

Annual report 2005

I am very pleased to report another year of good all round progress. Membership increased, now covering 22 neurology conditions and 15 charitable groups. Grants were received from the EBM Trust, and Penny in the Pound Trust for our specialist nurse project, from Berkshire Community Foundation for our conference, from Newbury Building Society for Newsletter costs and from Vodafone Foundation towards general costs. We remain comfortably solvent, helped by a profit from our conference, 'Action in neuro-rehabilitation', the highlight of our year and a great education event.

We operate in an environment of reorganisation of the NHS PCT structure and reducing likelihood of the formation of a local Care Trust, uncertainties that make it difficult to plan. Our dossier of health and social care priorities is well developed and is regularly promoted. We continue to challenge the poor resources available to provide the many services needed by neurology patients. We remain disappointed by the lack of preventive measures and therapies available for those we represent. However we are pleased that the local NHS Chronic Disease Collaborative initiative has now turned its attention to neurology, and look forward to making some input. Our presence on the Patient Panel of the Royal Berks' Hospital Trust allowed us to register a number of proposals to the Trust, although this Panel needs to develop more momentum. The reduction in the number of neuro-rehabilitation beds at the Trust was managed in a most unsatisfactory manner and the Trust Boards' explanation lacked content and is a worrying episode as the Trust attempts to secure Foundation status. Following our considerable contributions into the development of the Department of Health's National Service Framework for Long Term Conditions we welcome its publication and continue to input through our seat on the NSF Research Strategy Group. We continue to challenge the way that the Healthcare Commission's audit process has a damaging effect on NHS services for neurology patients.

Our 2005 conference was of the highest quality and attracted a good audience and excellent reviews. Thanks to Fred Davison and his team and to Professor Collin and Penny Lilley for their professional guidance. The post of West of Berkshire Nurse for Rare and Complex Neurology finally has been created. We have secured guarantees for the funding and aim to cover the guarantors' offers as quickly as possible. This pioneering post will be funded and monitored for two years. We have demonstrated the need for a hydrotherapy pool in Newbury and found a willing funding partner for the capital, although this project requires much further effort to bring to completion. We are members of the West Berkshire Active Therapies Partnership, a project intended to develop brain therapy provision locally.

It is pleasing to note that professionals continue to consult with us on a regular basis. Our open meetings remain useful forums for exchanges with professionals from health and social care. We again observed at several PCT Board meetings. We continue to submit questions to these Boards and comment on their proposals. We strengthened our contacts with the Thames Valley Strategic Health Authority, and welcome its moves to establish a regional Neuroscience Network, in which we aim to be fully involved. We have established a Partnership of Alliances with the Buckinghamshire Neurological Alliance and continue to work closely with West Berkshire Disability Alliance. We continue to share with the few other regional Neurological Alliances and to work with the national Neurological Alliance. Our Website attracts increasing interest and is an excellent source of information.

Molly Davison and Chreanne Montgomery-Smith both rejoined the Executive Committee, now 12 strong. My thanks go to our President and Patrons, to those who fund us, to the Executive Committee and to the Conference Team, for their hard and effective work throughout the year, and to everyone else I may not have mentioned but who has helped us to have another excellent year.