



*The Rock of Cashel was illuminated RED to  
celebrate World MS Day on the 30th May 2023*

 **MSIreland**  
THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF IRELAND

# **Annual Report & Accounts 2023**

# Mission, Vision, Aims & Values

## Mission

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

## Vision

MS Ireland has a vision of Irish society where all people affected by MS live positive and active lives in the community

## Aims

**The principal objectives for which MS Ireland exists are:**

- » to facilitate people with MS to control their lives and environment, to live with dignity and participate 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 cause of, cure for and management of MS, and the alleviation of medical and social symptoms
- » to exchange and disseminate information relating to MS
- » to provide an identifiable focal point by developing an efficient, effective and empathetic organisation to serve the needs of people affected by MS

## Values

### Supportive

“We support individuals whether they are People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS), staff or volunteers so that we can work together to fulfil our mission”

### Transparent

“Being open and honest in everything that we do”

### Informative

“Communicate reliable, accurate and useful information”

### Empowering

“Through the provision of information, advocacy and support services we enable people to make informed choices”

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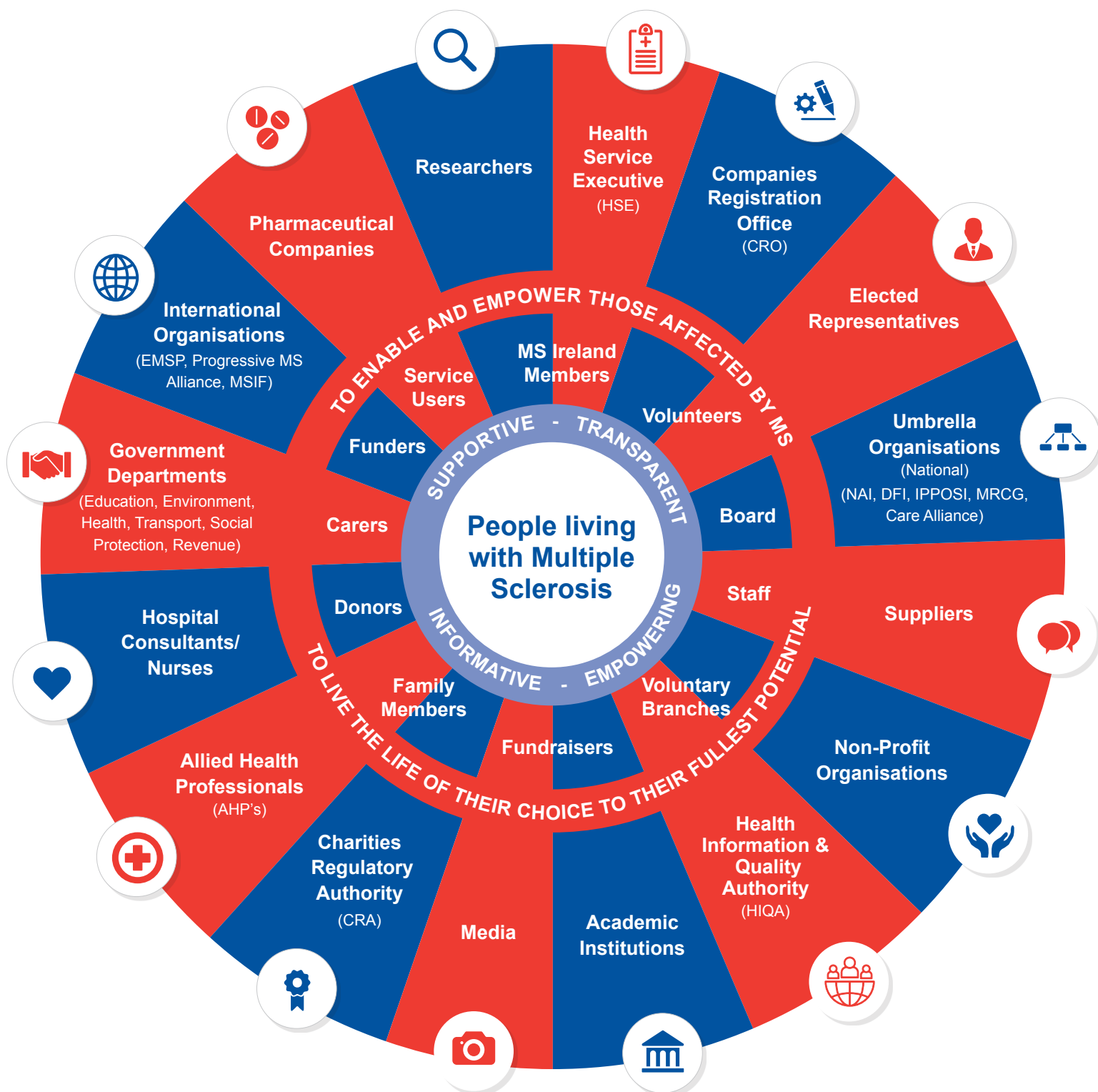
Goal: Innovation

## Page 50-53

Goal: People And Culture



# Stakeholder Map





# CEO & Chairperson Welcome



**Ms Ireland (Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland) is the only national organisation providing information, support, and advocacy services to the multiple sclerosis (MS) community. We work with people with MS, their families, and carers, as well as a range of key stakeholders including health professionals, students and others interested in or concerned about MS to ensure that we meet our goals.**

We are delighted to present to you a review of the activities, achievements, and challenges we experienced in 2023. This report highlights the dedication, resilience, and progress of MS Ireland in our mission to empower and support those affected by Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in Ireland.

None of our achievements in 2023 would be possible without the dedication of our staff, Branches and volunteers, including our Board who give their time and expertise to support the running of MS Ireland.

We would like to thank everybody who has supported our work in any way, by making donations, engaging in fundraising activities, or

raising awareness about who we are and what we do.

MS Ireland remains steadfast in our commitment to improving the quality of life for people with MS, their families, and caregivers. Our efforts were guided by the strategic priorities outlined in our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, which focuses on service delivery, sustainable finances, innovation, and nurturing a positive workplace culture.

As you read through this report, we hope you will gain a deeper understanding of the work we do and the impact we have on the lives of those affected by MS.

# Comprehensive Summary of MS Ireland's Goals and Objectives in 2023

## Objective 1: Service Delivery and New Service Models

In 2023, MS Ireland continued to advance its service delivery through the fourth year of our Strategic Plan. This plan emphasises providing a sustainable service model that enhances quality of life and helps maximise the independence of people with MS. We focused on expanding online services, allowing greater accessibility and engagement across Ireland both online and in person. We focused on our exercise and physical activity programs. Key developments included the continuation of the MS Model of Care, which provided emotional and practical support through casework services.

## Objective 2: Research

MS Ireland placed a strong emphasis on research in 2023, collaborating with international bodies like the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) and the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP). MS Ireland shared numerous research findings with the community through its eNews, MS News, website, and social media platforms.

## Objective 3: Advocacy

In 2023, MS Ireland revisited and expanded the "My MS My Needs Survey" from 2016, which provided crucial insights into the evolving needs of individuals with MS. MS Ireland's advocacy efforts extended to political engagement, with a Pre-Budget Briefing at Leinster House focusing on the need for increased funding for national physiotherapy services and the National MS Respite Centre.

## Objective 4: Grow Sustainable Revenue Base

MS Ireland focused on increasing its revenue base in 2023 through key fundraising events including the MS Readathon, which saw over 11,000 registrations, the May 50K challenge and several Facebook Challenges.

## Objective 5: Develop Partnerships

Partnerships played a pivotal role in 2023, with MS Ireland collaborating with pharmaceutical companies and international organisations to enhance service delivery and research efforts.

## Objective 6: Develop Digital Operations & Governance

MS Ireland continued to progress the development of a digital strategy including the enhancement of its website, and the implementation of Salesforce for better service management. These innovations aimed to improve operational efficiency and service delivery.

## Conclusion

Thank you for your continued support and partnership and we continue working towards realising our strategic vision in the year ahead. MS Ireland has made significant strides in service delivery, research, advocacy, revenue generation, and partnership development. These efforts have positioned MS Ireland as a key player in the national and international MS community.

**We hope you enjoy reading this report and we look forward to working with you in the coming year.**



**Ava Battles**  
Chief Executive



**Anne Restan**  
Chairperson

# MS Ireland Strategic Priorities

In 2023, MS Ireland worked towards achieving our strategic priorities, as set out in our Strategic Plan 2020-2024. The Board of MS Ireland is committed to building a Society which is integrated, effective, outcome-driven and accountable.

The key objectives of the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 of MS Ireland are as follows:

## Goal: Service Delivery

### Objective 1:

#### Services development and New Service Models

Provide a sustainable service model that delivers quality of life, maximum independence and client satisfaction to our community and stakeholders.

### Objective 2:

#### Research

Service design and development informed by research, international best practice and outcomes.

### Objective 3:

#### Advocacy

Improve access to services to ensure people with MS can exercise choice over their lives and careers.

## Goal: Sustainable Finances

### Objective 4:

#### Grow Sustainable Revenue Base

Increase HSE services and develop regular and recurring giving campaigns to help sustain vital services and new programmes.

### Objective 5:

#### Develop Partnerships

Leverage and grow our partnered programmes to support service development, funding and delivery.

### Objective 6:

#### Develop Digital Operations & Governance

Develop Digital Operations and Governance structures and strategies to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

## Goal: People & Culture

### Objective 7:

#### Develop & Invest in Our People

Ensure a fit for purpose organisational design and develop a workforce model for the future, recognising that as the capabilities of our people improve, so does our overall service to clients.

### Objective 8:

#### Grow Branch & Community Volunteer Base

Grow our volunteer base across our branch network through diverse volunteer opportunities, programmes and ways to get involved.





**Goal: Service Delivery**

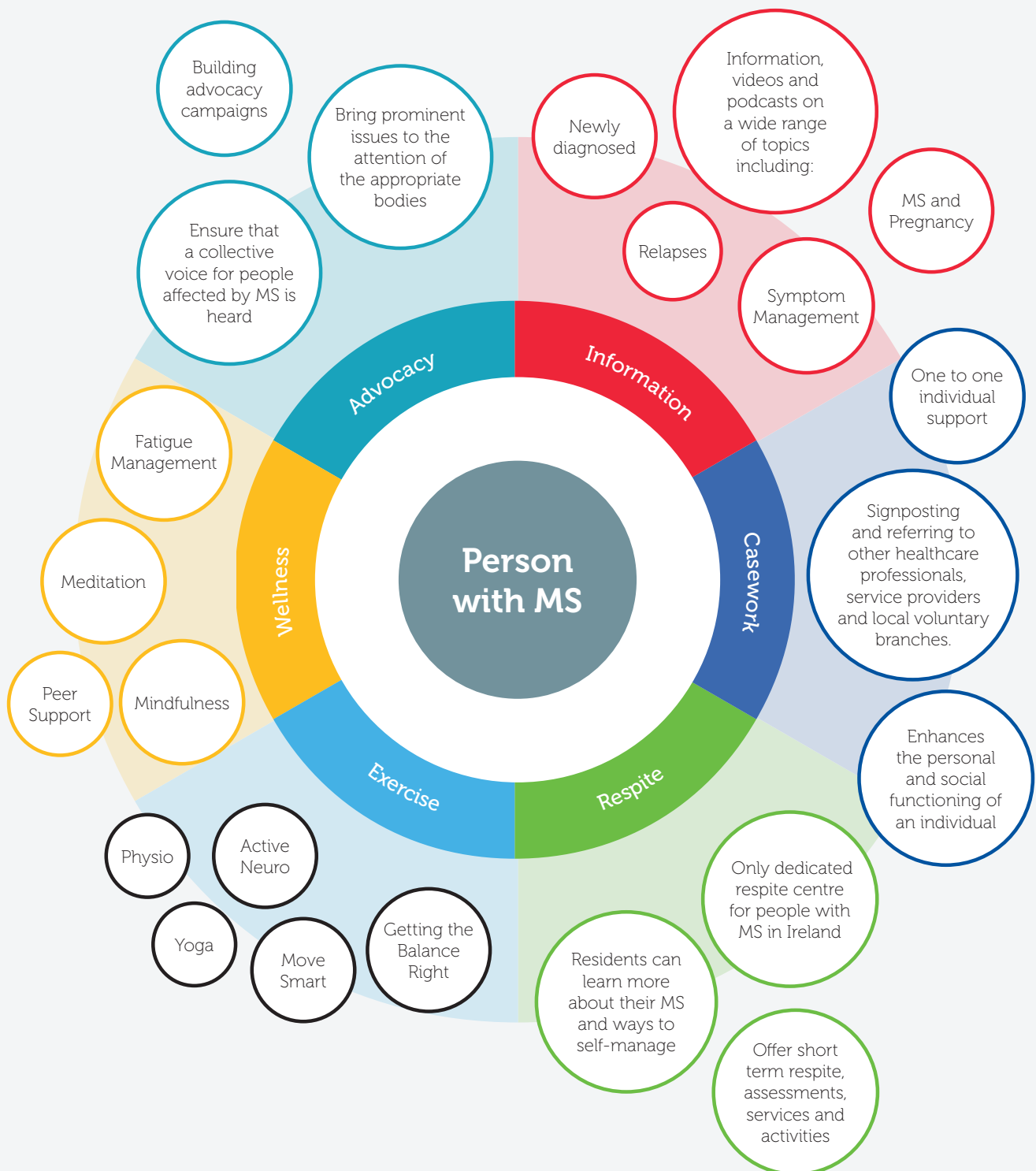


## Objective 1: Services Development & New Service Models

Description: Provide a sustainable service model that delivers quality of life, maximum independence & client satisfaction to our community and stakeholders.

In 2023, MS Ireland underwent the fourth year of its Strategic Plan. It continued to review and develop our suite of services provided by professionals and volunteers. The provision of online services continued. This was an exciting development resulting in many of our programmes being non-location specific thus appealing to a potentially wider audience. This offered us an opportunity to capacity build our staff, volunteers, and MS community with digital literacy opportunities.

### MS Ireland's Model of Care





## Regional Community Work

In 2023, MS Ireland ensured the provision of practical and emotional support through the casework services to people with MS and their families, especially individuals with a recent diagnosis. Community Workers supported issues relating to emotional and psychological support, social welfare, medical card applications, employment, education, housing, symptom management and relationships to name just a few of the many issues affecting people with MS.

Ten Service Level Arrangements (SLA) exist with the HSE in the North West, North East, Dublin (NA,ECA,SWA), South East, Southern, Mid-West, West and Midlands areas.

A scoping exercise for the Casework Salesforce Project commenced in 2023, to implement the recommendations from the Framework for Multiple Sclerosis Service ("FRAMES") report and the Quality Matters project.



**2,665**

Individuals Receiving  
1:1 Casework



**61**

Newly Diagnosed  
Contacts

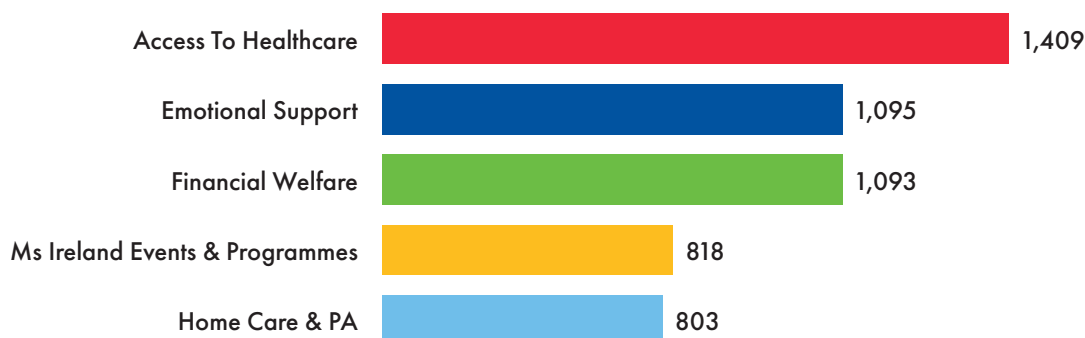


**237**

New  
Referrals



## Top 5 Issues Presented By Clients



MS Ireland's approach to case management is 'solution-focused'. Our regional teams work with the client to identify issues and find appropriate solutions where possible. This graph summarises these issues.

We had **822** individual clients in **509** programmes and offered **16,795** treatment episodes in our physiotherapy services in 2023.

## Exercise And Physical Activity Programmes

MS Ireland runs several different programmes as part of our exercise and physiotherapy services. Our focus is on exercise and physiotherapy programmes to enable people to live well at home, reduce disability and symptom severity and improve quality of life. We have a team of directly employed physiotherapists and also engage with independent physio, yoga and fitness contractors around the country to deliver this service.

Evidence gathered in 2023 continues to show that our programmes have a range of benefits including improvements in symptoms and quality of life, reductions in fatigue and mental health issues, reductions in falls and improved confidence to be physically active and reduced healthcare utilisation.



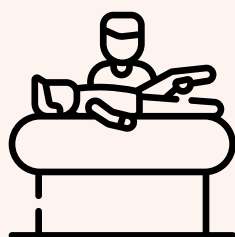
## Getting The Balance Right

Getting the Balance Right (GTBR), our nationwide exercise, health promotion and research programme for people with MS, continues to be an enormous success. The programme offers a range of opportunities for people with MS to maintain and improve a full range of motion, which may have been impacted by MS. Interventions range from physiotherapy-led group programmes, one-to-one physiotherapy, yoga, gym-based programmes and hydrotherapy. GTBR programmes ran across all 10 of our regions and are reliant on fundraised income and provided by contractors, 50% of those contractors are funded by branches. The service in the West is provided by our directly employed senior physiotherapist and a team of physiotherapy assistants. New initiatives in 2023 included the increased use of the care centre gym for regional services.

### In 2023 we provided:

131

Physiotherapy  
Programmes



499 participants

86

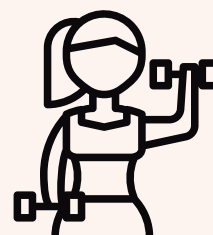
Yoga  
Programmes



764 participants

6

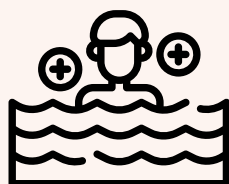
Fitness  
Programmes



54 participants

2

Hydrotherapy  
Programmes



24 participants

1

Exercise Buddy  
Programme



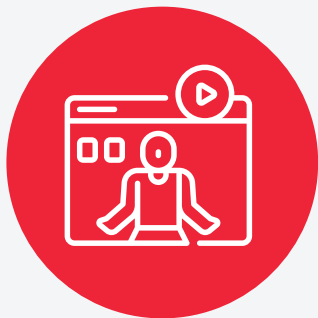
25 participants

3

External  
Collaborations



to provide 12 additional  
physio programmes



## Move Smart MS

35  
Programmes

262  
Participants

Move Smart MS programmes are tailored for ability and time since diagnosis and address specific symptoms using an exercise and education approach that enables peer learning and social support. Move Smart MS was funded by the Hospital Saturday fund and our branches in 2023. Across the three blocks, programmes were developed for Pain Management, Core and Continence, Seated Exercises and Tone, Stiffness and Spasm, in addition to existing programmes for Strength, Balance, General Fitness, Falls Management/Prevention, Foot Drop and Dizziness.



## Physio West

140  
Individual assessments

527  
Individual physio or physio assistant sessions

In Galway, Mayo and Roscommon we have a directly employed full time physiotherapist and 0.5 WTE physiotherapy assistant funded by the HSE. In addition, we have a team of physiotherapy assistants through the Community Employment Scheme.

This team runs Getting the Balance Right in person and online classes, Active neuro in-person and online classes, and individual assessments and treatments including the intensive, semi supervised programme.



## Active Neuro

27  
Programmes

165  
Participants

The Active Neuro programme ran in the West and Mid-West in 2023 and is funded by the HSE. This extension of the Sláintecare Integration fund project in the Midwest provides physiotherapist-led physical activity and symptom management programmes for people with MS and other neurological conditions and provides greater availability of and access to physio programmes for people with MS in these regions.



## Living With MS Programmes

Our regional services provide a wide range of group support through programmes, events, workshops and activities. Types of programmes include newly diagnosed seminars, symptom management, Carers' support groups, information mornings and yoga sessions. These programmes may be one-off sessions or a ten-week course, depending on the nature of the programme. The figures below summarise the types of programmes we ran in 2023:



## Wellness Programmes

MS Ireland offers programmes that aim to improve the overall well-being of people with MS. These programmes are facilitated by a combination of MS Ireland staff, external contractors, volunteers and partner organisations (such as the HSE and Education and Training Boards). They aim to improve overall well-being by providing up to date information, encouraging peer engagement and support and providing opportunities to improve symptom management.

In 2023, the Community Worker team facilitated FACETS (Fatigue: Applying Cognitive behavioural and Energy effectiveness Techniques to lifestyle). It is a 6-week evidence-based group fatigue management programme run online or in-person specifically for PwMS. In 2023 staff facilitated four national programmes and one regional programme. Each programme is facilitated by two MS Ireland Regional Community Workers.

Adaptations were made to the programme to use a co-design methodology to better reflect the experience of people with MS that are wheelchair users. These adaptations will be piloted in a programme scheduled in early 2024.

## Information Line

The MS Information Line is a confidential service providing reliable and accurate information and support to callers. The information is given on an individual basis to individuals affected by MS and health professionals through the MS Information Line - Telephone - 0818 233 233, the email [info@ms-society.ie](mailto:info@ms-society.ie) and through social media messaging. It is often the first port of call for a person with MS and/or a family member. The Information Line can signpost callers to other appropriate supports such as the Community Worker service, external services and/or agencies.

**In 2023, 337 contacts were made to the MS Information Line.**

### Reasons For Making Contact Included:



General  
Information



Transportation



Helpline  
Support



Travel



Entitlements  
and Services



Query  
Diagnosis



Treatments



Accessibility



Counselling



Health Care  
Professional



Short Term  
Respite



Moving  
to Ireland



## Case Study

### Paul Tierney

Chairman of the South Tipperary MS Ireland Branch is one of the chosen “Faces” campaign for World MS Day in 2023.

“I was diagnosed with MS in 2013, at the age of 21. I live on a farm with my family in Tipperary. My story is a bit different to most or all. I began experiencing groin/hip problems and was referred by my GP to Whitfield where I underwent surgery. Soon after, I was given the news that I had MS. I remember being asked if I had heard of MS before. I said no.

“After receiving the news, I remember feeling numb. I was unaccepting of the diagnosis and hid it from friends for some time. Once I did accept it and shared news of my diagnosis with friends it weirdly felt like a massive relief. It removed the strain and energy I was using up hiding the diagnosis.

“ I was diagnosed with MS in 2013, at the age of 21 “

“One challenge I have faced is having to adapt my sporting life. I miss playing and competing in rugby and GAA. However, I have found alternatives like volunteering at Park Runs and coaching yoga - something I never would have done before. When I think back, I realise the inner strength I had.

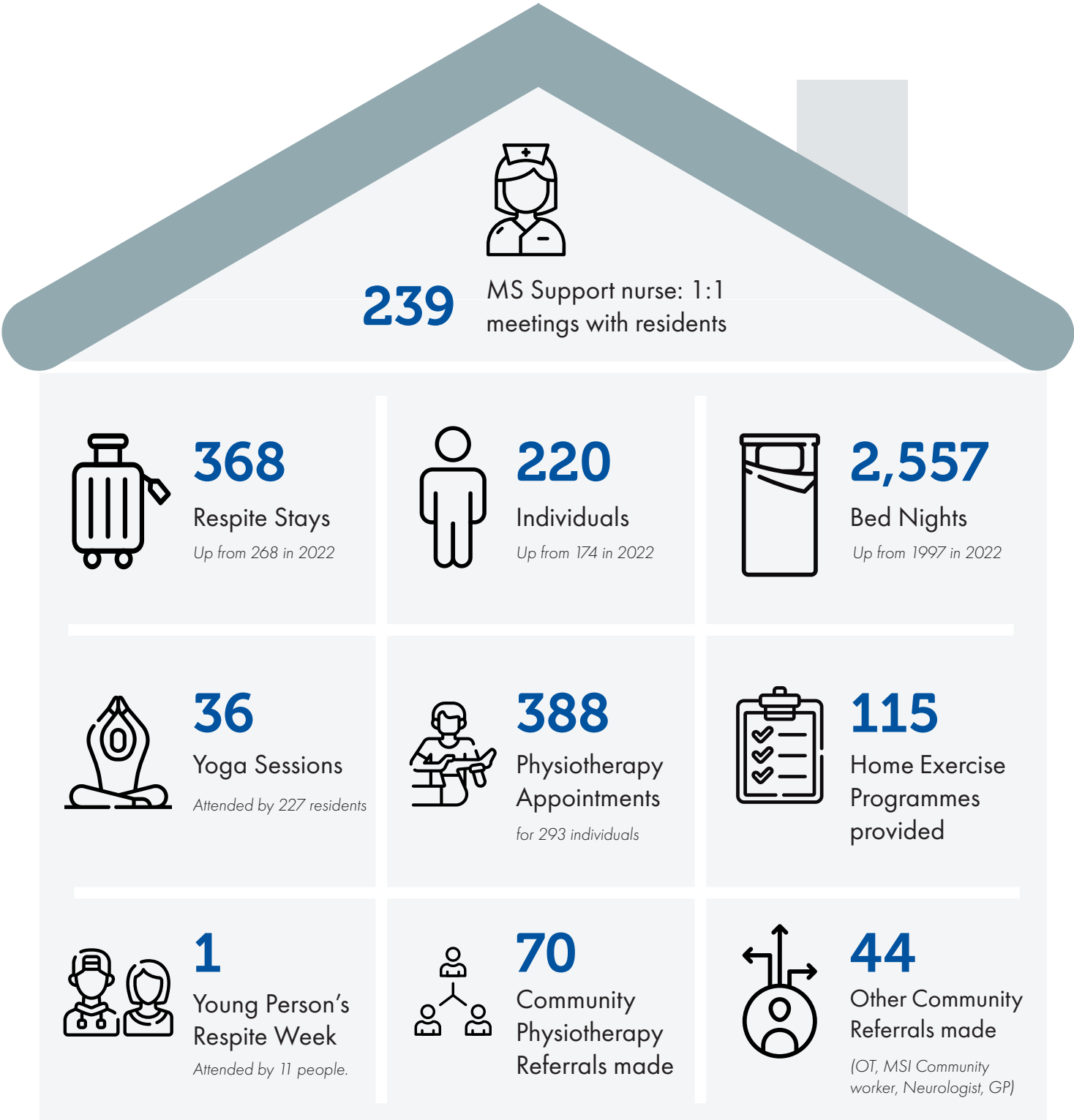
“My advice to those diagnosed is not to dwell and to try to stay as positive as possible. I have found the family support and new people I have met due to MS a bonus. From those I have met in South Tipperary to those I have met in the National MS Care Centre and further afield, I have enjoyed getting to know new people and that has been a benefit in my view”.



# The MS Care Centre

The MS Care Centre is a 12-bed respite facility. Following a reduction in beds during COVID, the capacity was increased to 12 residents, with lengths of stay options of 5/7/12 nights in 2023. 368 individuals availed of respite care in the Care Centre, with high dependency beds with the greatest demand. The Care Centre continued to operate under HSE advice in line with COVID Management recommendations.

The MS Care Centre, - registered by the Health Information Quality Authority ("HIQA") is monitored every three years by HIQA and was approved for re-registration in October 2020. The Care Centre had an announced inspection on the 16th November 2023 and the report will be available in 2024. The Clinical Nurse Manager and the Quality Manager at the Care Centre ensure that the standards and regulations set by HIQA are maintained.



## Find Your Local MS Ireland

To learn more about services available in your area, contact your local Regional Office. All voluntary Branches can be contacted through their associated regional office.

### Dublin North & Fingal Regional Office

Providing services in north county Dublin and city

na@ms-society.ie | (01) 490 5933

### Midlands Regional Office

Providing services in Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath

midlandsr@ms-society.ie | (042) 975 4304

### Midwest Regional Office

Providing services in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary North

midwest@ms-society.ie | (061) 303 802

### North East Regional Office

Providing services in Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, and Meath

northeast@ms-society.ie | (042) 975 4304

### North West Regional Office

Providing services in Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim

northwestr@ms-society.ie | (074) 918 9027

### South East Dublin & Wicklow Regional Office

Providing services in Wicklow and areas of south Dublin

eca@ms-society.ie | (01) 490 5933

### Southern Regional Office

Providing services in Cork and Kerry

southern@ms-society.ie | (021) 430 0001

### South East Regional Office

Providing services in Kilkenny, Wexford, Carlow, Waterford and South Tipperary

southeastr@ms-society.ie | (056) 7777 771

### South West Dublin & Kildare Regional Office

Providing services in Kildare and areas of South West Dublin

swa@ms-society.ie | (01) 490 5933

### Western Regional Office

Providing services in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon

westernr@ms-society.ie (091) 768 630

## Voluntary Branches

Carlow	East Wicklow	Leitrim	Tipperary
Cavan	Fermoy	Limerick	Tipperary South
Clare	Galway	Louth	Tralee/West Kerry
Cork City	Kerry North	Longford	Tuam
Cork North West	Kerry South	Mayo South	Waterford
Donegal	Kildare	Meath	Wexford South
Dublin North	Kilkenny	Monaghan	
Dublin South	Laois	Roscommon	

## Voluntary Branches

In 2023, MS Ireland staff continued to support Branches to utilise various digital platforms and facilitate hybrid meetings due to the return of in person meetings and activities after the pandemic. Branch activities include support groups, social activities, therapies and in some instances, financial assistance. Capacity building opportunities and training were also facilitated for all Branches. The provision of branch level support is made possible by voluntary local fundraising.



*Monaghan Branch*



*Cavan Branch*



*Donegal Branch*

## Community Employment Schemes

The provision of services and supports throughout the country relies on the quality contribution of our Community Employment Scheme Participants. They contribute hugely to the work of MS Ireland on a day-to-day basis.

There are 17 CE participants assisting in the work of the Care Centre, 13 CE participants assisting with the exercise training plans for PwMS in the Western region and 13 CE participants visiting PwMS in their homes, in the North West region. All regions have a number of CE participants that assist with data collection for the Health Research Board.



## Social Media

In MS Ireland, we continued to develop our social media presence throughout 2023. 23,000 (+9.5%) people accessed our Facebook page, 9,654 (+2%) people accessed Twitter and 6,024 (+20%) followed us on Instagram and 1,820 (+20%) on LinkedIn. The Facebook page reach was 1.5m (+12.4%) and pages visits 68,100 (+115%). Instagram reach was 1.2m (+93%) and profile visits were 20,400 (+229%).

We used social media to support our various online fundraisers in 2023. The Facebook/Instagram paid reach was 2.1m (+27%) and paid impressions were 11.7m (+21%). We increased our presence on our YouTube channel with new videos and playlists which lead to 83,962 views in 2023 which was an increase of 19% compared to 2022.



### Instagram

multiple\_sclerosis\_ireland

6,024 Followers

### LinkedIn

multiple-sclerosis-ireland



1,820 Followers



### Facebook

MultipleSclerosisIreland

23,000 Subscribers



### Twitter

@MSIRELAND



9,654 Followers

35 Emails sent



### E-News

Sign up on our website

Over 6,000 Subscribers

### YouTube

@MSSocietyIRELAND



1,470 Subscribers

## MS Ireland Website

In 2023 our website had a total of 274,377 pageviews. The biggest page visit increases were Donate +166.9%, News +29.4% and MS and Me +58.2%. Ireland accounted for 76% of our website visitors in 2023.

The most popular means of accessing our website was from search engines and 49.8% (54% in 2022) of people accessing our website came from this source. Direct entry accounted for 24% (29% in 2022) followed by Social Networks at 22% (11% in 2022) and finally other websites was 3.7% (3% in 2022) and campaigns at 0.5%.

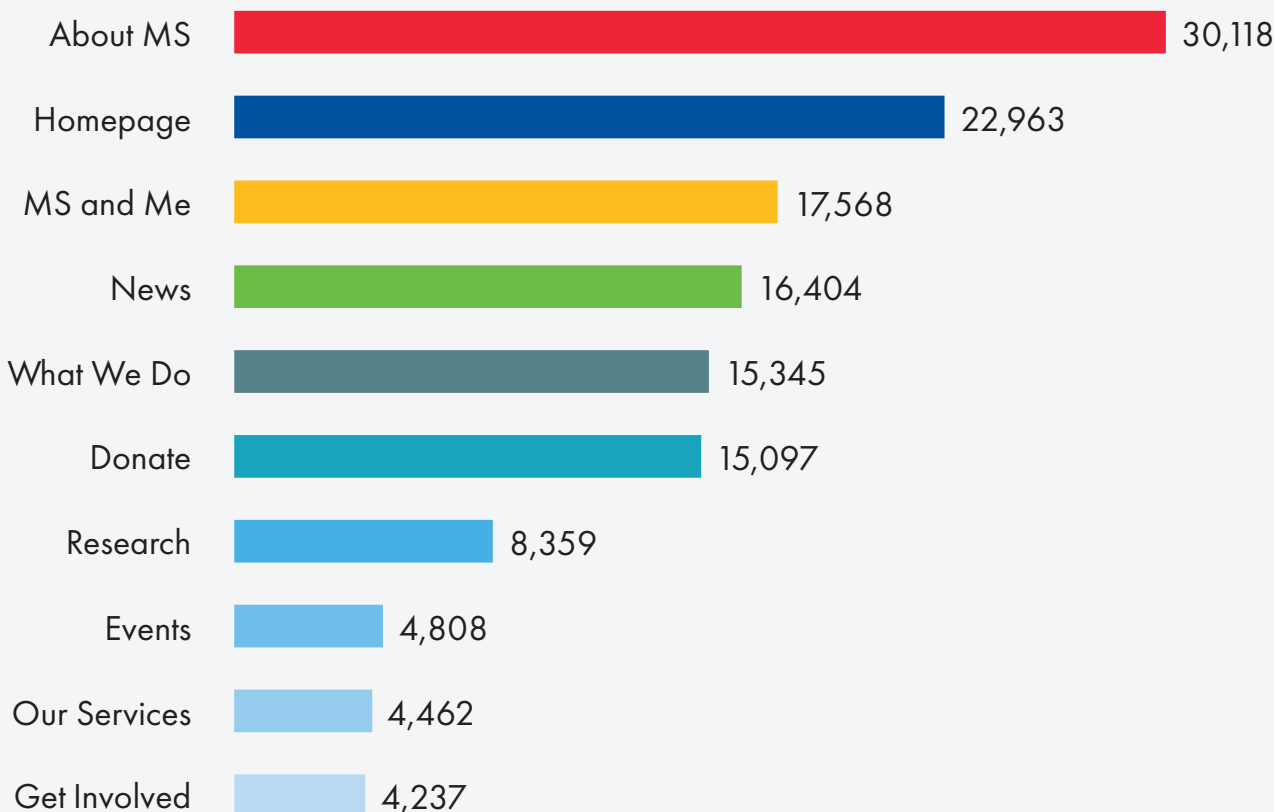
The smartphone is the most popular device used to access our website at 60.3% (54% in 2022), followed by Desktop at 33.3% (36% in 2022) and then tablets at 3.3% (3% in 2022).

## MS & Me Blog

We have a team of volunteer bloggers who write weekly about their own personal experiences of living with MS. We share these blogs on our website and promote them through social media to signpost our members to this resource. This continues to be one of our top drivers of traffic to our website. We celebrated the 10th anniversary of the blog with our wonderful blog team in September with an anniversary lunch in Dublin. Rosie Farrell and Nadia Anshasi joined our MS and Me Blog editorial team at the end of the year. We also want to extend our sincere thanks to the previous editors, Trevis Gleason and Emma Rogan, for their exceptional contributions in establishing one the world's longest running blogs.

### The most viewed website pages were:

*All figures listed are unique page views*





## Public Relations Coverage

We completed two big media campaigns for the physio and care centre business cases where we garnered extensive national and regional media and radio coverage including features in the Irish Times and the Irish Examiner.

The MS Readathon, May 50K and World MS Day had some brilliant ambassadors who shared their stories on what life is like living with Multiple Sclerosis. We featured in the national press including the Irish Times, Irish Examiner, Irish Independent and the Sunday Business Post and many regional newspapers. We also featured on national radio including the Pat Kenny show and many regional radio stations

The PR focus for May was World MS Day and we got a lot of coverage with appearances on tv, radio and print media. We emphasised local radio where we highlighted the work of our regional workers and the stories of local ambassadors with MS. We had people doing interviews on 14 radio stations including the Pat Kenny show on Newstalk and we also had a segment on the Ireland AM show on Virgin Media. A special thank you to Maurice O'Connor and Aidan Larkin for their annual radio takeovers in Kilkenny and Galway respectively.

To support fundraising we had media campaigns on national and local radio and press with our biggest

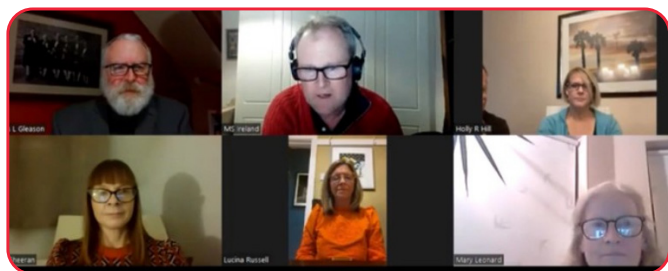
campaigns being May 50K and the MS Readathon. The MS Readathon launch with RTE's Rick O'Shea and our wonderful ambassador Shirley Keane O'Brien in the Irish Print Museum garnered extensive media coverage with the highlight being a front page photo in the Irish times.

We had some brilliant ambassadors sharing their stories on what life is like living with Multiple Sclerosis for all our campaigns including Shirley Keane O'Brien for the MS Readathon, Orla Marron for the Christmas mailing and the Faces of MS campaign for World MS Day and this helped secure press coverage in print and online all over Ireland with over 30 publications to help raise awareness for our community.





## Webinars



In continuation of our webinar series, throughout 2023 MS Ireland arranged several online information webinars which allowed people in the MS community to virtually attend expert led information sessions. We recorded these sessions and made them available on our website on our dedicated 'Online Video Catalogue section'. Providing the information in this format allows our community to access these videos on demand at a time that suits them.

The new Unspeakable Bits Webinar series had a very successful run throughout 2023 with 8 webinars taking place on a variety of topics including food and exercise, relationships, money matters and sex. There were over 500 people watching the live webinars and over 2,000 have subsequently watched the webinars on our MS Ireland YouTube channel. MS Ireland ran the webinars in conjunction with volunteer Trevis L Gleason and over 20 volunteer expert speakers.

## Information Resources

During 2023 information resources were developed in the areas of fatigue management, financial resources and general information about MS Ireland's services.

## Young Persons' Survey

Data elicited from the survey was used in the Young Persons Report. This report summarised the findings of the research and presented a series of recommendations to practice within MS Ireland services and elsewhere.

## MS Explored – The Podcast

In 2023, MS Ireland continued its popular podcast series (supported by Novartis) and produced 3 podcasts. These focused on information for people newly diagnosed, dealing with fatigue and advancements in the management of MS. These aimed to highlight some of the key supports that exist to support people living with MS.





## Case Study

### Shirley Keane O'Brien

#### MS Ireland Readathon Ambassador 2023

"I'm only delighted to be the ambassador and help raise awareness of the MS Readathon. I remember it from the kids doing it in primary school. Now I'll be doing it and loving every minute of it.

Shirley has been through a difficult few years from getting her multiple sclerosis diagnosis to "embarking on a very scary, often frustrating and confusing journey. It took me awhile to accept my diagnosis and to figure out my next steps.

"I spent a year or so on a roller coaster of emotions, and worry, trying to learn about my MS and figure out how I could take back control. I opened my mind to try new hobbies and therapies.

I found MS Ireland which was crucial. hey provide physiotherapy and psychological support, as well as really good information.

"I found MS Ireland which was crucial. They were so positive and helpful. I go to their social events now. They provide physiotherapy and psychological support, as well as really good information.

"I'm still learning every day, and there are days when my mindfulness fails me, but I recognise this and now carry the tools internally to reset. That can be challenging, especially as a mom to two teens, but I'm always working on it.

"I want people to realise the importance of self-care and life balance, which is just as important before any sort of diagnosis, as it is post diagnosis".





## World MS Day

On May 30th, MS Ireland joined people living with MS and other MS organisations around the world to mark World MS Day. The theme for World MS Day (WMSD) 2023 was 'Connections'. MS Ireland's campaign in 2023 was about building community connection, self-connection, celebrating support networks, championing self-care and finding connections to quality care. The MS community was encouraged to use the hashtag #IaMSSomeone on all social channels.

Some examples of activities held to mark WMSD in 2023 included: 'Face of MS' exhibition in Stephen's green shopping centre, light up of prominent public building across the country, Care Centre coffee morning, Leinster House AV room briefing, regional information and social events across the country.

The dedicated World MS Day webpage was the most visited page in May and the website was visited most on World MS Day with triple the daily average.

## National Conference

In September 2023, MS Ireland hosted an in-person conference in Athlone - its first in three years. This event took place over two days and brought a number of expert speakers to provide input for a

healthcare professionals session (including regional Community Workers) and for a more general audience. The event also featured a gala dinner. Over 250 people from the MS community attended the event. The speakers covered a range of topics, fatigue, assistive technologies, physical activity and mental health. Feedback from the community was positive and provides a firm basis for the continuation of the conference for 2024.



## Objective 2: Research

**Description:** Service design and development informed by research, international best practice and outcomes.

Sharing opportunities with our community to engage in and learn more about MS research is an important part of the work that MS Ireland does and throughout 2023, we shared numerous opportunities with our community members. We shared research findings through our eNews, website and social media platforms. MS Ireland collaborated with Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) on updates to the Atlas of MS and the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP).

MS Ireland have continued to develop the 'Researchers profiles' section on our website. This involved having up to date Researchers Profiles and

call outs on our website and ensuring this section was easy to navigate for people with MS and researchers alike.

MS Ireland has remained active within the research space throughout 2023 through collaboration with the All-Ireland MS Research Network (AIMSRN) as well as through Maynooth University and other research organisations. During the year preliminary work with Maynooth University took place regarding a research project focusing on the needs of people with MS regarding peer support and engagement. This research will support the direction of peer support engagement projects in the future.

## Objective 3: Advocacy

**Description:** Improve access to services to ensure PwMS can exercise choice over their lives and careers

### My MS My Needs Survey

In 2023, MS Ireland undertook a pivotal initiative by revisiting and expanding upon a comprehensive survey first conducted in 2016 to discern and address the dynamic needs of individuals living with MS. The results of this My MS My Needs Survey have played a crucial role in shaping and refining MS Ireland's services, offering valuable insights into the evolving requirements of the MS community.

The outcomes of the survey have not only contributed to the planning and customisation of services but have also fortified MS Ireland's ongoing advocacy endeavours. By capturing the real-world experiences and challenges faced by those with MS, the survey acted as a compass, guiding strategic initiatives and influencing policies to bridge existing gaps in service provision.

Importantly, the collected data established an evidence-based foundation for MS Ireland's



advocacy efforts, empowering the organisation to champion the rights and needs of the MS community effectively. The survey became a cornerstone in the



organisation's commitment to creating comprehensive and responsive support, driven by the nuanced understanding gained from the collective voices of individuals with MS.

The success of this endeavour was dependent on the active participation of the MS community, as each response contributed to a more nuanced understanding and more impactful advocacy for those living with MS. The collaborative effort in 2023 served as a testament to the commitment of MS Ireland in ensuring that the needs of individuals with MS were not only recognised but also prioritised in the ongoing pursuit of enhanced support services.

Full results will be published in 2024.

## NAI Campaign Collaboration



In 2022, The Neurological Alliance of Ireland launched a nationwide advocacy campaign, urging for funding to establish nine community neurorehabilitation teams—one in each of the 9 HSE CHO (Community Health Organisation) areas, in accordance with the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy and a key commitment within the current Programme for Government. At the campaign's commencement, only two teams were operational nationwide. MS Ireland played a crucial role in supporting this advocacy effort, contributing significantly to the campaign's success.

As of October 2023, the campaign achieved remarkable results. With over 10,400 emails sent through the campaign website, the collective voice of supporters resonated strongly. The advocacy efforts extended to the parliamentary arena, with

more than 90 TDs submitting questions fervently endorsing the campaign's objectives. Thanks to these concerted actions, four additional community neurorehabilitation teams secured funding during the fiscal years 2022-2023. This achievement marks a concrete step towards realizing a comprehensive neurorehabilitation framework, and MS Ireland remains steadfast in advancing such critical initiatives for the benefit of the neurological community.

## Neuro Mapping Project



The launch of the Neuro-Mapping Project, a collaborative effort between the Health Service Executive, Disability Federation of Ireland, and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland, was a momentous occasion attended with enthusiasm. Minister Anne Rabbitte T.D. unveiled this groundbreaking project, detailing the extensive range of community services accessible to individuals with neurological conditions through voluntary organisations. The project also highlights joint service initiatives between voluntary organisations and the HSE, providing a comprehensive overview of available support. Multiple Sclerosis Ireland embraces and supports this significant report, eagerly anticipating the upcoming phase 2 of the Neuro-Mapping Project. This initiative not only aligns with our commitment to comprehensive neurological care but also represents a crucial step towards fostering collaborative partnerships for the betterment of the neurological community.



## Physiotherapy Business Case Launched

The unveiling of MS Ireland's physiotherapy business case at the National MS Care Centre marked a momentous occasion, attended by Deputy Colm Burke and Senator Martin Conway. This strategic initiative aims to introduce a sustainable, nationwide physiotherapy service, spearheaded by a team of specialist physiotherapists directly employed by MS Ireland. The service will be delivered at a regional level, leveraging a combination of 'online' and 'in-person' programmes.

Backed by research and clinical audit evidence, these programs have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing symptom severity, enhancing the quality of life, and curbing health service utilisation. The proposed service addresses a dual need: first, by providing tailored exercise and education

programs delivered by specialist physiotherapists in an environment fostering peer learning and social support; and second, by implementing programs designed to prevent disability in those newly diagnosed or facilitate individuals with existing disabilities to lead fulfilling lives within their communities through effective symptom management.

Crucially, research indicates that delaying and mitigating disability caused by MS could result in substantial annual cost savings of up to €19m for the Irish health system. With an estimated annual cost of €880,000, the implementation of this service across all nine CHOs promises not only to enhance the lives of individuals affected by MS but also to contribute significantly to the overall well-being of the Irish healthcare landscape. MS Ireland remains steadfast in its commitment to pioneering initiatives that empower and uplift the MS community.





## Leinster House Briefing

Amidst the global resonance of World MS Day 2023, Multiple Sclerosis Ireland orchestrated a pivotal Pre-Budget Briefing and Panel Discussion at Leinster House, elevating not only the collective voice of the MS community but also launching strategic budget asks for 2024. This event, attended by over 30 Oireachtas members, including Minister Anne Rabbitte, marked a significant political engagement for MS Ireland.

The heart of MS Ireland's advocacy lies in its budget requests for 2024, addressing the critical need for sustainable funding for national physiotherapy services, not only for people with Multiple Sclerosis but also for those with other neurological conditions. The financial requirement of €880,000 annually, spread across all 9 CHOs, underscores the essential role of physiotherapy in enhancing the quality of life for individuals facing these conditions.

MS Ireland also emphasised the urgency for an increased annual investment of €627,000 in the National MS Respite Centre. This financial boost is imperative to fortify the resilience and capacity of the centre, ensuring it meets the evolving needs of those seeking respite care within the MS community.

The Leinster House event not only brought attention to the broader MS awareness campaign but also strategically positioned MS Ireland's budget asks

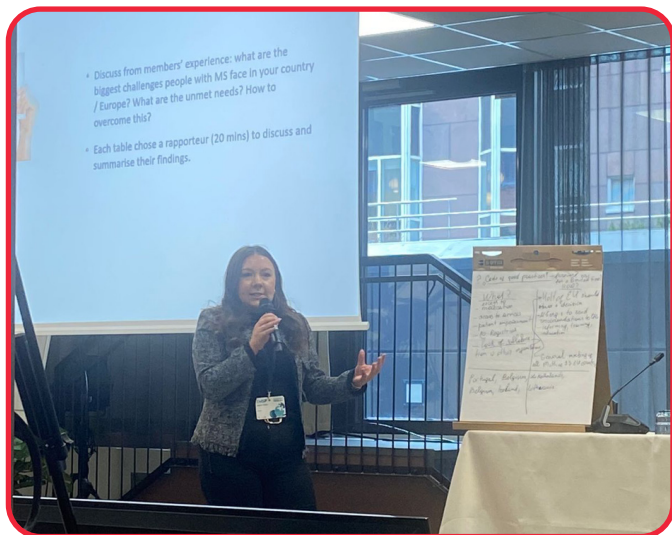
on the political agenda. By garnering significant participation from Oireachtas members, this event solidified MS Ireland's role in influencing key decision-makers and shaping policies crucial for the MS community.

## EMSP Annual Conference

In 2023, the Advocacy department had the privilege of representing MS Ireland at the EMSP Annual Conference in Helsinki, themed "Social Policy: A Better Life for People with MS." The four-day event, co-hosted by Neuro-Liito, provided a dynamic platform for MS organizations across Europe to unite, share insights, and address pressing issues. Day 1 commenced with an engaging welcome from EMSP President Herbert Hemmes and Helena Ylikyla-Leiva, CEO of Neuro-Liito. The agenda delved into crucial topics under the umbrella







of social policy, featuring presentations on employment, marginalisation, and social inclusion. Panel discussions, including speakers like Professor Elisabeth Celius Gulowsen and Aoife Kirwan, brought forth lively dialogues on impactful subjects.

Day 2 continued with high energy, featuring a motivating 'Just Do It!' session with Chris Wright, a professional basketball player living with MS. The conference facilitated open conversations on palliative care, long-term care, and systems change, acknowledging the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

Bettina Hausmann, the master of ceremony, emphasised the importance of addressing social systems impacting the lives of people with MS. The event concluded with reflections from Interim CEO Jana Hlaváčová and a handover to Elisabeth Kasilingam.

This immersive experience enabled MS Ireland to gain valuable insights into international best practices, strategies for social change, and effective ways to advocate for the MS community. As we look forward to the 2024 conference in Brussels, we remain committed to implementing these learnings for the benefit of our community in Ireland.

## MS Care Centre Business Case Launch

In September 2023, a significant milestone was achieved as MS Ireland introduced the MS Care Centre Business Case at the National MS Care Centre in collaboration with Senator Dr. Tom Clonan. The primary objective of this strategic initiative

is to secure an additional €627,000 in funding for the Respite Centre, with the aim of extending its operational hours to 350 days annually. This proposed expansion is designed to significantly enhance the centre's capacity, providing an additional 1,248 bed nights to accommodate the respite needs of individuals impacted by MS.

This move represents a substantial leap forward in MS Ireland's ongoing mission to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families navigating the challenges associated with MS. The call for additional funding underscores the organization's commitment to addressing the evolving needs of the MS community.

The introduction of the MS Respite Centre Business Case in 2023 demonstrates a tangible commitment



to improving the quality of life for individuals and families impacted by MS, marking a noteworthy development in our collective efforts to build a more inclusive and compassionate landscape for those on their journey with MS.

## MCB Programme



Multiple Sclerosis Ireland actively participated in the Membership Capacity Building (MCB) Programme, collaborating with the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP) and the MS Data Alliance. This workshop, held in Brussels on December 13, 2023, aimed to empower MS Societies in Western Europe to establish effective MS registries, enhancing care and advocacy efforts.

The workshop, led by Dr. Liesbet M. Peeters of MS Data Alliance, provided comprehensive knowledge and tools for navigating the complexities of setting up MS registries. Representatives from MS Societies in Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands actively engaged in discussions, including Aoife Kirwan and Alison Cotter from MS Ireland.

Establishing MS registries emerged as a priority during a Discovery workshop under MCB in 2022. Registries play a crucial role in informing policy, providing data on prevalence, demographic trends, care, treatment, and risk factors. Insights from successful registry implementations in Germany and the UK were shared, offering practical perspectives on challenges and solutions. Critical roles required for registry establishment were identified, and the "End-to-End Pipeline" strategy equipped participants with tools to translate questions into practical insights.

The workshop concluded with participants, including those from MS Ireland, discussing their next actions in the registries space. This collective ambition is aimed at making a substantial impact on MS care and advocacy in the coming years.

## Research

In May 2023, MS Ireland held an online event focused on neuropsychology, cognition, and psychological well-being in the context of MS.

These projects collectively offered diverse perspectives and comprehensive insights into the various dimensions of MS research, furthering our understanding of neuropsychological aspects and contributing to the enhancement of psychological well-being for individuals living with MS.

At the end of 2023, we had 14 open research calls on our website and attended many events throughout the year on various topics including the Research Together Event in Maynooth University.



## Research Ezine

In our call-out for research articles for our Research Ezine at the end of 2023, we were thrilled to receive a remarkable response, with a total of 12 submissions returned. The enthusiastic engagement of the research community highlights the commitment and dedication to advancing knowledge in the field of MS. The Ezine serves as a platform to showcase and disseminate cutting-edge research, providing valuable insights into various facets of MS. These 12 submissions contribute to the diversity and depth of content, enriching our publication with the latest findings and perspectives.





# Goal: Sustainable Finances



## Objective 4: Grow Sustainable Revenue Base

**Description:** Increase HSE services and develop regular and recurring giving campaigns to help sustain vital services and new programmes.



### MS Readathon 2023

We had over 11,000 online registrations from children, schools, and “big-kids” last November. Numbers were up compared to previous years, although fundraising saw a slight decrease. Nevertheless, it was still a successful campaign overall.

Throughout the month, there were author visits, illustration workshops, and our dedicated volunteer school ambassadors engaged with children and teachers nationwide. MS Ireland offered a hybrid Readathon this year, acknowledging that being fully online isn’t suitable for everyone. This approach was particularly popular with newer participating schools.

Despite the challenges of the past year, we raised just over €248,000. This remarkable achievement highlights the dedication and generosity of our participants and supporters.

Prize winners were galore, ranging from highest fundraisers to most books read, to most improved reader, and competitions for best book reviews, and many more. We are very thankful for our sponsors,

including thebookshop.ie, Languages Connect, Pan Research, and Aramark for sponsoring bikes.

Looking ahead to MS Readathon 2024 With a refresh planned for 2024, we encourage everyone to keep an eye on our [www.readathon.ie](http://www.readathon.ie) website for exciting new updates. Thank you for your continued support and participation in making the MS Readathon a success.



### May 50K 2023

We were thrilled to have the May 50k back in 2023. It was fantastic to see over 900 people register for the challenge. This event provided a great opportunity for



us to partner with the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) and raise funds for MS services in Ireland and research.

Over €120,000 was raised by the challenge, and we cannot thank everyone enough who ran, walked, or rolled 50k in May for us. Your participation and support have been invaluable in helping us advance our mission.

## Facebook Challenges

We did 5 Facebook Challenges in 2023. In March we did our 3rd Crunch Challenge and in September we trialled doing 2 challenges simultaneously – the 10,000 Steps a Day Challenge and the Dip a Day Challenge. This worked well as they were very different challenges.



In December we also did 2 challenges – the Christmas Crunch Challenge. The Facebook challenges raised nearly €110,000 in 2023.

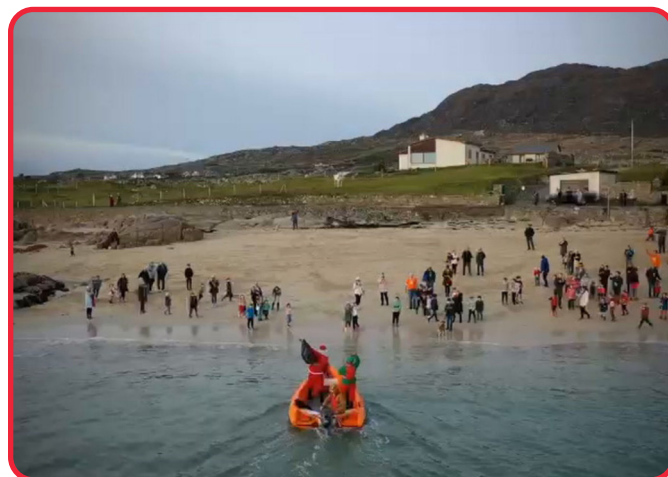
## Ad Hoc Sports



As with every year we are incredibly lucky with the amazing people who support MS Ireland by taking on a variety of challenges. We had 2 ultra challenge fundraisers, Finally Ray McFadyen who is a committed

supporter who did the Donegal 555 Ultra cycle and raised over €21,000 and Sean Bagnell who did a series of ultra marathons between Dublin and Galway raising nearly €18,000. Rachel Conway did the Paris marathon raising nearly €7k and Eoin O'Neill climbed 7 mountains in 7 days raising over €4k. Many others took up all sorts of challenges for MS Ireland.

## Community



So many wonderful people raised funds in different ways in 2023. Hair seemed to be the theme of 2023 with various people cutting and dying their hair to raise huge funds – over €10,000. Other fundraisers were wild swims, bake sales, jumper day, easter walk, pub quiz and danceathons.

## Golf

We were delighted to have Winward Management for hosting their annual charity golf day in support for MS Ireland.

## Women's Mini Marathon

We have 75 ladies who joined Team MS Ireland for the Women's Mini Marathon and they raised over €20,000 this year.

## Skydive

We have 9 people sign up and complete skydives in support for MS Ireland in 2023.



## Case Study

### Orla Marron

#### Christmas Appeal Ambassador

"I was diagnosed 6 years ago with MS a month after my 30th birthday and a month after moving into our dream home. I have always been a planner so the unpredictability of multiple sclerosis and how that was going to fit into my life was a lot to digest.

"The first year was a rollercoaster, coming to terms with the diagnosis and then trying to deal with some of the awful side effects from them. My mum also has MS, so I have grown up with it. The bad days make me appreciate the good days even more. I have gone from a planner to a person who tries to take one day at a time.

I'm hopeful for the future. I would love to ensure that people know that there is help out there for them. MS Ireland is a great help.

"I have always been a volunteer for our local MS Branch in Monaghan. The local voluntary Monaghan MS branch raises money throughout the year with various fundraising initiatives and that money is used to help the people in Monaghan with MS.

"I'm hopeful for the future. I would love to ensure that people know that there is help out there for them. MS Ireland is a great help. Your local case worker can set you up with physio, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and counselling services. I have used all these services in the last 6 years, so I know the benefits from them and appreciate them all. Take the help and support available from MS Ireland".





## Dublin Marathon

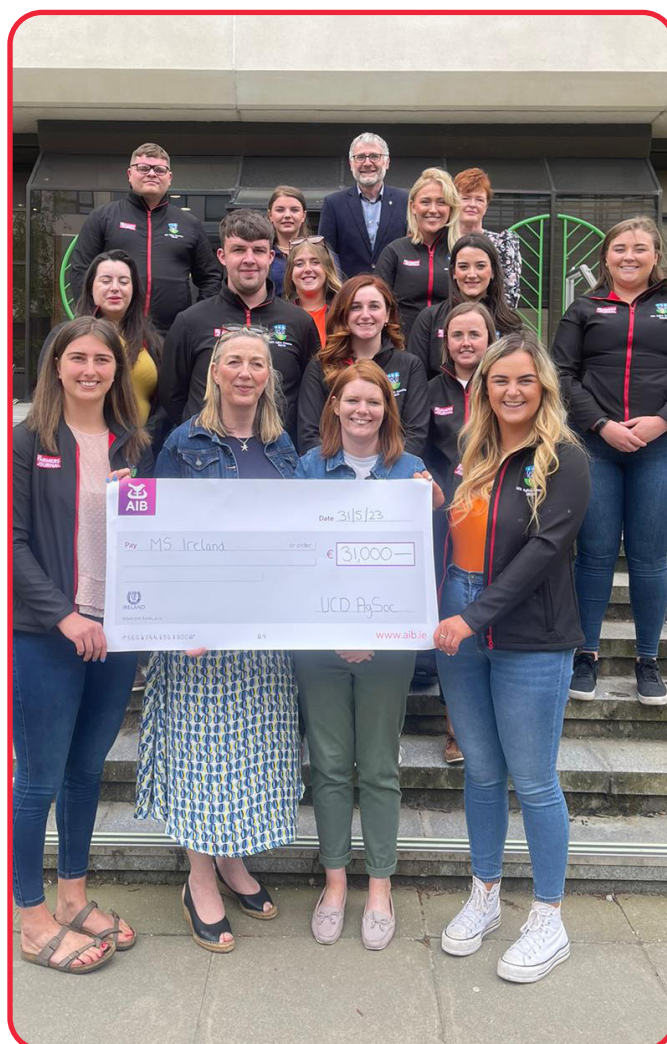
MS Ireland has 33 people running in the Dublin marathon this year and they managed to raise over €50,000 through sponsorship of their runs.

## Corporate Support

The support that we received from the corporate sector has been amazing in 2023. MS Ireland is now offering the corporate sector 'MS Awareness in the Workplace' training, which aims to raise awareness of MS, the challenges people living with MS may face in the workplace and how teams may support colleagues living with MS.

## Charity Partnership

We partnered with The UCD Agricultural Science Society in 2023 – they chose MS Ireland and The Tiggy Trust. The students were indefatigable in their fundraising as they presented both charities with cheques for €31,000 each.







## Objective 5: Develop Partnerships

**Description:** Leverage and grow our partnered programmes to support service development, funding, and delivery.

## Significant Partnerships in 2023

- MS Ireland's Information Officer, Aoife Kirwan is on the Board of the European MS Platform (EMSP, an umbrella organisation of MS societies and organisations across Europe).
- MSIF and the International Progressive MS Alliance in the areas of policy, common goal setting, research and governance. MS Ireland sat on MSIF's working group for the Atlas of MS.
- Pharmaceutical companies; in particular Novartis, Perrigo, Merck, Viartis and Alkermes partnered with MS Ireland on educational projects and activities, research and supporting information services. In particular, we would like to note the following collaborations in 2023:
  - » Novartis supported our World MS Day activity 'Faces of MS' campaign.
  - » Alkermes continued their support of MS Ireland's Information Line service by providing us with financial commitment to see this service secured for 2022 and 2023.
  - » Merck continued to support MS Ireland by providing funding for the development of an 'MS in the Workplace' training which will begin being delivered in workplaces in 2024.
  - » Viartis supported MS Ireland's Reflective Video series, in which a range of professionals reflect on advances that have been made in the field of MS.
  - » Novartis and Roche supported our National Conference.





Goal: Innovation



## Objective 6: Develop Digital Operations & Governance

**Description:** Continue to strengthen the governance and regulation of MS Ireland ensuring compliance with relevant regulatory bodies.

The overall aim is to Develop Digital Operations and Governance structures and strategies to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. Ensure the Organisation has a robust ICT (Information & Communication Technology) strategy roadmap and execution plan, including the financial, tactical and strategic benefits of proposed major ICT initiatives. The Digital, Innovation and Technology Committee facilitated lots of consultation on MS Ireland's Digital Strategy. The Digital Strategy aims at defining a winning path to support overall organisation objectives through digital channels by 2024.

- We planned and budgeted the rollout of salesforce across the organisation.
- Fatigue: Applying Cognitive Behavioural and Energy Effectiveness Techniques to Lifestyle (FACETS): The FACETS salesforce project was completed in 2023.
- Casework: Enclude completed a technical scoping exercise based on the recommendations of the Quality Matters Report in 2023, with a schedule of work planned for 2024.
- Website: Work was done to enhance user experience and navigation on the Community Work and Physiotherapy & Exercise pages
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) & Google ad words: We engaged a digital agency on retainer to manage our Google ad word accounts and a series of campaigns. The first two campaigns launched in early July.

## Who We Are

### Patron

MS Ireland is delighted to have Micheal D. Higgins, President of Ireland, as sole patron.

## Organisation Details

### Auditor

Deloitte Ireland LLP  
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm  
Deloitte & Touche House  
Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2

### Principal Bankers

Bank of Ireland  
College Green  
Dublin 2

### Solicitors

Joynt & Crawford  
8 Angelsea Street  
Dublin 2

### Registered Office

80 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4

### Charity Number

CHY 5365

### Charity Regulatory Number

20007867

### Company Number

296573

### Date of Incorporation

19th November 1998

### Year MS Ireland was founded

1961

## The Board

MS Ireland is governed by board of 13 voluntary members, each bringing a diverse range of experience and skills. This includes individuals with MS and those with family members with MS, as well as professionals with extensive backgrounds in law, and other fields.

The board is responsible for promoting our vision, aims, and values and directs the Chief Executive to achieve these goals through the various departments, services and resources. In 2023, the board convened nine times, focusing on significant work in finance, funding, governance, and strategy.



BOARD MEMBER 2022/2023



BOARD MEMBER 2023/2024



● Anne  
● Restan



● Aveen  
● Murray



● Carol  
Barton



● Robin  
● Bradley



● Noelle  
● Burke



● Tony  
Candon



● Thomas  
Cronin



● Eugene  
Kearney



● Anthony  
Kelly



● Jacinta  
● Kelly



● Rebecca  
● Maguire



● Sean  
Martin



● Rory  
● Mulcahy



● Maurice  
● O'Connor



● Martin  
● Power



● Mary  
● Sheahan  
Lonergan



● Leslie  
Warren

### Resignations/Changes

Anthony Kelly resigned 13/01/23  
Carol Barton resigned 7/12/23

### Appointments

Leslie Warren Coopted 13/2/23  
Sean Martin, Tony Candon and Leslie Warren  
were appointed on 16/9/23

## New Board at AGM 2023

- Maurice O'Connor has stepped down as Chairperson. He is required to do so after 3 years. Maurice will however remain on the Board for a further year.
- Jacinta Kelly has stepped down as Vice Chairperson. She is required to do so after 3 years in the post. Jacinta was re-elected to the Board.
- Anne Restan is the new Chairperson of the Board.
- Aveen Murray is the new Vice Chairperson.
- Jacinta Kelly (re-elected) + Sean Martin (elected) + Aveen Murray (re-elected) + Martin Power (re-elected) + Leslie Warren (elected) onto the Board at the AGM.
- Rory Mulcahy is being replaced as Company Secretary by Maurice O'Connor.
- Tom Cronin stepped down as the Council rep and Tony Candon South Mayo Branch was elected.

## Board Committees

The Board is responsible for the strategy, and it creates/ appoints committees. The following committees are appointed by the Board to aid in the internal workings of MS Ireland:

1. Finance, Audit, Risk and Strategy Committee
2. Services, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
3. Research, Information, Advocacy and Communications Committee
4. Remuneration and Nomination Committee
5. Governance and Sustainability Committee
6. Organisation and People Committee

## Board attendance 2023

	28 Jan	23 Feb	5 Apr	25 May	29 Jun	24 Jul	14 Sep	16 Sep	24 Oct	TOTAL
Robin Bradley	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	5/9
Noelle Burke	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1/9
Tony Candon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	2/2
Thomas Cronin	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	5/7
Carol Ellis-Barton	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	2/9
Eugene Kearney	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	n/a	n/a	5/7
Jacinta Kelly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/9
Dr Rebecca Maguire	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	7/9
Sean Martin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	2/2
Aveen Murray	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/9
Rory Mulcahy	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	6/9
Maurice O'Connor	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/9
Martin Power	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/9
Anne Restan	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	7/9
Mary Sheahan-Lonergan	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	6/9
Leslie Warren	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	6/7



## Conflicts of Interest and Loyalties

At every Board meeting, members are asked to state if they have a conflict of interest and/or conflict of loyalty. A register is kept, and Board members are asked to complete a form stating their conflict of interest if they have one. MS Ireland also has a Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Loyalty policy.

## Recruitment and Induction of Board Members

Three of our 13 Board Members vacancies are filled rotationally from the council branch representatives. Notification of the remaining vacancies for Board members is advertised in MS News, eNews and on the MS Ireland website. Prospective Board members complete an application form considered by the Nominating Committee, who then make recommendations to the Board. Once approved by the Board, the chosen candidates stand for election by the members at the AGM.

New Board members are given one afternoon's induction training by the CEO to familiarise them with their duties as Board members, their legal obligations, the governance of the organisation and policies and procedures. Further training can be made available if required.

## Boardmatch Ireland Transparency Scale

MS Ireland complies with the standards contained in Boardmatch Ireland's Transparency Scale 'A' Standard.

## Skills and Experience

Annually, the Nominating Committee with the CEO determine the skills required on the Board. When the Nominating Committee recommend candidates to the Board, they ensure that the skills gap is filled. Candidates are required to be committed to MS Ireland's development, share in its values and be problem solving in their approach, as well as having proven professional skills. MS Ireland's Board members have expertise in a wide range of areas including accounting, legal, banking, HR and strategic marketing. For full board profiles log on to our website, [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie).

## Length of Terms Served by The Board

A Board member is elected on to the Board for a period of three years. The Board member can opt to stand for re-election for a further three years. Each board member can serve no more than three terms of three years on the Board, so a maximum of nine years' service as a Board member is permitted.

## Decision Making Processes

Decisions reserved for the board and those delegated to CEO are listed in the organisations Code of Conduct. Schedule of Matters of the Board are detailed in the Code of Conduct. Log on to our website to read the Code of Conduct: [www.mssociety.ie](http://www.mssociety.ie).

## Risk Management Policies and Processes

Risks are detailed in a Risk Register reviewed by the Board, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the senior management team.

## Engagement with Stakeholders

MS Ireland communicates with its stakeholders via email, eNews, the website, social media, MS News, council meetings, regional integrated meetings, staff meetings, and through correspondence and meetings with third parties.

## Governance/Administrative Details

MS Ireland is the only national organisation working for people and families living with MS. 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 continuously meets the needs of the MS community in a professional and accountable manner.

### 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 co-operation between all structures of the Society. Two Council meetings were held in 2023. All Branches are represented on the Council. Three Council members are elected by Council representatives and sit on the Board of Directors of MS Ireland.

### Voluntary Branches

30 voluntary Branches operate across Ireland.

### 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. MS Ireland employs 76 people across national and regional offices and 46 Community Employment participants. MS Ireland's work is supported by committed volunteers around the country.

#### Ava Battles, Chief Executive

**Declan  
Murphy**

Head of  
Finance

**Aoife  
Lambe**

National  
Services  
Manager

**Caitriona  
Hughes**

Fundraising  
Manager

**Aidan  
Larkin**

National  
Services  
Development  
Manager

» Aidan Larkin (National Services Development Manager) left on 15/12/2023

### Remuneration

The number of employees whose emoluments, excluding employer pension contributions, were greater than €60,000 in 2023 is set out below:

<b>4</b> €60,000 - €70,000	<b>2</b> €70,000 - €80,000	<b>1</b> €80,000 - €90,000	<b>1</b> €100,000 - €110,000 (CEO)
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The Nominating and Remuneration Committee, a sub-committee of the Board, is responsible for making decisions regarding remuneration of the senior management team and those who report directly to the Chief Executive.



## Codes of Practice

MS Ireland operates in accordance with a number of codes applicable to our work. These codes are a combination of best practice guidelines, policies and procedures that protect the people we work with and ensure that our work is transparent and above reproach.

### The Governance Code

MS Ireland is fully committed to the standards outlined in the Governance Code.

In 2017 MS Ireland became a member of the Charities Institute of Ireland Triple Locked Standard – Best Practice in Transparency and Accountability.

### Guiding Principles For Fundraising

The Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising is a guide to best practice developed by a steering group set up in response to the Charities Act 2009. MS Ireland is fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.

#### The Statement exists to:

- » Improve fundraising practice.
- » Promote high levels of accountability and transparency by organisations fundraising from the public.
- » Provide clarity and assurances to donors and prospective donors about the organisations they support.

### National Financial Assistance Regulations

MS Ireland can offer financial assistance to people with MS to help cover the costs of some expenses associated with the condition. Voluntary Branches raise this money through their fundraising activities.

### Codes Of Good Practice to Protect Children

MS Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. Our policy on child protection is in accordance with Children First, the national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children.

### Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

MS Ireland is dedicated to implementing and promoting measures to protect the right of all service users to be treated with dignity and respect, and is committed to ensuring that the organisation provides a safe environment which is free from all forms of abuse, including discrimination, bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, neglect and mistreatment. In achieving this aim, MS Ireland is committed to ensuring that there are policies, procedures, guidance and training for staff and service users that prevent any infringement of this right.

**Log on to our website for further details of all the Codes of Practice MS Ireland subscribes to: [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie)**

## Extract From Audited Financial Statements

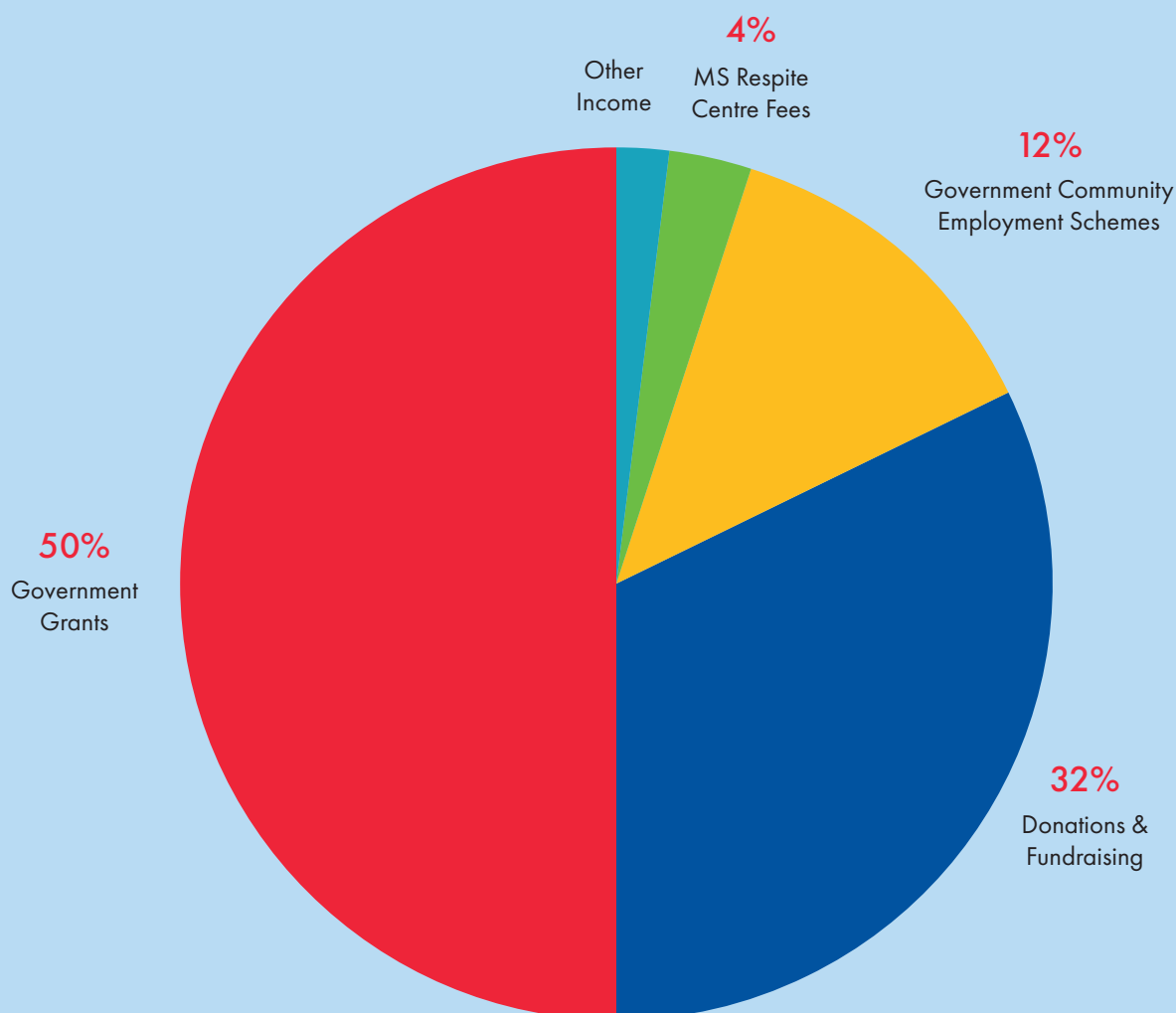
	Unrestricted Funds 2023 €	Restricted Funds 2023 €	Total Funds 2023 €	Total Funds 2022 €
<b>INCOME</b>				
Income from generated funds:				
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Grants and service contract income				
- Community services	4	2,381,606	2,381,610	2,280,954
- Respite care services	272,991	1,245,573	1,518,564	1,420,006
- Governance	4,017	515,822	519,839	481,512
<b>Voluntary Income</b>				
- Fundraising - National Office	1,104,163	368,110	1,472,273	1,543,793
- Fundraising - Branch	612,095	-	612,095	429,260
<b>Total income</b>	<b>1,993,270</b>	<b>4,511,110</b>	<b>6,504,380</b>	<b>6,155,525</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
<b>Charitable activity costs</b>				
- Community services	85,625	2,676,407	2,762,032	2,548,322
- Respite care services	123,895	1,855,876	1,979,771	1,637,185
- Governance costs	151,031	773,513	924,543	777,825
- Branch services	408,595	-	408,595	382,169
<b>Voluntary income costs</b>				
- Fundraising - National Office	586,364		586,364	574,700
- Fundraising - Branch	50,886	-	50,886	30,278
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,406,396</b>	<b>5,305,796</b>	<b>6,712,191</b>	<b>5,950,479</b>
Net (expenditure)/income for the year	586,874	(794,685)	(207,811)	205,047
Transfer between funds	(935,516)	933,516	-	-
Net movement in funds	(348,642)	140,831	(207,811)	205,047
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
Total funds brought forward	6,944,651	3,411,056	10,355,707	10,150,660
Prior year adjustment restricted funds	928,408	(928,408)	-	-
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>7,524,417</b>	<b>2,623,479</b>	<b>10,147,896</b>	<b>10,355,707</b>

## Income Analysis 2023

# €6,504,381

Income of €6,504,381 was received of which 50% was funding from Government Grants mainly HSE, 32% was Donations and Fundraising, 12% was from three Department of Social Protection schemes we have in Donegal, Galway and Dublin, 4% was from fees received from Respite Centre residents and 2% from miscellaneous income.

	2023 (€)	2022 (€)
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Government Grants	3,259,535	3,105,747
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Donations & Fundraising	2,106,742	1,972,742
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Government Community Employment Schemes	785,876	769,903
<span style="color: green;">■</span> MS Respite Centre Fees	272,991	168,898
<span style="color: teal;">■</span> Other Income	79,237	138,235
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,504,381</b>	<b>6,155,525</b>



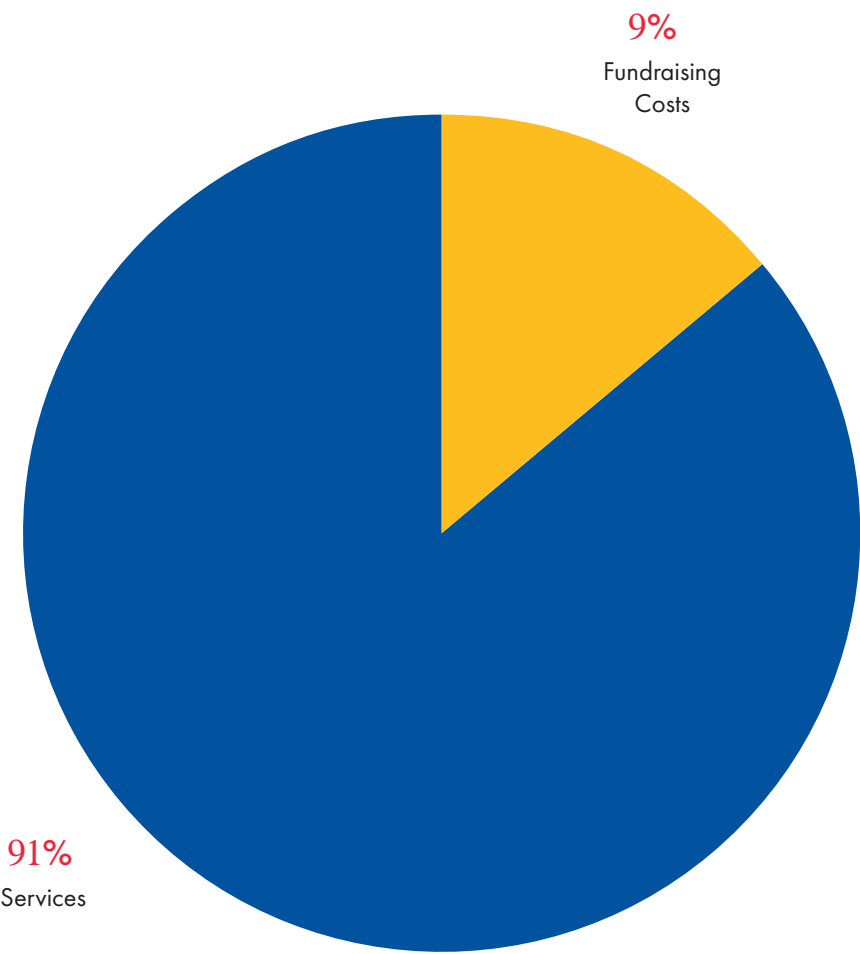


Operational Expenditure Analysis 2023

€6,712,191 (excluding exceptional items)

€6,712,191 before exceptional items was spent in 2023 of which: 84% was spent on Community services, Care Centre respite services and Research; and 16% on Fundraising.

	2023 (€)	2022 (€)
Services - Community, Local MS & Respite Care, Research	6,074,941	5,143,831
Fundraising Costs	637,250	806,647
TOTAL	6,712,191	5,950,478

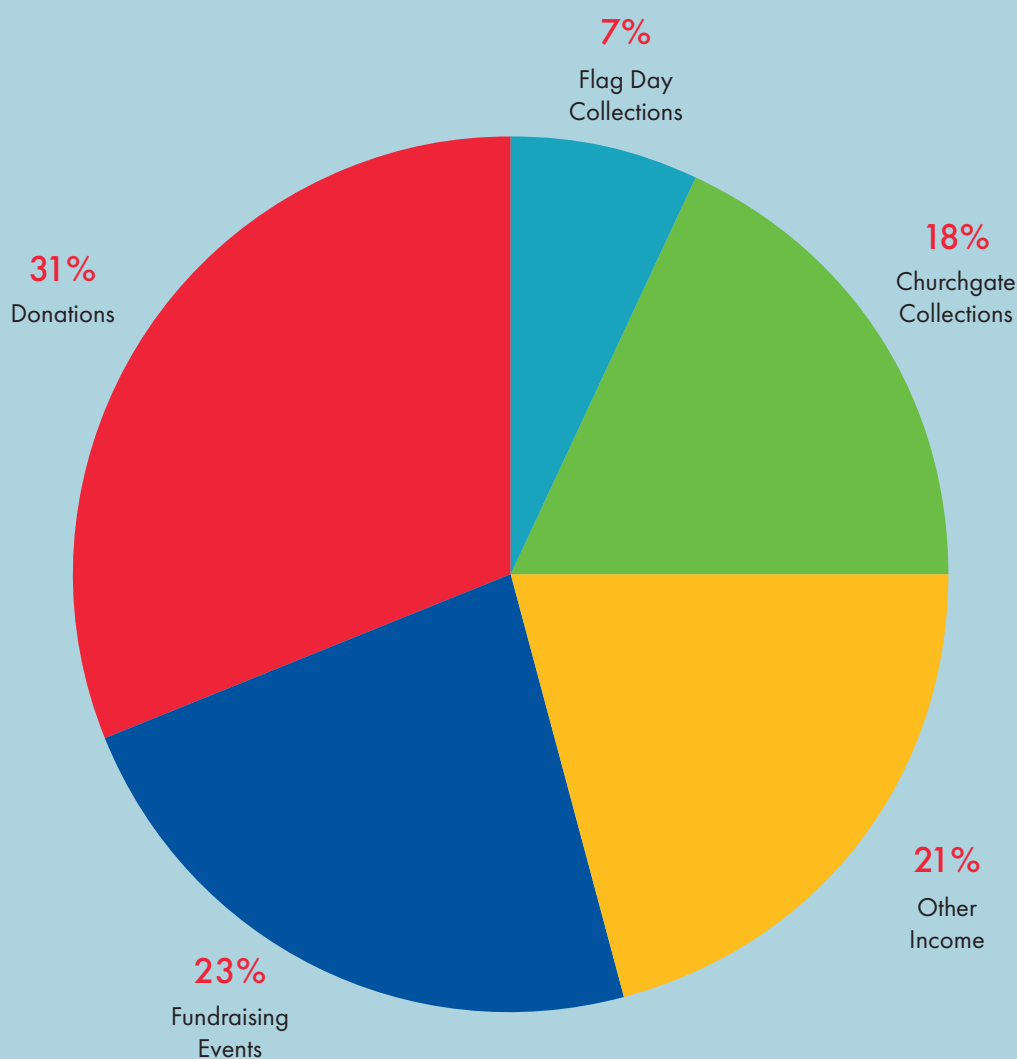


## Branch Income Analysis 2023

# €589,763

There were 30 Branches in operation during the year. All the funds raised in the Local Branches is spend locally to provide services for people with MS. Income of €589,763 was received of which 23% was raised from fundraising events and 66% from Donations and 21% other income.

	2023 (€)	2022 (€)
Donations	183,461	138,627
Fundraising Events	135,489	193,145
Other income	123,698	817
Churchgate Collections	106,881	69,301
Flag Day Collections	40,234	27,370
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>589,763</b>	<b>429,260</b>

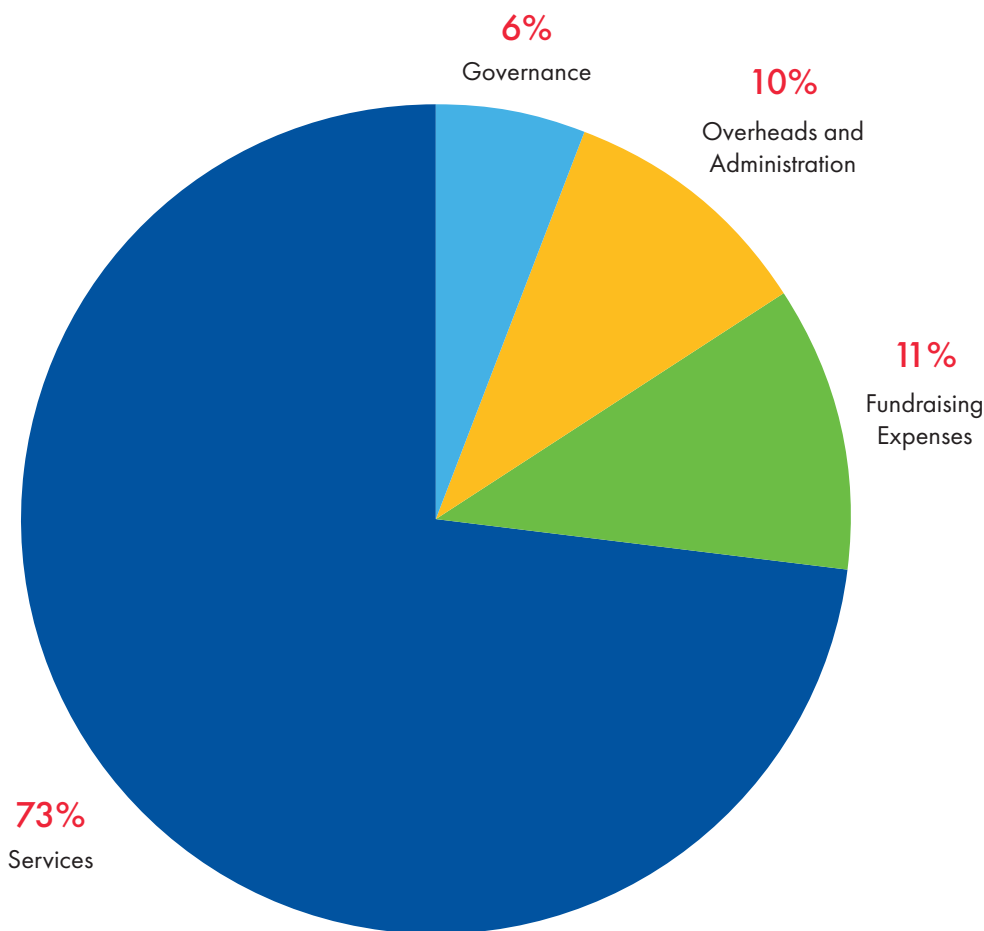


## Branch Expenditure Analysis 2023

# €459,481

€459,481 before exceptional item was spent in 2023 of which 73% was spent on providing services & Financial assistance to members, 10% Overheads and Administration expenses, 6% on Governance and 11% on fundraising expenses.

	2023 (€)	2022 (€)
Services and Financial Assistance to Members	334,514	317,962
Fundraising expenses	50,886	24,941
Overheads and Administration expenses	46,557	61,435
Governance	27,524	23,557
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>459,481</b>	<b>427,895</b>







Goal: People & Culture



## Objective 7: Develop and Invest in Our People

**Description:** Ensure a fit for purpose organisational design and develop a workforce model for the future, recognising that as the capabilities of our people improve, so does our overall service to clients.

2023 was the twelfth year of the integrated model of working whereby local voluntary Branches and regional staff worked together to plan, organise and fund services for their respective areas.

Our Branches participated in the meetings and contributed financially to the provision of regional services. In each of our 10 regional areas, regional integrated meetings took place at least twice a year and often had a senior manager from National Office and/or Board member in attendance. These meetings led to a number of outcomes:

Better use of monies available as resources are pooled; More targeted services as service users are more involved in planning; Improved planning as skills, materials and equipment are pooled; Improvement in communications; Local Branches were asked to continue their contribution of 15% of their year-end net assets to support local service;

In total, 14 Regional Integrated Meetings took place in 2023 with one rescheduled for January 2024.

### Resource Alignment

We continued to fundraise online and some events started to operate physically. The fundraising space continues to be very challenging both for MS Ireland as a National organisation and our Branches.

Budgets were again reduced and monitored closely; Additional reporting on regional and national level of the costs of service delivery supported efforts; Local Branches were asked to continue their contribution of 15% of their year-end net assets to support local services.

### Voluntary Branches

Our voluntary Branches are a vital support network for people living with MS and their families in local communities. They raise funds locally for the provision of services in their respective areas, which can include providing a financial assistance service, access to a number of different therapies, and organising various social gatherings.

### Volunteering

MS Ireland would not exist without the invaluable support of our fantastic volunteers around the country. The majority of our volunteers work within our voluntary Branch network, directly supporting people affected by MS. Many more volunteers support us at fundraising events, through administration work, and increasingly through workplace volunteering schemes.

### Internships And Volunteers

MS Ireland continues to utilise a number of interns and volunteers in our National Office, Care Centre, and throughout the regions. Each brings their own skill set to the Society which contributes greatly to our work.

### Company Pension Scheme

The trustees of the scheme were satisfied with the running of the scheme and that there were no issues in 2023.

### Human Resources

Recruitment of staff was robust but recruitment was challenging during 2023, which was an issue throughout the charity sector nationally. This was a national issue. We implemented the Employee Self service module for managing annual leave and absence. Training was provided for employees and volunteers, including LGBTI+ Awareness Training and Personal Safety & Lone Worker Training. We continued to operate the remote working pattern in line with the Remote Working Bill and the Work Life Balance Bill published in 2023. Pay restoration for Section 39 organisations was completed in 2023, salaries for the majority of MS Ireland employees were increased as a result.

### Staff Training

In 2023, our staff participated in the Services Training Schedule. QQI Level 5 training in Health Skills areas was carried out in the three community Employment Scheme operated in Ireland.

## Objective 7: Grow Branch & Community Volunteer Base

**Description:** Grow our volunteer base across our branch network through diverse volunteer opportunities, programmes and ways to get involved.

### Branches

In 2023 we continued to work with the branches to improve their governance. Branch activities include support groups, social activities, therapies and in some instances, financial assistance. The provision of branch level supports is made possible by voluntary local fundraising. MS Ireland staff continued to support Branches and delivered services via in person and various digital platforms.



### National Awards 2023

#### MS Person of the Year:

#### Bronagh Moran

*Nominated by Dublin South Branch Committee*



Bronagh is an active member of South Dublin Branch, a fundraiser and long-time supporter of MS Ireland. Brona is a kind and encouraging lady who happens to have MS. She is cheerful and supportive of all the branch members, never complains even though she has progressive MS, that in the past year she had to retire from work due to MS and became a wheelchair user during Covid.

Bronagh is a terrific ambassador for the Branch and for MS Ireland. Bronagh participates in the yoga classes online and always raises the spirits of the members.

Her kindness and popularity are evident from the fact that her friends and colleagues raised very significant amounts of money for MS Ireland and for South Dublin Branch during Covid. Due to Brona, more than €12,000 was raised for the Branch, and further large sums went directly to MS Ireland. Bronagh's Energiser Bunnies were instrumental in raising funds directly for MS Ireland via an Irish Sea swim, a Croagh Patrick climb and a Carruntuohill climb. The funds that Bronagh raised meant that in 2022 and again in 2023 the Branch was able to support MoveSmart by €2,000 rather than the €1,000 suggested (total €4,000 so far).

The €12,000 funds that Bronagh and friends raised for the Branch meant that although unable to fundraise due to Covid, they could continue to support physio, yoga MSIF, the Care Centre, Move Smart and MS Ireland. Bronagh truly plays a vital role in the MS Community in South Dublin.



## Carer / Helper of the Year

### Joe McArdle

*Joe was nominated by the Louth Branch*



The Louth Branch and MS Ireland would like would to sympathise with Joe on the recent passing of his wife, Sinead. Joe dedicated himself to looking after and caring for Sinead. He offered unwavering commitment to the Louth community and to the remarkable care of Sinead.

Joe has been an integral part of the Louth branch for the past 10 years, tirelessly organising the Ardee Flag Day every year. Whenever assistance is required, Joe is always there lending a helping hand. He goes above and beyond by arranging an annual church gate collection and a table quiz, not only to raise funds but also to create an enjoyable evening for everyone involved.

For years he has been the primary caregiver for Sinead, taking care of her every need. From cooking and laundry to grocery shopping and any other tasks that arise, Joe has shouldered the responsibility with unwavering dedication. It is worth noting that Joe made the courageous decision to marry Sinead just three days after her MS diagnosis demonstrating his unwavering love and commitment over 30 years. Joe has supported Sinead through her battles with both MS and cancer. Joe's quiet presence in the background speaks volumes about his humility and genuine care for others.

## Volunteer of the Year

### Mary P. McCaffrey

*Nominated by Lorna Callaghan, Monaghan Branch*



2023 marks 50 years that Mary has been a volunteer with the Monaghan branch. Throughout that time, she has held a variety of the officer roles and is currently Branch Secretary. Mary always brings enthusiasm, exemplary organisational skills, empathy and wholehearted commitment to her roles. Her nursing and hospital administration experience has served the Branch well. She is conscientious and takes her responsibilities seriously, always putting the welfare of people with MS in Monaghan first. Mary has a strong understanding of how the Branch and the Society function, and her vast experience brings a very calm and steady approach to any issues the Branch encounters. Mary is also very social and always willing to participant and lend a hand during their events. She can be relied on to bring her wealth of knowledge to branch meetings and gives sound advice. No matter what question is asked, Mary is able to give an informed response that is always in the best interests of the people with MS that the Branch serves.



**An Roinn Tithíochta, Pleanála,  
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