

Aberdeen Independent Multiple Sclerosis



Trustees Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1 January to 31 December 2024

Aberdeen Independent Multiple Sclerosis
Registered office: 43 Gordon Place, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen AB23 8RB Scottish
registered charity number SC051225

Reference and administrative details

Charity name:

Aberdeen Independent Multiple Sclerosis

Registered number:

SC051225

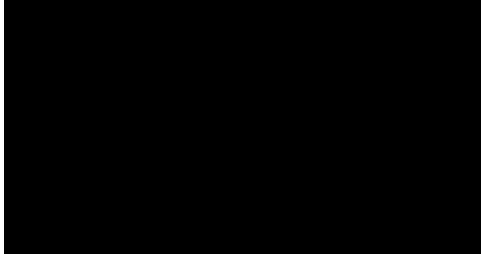
Registered Office:

43 Gordon Place

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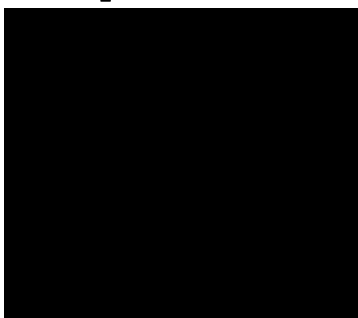
AB23 8RB

Trustees:**Bankers:**

Bank of Scotland plc

PO Box 1000

BX2 1LB [postal account]

Independent Examiner:

Report of the Trustees

The trustees are pleased to present their annual report and accounts for the 2024 calendar year.

Structure, governance, and management

Aberdeen Independent Multiple Sclerosis [known by the acronym AIMS] obtained Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation [SCIO] status on 30th August 2021.

The charity is governed by its constitution which states trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting and hold office for a period of one year.

The maximum number of trustees is eight and the minimum is three.

Names of the trustees - who all served throughout the period of this report - are shown on the preceding page.

Regular face-to-face management team meetings are held and decisions are also made in virtual meetings and by email correspondence if a quick response to an item is required. Team members find this manner of operation to be most satisfactory and the best methodology for effective working.

Objectives and activities

The charity's purpose is to improve the quality of life for people affected by multiple sclerosis [MS] and related neurological conditions in Aberdeen and the surrounding area. We achieve this by operating activities which improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our members and service users such as running chair-based exercise, seated yoga, mindfulness, a social group and an art and crafts session. The perceived consequence of running these services is our community members have a reduced number of medical interventions through having a greater level of fitness and are healthier than if they were not available.

People with MS are significantly less active than the general population. Inactivity results in fatigue and muscle weakness which affects mobility. The charity's exercise provision improves the general wellness of its community members and reduce their reliance on interventions by NHS personnel.

Our programme of exercises is specifically targeted at people with an impaired range of motion due to their MS condition – some of the beneficiaries are wheelchair bound and are unable to take part in exercises aimed at the general population. We provide an adapted programme of exercises.

There is a lack of exercise programmes in the Aberdeen area for people who are movement restricted. Indeed, there is a lack of availability UK-wide and we have opened our activities to two ladies from the Camden area of London and one from Staffordshire.

There is medical evidence suggesting regular exercise decreases the severity of various MS symptoms such as fatigue and depression. Exercise also improves balance, mobility and enhances a person's quality of life. Participants inform the charity's management team they feel better after attending a session of exercise and we quote some testimonies later in this report. They also feel more motivated to exercise as part of a regular session with others rather than attempt to work on their own.

Achievements and performance

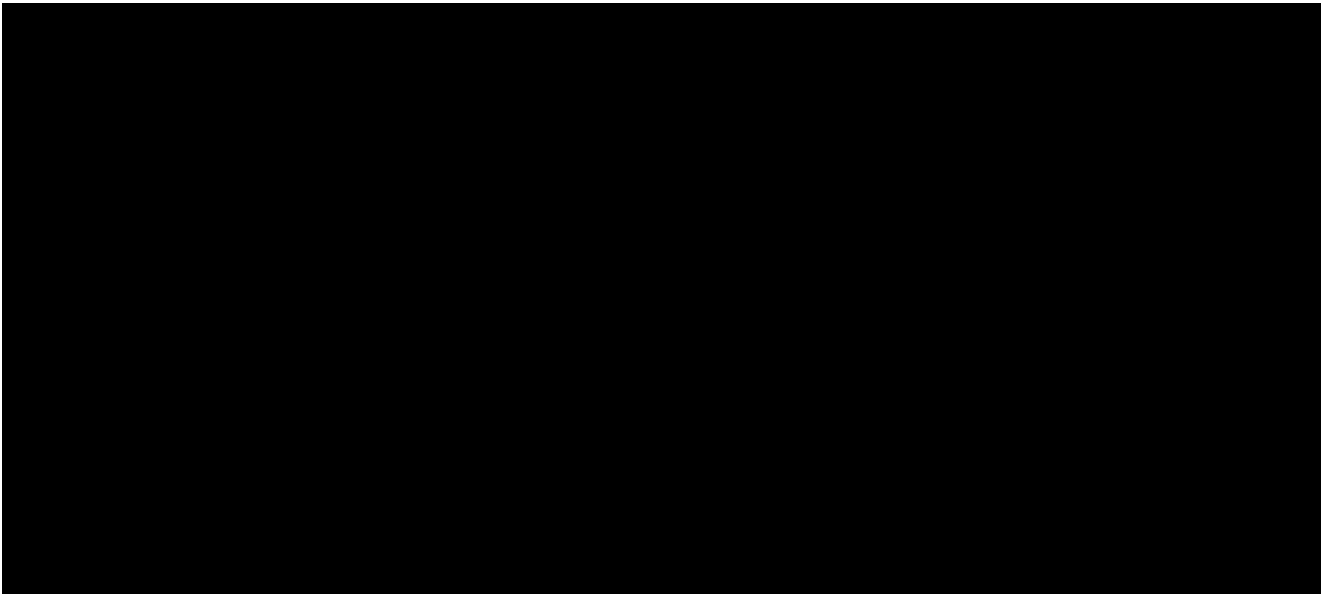
Most of our sessions are carried out digitally. Every week, we operate three chair-based exercise sessions on the Zoom platform and a face-to-face meeting in Trinity Church, Westhill; one seated yoga session; a mindfulness class; an art and crafts class and a social group.

Most sessions are led by qualified personnel but the Thursday morning digital session which runs in parallel to the face-to-face session is led by members of the charity's management team to keep costs low.

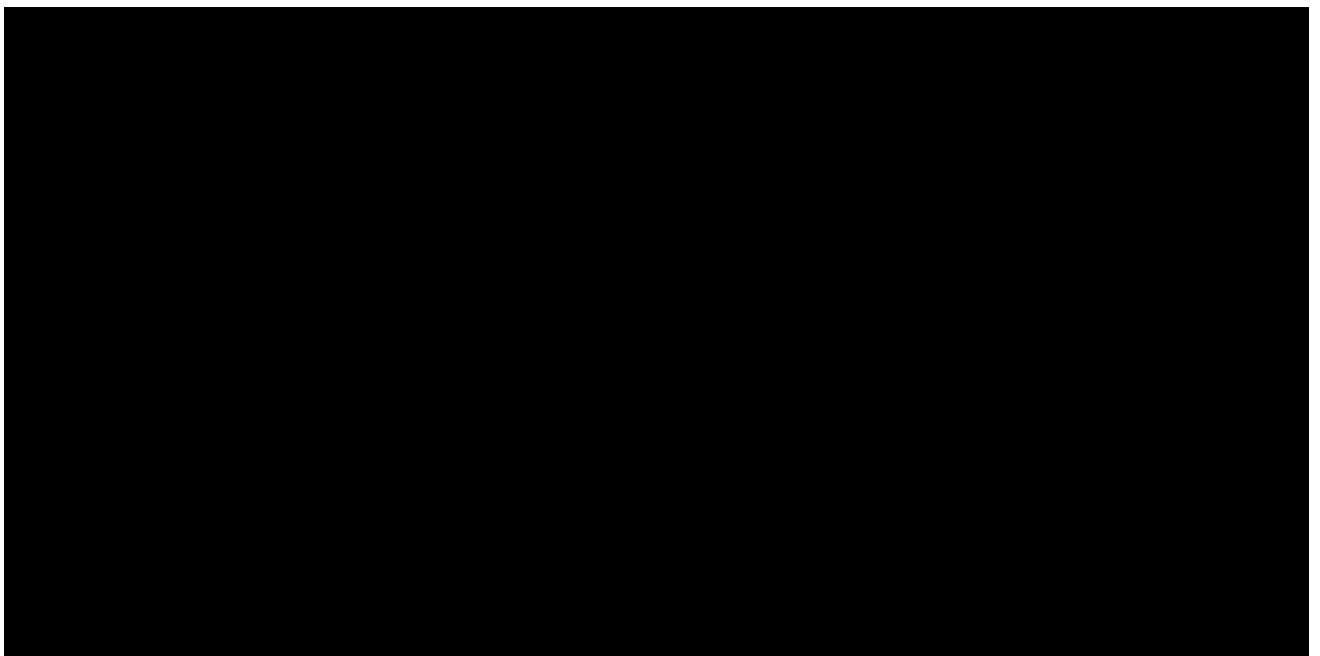
We are pleased to say, the growing number of participants attending our Thursday morning face to face exercise sessions resulted in two sessions having to be created during quarter two of the year. The first session operates from 10:15 until 11:15 and is followed by a time for refreshments and chat. Participants are joined by those who attend the second round of exercise which operates from 11:45 until 12:45.

The age range of participants is mid-40s to early-80s and the range of motion from fully mobile to those who are confined to wheelchairs. Our physiotherapists and

personal trainers are required to take that range of abilities into account when preparing their programmes.

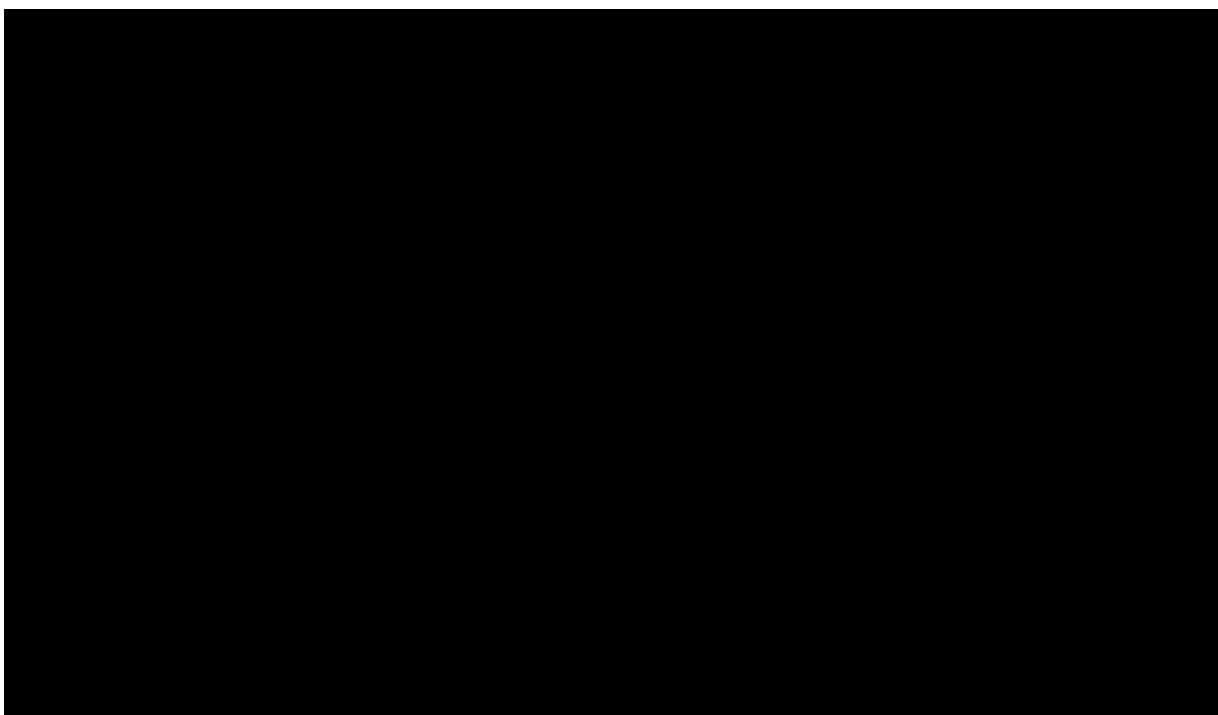


Social activities – We run regular face to face coffee and chat afternoons for people to meet up on an informal basis. These have been held at various locations throughout the city and Aberdeenshire. During the year we ran nine coffee and chat afternoons and our annual Christmas lunch. Thank you to Chrissie for organising these occasions.



Christmas lunch was held at The Craighaar Hotel on Saturday 7 December and was attended by 36 members and their families.

Craft fairs: We have several talented crafters who attended two fairs with their handmade goods to raise funds for the charity.



The charity's biggest challenge to date has been in attracting younger people both to attend its services and volunteer with its work. The management team is aware of this matter and is actively looking to resolve it and create a succession plan for the future.

Participant Testimonies

[A] Before finding these exercise classes I used to struggle to get myself into bed at night and had to rely on my husband lifting my left leg into my bed. I no longer need assistance for this; I can get myself safely into my bed and can carry out all my daily tasks without overtiring myself.

Having an allocated time to log into Zoom for the classes is very beneficial, I find this encourages me to take part. I feel accountable if I don't attend and the only person you are cheating is yourself. I am a great believer in 'use it or lose it' and exercise is good for the soul as well as the body.

I will always be eternally grateful to AIMS for providing facilities to enable me to keep exercising safely at home. Since Covid I have struggled with going out. These exercise sessions are lifesaving - they take care of my fitness as well as my mental health.

[B] I attend various activities offered by AIMS. I was diagnosed with MS 45 years ago. The daily activities on offer are a lifeline, keeping me connected and making friends with fellow sufferers. The work and dedication of a small group of volunteers, willing to give so much of their time, make the charity a great success with the MS community,

I look forward to Monday mornings, starting the week with a digital Mindful Movement session. This class targets all our stiff joints, getting them moving, helping maintain flexibility, while at the same time focusing on breathing to relax our minds. My painful hip has improved from this session, and I love the calm feeling after the session. It is a good full body workout for maintaining strength and balance. The exercises are offered with options to suit everyone's different ability.

On a Thursday I attend a face-to-face circuit-based exercise session. 12 exercise stations are set up in a church hall, targeting upper and lower body, balance and core strength. We use hand weights, resistance bands, balance cushion, TRX suspension trainer and various other items, all provided by AIMS. After warm-up stretches as a group, we exercise individually for two minutes at each activity, working round every station, before having a coffee and a chat. This class has proved to be so popular a second session has been added, with both groups of participants now having a coffee together, the second group enjoys a coffee before their session. This class has many benefits, including physical strength, balance, confidence and important social interaction. We are encouraged to push ourselves while staying safe.

[C] I have taken part in the charity's activities since 2021 and have found it really beneficial. From knowing no-one in the organisation at the outset, it was easy to be included and being made most welcome and feeling 'at home'. I can't speak highly enough of the art/craft sessions. The classes I have found therapeutic and they have awakened a creative flair. It's interesting to learn from the tutor and also the other participants. Living with a chronic illness can be a troubling and lonely experience. Likewise, the coffee and chats are invaluable. It's an opportunity to 'mingle' with like-minded people. This is highly beneficial and positively impacts my mental wellbeing.

[D] I have found enormous benefit in attending the class at Westhill. The benefit of group exercise is great and gives you an insight into other MS sufferers with varying difficulties. The hands-on help and professionalism from the session leader is so worthwhile and encouraging. The exercises are well planned and carried out under her supervision.

The social contact is so important and chat at coffee time is invaluable. I love the class and would like to thank all involved for the dedication you show.

[E] I attend the digital chair-based exercise and seated yoga sessions. I enjoy enormously the camaraderie and encouragement I get from these sessions as well as the physical benefits. Although I am not based in Aberdeen, as an expat Scot in London, I find these sessions very helpful to me in managing my multiple sclerosis as well as providing emotional support from people living with, and fighting, MS.

Partnerships

[a] We work closely with personnel in the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations [ACVO]. It was the Guidance Officer from that concern who assisted in getting the charity's constitution approved by OSCR.

[b] We are members of the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations which provides a list of grant funders

[c] We are members of Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action

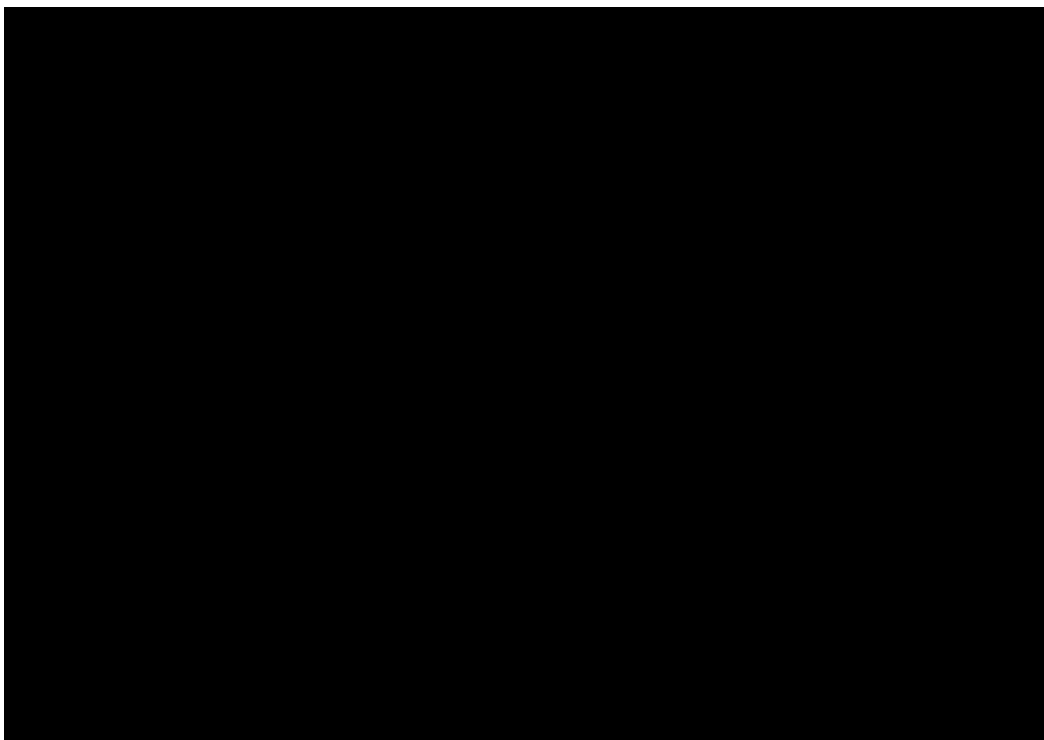
[d] Robert Gordon University. In early 2024 a team of students from the university's business school reviewed the structure and rules of the charity to see what improvements, if any, could be undertaken. The project was part of the students' course work and the team was asked to look at how the charity could attract younger people. These recommendations are currently being investigated.

[e] Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership [AHSCP]. During 2024, we gave two talks to staff there – the Health and Wellbeing team and Care team. We attended its Grampian Gathering and presented two workshops based on its mindful movement and chair-based exercise programmes in addition to providing a 15-minute mindful movement warm-up at the start of the event.



[f] Grampian Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre. The charity has a tie-in as many people with MS attend both groups. The work of the two charities does not overlap as it mainly offers oxygen therapy, reflexology and physiotherapy; things not offered by AIMS

[g] Doors Open – We were present at Midstocket Church when it was part of the Open Doors event across Aberdeen in September.



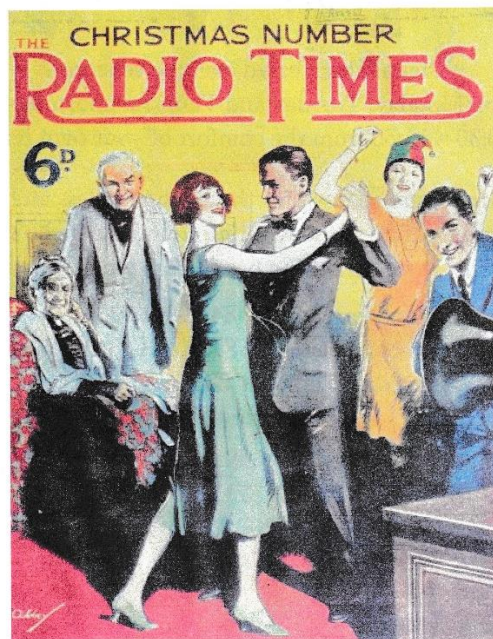
Communication and social media

We publicise activities on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com> and our website at: <https://www.youraims.org>. Thanks to Sandra for keeping the social media updated.

We produce a quarterly newsletter to keep members, service users and contacts updated with our activities. This is sent out by email and can also be read on Issuu. For those with no digital presence, the newsletter is sent by post. We send out regular email updates to those on our list of contacts. Some of our members and service users do not have access to computers and the ladies on the management team phone them on a regular basis.



Winter 2024-25 Newsletter



Statistics

The group operates 52 weeks each year, only taking off Christmas Day and New Year's Day. In most cases, volunteers cover sessions when the contracted leader has time off on holiday. During the year, the charity operated 421 [2023: 451] digital and face-to-face sessions which have been attended by 3,207 [2023: 3,243] participants. We are grateful to our session leaders for their commitment to the work of our charity.

During the year we changed our seated yoga leader from Maria Jones to Nicola Bradbury, who joins us each Wednesday from her home in France. We are pleased to say Maria continues to lead our Tuesday morning chair-based exercise session.

During April, due to low numbers attending our art sessions, we merged the art and crafts into a two-hour session on a Monday afternoon.

The breakdown of participants for activities is as follows:

DIGITAL

Activity	Participants	Sessions held	Average per session
Monday mindful movement	512	53	9.7
Monday art/crafts	254	59	4.3
Tuesday chair-based exercise	444	53	8.4
Wednesday Seated Yoga	239	50	4.8
Wednesday Social Group	311	51	6.1
Thursday chair-based exercise	378	52	7.2
Friday Mindfulness	213	48	4.4

FACE TO FACE

Activity	Participants	Sessions held	Average per session
Thursday chair-based exercise [face to face] [2023] 586/42/13.9	674	45	15.0
Social events [2023] 206/10/20.6	182	10	18.2
TOTAL [2023] 3,243/451/7.2	3207	421	7.6

The annual time commitment of the five members of the charity's management team is in the region of 1800 hours. We are of the view the high number of voluntary hours given by the members of the management team

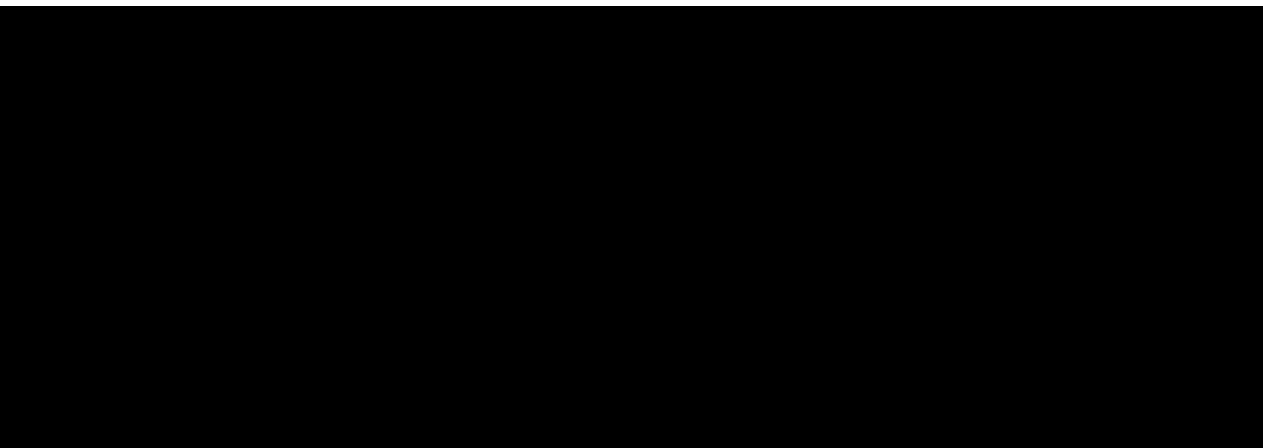
makes the charity's offering exceptional. These volunteers work very well as a team allowing the number of services on offer to be carried on throughout the year.

Financial review

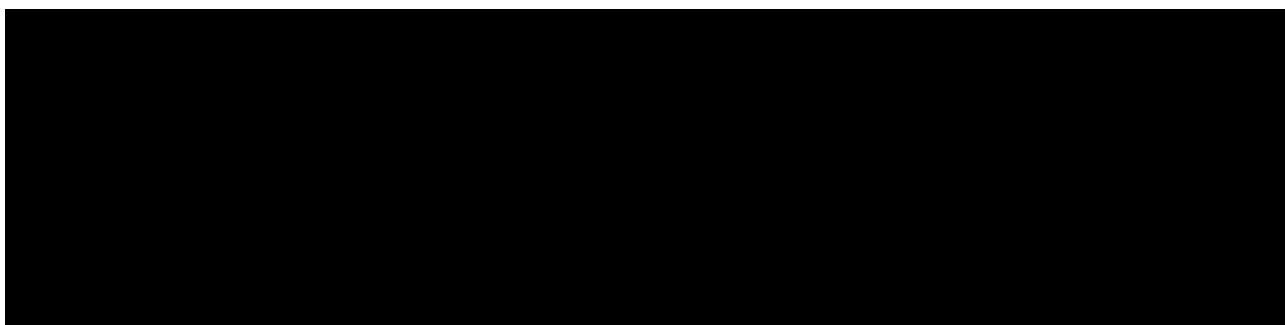
We request a donation from activity participants but are aware some people are finding the cost-of-living crisis to be a financial burden and people who cannot afford to donate are not turned away. We want people to participate in regular exercise to enable them to live as independently as possible in their own homes for as long as possible.

The management team was of the opinion, with sufficient funds held in the bank account, there was no need to chase grant funding to the extent carried out in the previous financial periods despite operating a financial deficit during the review period. Thanks to John for managing the accounts.

DONATIONS



The biggest donation during the year was made by Music at the Stocket from a concert which raised £500 towards our work.



APPENDIX 3



Report to the trustees/members of
Registered charity number
On the accounts of the charity for the period
Set out on pages

Independent examiner's report on the accounts v2						
Charity name ABERDEEN INDEPENDENT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS.						
SC 051225.						
Period start date				Period end date		
Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year
01	01	2024		31	12	2024
						(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

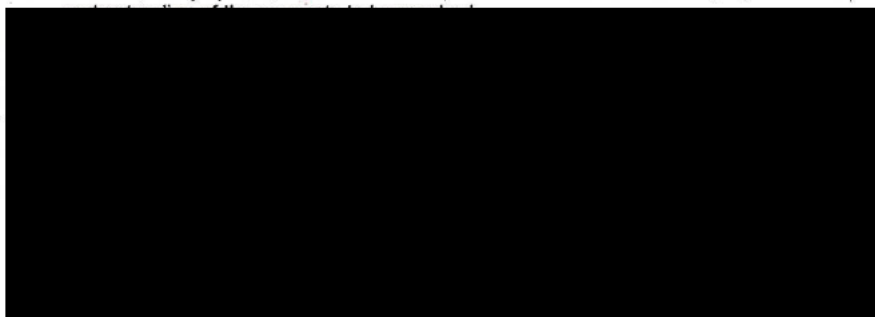
In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention [other than that disclosed on the attached page*]

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper

Signed:**
Name:
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):
Address:



*Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply. If the words do apply, set out those matters which have come to your attention on the following page.

**OSCR will accept digital or typed signatures.

Receipts and Payments for period 1 January – 31 December 2024

Receipts

	2024	2023
Annual subscriptions	840.00	880.00
Class attendance fees	8,615.00	8,707.00
Donations, fundraising, including Gift Aid	4,499.36	5,853.90
Craft/art sales	73.35	1,054.07
Grants	0	3,626.48
Fundraising: collecting cans	680.25	704.46
Social events	1,749.00	1,953.50
Miscellaneous	90.00	53.68
Total	16,546.96	22,633.09

Payments

Session fees:		
Chair based exercise [including hall hire & equipment purchased]	13,114.76	10,310.71
Seated yoga	2,378.75	1,922.50
Mindfulness	2,340.00	2,040.00
Art/crafts [includes purchase of materials]	3,675.00	5,665.00
Other costs:		
Insurance	169.55	142.49
Social media: website etc	786.02	669.11
Social events	1,296.65	1,663.00
Miscellaneous	0	27.00
Total	23,760.73	22,439.81
Surplus / [Deficit]	-7,213.77	193.28
Bank balance at year end	44,103.70	51,317.47

Signed on behalf of the Trustees, 10 January 2025:

