

Chairman's Annual Report for 2015

This is our sixteenth AGM and we have had another very good year. At long last the agenda for commissioning the services needed by neurology patients locally is being discussed systematically within the NHS. We contribute to this strongly, with a seat on the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group Federation's Long Term Conditions Board and also on one of its sub groups, the Neurology Steering Group. Care pathways that previously were more imaginary than real are now being properly defined and the referral routes whereby patients get to see the most appropriate clinician are in the process of being streamlined. We look forward to neurology patients receiving a more accurate diagnosis and more consistent service as other changes now under discussion take hold. We look forward to the time when local developments now taking place, specific to epilepsy, ME/Chronic Fatigue, headache and MRI scanning, will provide lessons that will roll out quickly to benefit all patients.

We also have a seat on the Thames Valley Neurological Strategic Clinical Network, where, in contrast, progress has been slower, and the potential to share good practice across the region is not yet being realised.

We continue to enjoy a loyal and supportive membership. This is due to the relevance of the meetings we hold and our needs-orientated research that informs the way we represent neurological patients and carers. At our open meetings we have had some excellent exchanges with guest speakers from both health and social care and also devoted one meeting to sharing best practice within the local neurological sector. We held a focus group on 'living with migraine and headache', specifically to inform a local NHS development project. Recently we held a focus group on 'My experiences of being diagnosed with a long term neurological condition', for those given a diagnosis within the last 18 months, again specifically to inform local NHS service developments.

Preparations for our 2016 conference are going well. Chris Horner has joined us to drive the team, and Dr Faraz Jeddi continues as our clinical advisor. The Arlington Arts Centre is booked for 3rd May and we are delighted that Professor Derick Wade will be our keynote speaker. The conference will explore 'the relationship between primary, secondary and tertiary neurological care' and will provide education credits

We are proud to be the principal backer of West Berkshire Therapy Centre, which has grown remarkably, already is helping over 200 people a week to exercise safely using power-assisted technology. The positive impact on individuals affected by neurological conditions is very clear, in terms of mobility, ability to carry out tasks of daily living, psychological outlook and weight management. We were delighted to be approved to distribute carers grants by Berkshire Community Foundation and have helped about thirty carers so far to be able to take a break from their caring roles. We continue to work with West Berkshire Disability Alliance, the Independent Living Network, Patient Panel and others wherever opportunities arise, helping to maintain a dialogue with the three local Unitary Authorities, particularly with West Berkshire. We funded all our activities this year without any need for fund raising and our reserves are strong. Our executive remained 8-strong through the year, although we are in need of a Secretary. I thank everyone on the committee for their effective teamwork and dedication and thank our Patrons for their longstanding support.

Irene Waters (Chairman)

17th September 2015