Winter 2020

NMC NEWS

Welcome

to NMC's Winter News! We hope that you are all keeping safe and well in these strange times.

Well, what a year for NMC to turn 30! At the start of 2020, we were very much looking forward to a celebratory birthday party in our Meadow, tons of new activities and of course our headline events; Live in the Park at Arley Hall and The Spirit of Christmas at Chester Cathedral.

Sadly, our fundraising events have been postponed to 2021 but we are being resourceful in how we can raise money during these uncertain times, and have been in absolute awe of the creativity and generosity of our wonderful supporters and volunteers – a huge, heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you for your unwavering devotion to NMC.

We'll be dedicating this Newsletter to providing you with the highlights of life at NMC in lockdown and thanking as many people within our community as we can fit on the pages!

We also very much look forward to raising a glass of fizz with many of you at Virtual Spirit of Christmas from 27th November onwards – details inside.

The Fundraising Team

Inside: Unimaginable Summer • Lockdown Fundraising • Virtual Spirit of Christmas

The Unimaginable Summer of 2020...

When we all went to bed after a glass of bubbly last New Year's Eve we were, as always full of good intentions, bold plans and great hope and optimism for 2020.

Never in our most outlandish dreams did anyone imagine that 2020 would unfold in the way it has.

NMC had enjoyed an extraordinarily successful 2019. There were so many new people joining our community, so much energy and vibrancy and vitality.

Our finances were strong and our levels of confidence and optimism for 2020 and beyond were high. It seems a lifetime ago when the Centre was buzzing with the excitement of our monthly Welcome Days, Connect Up was the focus for regular social gatherings, the car park was full to overflowing and Physio was routinely seeing well over 300 people a week for treatment.

Then overnight pretty much everything stopped EXCEPT...

The love, warmth, friendship, expertise, determination, skill and sense of close community! We had all that in abundance and it has enabled us to remain optimistic and realistic about the shape of NMC in months and years to come.

The period of the pandemic crisis has broadly been split into 3 phases at NMC It's important to stress that the Centre has stayed open throughout.

Matthew Lanham
Chief Executive

Our 3 phases

1. Keeping in touch, providing advice & urgent help. As a whole staff team we took responsibility for keeping close and regular contact with designated groups within our community. We ran an advice line with a skeleton staff crew in the Centre, helping people to process the shock of lockdown and dealing with urgent practical problems.

Feedback during this phase was immensely positive. We helped hundreds of people; many were lonely, frightened and experiencing aches and pains that inevitably resulted from the curb on physical hands-on treatment at the Centre.

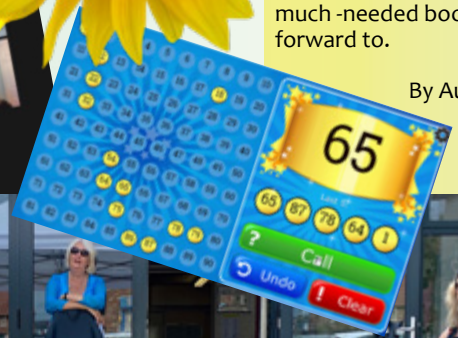
2. Enabling virtual & real social connections An extraordinary outpouring of desire to connect and have a laugh drove a vibrant online social media group that reached out to hundreds of the NMC community.

There were online bingo evenings, book clubs and crossword sessions that caught the mood perfectly and gave many people a much -needed boost and something to look forward to.

By August we were ready to start welcoming people back in small social groups of 5 in the meadow. The weather was glorious and these weeks were a lovely time at NMC. Old friends reunited, the gardens and grounds looked amazing with the fabulous display of sunflowers forming a "wow moment" for all our visitors.

3. Physiotherapy & exercise. From the beginning of lockdown the Physios started doing a weekly online exercise class, which proved massively popular and has continued ever since. In July we completed over 400 reassessments online using Zoom. These sessions kept people on track and helped others respond to changes and challenges. During September we resumed hands on Physio for over 100 individuals – far less than pre-pandemic levels, but at least we were getting back to what we do best. The arrangements are strict and safe for staff and patients.

My warmest thanks to all our loyal and lovely supporters, volunteers, staff and fantastic community. You've all played a part in getting us through the crisis to this point. NMC is strongly placed to cope with, thrive on and bounce back from all these challenges and obstacles. There are more tough months ahead but one thing is crystal clear; our work is needed like never before. Our role in people's lives has never been more clearly demonstrated, so we have to get through this and we will.



Thank you!

- **NMC Craft Club** and all volunteers who have made face coverings to raise funds for NMC – we have received over **£2,600** in sales so far!
- **Rod and Audrey Birchall** and their extremely generous friends, for their donation of **£1270** in lieu of their annual Garden Party.
- **Blythe Waters Fisheries** for donating **£420**
- **Fi Anderson** for raising **£100** from a virtual Disney Singalong event, and over £100 from a 'name the teddy bear' competition
- **Sophie Webber** for taking on the Bristol 10k and raising over **£700**
- **The Inner Wheel Club of Nantwich** for their donation of **£2000**
- **Jake Hudson** for raising over **£450** from his challenge to watch all 26 James Bond films in 26 days
- **Gemma Ainscough** and her parents for raising **£100** in lieu of anniversary gifts

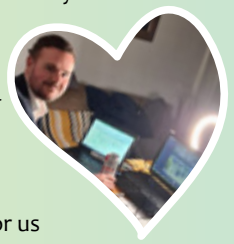
We are always completely in awe of all our incredible community for their devotion and generosity, but even more so during the past 6 months. From head shaving, virtual sing-a-longs and birthday celebrations to socially distanced half marathons and mask making – our loyal supporters have done it all.

There are far too many people to mention individually, but here are some lockdown fundraising highlights from 2020.

Enormous thanks to everyone that has supported us!

- **Macclesfield Town Ladies U10s,** who walked / ran / hiked / cycled the distance to Wembley! Raised over **£330**

- The wonderful **Pat McWilliams** for continuing to make her beautiful, hand painted crafts throughout Lockdown. Many items can be found on sale in our Virtual Christmas Craft Fayre
- **Charlie Bester** celebrated his birthday lockdown-style with a Virtual Race Night with his friends, raising an amazing **£800** for us



- **Lorraine Woolley** for sharing her story to honour our 30th birthday and raising over **£3,500**!
- We held a **virtual Easter Raffle,** which attracted huge support from our chocolate-loving community and raised over **£500**
- **Everyone that has donated to NMC in lieu of birthday gifts**
- **Georgie Paling** for not letting the cancellation of the Hackney half stop her running – she ran a half marathon around her home village instead and raised **£680**
- **Oliver Preston** and his family for donating **£500** from returned school fees and Oliver's own personal savings!
- **Jake Styles** for spending his 21st Birthday doing a half marathon and raising over **£760** to date
- **Carrie Aimes** and friends took on the Welsh 3000s challenge, raising over **£1030**!
- **Tom Williams** for completing a 'Mega Everest' Cycle challenge, climbing 8848 metres on his bike in just one day, raising in excess of **£1360** for NMC!
- **Debbie Richardson** for watering our plants and flowers in our outdoor spaces throughout lockdown
- **All 19 participants** for taking on our virtual 3 peaks challenge and raising over **£2000** between them

- **Alison Morgan** for 'braving the shav and raised **£260**!

- **Morrisons PLC** for an item of kit for our physiotherapy department
- **Billy and John Brown** for taking on a 'Big Bike Ride' and raising over **£300**
- **Crystal Legal Services** for choosing to support NMC
- **Toni Abram** for her fantastic gardening blog and for being the driving force behind our 'Gardening Tuesdays'. Toni is leaving NMC to continue her studies – we wish her the very best of luck
- **All the volunteers involved with Live in the House** – we raised over **£1000**!

- **Everyone who entered or supported our Virtual Dog Show,** which attracted 159 entries and raised over **£350**
- **John Critchlow** for raising an amazing **£253** through collection tins
- **Alex Hutson** for cycling a whopping 100km and raising **£410** for us

Live in The ~~Park~~ HOUSE!

In the absence of our annual tribute show Live in the Park at Arley Hall, our youth panel 'NMC Gamechangers' decided to recruit talent and creativity amongst our supporters and friends to present a virtual festival instead. The aim was to engage with our community, provide some much-needed lockdown entertainment, have fun and raise money!

Live in the House took place on Saturday 22nd August, bringing together a wide range of talents including music, comedy, acting and magic. The result was a varied, vibrant and enjoyable event, with each act introduced by our wonderful President, Matthew Kelly. All filming was superbly edited by Mark Woolley and Mark Chapman, and the result was a professional collaboration from our skilled group of young people, led by Transition Officer Lorraine Woolley. The event was streamed to our website, which was expertly put together by our website technician Jake Hudson.

Much of the evening was very interactive, with a quiz, a fancy dress competition and Zoom tents allowing the opportunity to socialise and have fun! This went down really well with the attendees, many of whom had been shielding and really missing the NMC family. The event culminated with the very popular Brightside Radio show, with presenting duo Mark and Lorraine Woolley.

Enormous thanks to Matthew Kelly, for giving up his time to support this groundbreaking NMC event, all the organisers, performers, presenters, Zoom Tent hosts and of course everyone who bought a ticket in support of our very first virtual festival – we raised over £1000!

Lockdown Fundraising

We began 2020 with a flurry of fundraising activities, the highlights being our February Gin Tasting with Chester Beer and Wine at Hoole Community Centre, followed by our much-loved annual Quiz Night at the Grange Junior School at the beginning of March. By the end of March, events were cancelled one by one. 30th birthday celebrations were put on hold. But, we launched a series of Virtual events instead! Huge thanks to everyone that supported these – here are the highlights:

In April, we celebrated Easter with a virtual raffle, raising over £500, and celebrated a very special lockdown 30th birthday with a virtual 'Big Birthday Quiz', which raised over £1000!

June and July saw us playing Bingo virtually – enormous thank you to Sarah Lalieu for being our bingo caller extraordinaire and to our technical guru Katherine Avery for making these events possible.

Our Virtual Dog Show at the beginning of August over Facebook saw 159 furry friends competing for a place on the podium and to get their paws on prizes. We were overwhelmed by the support for this event, which raised over £350!

We launched a Virtual 3 Peaks Challenge, encouraging people to complete the distance of the highest 3 mountains in the UK (a total of over 72,000 steps!) on foot, by bike, trike or pedals within 30 days to celebrate our 30th year. Our 19 participants raised over £2000 between them!

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

At NMC, we have a big focus on young people and enabling the best journey to independent adulthood, and our Transition Officer Lorraine Woolley is worthy of special mention during this period. She enthused, energised and enabled practical opportunities for young people to grow and develop as young adults. The time of lockdown was not wasted!

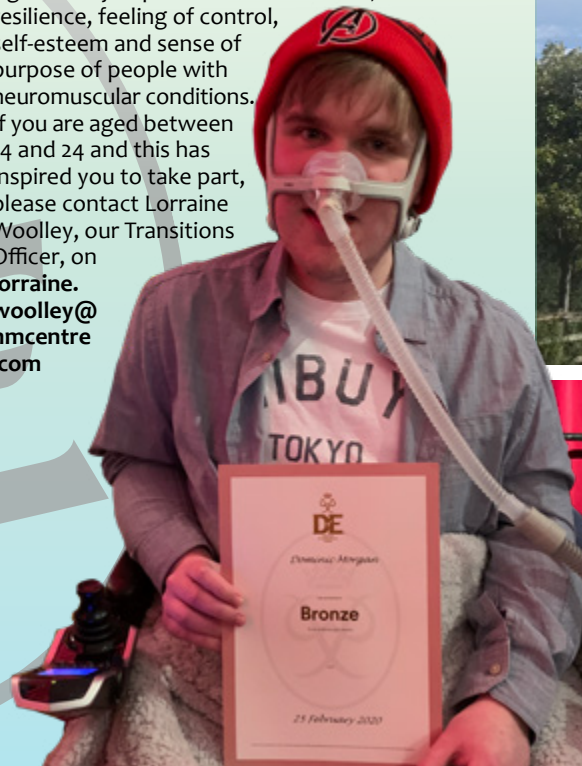
In 2017, we introduced DofE to our community of young people, and Dominic Morgan is the first person to achieve this prestigious award via NMC.

With many of our young people telling us that their school and/or college were unable to support them to complete their Bronze Award, we knew we had to introduce the Scheme to the Centre and offer this fantastic opportunity to our cohort of young people. We recognised that the societal barriers to accessing the Award were not just limited to people with a neuromuscular condition but affected young people with a whole variety of different conditions. As such, we joined forces with Cheshire Centre for Independent Living and iMap, two organisations that support young people with a huge range of physical, learning and behavioural difficulties. Working in partnership meant not only could we share skills and knowledge, but we could maximise integration and raise awareness of the societal barriers facing young people wanting to take on the DofE challenge.

DofE is a national scheme for people aged 14 to 24 in which participants undertake volunteering placements, physical activity sessions, skills-building opportunities and an expedition. It's a tough challenge for anyone, and we are all in complete awe of Dom's achievement. HE has proven ANYTHING is possible. It's all about what you can do.

Dom completed a team expedition in the Lake District successfully with our group of ambitious young people who triumphed against the wind, rain and freezing temperatures to take on tent-building and outdoor cooking training. Dom learnt a new skill, which was to develop a high level of drawing and artistic creativity and also volunteered in a community Basketball club for under-privileged youngsters in Crewe.

It is evident that the NMC DofE has significantly improved the confidence, resilience, feeling of control, self-esteem and sense of purpose of people with neuromuscular conditions. If you are aged between 14 and 24 and this has inspired you to take part, please contact Lorraine Woolley, our Transitions Officer, on **lorraine.woolley@nmcentre.com**



NMC FISHING TRIPS RESUME!

A year on from launching the NMC Fishing Club, we were fortunate to be able to hold two socially distanced fishing days over the Summer.

Organiser Paul Baddeley, NMC Fundraising Assistant said "the fishing was great, the weather even better – everyone felt safe as we were spaced well apart and it was nice to get a small group of people together outside – there was no mention of covid at all – total relaxation apart from when we hooked big fish"

Sean, who accesses NMC's services, said: "Being in lockdown for so long has been really tough and having the opportunity to just be outside in the fresh air on a lovely warm sunny day, enjoying the beautiful environment and fabulous wildlife around us, really improves your sense of wellbeing.

It was wonderful just watching the family of Moorhen's constantly feeding their young chicks, and their reaction every time Ryan's float hit the water was hilarious!

Andy was a fantastic support in helping us and it was lovely to chat away knowing that his help was there when needed, and very much appreciated! We all caught some great fish and I even caught the sun quite a bit too.

We felt totally safe with the way everything was arranged and organised, and the fishery has such great facilities and accessibility."

Enormous thanks to Paul Baddeley for organising, all the volunteers for their support during the run up and on the day; particularly Andy Norburn, Shaun Buckley and Kay Briggs, everyone that attended and to Middlewich Fishery for having us.

If you would like to find out more about our Fishing Club and be kept up to date with future fishing dates, please email Paul:

paul.baddeley@nmcentre.com

Connect with NMC

Connect Up is our project to tackle loneliness and social isolation particularly in the over 50s, and since launching in 2018 our calendar has been a varied and vibrant collection of worskshops, activities and days out.

The pandemic has interfered with many plans, but certainly not the need to reach out and connect with people. Our 'Online with Connect Up' Facebook group rapidly expanded when lockdown was introduced, attracting hundreds of new members. Not a day goes by when there isn't a discussion and some comic relief, and it's just wonderful to see how many friendships have developed and strengthened as a result.

We've held lots of events over Zoom including VE Day Afternoon Tea celebrations, weekly Coffee and Crossword meet-ups, Art Appreciation sessions for the more creative among us, Read and Connect book club, bingo and much more.

Our Training Coordinator Kay Briggs turned her hand to Mindfulness and Meditation, providing much needed relaxation sessions that have proven immensely popular within our community.

During August, we also launched meadow visits for our community and hosted 78 people in total over a 2 week period. For many, this was the first time they had left the house since lockdown began, which truly brings home what NMC means to people.

We are hoping soon to be able to offer small meet-ups in our Event Space every Friday, so if you would like to be involved please contact; **connectup@nmcentre.com**

At no extra cost to you...

Online Shopping to support NMC!

Give as you live generates charitable donations every time you shop online, working with 10,000 charities including NMC, and 4,000 online retailers.

All you need to do is sign up at ***www.giveasyoulive.com/join/nmcentre*** and shop as you normally would, but via the Give as you live website or app. Every time you buy something from your chosen retailer, Give as you Live will make a FREE donation in your name to us!

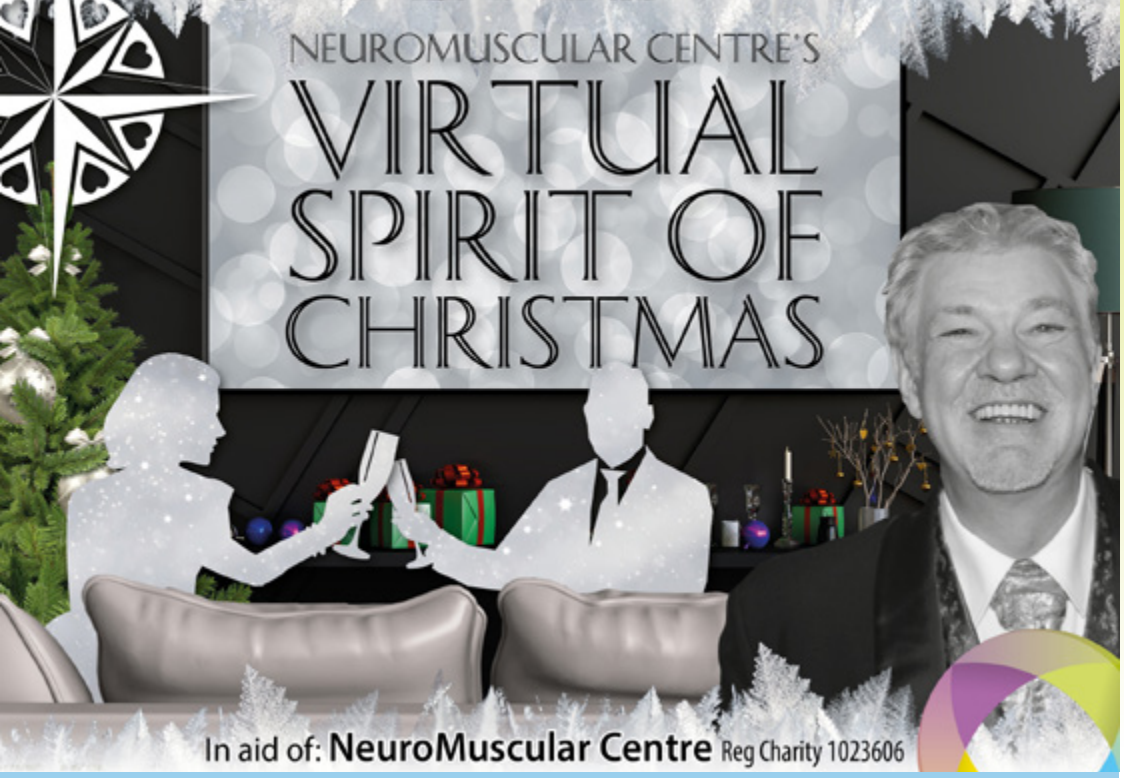
Amazon Smile. Amazon will make donations to NMC at no charge to you, every time you shop!

Simply visit ***www.smile.amazon.co.uk*** and you will be asked to select a charity. Once you've chosen Neuromuscular Centre, Amazon will save this and all you need to do is remember to shop via the ***smile.amazon.co.uk*** website! You won't need to set up a brand new account if you've already got one, and Amazon will donate 0.5% of all your purchases made to us.

NMC Christmas Craft Fayre
Our Christmas Craft Fayre will be a little different this year - we are bringing you all our lovingly made, beautiful handcrafted items from NMC Craft Club and volunteers online!

Please visit ***www.facebook.com/groups/380558409612179*** to join and browse all we have on offer. More items are being added all the time, and we will be able to post items out until we close for Christmas on Friday 18th December.

A Charmed Life. Hugely talented Physio patient Nick King has written a book during lockdown, available on Amazon with all proceeds to NMC! It's called a Charmed Life and is available here: ***www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08F6DJ5JY/ref=cm_sw_r_em_api_i_kUXmFb6471H78***



A star-studded, glittering concert awaits you this Christmas! We are bringing the Spirit of Christmas magic directly to you in the comfort of your own home, from our host Matthew Kelly and his friends of stage and screen.

NMC's Virtual Spirit of Christmas with festive readings, stories and music will take place on the planned date of Friday 27th November and will be streamed until Friday 18th December on our website.

Whilst we will greatly miss Chester Cathedral and seeing our wonderful supporters in person, we are excited about our virtual venture and hope to raise a glass of festive fizz with you all during the run up to Christmas!

We have an incredible line up for you, including Sir Derek Jacobi, Jim Broadbent, Imelda Staunton, Jim Carter, Alison Steadman, Greg Wise, David Bradley, Sophie Thompson, Patti Clare and many more.

Singer Claire Moore, who has most recently starred in Mary Poppins on the West End, will also be performing.

Blue Tickets: £5. Online viewing of the concert on a date of your choosing, plus digital programme.

Silver Tickets: £15. Souvenir hard copy version of the programme and special DVD edition of the concert.

Hamper Raffle Tickets: £5. Enter to win our fabulous hamper!

Please visit **www.nmcentre.com** for further information and tickets.

Good News!

As part of its strong commitment to safety, Urenco ChemPlants (UCP) has donated £3k to the Neuromuscular Centre (NMC), Winsford, Cheshire. The money is from a fund set-aside by the company to award excellence in safety practices at its Capenhurst site in Cheshire.

Employees and contractors working for UCP were asked to nominate charities in which they have a personal interest. The charity is one of three charities chosen from the shortlist to receive a donation from the £9k fund.

Dr Doug Annan, Managing Director, UCP, said: "Over the past three months, we have hit a number of significant safety milestones. Our safety culture is based on a commitment to personal accountability and for the safety of others. Employees decided that they wanted to donate the money set aside to mark these achievements to three local charities. The NMC was nominated by our engineering team. Last year, the team were able to landscape and overhaul the grounds of the charity, creating raised flowerbeds and wider routes around the grounds to improve access. This year, we have been unable to provide help in person so instead we hope this financial donation will go some way to help the NMC continue to provide support to those most in need."

Photos: The Urenco team on their pre-lockdown visit.

What's On!

Creative Monday
Art appreciation with Alison Evans

Workout Wednesday
Weekly exercise session with our Therapies team

Thoughtful Thursday
Crossword and Coffee Club at 11:00 www.facebook.com/groups/2133290867610 81

Food Friday
Recipe sharing and cookery workshops

Mindfulness
with Kay Briggs
www.facebook.com/groups/586014752350812/

We have a series of weekly and monthly events, which are online and free to attend. To find out more and be kept up to date with what's going on, please email connectup@nmcentre.com

Every 4th Friday of the month is Read & Connect book club. We are also hosting a Christmas Party, date TBC

NMC Christmas Craft Fayre
Ongoing until Friday 18th December

Virtual Spirit of Christmas
Friday 27th November to Friday 18th December

Quiz Night at the Grange Junior School
Friday 5th March 2021

FOR SALE

Face shields and surgical mask straps

Our 3D printing Club has been working extremely hard to create these. They have been monitoring the national (& international) 'maker' community response to the PPE supply crisis relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and have followed closely the designs of protective face visors that DoES Liverpool have been using for their PPE manufacturing efforts.

If you would like to find out more please visit ***cheapjack.github.io/NMC3DPrintClub/***

If you would like to order a face shield or surgical mask strap support, please contact ***kay.briggs@nmcentre.com***

Face coverings

Our Craft Club and volunteers have been very busy putting their impressive sewing skills to good use for our community and beyond. To see our face mask designs and to place an order, please visit: ***www.nmcentre.com/community-buy-and-sell***

Pick me up Postcards

NMC 'Pick me up Postcards' are a fun and different way to reach out to those you care about.

Whether you want to send a positive message to a loved one or display them as 'pick me up' decorations, they are the perfect way to stay connected and battle feelings of isolation during this difficult time.

Each pack contains six different postcards, each beautifully and thoughtfully designed by our very talented NMC competition winners. They are colourful, positive and motivational; perfect for a pick me up!

One pack contains six postcards, one of each design, and costs just £5 (plus P&P).

GRAPHIC**DESIGN** +**PRINT** MANAGEMENT

Part of the NeuroMuscular Centre providing creative opportunities for people with muscular dystrophy...

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nmcdesignandprint.com

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Going digital?

Would you like to receive this newsletter by email instead? If so, please send your email address to: claire.james@nmcentre.com to be added to our e-mailing list.

Donations Wanted!

We are hoping to hold more raffles, either virtually or at fundraising events in early 2021, so if you have any prizes to donate please call 01606 860911 or post directly to NMC.

This newsletter was designed by our very own design team, NMC Design+Print Contact them on 01606 863 464

Take a look at our Website...
www.nmcentre.com

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