

One Voice

NMC Physio Client Newsletter
Spring 2006 - Edition 3

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NMC BUILDING WORK
In April, building work is due to start at The NMC. The training department is moving into the Design area and what is currently the training department office will become Matthew's new office. The plans (before and after) are on display at the NMC. Clearly, the Centre will do all it can to minimise disruption to clients and employees during the building work. The end result will be worth it!

NMC STAFF NEWS UPDATE

In January, the NMC welcomed three new recruits. Alan Mottram became Sales Manager of NMC Design. With a background in print and design, Alan works three days a week. We also have two new members of the fundraising team. Jessica Kingsley-Jones is our new Events Manager. Her most recent role was with Chester City Council's Tourism Development Unit. Katia Vicini has joined as our Community Development Officer, a new role designed to develop links with local groups and individuals. Katia was previously a Development Officer in Fundraising for The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy. We extend a warm welcome to each of them.

PHYSIO TEAM UPDATE

Helping Others

During December, members of the NMC team de-cluttered the physio area in order to create more space and privacy together with an "active work area" for client treatments. In doing so, several electric wheelchairs that were no longer needed by the NMC (but were far too good to be thrown away) were found a new lease of life. They were sent onto Romania. Lifeline Romania is a Christian charity based in Southport aimed at helping the poor and disadvantaged in Romania to improve their opportunities in life. Matthew explained that The NMC are always fundraising for our own charity, so it was great to be able to give something back.

Stretching and Exercising

There is now an "active work area" in the physiotherapy dept for resisted exercises. The idea is that some of the stretches and exercises that we are taught at the Centre can be done at home and incorporated into daily living with minimal assistance needed. If you would like to try some resisted exercises please chat to any member of the physio team.

Cough Assist Machine

The physio department have received funding to buy a "Cough Assist Machine". The team are targeting those clients who would most benefit. Watch this space!

Hoists and Scales

The hoists in the Centre are being upgraded so that all clients are able to use them. A new set of scales have been purchased at a cost of just over £500. These can be clipped on to any hoist which means that clients have minimal disruption when being weighed.

Hydrotherapy at Hebden

The Hydrotherapy sessions at Hebden Green are fully operational again and the new changing rooms are proving to be more accessible for all clients. There are still concerns about grab rails and seating whilst showering but these issues are being addressed.

OUT AND ABOUT

Two trusts that come with a personal recommendation are:

www.wheelyboats.org

www.lyneal-trust.org.uk

Others include-

www.snowdonrailway.co.uk

WALKING FOR ALL

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council offer a varied programme of walks for families, people with a disability, walkers and non-walkers. All walk routes are on good paths and mainly on a firm surface. Each walk is led by a trained leader and a back leader makes sure no-one gets left behind. For further information about the walks and suitability for wheelchair and pushchair users please telephone Allison Lewis on 0151 356 6892 or allison.lewis@epnbc.gov.uk

NEED 2 CHAT?

Do you sometimes feel a bit down in the dumps? Need to get something off your chest? In addition to having each other at The Centre please also remember that Heather (in on Tuesdays and Thursdays), although not qualified as a counsellor is undergoing a counselling course and has a very good listening ear. Heather may not have all the answers to your problems but she will listen and point you in the right direction. Remember that a problem shared is a problem halved.

FEEL GOOD FACTOR

The NMC are currently looking at the types of additional services and treatments that could help clients in their daily lives. Initial thoughts include relaxation and pain relief through alternative therapies such as Reflexology, Massage, Reikki, and Acupuncture. Do you know somebody who practises in any of these areas? Would they be willing to donate some of their time to the Centre? Would you be interested in a Pamper Day at The NMC, where you could try some of these treatments? Would a weekday /weekend suit you best? Please let me have your thoughts/ideas. Also, keep an eye out for further info on this subject at The NMC.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES



Interview with Dan Cundall,
Head of Design at The NMC

Dan currently uses a powered wheelchair but prior to this had used a manual wheelchair.

Dan has been using a wheelchair for several years now. He explained that before this he was mobile and on his feet but suddenly became aware that he was falling a lot, often several times a day. It was at this point that he realised it was becoming a health and safety issue and something had to be done. After much deliberation, Dan agreed to use a wheelchair to help him get out and about. At the time he was at college so it was important for his image that he could do the things his mates did, including going to the pub for the odd drink or two! Unfortunately Dan did not have his powered chair then but with the help of his friends he has fond memories of his college days!

Dan explained that when he changed from using a manual wheelchair to a powered one he suddenly felt he had this sense of freedom and a new lease of life. He was no longer reliant on someone pushing him and therefore didn't need help all of the time. He was now able to manoeuvre his own chair and go where he wanted to go. He felt 'in control'. It made him realise what he had been missing out on. For example he was now able to take the dog for a walk.

Dan found that it requires a huge psychological adjustment from being on your feet to realising that you need a wheelchair to get about. However, as Dan found it gave him increasing independence, particularly when he went into his powered chair. It's worth remembering that as your body loses strength there are adaptations and gadgets that can be put onto your chair to help you.

Sometimes it is hard to give in to your body's increasing frailty but it need not be the end of the world. Suddenly you have a new lease of life. Remember, as one door closes, another opens.....

BUYING A WHEELCHAIR

Buying a wheelchair is a huge and long term investment. It is therefore important that you have all the correct and up to date information to hand to enable you to make the most informed decision. It is also worth speaking to friends and colleagues who use a wheelchair as they have first hand experience and that is priceless. Another factor to remember is that the wheelchair must be suitable for your lifestyle.

The following guidelines should help you through the maze:

Seating. The surface should be firm enough to provide support for the pelvis and keep it level. Backrests and seat should be adjustable and at the right angle. You may need a high back with a substantial headrest or a slim line low-backed chair. You will also need to ensure that the turning circle is tight enough and that you are able to navigate your home easily enough. Headrests are recommended if you need additional head support.

Accessible Controls. It is important that you can maintain an upright position and do not need to lean either towards or away from the wheels or control, to gain the correct leverage.

Weight of the chair. A titanium or aluminium frame is lightweight and strong but likely to be more costly than a steel-framed chair.

Width of the chair. You need to ensure that the chair can fit through a standard doorway.

Tyres. Gel-filled tyres last longer than ordinary air-filled tyres as they do-not puncture although they are more costly.

Footrests and Armrests. Footrests and arm rests can be fixed or moveable. With special modification it is possible to have electrically retractable footrests.

Aesthetics. Aesthetic features are important too. There's lots of choice in terms of design and colour. You can really personalise your chair and express your personality with the great selection of funky wheel covers, hand control covers and seating covers. Remember that you can still have "street cred" in your chair.

Standing Facility. Some power chairs allow the user to fully stand up.

Battery. A battery that is easier to lift off the chair will make folding it much easier.

Try before you Buy. It is advisable to test drive the wheelchair before you buy and preferably in the areas that you will use the chair ie: along the high street, in your own home, at your place of work.

Talk to Other Wheelchair Users. They have lots of knowledge and practical experience about the good and bad points about the chairs they use now and those they have used in the past. It is best to get as much advice and information as possible.

User Independence. Manual chairs require a person to push the wheelchair user whereas in a powered chair the user can be more independent and feel "in control".

Cost versus features. Power chairs are more costly than their powered alternative but have many more features.

Indoor / Outdoor Wheelchairs. These chairs are for primary use indoors but can be used outdoors. These chairs tend to be bigger.

Transporting your wheelchair. You need to consider the space in your vehicle and ease of loading for a wheelchair. For manual wheelchairs the chair, in its entirety, or as separate parts should be light enough to lift into a car with ease. When travelling with a power chair it's a good idea to travel in it and consider buying a van to transport it. However, to be able to drive from your chair is an expensive option so the costs would need to be taken into account. For travelling you would need to have headrests and proper clamping. Headrests are essential for anyone travelling in a wheelchair in a van/minibus to guard against whiplash injury.

How do I pay for a wheelchair?

Comfort is often compromised because of the lack of funds to buy the most comfortable chair. Possible sources of funding include:-

- **Via The NHS.** The NHS Wheelchair Service provides wheelchairs on long term loan but you need to be aware that although they are free they have a very limited choice. Some health authorities only deal with manual wheelchairs, whilst others will help fund a power indoor / outdoor wheelchair. Some powered chairs are very costly so the criteria for obtaining funding via the NHS are very strict. Should you be provided with a chair from the NHS, it remains the property of the NHS and they are responsible for any repairs or services that the wheelchair needs. You can also obtain cushions for your wheelchair up to the value of £400 free of charge To check your eligibility for a wheelchair you would need to be referred by a doctor or therapist and undergo an assessment.
- **Via Access to Work.** A Government Scheme, you can access via Job Centre Plus, which aids disabled people into work. Any equipment that is seen to help a person whilst in work can be funded via the scheme. If you apply to the scheme within 6 weeks of starting a job then the Government scheme will cover all costs. However, if you apply having been in your job for over six weeks, the employer pays the first £200 and will receive 20% of the total bill for equipment to help the person access his/her place of work. This could be used to help fund gadgets such as page turners, to fund support workers and/or to help with transport costs.
- **Via your local Education Department of your local council.** They can provide equipment to help a disabled person through school or college, if it will aid their education. Again you will need to be assessed.
- **Via Motability.** Tel: 0845 456 4566 or visit www.motability.co.uk
- **Other sources of funding** - Charities, Rotary Clubs, Golf Clubs. These organisations welcome the opportunity to fund such purchases.

For wheelchair pneumatic tyres, the Innovations tyre repair cartridge from Wiggle costs just £2.99. Visit www.wiggle.co.uk

Manual versus Powered?

- Manual chairs are cheaper than their powered alternative.
- Powered chairs offer the user greater independence.
- Manual chairs are much lighter than powered chairs.
- Powered chairs have limitless features in terms of seating and standing options and as such they are able to satisfy a range of needs. They enable the user to remain as independent as possible.
- Need to consider transportation. For a powered chair an existing vehicle may need to be adapted to accommodate the chair. Alternatively, you may have to consider purchasing a new vehicle.

In summary, things to remember before you buy.

- Talk to other wheelchair users.
- Try before you buy.
- Manual versus electric wheelchair?
- Consider both the width and weight of the chair.
- Cost versus features.
- Transporting your chair.
- Electric versus manual.
- Shop around to get the best deal.

Further Information

- www.muscular dystrophy.org/caresupportequipmentandwheelchairs.html
- For independent clinical advice before purchasing a wheelchair? Call The Clinical Wheelchair Specialists on 0870 894 3357 or visit www.cwsl.co.uk or e.mail posture@cwsl.co.uk
- For contact details of major manufacturers and dealers call: Disabled Living Foundation Helpline: 0845 130 9177 or log onto www.dlf.org.uk
- For up to date products visit Naidex and The Motability Roadshow.

VAT Exemption

Most disabled people are exempt from paying VAT on items and equipment that will improve their quality of life. However, you will need to complete a VAT Exemption form (Notice 701/7) available from HM Customs Tel: 0845 010 9000

Products and gadgets found in specialised catalogues aimed at making daily tasks more manageable for those of us with a disability are often very expensive. Sometimes it is possible to find a suitable alternative in the high street at a fraction of the cost. It does mean shopping around but with the use of the internet it's much easier. Argos for example now have a section in their catalogue on Living Aids. Chemists often have their own catalogues of living products and the supermarkets are another good outlet. If you have found a product or gadget particularly useful please let me know.

NAIDEX - 25TH - 27TH April,
NEC Birmingham
Homecare, Disability and
Rehabilitation Event. Free Entry.
For further information and to
pre-register visit
www.naidex.co.uk or tel 0870
429 4428

For tickets to the following events
please see Jess in Fundraising.

Ladies Luncheon, 17th May
2006

Join us at the beautiful Bridge
Hotel, Prestbury where our guest
speaker, David Mitchell the
renowned Town Crier for Chester
City Centre will entertain you
whilst you enjoy a two course
lunch. Tickets priced at £15.

Browns of Chester Beauty
Event, 8th June, 2006

Join us at Browns of Chester for a
special pampering evening
especially for ladies. During the
evening ladies will have
demonstrations by the leading
beauty houses and opportunities to
test out the new seasons colours
and products in the health and
beauty department. Each lady will
receive a free goody bag and a
complimentary glass of wine.
Tickets priced at £5.00.

Ladies Luncheon, 29th June
2006

Join us at Crewe Hall Hotel for a
wonderful two course luncheon
followed by an historical fashion
show by Notty Hornblower of
Hope House Costume Museum.
Renowned fashion expert Notty
Hornblower will guide you
through the fashion ages with
outfits and accessories dating
back from 1790 whilst you enjoy
an exquisite and leisurely lunch.
Tickets priced at £15.

Easy grip cooking utensils & gadgets

OXO Good Grips offer an extensive range of products that are easy to grip, ideal for those of us with weak hand function. Reasonably priced and available in some high street stores including KITCH 'N' SYNC. For more info visit www.oxo.com.

Lighten the load.....

Make light of your daily tasks by thinking about the weight of the products that you are having to lift eg: kettles, irons, hairdryers etc. If you are replacing your products remember where possible to "try before you buy". Some kettles are really heavy and that's before you've even put any water in them. Travel alternatives are often smaller and much lighter. Also think about a "sit down" ironing board, available from most high street stores.

"SNAP ON"

Fed up with you sticks / crutches falling down? "SNAP ON" allows safe attachment to the user's clothing, with "plates" to park the stick or crutch in strategic areas in/outside the home. For further information visit www.walkeze.co.uk

SAFE MOTORING

Mobility Atlas For Disabled Motorists

"The Gowrings Mobility UK Road Atlas" incorporates useful information for disabled people including parking for Blue Badge holders, accessible car parks and petrol stations, tourist information, Shopmobility locations, accessible beaches, toilets and accomodation. Priced at £12 (RRP£12.99). To order a copy call 0845 608 8020. I spoke to Julie who was most helpful.

Car Tax

For those of you on the Motability Scheme, a recent change to the car tax procedure means that your new Tax Disc is automatically sent to your home address before your old one has run out. In theory this is great as it eliminates the need to go the post office, and it should arrive in good time before the old one has expired. However a word of warning. When parked in Chester in January I returned to my car to find an "advice notice" placed on my windscreen, with reference to my car tax. When I looked at my disc it had Nov'05 on it! I immediately contacted Motability who accepted full responsibility for not having sent me a replacement tax disc. They were most apologetic and very friendly. Thankfully the new disc came through fairly quickly in the post. My advice would be that just before your car tax expires it would be worth ringing Motability just to confirm that you are in the system and that your new disc is on its way.

Collection Tins

Do you have a local shop, pub, restaurant, gym that would be happy to have an NMC Collection Tin? A great way to collect money but also raise awareness about The NMC, For further info please see Katia in Fundraising.

BIRD TABLES AND NESTING BOXES

With Spring here why not encourage the birds to your garden? A pastime we can all enjoy. Ken Hester, a physio client of the NMC is very much aware of the help the Centre provides. To help raise funds for the Centre's work he now spends much of his time making Bird Tables and Nesting Boxes. If you are interested in helping Ken with his fundraising, he will make you a Bird Table or Nesting box in return for a voluntary donation to The NMC. They make an ideal present, suitable for all occasions whether it be for a birthday, retirement, or Easter. Ken has already raised £1200 for The NMC. The quality of his work speaks for itself. For more information please call Ken on 0151 632 1029.

NMC Design

This year the Design Team celebrates its fifteenth birthday. Please help us celebrate by passing on our details to your family and friends. NMC Design is a commercial organisation that can design and produce all your stationery requirements, promotional items (mugs, pens, key rings) and publicity material in an efficient and friendly manner. Why not give us the opportunity to quote? Would you like some samples of our work? Please contact Dan Cundall on 01606 863464.

FINALLYAN NMC WEDDING BELLE..

In May, Karen Rush, a physio client and design team member at The NMC is getting married. Karen has agreed to put together an article about her wedding experience. We wish Karen and Alan all the best for their special day and look forward to hearing all about it in the Summer Edition of One Voice.

FORTHCOMING EDITION

Next issue Summer 2006 to include a wedding review, buying a scooter, Gary Little's outdoor challenge.....

...UNTIL NEXT TIME... YOUR SUGGESTIONS PLEASE!

You matter, the NMC needs YOU. Do you have an idea or suggestion about the NMC that you wish to share with us? It could be a fundraising idea, an opportunity for our design team, a thought about your physio appointment, the building, your swimming session, events, parkinganything, large or small that is important to you. The NMC don't claim to get it right all of the time, so if there's something we are not getting right please tell us and we can look into it. Please put your comments on a card (available at the NMC) and place in the Suggestions Box. The first 10 suggestions will be placed in a hat and the first drawn will receive a prize. Suggestions from employees, clients, families and friends.....all welcome

Please drop me a line by post to the NMC e.mail andrea@nmcentre.com telephone 01606 861733.

shop for less and support



NMC WEBSHOP

Our webshop www.buy.at/nmc has been a great success for the Centre. So far it has earned us £332 in commission. Please pass on the details to your friends and family. Remember, the more you shop the more we earn! Thank you.

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FROM THE EDITOR

As the bulbs start to appear and new life begins, the nights draw out and the weather begins to get warmer Spring is finally on its way. We can all come out of hibernation, discard those thermals and look forward to a bright year ahead.

Since the last newsletter, these past few months have once again seen some highs and also some lows. The Christmas break was enjoyable and it was great to spend time with my husband and children. However, without three weeks of physiotherapy and hydrotherapy, my body suffered and ached most days. I almost seized up. I know keeping active helps minimise aches and pains but getting out and about was difficult not only because I am fragile on my feet but also the weather was cold, the pavements icy and I was scared of falling. The holidays are great but the downside is that they are a constant reminder of what you cannot do. You sometimes feel alienated from your family's activities. That for me is the hardest part of living with a progressive disability and at times it does wear you down.

On a positive note, after a couple of physiotherapy and hydrotherapy sessions the aches and pains had reduced significantly, my head felt clearer and the freedom of being in the warm water at hydrotherapy sessions was heaven! Slowly, my body came alive again. It seems that you do-not realise the benefits that regular physiotherapy and hydrotherapy have on your body until you stop having it. It begs the question, Where would we be without the NMC?

I have enjoyed ten-pin bowling with my family, which really was great fun. It was very disabled-friendly, as I used a platform. My kids placed the ball on the platform and I just had to roll it on to the bowling alley. An ideal activity for all ages and abilities. I had been worried about going but came home feeling pleased that were still activities that I could participate and share in.

Like you, I am looking forward to the longer days, the warmer weather, spending more time outside, watching the bulbs grow and to wearing fewer layers of clothing! My 6 year old daughter wrote a few words about what Spring meant to her. I would like to share them with you.

"...All the trees leaves and buds. All animals come into the world. What a lovely time of the year. My fave season."

Happy reading, **Andrea**