

Chairman's Annual Report for 2016

This is our seventeenth AGM and we have had another good year, enjoying a supportive membership due to the relevance of the meetings we hold and our needs-orientated research that informs the way we represent unmet neurological needs. Our meetings generated many productive exchanges with guests from local health and social care decision-makers.

This year we held one focus group, on 'Caring for someone with a neurological condition'. Before the end of 2016 will have held two further focus groups; on 'Living with a rare neurological condition' and on 'Technology and the over-75s' respectively. We are most grateful to Healthwatch West Berkshire for sponsoring this important local research.

In May we provided our seventh accredited conference, working with Dr Faraz Jeddi, our clinical advisor. Professor Derick Wade was our keynote speaker and we showcased West Berkshire Therapy Centre. The conference explored 'The relationship between primary, secondary and tertiary neurological care'. We look forward to our eighth conference in 2018.

As principal backer of West Berkshire Therapy Centre, we are delighted that 250 individual exercise sessions are being taken up each week, helping disabled people to exercise safely using power-assisted technology. The positive impact on individuals affected by neurological conditions is very clear, in terms of improved mobility, ability to carry out tasks of daily living, improved psychological outlook and better weight management. We are working closely with the Enham Trust near Andover on their plans to replicate the concept in Hampshire.

Distribution of Carer's Respite Grants continues. We have now made over 40 such awards. We are most grateful to Berkshire Community Foundation for allocating us these funds. Separately, we have been pleased to support local pain consultant Dr Deepak Ravindran, to help fund an App that will help junior hospital doctors to manage their clients' pain better. This App is being developed in Reading but has the potential to help patients around the planet.

The commissioning of the services needed by neurology patients locally is being improved systematically in NHS Berkshire West. We contribute to this with a seat on the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group Federation's Long Term Conditions Board and also on one of its key sub groups, the Neurology Steering Group. Care pathways for several neurological conditions have been agreed, meaning that the referral routes whereby patients get to see the most appropriate clinician are becoming more streamlined and consistent. We look forward to the day when all neurology patients receive a prompt and accurate diagnosis and more consistent service as these improvements take wider hold. We also have a seat on the Thames Valley Neurological Strategic Clinical Network, where, in contrast, progress has been very slow, and the potential to share good practice across the region is not being realised.

We continue to work with West Berkshire Disability Alliance, the Independent Living Network, the Patient Panel and others where opportunities arise, contributing to a constructive dialogue with the three local Unitary Authorities of Berkshire West about social care provision. Unfortunately, local Social Care service quality and quantity are declining, due to lack of adequate funding. In contrast, we funded all of our activities this year without difficulty and our reserves remain strong. Our executive has been 8-strong through most of the year, although we remain in need of a Secretary. After 14 years of service, Chreanne Montgomery Smith stood down during the year and, after 18 years as a Trustee, John Holt is also standing down. The Trustees join me in thanking both for their service and major contributions to the growth and success of the Alliance. I would like to thank everyone on the committee for their effective teamwork and dedication and thank our Patron, Christine Collin, for her longstanding support.

Irene Waters (Chairman)

29th September 2016