Disability database,
- A number of information days,
- Concentration on casework function.

North East Regional Office – covering Cavan, Monaghan, Meath and Louth

Services and activities included:

- Programmes for newly diagnosed, teenagers and couples,
- The continuation of the ‘Optimise and Empower’ physiotherapy programme,
- The Independent Advocacy Service.

Eastern Region – South West Area – covering South West Dublin and Kildare

Services and activities included:

- Exercise programmes such as yoga, Tai Chi and physiotherapy,
- A ‘newly diagnosed’ information day and a new self-management programme,
- A number of educational sessions for health professionals and clients throughout the year.

Eastern Region – East Coast Area – covering Dublin East Coast and Wicklow

Services and activities included:

- Yoga programmes, carers’ information and support programme and a number of activity days for teenagers and young people,
- An information day for people newly diagnosed,
- Spring Feast – a residential weekend that helped to explore ways to live a balanced, healthy and fulfilled lifestyle,
- A series of professional advice and information sessions for people with MS and family members,
- A number of educational sessions for health professionals and clients throughout the year.

Eastern Region – Northern Area – covering North Dublin City and County

Services and activities included:

- Two respite and wellness weekends, with one designed for people with significant disability,
- A series of yoga and exercise classes and events/activities for teenagers and young people,
- A coffee evening for young people was introduced and a series of events and training was run for the first time for carers. This included safe lifting training, a wellness day and an information day,
- A number of educational sessions for health professionals and clients throughout the year, including a number of health professional talks.

Priority Concerns for people with MS in 2007

- Housing and accommodation
- Home care, personal assistants, home help
- Access to social services and entitlements
- Neurology and associated health services

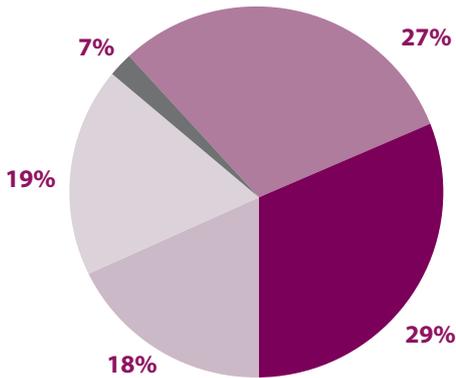
Helpline and Welfare

Helpline

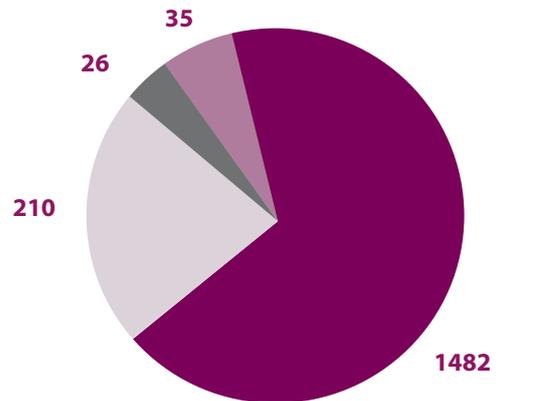
The MS Helpline provides information and support on all aspects of living with the condition to people with Multiple Sclerosis, their families, friends and colleagues. The helpline is staffed by a team of trained professionals who are on hand to talk or, more importantly, listen to anyone concerned about MS.

In 2007, 1,753 people used the services of the helpline. During the year developments were made to the email services and an increase in the number of people emailing queries has grown from last year.

Helpline contacts 2007



Sources of contact 2007



Total number of contacts: 1753

■ 508	people with MS
■ 315	family members/carers
■ 333	health care professionals
■ 123	employers
■ 474	other (staff, branches, students)

■ 1482	Telephone
■ 210	Email
■ 26	Visitors to the office
■ 35	Letters

The helpline is a service offering both emotional support and practical information. Of the calls received in 2007, the following were the most common issues and concerns:

1. MS as a condition and its treatments
2. The Society's other services
3. How to access and use health services
4. How to access social and family services
5. How to access transport options

Welfare

MS Ireland offers financial support to families who require assistance in meeting the extra costs sometimes borne by those living with a disability. In principle the state should provide assistance to these individuals and families, but this is often not sufficient. To fill this gap, MS Ireland's welfare service can help to alleviate some of the financial burdens.

Branch Welfare Fund

All branches of MS Ireland operate a welfare fund for individuals and families in the locality. In 2007, branches spent €294,112 on welfare.

National Welfare Committee

The National Welfare Committee accepts applications from clients who are unable to obtain funding from other sources (including the Branch Welfare Service) or who need money to fill the shortfall between existing funding and cost. In 2007, a total of €70,709 was allocated to 12 families across the country. Applications concentrated on bathroom and vehicle adaptations.

The MS Care Centre

The MS Care Centre provides short-term respite care and therapy services for people living with MS and other neurological conditions. The centre allows the person with MS to relax and avail of services while the carer or family can take a break.

In 2007, 448 clients stayed in the Care Centre for one or two week visits. 60% of those that stayed had high dependency levels and required significant care, ably provided by the staff at the Centre. Themed weeks, including a young person's week and various county weeks, were a feature of 2007.

MS Ireland is committed to providing the best care and services possible to all our clients. In 2007, MS Ireland undertook an accreditation process in order to review and improve services. 'Committed to Excellence' is an accreditation programme governed by Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA). With the commitment and hard work of staff and management, the Care Centre completed the programme in 2007 and was approved for accreditation in 2008.

The Care Centre dining room received a makeover in 2007 when celebrity chef Kevin Dundon danced his way to the upper ranks of RTE's 'Celebrity Jigs and Reels'. Kevin, his dance partner Rachel and all those who voted, managed to raise a fantastic €16,000 for the MS Care Centre. The money was used to refurbish the Care Centre dining room. Features include a new self-service tea station, a serving counter, new accessible furniture and a slip-proof floor.



The dining room in the Care Centre received a makeover in 2007 from the funds raised through RTE's Celebrity Jigs and Reels series.

'The Care Centre is a wonderful place to stay. I get to rest, be looked after by great staff and try out therapies and services I wouldn't usually get at home. I think its also good that my husband can take a break; he really deserves it.'
Mary, person with MS.



Advocacy and Campaigning

One of the primary concerns for MS Ireland is the adequate provision of state services, resources and entitlements for people and families living with MS. It is MS Ireland's belief that the State and its structures and organisations should sufficiently address the needs and rights of people affected by MS. Where services, resources and entitlements are unavailable or inaccessible, MS Ireland aims to highlight the deficiency.

MS Ireland represents people on two levels; individually and collectively. MS Ireland's team of Regional Community Workers assists individual clients to access services, resources and entitlements in their own locality, while the Board, the Chief Executive and her team represent at a national and international level.

2007 was another active year for MS Ireland in representing the collective needs and concerns of the MS community. Based on our eight campaign issues, many local and national representations and submissions were made throughout the year to various bodies and officials. This continuous reinforcement of our message is essential to keep the issues present in the minds of the decision makers and policy setters.

Notable activities in 2007 include:

'Quiz an Election Candidate' – General Election Campaign

Based on our eight collective issues, MS Ireland asked all members, staff and branches to quiz their local election candidates on the doorstep or to send them a letter. A pull-out section was included in MS News and a standard letter was available from the website. MS Ireland also contacted all political parties to highlight the issues. Additional media work brought the concerns of the MS community to the public.

European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP) Conference

At an EMSP conference in May, figures were released comparing MS services across Europe. Ireland was ranked bottom of the list when it came to the ratio of people with MS to neurologists. MS Ireland used the conference as an opportunity to highlight their concerns for neurology services in Ireland and to call on the Government to invest heavily in nationwide services for the MS community. A significant amount of publicity was generated with a significant piece broadcast on RTE News.



MS Ireland represents the concerns of the Irish MS community at European level through the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP). MS Ireland members took part in an EMSP conference in Prague in October 2007. From left; Allen O'Connor, June O'Connor, Austin Dempsey, Aine Smyth, Mary Lonergan and William Lonergan

The adequate provision of neurology services and associated multi-disciplinary teams is top of MS Ireland's lobbying agenda.

HSE Neurology Review

The 'Strategic Review of Neurology Services' was undertaken by the HSE to identify the current level of service provision and future requirements for neurology and neuro-physiology services in Ireland. MS Ireland contributed through the Neurological Alliance of Ireland, focusing on the role of voluntary agencies and neuro-rehabilitation in the community. The report is due to be launched in the summer of 2008.

Other highlights include:

- Meetings with Dr Jimmy Devins, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability and Mental Health at the Department of Health and Children, to discuss our eight campaign issues and the 'Getting the Balance Right' programme.
- HSE cutbacks in the autumn of 2007 impacted on the provision of services to many people living with MS. MS Ireland highlighted the issue of care packages to the HSE and raised public awareness through RTE's Prime Time show and other media outlets.
- MS Ireland supported the UN Convention For People With Disabilities, *which aims 'to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and 'To promote, protect and ensure respect for their inherent dignity.'* Ireland signed up to the convention in March but Irish legislation will need to be passed for the Convention to become binding in Ireland.

Campaign Issues in 2007

For the last two years, MS Ireland has worked on a number of collective issues it feels that if addressed adequately would yield the greatest impact for families living with MS. In 2007, MS Ireland continued to campaign on these issues.

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland Calls on the Government to:

Invest in services and supports for people with Multiple Sclerosis and their families and carers by providing additional resources to address the lack of adequate, timely services for people with Multiple Sclerosis. Progress must be made to deliver critical and essential services.

Specifically MS Ireland is seeking:

An increase in the number of neurologists and associated multi-disciplinary teams to be brought to the minimum recommended EU level of 39, within a three year timeframe commencing in 2007;

The provision of the required staff and facilities for the delivery of approved treatments on an equitable basis throughout the country;

The introduction of a Cost of Disability payment of €40 per week for all people with MS;

A significant increase in the Disabled Person's Housing Grant and to ensure equity of access to grants throughout the country;

The issuing of a medical card to every person diagnosed with MS;

The assurance that the necessary physiotherapy services are made available to people with MS on an equitable basis throughout the country;

A review of the current criteria for drivers' tax concessions, so that anyone diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis automatically becomes eligible for these rebates; and

Additional personal assistants who can enable people with MS and their families to participate in the community.

Branches and Membership

Membership

The membership of the Society at the end of 2007 stood at 5633, an increase from the previous year. MS Ireland continues to encourage people with MS, their families, health professionals and supporters to join the Society.

Benefits of membership

- Access to services, information and resources
- Support from professional staff and voluntary Branches
- Influence the government through lobbying and campaigning
- Vote on the aims and priorities for MS Ireland
- Receive complimentary copies of MS News
- Sense of ownership

Branch network

Many of our members are linked to the Branch network as volunteers. The Branch network is one of the most vibrant and important sections of the Society, offering services, interaction and financial assistance to members in their local communities.

In 2007, 41 Branches operated in every county throughout Ireland. Over €1,714,928 was raised by the Branches, with the majority of this spent on financial assistance, social events and support/exercise groups directly benefiting families affected by MS.



Branch Highlights 2007 Include:

Cork City Branch 40th Anniversary

In September 2007, the Cork City Branch celebrated 40 years of caring and supporting the local community.

A gala dinner was held for members, volunteers, fundraisers and friends of the Branch.

Limerick Supports Carers

The Carers' Support group in the Limerick Branch further developed, offering practical advice and emotional support to members. The group is run by members for members.

As part of Cork City's 40th Anniversary, the Branch hosted the 2007 National Conference. The weekend was held in the Silver Springs Moran hotel in March. Pictured at the event were MS Ireland Chief Executive Anne Winslow; Dr Amanda Stroud, Consultant Neuropsychologist at Leeds Training Hospital, UK; and Dr John Buckley, Consultant Radiologist at Cork University Hospital. Both doctors presented at the conference.



The Donegal Branch fundraised heavily in 2007, building and maintaining contacts with the local business community. This resulted in some good local media publicity.



Members of the Kildare Branch receive a cheque from proceeds of book co-authored by member Bryan Sammon.

Kildare's Literary Present

'Clane: The Village We Knew' was written by Kildare Branch member Bryan Sammon and local history enthusiasts Paddy Behan and Liam Burke. Proceeds of over €10,000 were donated to the Kildare Branch.

Leitrim's Minibus

After an extensive fundraising campaign the Leitrim Branch launched its new minibus in June. It is used to bring members to and from appointments and social events.

Exercise and Support in Meath

The Meath Branch supports direct therapy and home help hours for members in their own home. The Branch continues to provide funds for a physiotherapist based in the Trim Resource Centre.

Donegal's active fundraising plan

The Donegal Branch had a most active year in raising funds to support their services. Many local business and individuals donated money to the Branch. Funding and publicity improved as a result.



Our 41 Voluntary Branches are run for and by people and families affected by MS.



Information and Communication

The Communications Department of MS Ireland is charged with overseeing the information capacity and media relations of MS Ireland. It does this through a number of established communications tools and resources and helps to inform people with MS, their families, health professionals, staff and supporters.

Communications highlights in 2007:

- Two editions of MS News, our 44 page glossy magazine, circulated to 5000 people
- Eight editions of eNews, our electronic newsletter, transmitted to 1000 people
- Launch of internal intranet and Info Bulletin to improve staff communication
- Our website continued to keep visitors up-to-date with developments in MS and MS Ireland with an average of 1,110 people visiting every day

MSLiving: A National Convention for People Affected by MS

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland was delighted to host the biggest and most successful information sharing event ever held in Ireland for people with MS. Just under 1,200 people attended the RDS, Dublin 4 on Saturday 5th May. The day was a fabulous success and feedback proved it was a thoroughly beneficial day for people living with MS.

Exhibition and Venue

There were 62 stands showcasing products and services for people and families living with MS. These included:

- Mobility companies, medical equipment, travel/leisure and services/resources from sister organisations
- Pharmaceutical companies
- 'Meet the Scientists' stand where people could talk to some of the researchers and scientists who are currently involved in MS research
- 'Therapy Taster' area where people could try out therapies such as reflexology, meditation, massage and reiki
- 'Action Zones' where people were encouraged to take part in MS Ireland activities. Zones included:
 - Becoming a member
 - Becoming a spokesperson
 - Involvement in our general election campaign 'Quiz An Election Candidate'
 - Log onto the website
 - Get involved in fundraising activities
- MS Ireland services and resources



Above, 62 individual stands showcased products and services such as mobility solutions. Right, author and presenter Kevin Myers hosted the big debate in the afternoon where professionals and families living with MS discussed a variety of topics.



The morning presentations were delivered by UK Professors, specialists in their field. Pictured from left, Dr Stanley Hawkins, Consultant Neurologist, in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. Dr Hawkins is an MS Ireland Board member and chaired the morning session; Professor Alistair Compston, Consultant Neurologist at Cardiff University and University of Wales; Anne Winslow, CE of MS Ireland; Professor Neil Scolding, Director of the Institute of Neurosciences at Frenchay Hospital and Bristol University.

Talks and Debate

There were three sessions during the day – two presentations and an afternoon debate.

The first talk of the day was by Professor Compston, Consultant Neurologist at Cardiff University and University of Wales. His talk 'Genetics: Why Me?' looked at the genetic factors relating to MS. Professor Scolding, Director of the Institute of Neurosciences at Frenchay Hospital and Bristol University, was the second speaker of the day. His talk looked at the role of stem cells in the treatment of MS.

The afternoon debate, hosted by journalist Kevin Myers, looked at the various issues affecting people with MS and allowed health professionals and those living with MS to share experiences and opinions. The five topics covered were quality of life; emotional impact of MS; treatments; carers; and services available. The panellists were Nancy Law, Vice president of Client Services, National MS Society USA; John Golding, Vice President, EMSP; Prof. Michael Hutchinson, Consultant Neurologist, St. Vincent's Hospital Dublin; James O'Grady, HSE National Disability Manager; and Anne Winslow, CE of MS Ireland.

Extensive audio-visual equipment ensured all attendees were able to hear and see the talks as they happened. Copies of all the talks are available on CD and DVD from the National Office. Full set costs €15.)

Celebrity Chef and 'Jigs and Reels' contestant Kevin Dundon, his dance partner Rachel and her dance troupe entertained delegates with their Irish dancing skills.

Gala Awards Dinner

The convention culminated in a Gala Dinner in the Berkeley Court Hotel. At the dinner, MS Ireland presented its annual awards to Breda O'Gorman, MS Carer of the Year; Michael Classon, MS Volunteer of the Year; and Michael Crowley, MS Person of the Year. The Annual Awards are an opportunity for MS Ireland to acknowledge the courage and contribution people make in the lives of their families, communities and MS Ireland.



The Chief Executive of the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF), Peer Baneke, presented the annual awards. Left, Michael Classon receives his award for Volunteer of the Year; Centre, Breda O'Gorman receives her award for Carers of the Year; Right, Michael Crowley receives his award for MS Person of the Year.

Research

Research is an important component of the work of MS Ireland. Finding a cure for MS is the ultimate goal for researchers but this can only be achieved with more understanding of MS as a complex neurological condition. Although medical and scientific research is the mainstay, social research plays a significant role in understanding the quality of life implications MS has on a person, family, community and society.

In 2007 MS Ireland funded a number of research projects, the most significant of which is the research element of the 'Getting the Balance Right' programme, an exercise-based, health promotion research programme for people with MS. This project is supported by funds raised through Tesco Ireland Charity of the Year campaign and the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Research Funded 2007

Project name:	'Getting the Balance Right' programme. This research aims to profile the physiotherapy needs of people with MS and ascertain the benefits of a variety of interventions.	Project name:	Treatment of demyelinating disease by transient gene therapy using cytokine expressing Semliki Forest virus vectors.
Researchers:	MS Ireland and Physiotherapy Department of the University of Limerick	Researchers:	Prof. G. Atkins and Prof. B. Sheehan, Trinity College and UCD
Project name:	Further studies on the molecular and cellular basis of blood-brain barrier injury in multiple sclerosis; (i) the grey matter and (ii) primary progressive MS.	Project name:	Multiple Sclerosis in Ireland: A prevalence study in Dublin, Wexford and Donegal looking at differences in clinical needs and vitamin D status.
Researchers:	Drs Kirk, McQuaid, McDonnell, Queens University Belfast	Researchers:	Drs Tubridy, Hutchinson, McKenna, Loneragan, St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin

MS Ireland improved its communications regarding research developments and findings, with more information available through the website, MS News, eNews and through the MSLiving convention, where people heard of the developments in research with two excellent talks from Dr Scolding and Dr Compston from the UK.

The Research Committee was re-established in October 2007 and is charged with evaluating incoming applications to the research fund in the coming years. As per the strategic plan, MS Ireland aims to provide funding of €100,000 per year for research.

"Finding a cure for MS is the ultimate goal but developing other drugs and ways to help my symptoms and improve my quality of life today, is incredibly important too"
Stephen, person with MS.

Collaboration and Partnership

MS Ireland relies on the support of many different organisations in the provision of services to the MS community and the development of MS Ireland as an organisation. It is through these partnerships and mutual cooperation that services are provided in a way that meets the needs of clients while being financially viable and adequately resourced.

Partnership and Support Highlight – ‘Getting the Balance Right’

The most significant MS Ireland partnerships in 2007 were with Tesco Ireland, Pobal and the Physiotherapy Department of the University of Limerick. Each of these organisations played a vital part in the creation of the ‘Getting the Balance Right’ programme, a nation-wide exercise-based, health promotion and research programme for people with Multiple Sclerosis.

In the spring of 2007, MS Ireland was presented with a cheque for €1 Million from the proceeds of the 2006 Tesco Ireland Charity of the Year campaign. An application for matching funding was made to the Dormant Accounts Fund, administered by Pobal. In late spring, MS Ireland succeeded with its application and plans got underway to devise a comprehensive physiotherapy and physical therapy programme. Expert help was enlisted from the Physiotherapy Department of the University of Limerick.

The ‘Getting the Balance Right’ programme will be rolled out nationwide in 2008 and 2009. It is expected that over 1,500 people will take part in the programme.

The ‘Getting the Balance Right’ programme is first and foremost an opportunity for people with MS to participate in a monitored and guided exercise programme with greater frequency. It will enable all participants to be assessed by a trained physiotherapist and allocated to an exercise/physiotherapy programme most suited to their needs.

Research is a vital component of the programme. It is an opportunity for MS Ireland to profile the physical needs of its members and learn more about the impact of exercise in a variety of settings on people with MS at the various stages of the MS process. It will both inform the MS Society in terms of service delivery in the area of physiotherapy and exercise and provide us with much needed evidence to influence government policy in relation to the direction and development of exercise-based therapeutic interventions for people with MS.



The fundraising partnership between MS Ireland and Tesco Ireland culminated in the official cheque presentation, which took place in the Conrad Hotel in Dublin on 28 February. From left: Paul Collins, Fundraising Manager, MS Ireland; Patricia Harte, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Tesco Ireland; Tony Keohane, Chief Executive, Tesco Ireland; Anne Winslow, Chief Executive, MS Ireland; and Louise Cahill, Corporate Responsibility Executive, Tesco Ireland.



The Tesco Ireland Charity of the Year programme is the largest corporate fundraising programme in Ireland. MS Ireland was the designated charity of the year in 2006.

Significant Partnerships in 2007

NATIONAL

Health Services Executive

MS Ireland works with the HSE to ensure the provision and development of appropriate services for people and families living with MS. In 2007, in excess of 40% of our funding came from the state (HSE and other state bodies) which financed some of our regional and national services.

Pobal

The North East region benefited from funding from Pobal with the continuation of the 'Optimise and Empower' programme, an exercise programme for people with MS in Monaghan, Meath, Cavan and Louth.

Peace II Programme

MS Ireland received funds from the programme to continue the cross-border initiative, MS TACTICS, in collaboration with MS Society Northern Ireland.

FÁS

MS Ireland, with the support of FÁS, employs staff via the Community Employment Schemes to supplement existing work. In 2007, five Community Employment Schemes ran in four Regional Offices and in our Care Centre.

Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI)

MS Ireland is a member of NAI, an umbrella body for all neurology organisations. In 2007, MS Ireland inputted into raising awareness of the lack of funding for neurology, the HSE neurology review and Brain Awareness Week 2007. Anne Winslow, MS Ireland's Chief Executive, is the Treasurer of NAI.

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

DFI is an umbrella organisation for all disability agencies. MS Ireland worked with DFI on a number of issues including the service level agreements, funding, regional coordinating committees and various legislative issues. MS Ireland's Chief Executive is a Board member of DFI.

INTERNATIONAL

MS Society UK

The UK Society has assisted MS Ireland in providing information on models of service and best practice in a range of areas. At the end of 2007, the UK Society made available the content of its range of information sheets, which will be adapted to the Irish context in 2008.

European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)

EMSP works with MS organisations in Europe in three key areas; lobbying and awareness, facilitating projects and providing information. MS Ireland attended and collaborated in many projects with EMSP in 2007, including the MS-ID project (a comprehensive database of Europe-wide statistics on MS currently being developed) and the promotion of the 'Code of Good Practice in Multiple Sclerosis'.

Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF)

The Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) is an international body linking the activities of national MS societies around the world. In 2007, MS Ireland was active in the activities and developments of MSIF, including a presentation at the Prague conference, work on the World Atlas of MS, promotion of MSIF's 'Principle to Promote the Quality of Life for People with MS' and inputting into MSIF's strategy for the next few years.



MS Ireland works with a variety of different organisations and agencies in the provision of services and resources at a regional, national and international level.

The services and resources of MS Ireland are supported by staff working in the business side of the organisation.

Human Resources

The HR Department of MS Ireland is responsible for all staff-related issues such as recruitment, training, entitlements, performance management and employee relations.

In 2007 the primary focus of the HR Department was:

- The introduction and restructuring of key positions within the regions, including the posts of responsibility (Regional Coordinators) and the National Coordinator for the 'Getting the Balance Right' programme.
- The development of policies and procedures which provide clear and concise guidance to employees on a range of employment related issues e.g. bullying and harassment.
- A number of training opportunities were provided including helpline skills training for regional administration and resource workers and helpline staff. An educational grant was made available to staff to part-fund various qualifications.

Information Communication Technology

The ICT systems of the Society support the work of MS Ireland through the configuration of a number of servers, networks and systems. This allows the work of MS Ireland to be more accurate and efficient.

In 2007, the National Office, the Care Centre and all Regional Offices were, for the first time, working off one integrated, secure system. This allowed the synchronisation of applications and resources, granted access to staff from any location and generally improved the security, speed and reliability of systems and the information stored on them.

Finance

The Finance Department supports all other departments and services by providing accurate and efficient financial information. The department is responsible for the day-to-day accounts as well as the publication of reports and statements as required by departments, managers, the Chief Executive and the Board.

In 2007 the Finance Department initiated a protocol overview, based on the advice of Deloitte and Touche, the Society's auditors. These protocols addressed issues such as fundraising, credit limits, staff signatories, sign-off limits and purchasing procedures.

Ahead of the introduction of the Charities Act, a number of policy and practical changes were implemented to fundraising arrangements of branches. This was coordinated by the Finance Department.

Administration

The administrative function of the Society is far-reaching and supports a number of projects, departments and people.

In 2007, administrative support centred on:

- Secretarial support to the senior management team
- Organisation of the AGM and associated elements
- Support to the Convention Team 2007
- Information to staff and allied organisations

Fundraising

The work of MS Ireland, in providing support and assistance for people with Multiple Sclerosis, is only made possible by the valuable support and assistance from a wide range of supporters and fundraisers. In 2007 approximately 55% of our income came from our range of fundraising activities, events and charity shop.

Fundraising Highlight – Celebrity Jigs and Reels

Celebrity Chef Kevin Dundon danced for MS Ireland in RTE's Celebrity Jigs and Reels. Making it down to the last four, Kevin and his professional dance partner Rachel O'Regan not only raised a great deal of money for MS Ireland but they also raised the profile of the Society and its work in the community.

Celebrity Chef Kevin Dundon and dance partner Rachel O'Regan came along to the MSLiving convention and entertained the crowd. They are pictured here with Anne Winslow, MS Ireland Chief Executive.



National Campaigns - MS READaTHON

MS READaTHON is a sponsored read carried out annually through national and secondary schools in Ireland.

In 2007:

- 33,000 children read 50,000 books and raised €1.4 million for MS Ireland
- MS READaTHON celebrated its 20th birthday
- Special supporters included authors Oisín McCann, Cecilia Ahern, presenters Laura Woods and Aidan Power and rugby star Gordon D'Arcy



MS READaTHON celebrated its 20th birthday in March 2007. Author and friend of the MS READaTHON Cecilia Ahern came along to the party. Pictured with Cecilia are students from 2nd Class in St. Mary's NS, Donnybrook, Anne Winslow, MS Ireland Chief Executive and Cheryl Gunning, MS READaTHON Manager.

Christmas Stars

MS Ireland Christmas Stars were sold at €2 each through local MS Ireland Branches and participating businesses. Volunteers also sold stars on the street and in shopping centres.

Now in its fourth year, the corporate stars campaign was the biggest success to date. €106,000 was raised by a number of companies, led by McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors. Thirty different companies each sponsored a star, which were placed on the MS Ireland Christmas Tree in the Blanchardstown Centre. Their company logo/listing also appeared in the Irish Times and Business Plus magazine.



The MS Ireland Christmas Stars campaign was launched in December by model Roberta Rawat and 'star' kid Miss Lilly Collins (4).

MS Walks

Three walks took place in 2007:

- In June, 60 people took part in our annual Camino de Santiago walk
- In September, 45 trekkers ventured on our sixth trek in Peru
- In November, 58 walkers took the inaugural trip to Nepal

Our team of Walkers raised €764,778 in 2007

NEW CAMPAIGN – MS Care Centre Raffle

MS Ireland welcomed a new campaign to its cache of fundraisers in November – the MS Care Centre Raffle. A successful telephone campaign and distribution through MSnews and Branches which helped to bring in an astounding €122,000 in its first year.

Flora Mini Marathon

An amazing 400 women and skirt-wearing men took part in the Flora Mini Marathon on the June bank holiday.

Runners brought in a fantastic €143,000 for MS Ireland.

MS Swim

The annual MS Swim took place in Marian College swimming pool in March 2007. 250 swimmers raised €9,000 for MS Ireland.

Corporate Donations

A wide range of companies continued to support our work through once-off

donations, planned giving and corporate events.

The pharmaceutical companies Sanofi Aventis, Serono, Bayer Schering, Biogen Idec and Elan also donated generous amounts of money in support of our community workers' meetings, our convention and other support services.

MS Charity Shop

The shop in Bray, Co. Wicklow is run by a team of 25 volunteers.

The shop continues to raise funds and act as point of information on MS and MS Ireland.

Branch Fundraising

To fund local services, our 41 branches organise a range of events and activities. Church gate collections, sponsored walks, raffles and flag days are some of the ways branches raise their own funds. In 2007, over €1.7 million was raised by our branches.

Individual Donations and Bequests

Private contributions through once-off donations, direct debits or legacies provide significant essential resources.

In 2007, approximately 55% of our income came from our range of fundraising activities and events. The provision of services and supports for the MS community relies heavily on this income. If you would like to donate or fundraise for MS Ireland, call us on 1850 650 950 or email fundraising@ms-society.ie



10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP US

MS Ireland continues to need your support and you can help in a wide range of ways including:

- Committed monthly donation
- Remembering our work in your will
- Taking part in one of our sponsored events such as a walk
- Sponsor a young person to take part in the MS READaTHON
- Buy and wear a Christmas star
- Donate good quality goods to our shop
- Volunteer with one of our 41 local branches
- Set up payroll giving in your work
- Run in the Mini Marathon
- Become a life member

Important – If you are a taxpayer and have made an annual donation of over €250, MS Ireland can reclaim the tax paid.

In 2007, MS Ireland was privileged to welcome as patron of the Society Mary McAleese, President of Ireland. President McAleese has greatly supported the disability and community sector and has always been an advocate for inclusion and equality. President McAleese opened our first Convention in 2003, where many of our members met and spoke to the president.



President of Ireland Mary McAleese with past MS Ireland Chairman Allen O'Connor at the 2003 MSUncovered convention.

Governance

MS Ireland is the only national organisation working for people and families living with Multiple Sclerosis. It is a limited company with charitable status. It is governed by a Board of Directors which is accountable for the financial dealings and overall execution of the Society's vision. MS Ireland's structure enables it to develop as an organisation that continually meets the needs of the MS Community in a professional and accountable manner.

The Board

MS Ireland is governed by a Board of 17 voluntary members. These members have a wide range of experience and skills. Some have MS themselves or have family members with MS. Others have long careers in business, social services and other areas. The Board promotes the vision and aims of the Society and charges the Chief Executive to meet these aims through the various departments, services and resources of the Society. In 2007, the Board met nine times. It concluded the strategic planning process and agreed MS Ireland's strategy for 2008-2012.

The Council

MS Ireland's Council is a representative body of the voluntary branch network. It encourages communication on a range of issues and enhances cooperation between all structures of the Society. In 2007 the council met six times.

All branches are entitled to be represented on the Council. Three Council members are elected to sit on the Board of Directors.

Management and Staff

The management and staff carry out the day-to-day activities of the Society through various services, departments and facilities. These are directed by the Senior Management Team, headed by the Chief Executive.

Senior Management Team:

Chief Executive:	Ms. Anne Winslow
Financial Controller:	Mr. Paul Flood
Services Manager:	Ms. Olga Estridge
Human Resource Manager:	Ms. Aoife Kelly (until October 2007)
Fundraising Manager:	Mr. Paul Collins

Just over 100 people work for MS Ireland on a permanent basis in a number of locations around Ireland.

A further 48 people work with MS Ireland in a number of Community Employment Projects. MS Ireland's work is supported by committed volunteers around the country.

2007/2008 Board members:

Ms Louise Wardell, Chairman
Mr Oliver Durkin, Deputy Chairman
Mr Joe Cahill
Dr Art Cosgrove
Ms Jean Croucher
Ms Deirdre Dolly
Dr Gemma Donnelly-Cox
Mr Kevin Doyle
Ms Chris Fahy
Mr Brian Farrell
Ms Maureen Feeney
Dr Stanley Hawkins
Mr Paul Hogan
Ms Mary Keane
Mr William Lonergan
Mr Sean Murphy
Mr Paddy Power

Board Committees

A number of committees inform and complement the work of the Board. Each committee is made up of Board members with particular interest, experience or knowledge. A number of staff and external professionals sit on some of the committees.

- Finance and Risk Management
- Strategy, Policy and Development
- Nominating
- Medical Advisory and Research
- Remuneration
- National Welfare
- Carers
- Care Centre Advisory
- Fundraising Task Force
- Membership

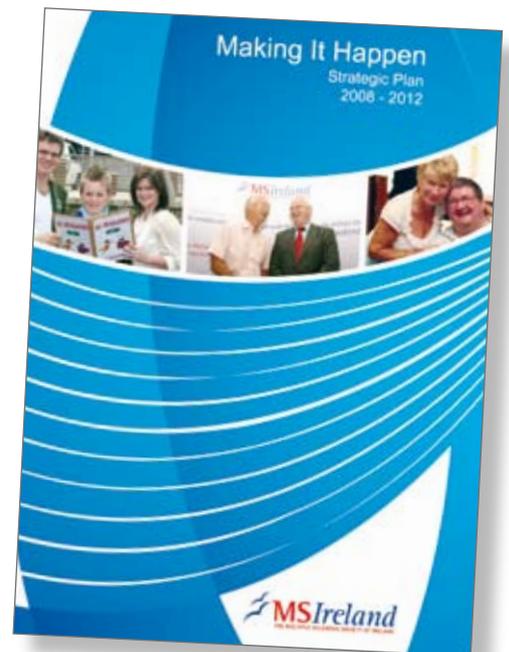
Athlone	Fermoy	Mullingar
Ballina	Galway	Offaly
Ballinasloe	Kerry North	Roscommon
Bandon/Kinsale	Kerry South	Skibbereen/Bantry
Bray	Kildare	Sligo
Carlow	Kilkenny	Tipperary
Cavan	Laois	Tralee
Clare	Leitrim	Tuam
Cork City	Limerick	Waterford
Cork North West	Limerick West	Wexford North
Donegal	Louth	Wexford South
Dublin North	Longford	
Dublin South	Mayo South	
Dublin West	Meath	
Dungarvan/South Tipp	Monaghan	

Branches in 2007

Strategic Planning Process – Building for the Future

One of the main areas of work for MS Ireland throughout 2007 was the development of a Strategic Plan outlining actions for 2008-2012. This was initiated by the Board and further developed with the Chief Executive and her team. Our Strategic Plan 'Making It Happen' is the culmination of research, consultation and deliberation. A comprehensive schedule of consultation and research was conducted among staff, members, allied disability/support agencies and international MS societies and umbrella organisations. It was particularly important that people and families affected by MS were consulted, as it is their direct needs that MS Ireland aims to address.

'Making It Happen' is a five year plan, beginning in 2008, and will be supported by annual business plans and resourcing strategies required for its effective roll-out. The International Multiple Sclerosis Federation's publication 'Principles to Promote the Quality of Life' and the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform 'Code Of Good Practice On The Rights and Quality Of Life Of People Affected By MS' will be actively used as tools to achieve goals. Building partnerships with State and Government agencies, the disability sector, voluntary sector, community service groups and most importantly with people affected by MS, will also underpin the success of the plan.



Goal 1 – Support and service provision

To provide appropriate quality nationwide services based on individual and family needs.

Goal 2 – Campaigning and advocacy

To effect change in policy and services with respect to people affected by MS and to ensure equitable access to services and programmes throughout Ireland.

Goal 3 – Research

To support, promote and advocate for all aspects of research beneficial to people living with MS and to disseminate research findings.

Goal 4 – Strengthening MS Ireland's organisational capacity

To enable MS Ireland to be at the forefront of good organisational practice and governance and to maximise its capacity to deliver on organisational objectives and value to its stakeholders.

Goal 5 – Funding

To increase levels of funding to deliver on the organisation's objectives.

To read more about the Strategic Plan you can log onto our website and download a copy or contact our National Office for a hard copy.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society Of Ireland

Consolidated Statement Of Financial Activities
For The Year Ended 31 December 2007

Total Funds 2007
€

INCOMING RESOURCES

Incoming resources from generated Funds:

Voluntary Income

- Donations and fundraising	5,100,070
- Research	11,480
- Subscriptions	7,010

Activities for generating funds

- Trading	86,333
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Incoming resources from charitable activities

- Fees received	386,257
- Grants and other service contract income	3,209,345
- Government Schemes	711,692
- Other income	218,426

Total incoming resources	9,730,613
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RESOURCES EXPENDED

Costs of generating funds

Costs of generating voluntary income

- Fundraising	1,162,373
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Charitable activities

- Community Services	3,236,505
- Respite Care Services	1,567,417
- Research	14,375
- Government Schemes	831,904
- Local MS Services	2,507,973

Other resources expended

- Trading	58,505
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Governance costs	89,857
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Total resources expended	9,468,909
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Net Incoming resources	261,704
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Total funds brought forward at 1 January 2007	7,855,812
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Total funds carried forward at 31 December 2007	8,117,516
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All gains and losses
arose from continuing
activities.

The financial statements
were approved by the
Board of Directors on 17
May 2008 and signed on
its behalf by:

DIRECTORS

Louise Wardell
Oliver Durkin



The Multiple Sclerosis Society Of Ireland

Consolidated Balance Sheet As At 31 December 2007

	2007
	€
FIXED ASSETS	
Tangible fixed assets	7,661,936
CURRENT ASSETS	
Stocks	20,245
Debtors	630,465
Investments	70,664
Cash at bank and in hand	3,032,252
	3,753,626
CREDITORS:	
(Amounts falling due within one year)	(1,153,583)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	2,600,043
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	10,261,979
CREDITORS:	
(Amounts falling due after more than one year)	(2,144,463)
NET ASSETS	8,117,516
FUNDED BY:	
Restricted funds	2,170,975
Unrestricted funds	5,946,541
FUNDS	8,117,516

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 17 May 2008 and signed on its behalf by:

DIRECTORS
Louise Wardell
Oliver Durkin

Contact Details

National Office

80 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 678 1600
Fax: 01 678 1601
Web: www.ms-society.ie
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Helpline: 1850 233 233

MS Shop

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Tel: 01 286 1913

MS Care Centre

65 Bushy Park Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6
Tel: 01 490 6234
Fax: 01 490 6724
Email: m scare@ms-society.ie

Regions

Eastern Region, East Coast Area

Unit 10a, The Egan Centre,
Dargle Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow
Tel: 01 286 6800
Fax: 01 272 4110
Email: eca@ms-society.ie

Eastern Region, South Western Area

65 Bushy Park Road,
Rathgar, Dublin 6
Tel: 01 256 9585
Fax: 01 490 6724
Email: eca@ms-society.ie

Eastern Region, Northern Area

65 Bushy Park Road, Rathgar,
Dublin 6
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Fax: 01 490 6724
Email: na@ms-society.ie

South Eastern Region

Nuncio Road, off Waterford Rd, Kilkenny
Tel: 056 77 51522
Fax: 056 77 71011
Email: southeast@ms-society.ie

Southern Region – Cork

North Quay House,
Pope's Quay, Cork
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Email: southern@ms-society.ie

Southern Region – Kerry

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Midlands Region

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Co Westmeath
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Mid Western Region

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Email: midwest@ms-society.ie

North Eastern Region

1 Church Street, Carrickmacross,
Co. Monaghan
Tel: 042 966 4410
Fax: 042 969 2812
Email: northeast@ms-society.ie

Western Region

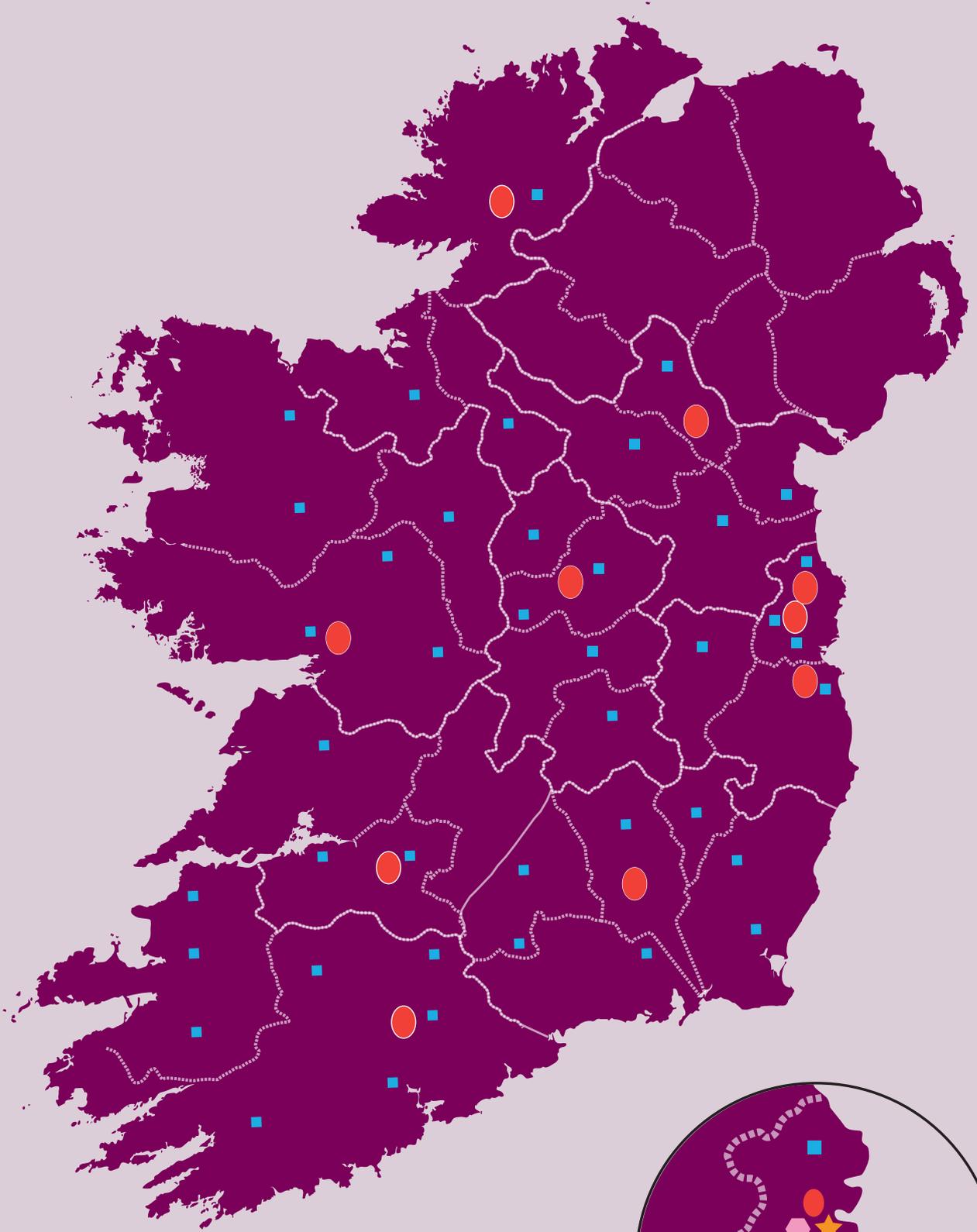
Roxboro House, Raleigh Road,
Galway
Tel: 091 862 478
Fax: 091 862 511
Email: western@ms-society.ie

North Western Region

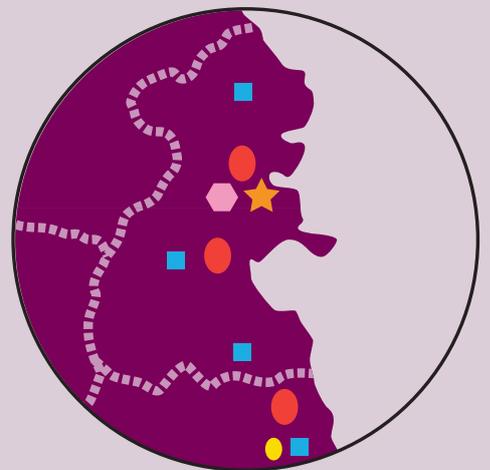
Unit 6, Rossvie Business Park, Port
Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
Tel: 074 912 5017
Fax: 074 912 3044
Email: northwest@ms-society.ie

Legal and Administrative Information

Charity Number:	5365
Company Registration Number:	296 573
Company's Registered Office:	80 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4
Company Secretary:	Paul Flood
Company Auditors:	Deloitte and Touche
Company Bankers:	Bank of Ireland
Company Insurers:	Mullarkey Hooper Dolan



-  MS Regional Office
-  MS National Office
-  MS Voluntary Branches
-  MS Care Centre
-  MS Shop



To make contact: Call: 01 678 1600
Helpline: 1850 233 233
Email: info@ms-society.ie
Web: www.ms-society.ie