

June 2025

DGMEFM Network

Support for ME, CFS, Fibromyalgia

Welcome from the Chair

It was a fairly dismal start to the year for me with tummy bugs and the dreaded norovirus. But April brought us some longed-for sunshine to warm up our weary bones and I for one definitely appreciated it. And May has been so good to us, helping the flowers along and allowing us to enjoy the bird song. Long may it last.

Since our last Newsletter, we've had numerous social meet-ups, online meetings, activity in our Facebook group and crafting activities such as iris folding and fascinator making. On April 2nd, I personally had a wonderful birthday present in learning that our funding application had been granted and we can continue numerous activities for the next three years. It's a fine line for charities between being able to continue their work or being forced to fold through lack of funds, so we're extremely grateful to the National Lottery, but I'll leave Treasurer Paul Thompson to tell you more about that further on in the newsletter.



If you would like to contribute an article about meet-ups you've attended or crafting classes you've undertaken with us, please feel free to do so and it will be published in the first available edition of the Newsletter. Send any offerings to christine@dgmeffm.org.uk. Similarly, if you would be interested in joining our Board and contributing to the behind-the-scenes work of the Network, contact me, bobbie@dgmeffm.org.uk or any other current Board member. In the meantime, do enjoy our latest Newsletter.

Bobbie

WhatsApp Groups

We have several chat groups in operation now on WhatsApp that are keeping members abreast of activities and also, serving simply as a means for members to get to know each other and reach out for help in one way or another.

We already have a group for Annan, one for Stranraer and one for Dumfries. People are asking for help in finding new books to read or describing wheelchairs on offer at very reasonable prices. So you'll find them a very helpful resource.

These are friendly places for a chat that, again, aim to keep you not only up-to-date with upcoming activities, but allow you to make new friends and curb isolation and loneliness.

If you're not already a member, please contact christine@dgmeffm.org.uk to request to be added and remember, depending where you live, you may want to join more than one group. We have people in Wigtownshire who have joined both the Stranraer and the Dumfries groups or some who live in between Dumfries and Annan and have joined both groups. Don't be afraid to ask!

Bobbie

Pop-Up Meet-Ups

Check out the website and Facebook page for more information on dates / locations over the coming weeks. If transport is an issue, let us know and we can see if we can help you.

Stranraer – Friday 13th June at Driftwood, Agnew Park at 1pm. Book your FREE place using the Eventbrite link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1377483081979?aff=oddtcreator> or email christine@dgmeffm.org.uk. Please note that this event is not funded and anything you order will need to be paid for individually.

Castle Douglas - Monday 16th June at Gordon Memorial Hall at 1.15pm
Please book your FREE place using the Eventbrite link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/castle-douglas-meet-up-tickets-1341972167879?aff=oddtcreator> or email paul@dgmeffm.org.uk. Please bring your own lunch with you.

At this event, we will have Joanne Taplin from 'A Listening Ear' talking to us about her charity and she is also going to provide teas, coffees and some biscuits! We will also have D Rhodes who will be sharing a presentation on the Emergence Self Portrait project and show the wonderful artwork that was produced by our members.

Annan – Wednesday 16th July at Our Place, High Street at 12.30pm.
Book your FREE place using the Eventbrite link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/annan-lunch-meet-up-tickets-1360383847709?aff=oddtcreator> or email christine@dgmeffm.org.uk. Please note that this event is not funded and anything you order will need to be paid for individually.

Dumfries – Friday 29th August at Cornerstone Café, Dumfries Baptist Church at 12.30pm
Please book your FREE place using the Eventbrite link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1377492861229?aff=oddtcreator> or email christine@dgmeffm.org.uk. Please note that this event is not funded and anything you order will need to be paid for individually.

Booking on Eventbrite confirms your space. No actual ticket is required. If you have any difficulty with booking or any queries, please contact christine@dgmeffm.org.uk.

Craft and Wellbeing activities



Iris folding – Friday 27th June at Annan Old Parish Church hall, Annan at 2.15 - 3.45pm.
Paul Thompson will teach you the skill of iris folding (see picture example). You will use this technique to create a card to take away with you. Book your FREE place using the Eventbrite link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/iris-folding-workshop-tickets-1360388070339?aff=oddtcreator>

Online meeting – First Thursday of the month

Come and get to know us, chat, ask questions and make new friends. Sometimes we have talks or discussions from outside speakers. The next meeting is the **5th June at 2pm**. Our speaker will be Carolyn Cluness from SHAX who will be talking about How SHAX supports the D&G Community. (This is a change to the previously advertised speaker). You can join us by clicking this link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82063674933?pwd=3hYUDTttA8RiMbloAxlegVpvvSY6cT.1> or entering this info: Meeting ID: 820 6367 4993, Passcode: 1234

There will be no monthly meetings in July and August.

Easter Crafting in Stranraer

A lovely afternoon was had in Stranraer Creative Hub on 17th April!! Everyone got to paint their own bunny pot – they are gorgeous. DGMEFM Network would like to thank Savannah so much for hosting Easter Crafts for us and to the Hub for funding this to a local support group like ours.

All the ladies enjoyed a relaxing afternoon with tea, scones and painting. Special thanks go to Marie for making everyone scones despite not being able to make it in person. 🐰 🌸

Bethany



So Much Fun!

The range of crafting and other activities that the Network has been able to offer in recent months has been wide and varied, and members have reported how much fun they've had participating. That's one of our main aims - to offer members the opportunity to try out new skills while enjoying the company of others in like situations and thus, reduce loneliness and isolation.

Now that we are assured of funding for the next three years, we are busy coming up with more ideas of activities to provide for members. We've been heartened to see that people have been happy to organise get-togethers even when we weren't able to provide the funding in the last month or two, either paying directly to a venue or finding somewhere they could bring their own drinks and sandwiches, for example. I believe we even kindly had a scone maker who provided a tasty treat in one of the Stranraer meets - well done to all.

Some of us have been attending the online art classes run by Taking Art Home and they too have had their funding issues. While one session came to an end and we had no official classes, one of the members offered to run Zoom sessions to enable us to continue our efforts in recent months and to make friends with the others. Several of those attending the class are from our own membership including Johnstonebridge, Dalbeattie, Annan and Castle Douglas.

Dusty Rhodes kindly set up the Emergence art project and member Emma Mitchell ran two workshops to show members how to make their own fascinator, one in Dumfries and one in Newton Stewart (see article further down). Having seen some of the finished articles in photos, I am so sad that I missed these classes through ill health. And don't forget, dear members, that these classes are offered to you free of charge thanks to the fund-seeking efforts of our own Eppie Sprung and Treasurer Paul Thomson. Where else would you get to try out carriage driving or fascinator making for free? As well as make friends at the same time with those who all understand your health condition.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with ideas for activities and even more so if you wish to take part in anything that will be advertised in the coming months. Remember that these adverts will appear in our Newsletter, in our Facebook group and in emails, thereby reaching, we hope, all of our membership.

Bobbie

Network Wellbeing Project



As you may already know, we were successful in our application to the National Lottery Community Fund 'Fairer Life Chances' programme. With grateful thanks to their panel for granting approval and the funding officer for his support, and to Eppie for her work throughout the application process.

We were asked to make a contribution to the overall 3-year project cost, which we are able to do thanks to the Henry Duncan grant mentioned in our March newsletter. The lottery grant allows us to employ a part-time Wellbeing Worker, whose role will include co-ordinating and delivering activities for members both face-to-face and online, such as we have enjoyed over the past few years through other funding and organised by Christine and Eppie. We're pleased that we can carry on such activities, at least until May 2028.

Amongst other duties, the job will also include support to our Befrienders/Peer Mentors; connecting with the most vulnerable and newly diagnosed members; building on contact with health and social care professionals; and marketing to raise awareness of the Network.

In case you're wondering, the grant together with other funds allow us to keep both Christine and Eppie in post as well.

A candidate has been selected and we will update you with more details when we can.

Paul

Seasons

Rebirth of fauna and flora.

Hues of green banish winters aura.

Spring is in the air, hibernation ends.

Cast off woollies, we no longer depend.



Summers here, all colours known to man.

Children's laughter. Running wild, stretching their span.

Families gather with such glee.

Buzzing around like the humble bumble bee.



Leaves are turning reds, golds and browns.

Piled high, our feet are drowned.

Last fling of warmth in the year our autumn.

Halloween, Fireworks. It's our custom.



Winters grip, oh so icy.

Stews and broths, our favourite delicacy.

Woolies and scarves our warm embrace.

Walking carefully we slow our pace.



By Sharon King

(one of our competition entries)

Useful weblinks

Here's some information to consider having a look at, compiled by a member, Joanne Halliday, prompted by our discussions at a recent Annan meet up. She doesn't have personal experience of most of these, just thought they could be useful:

Broadband 'social tariffs' for people on certain benefits: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/compare-broadband-deals/broadband-social-tariffs>

Free 2 hour mobility scooter rental in Dumfries town centre: <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/roads-transport-parking/public-transport/free-use-mobility-scooter>

ID and discount card for paid and unpaid carers. Here's a link to nominate an unpaid carer for a free card. <https://blueskycard.uk/nominate-a-carer/>

Disabled user testers

<https://abilitynet.org.uk/jobs/disabled-user-tester>

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sjmKVPaxCSOeAwmUFsnGcfEwkPWRyQW0/edit?tab=t.0>

Free online games/quizzes

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/play>

<https://www.sporcle.com/>

Quick Fix Recipe

1 x sachet of flavoured couscous (Mediterranean Tomato or Lemon and Coriander)
1 x tin of tuna/sardines/salmon
1 x tin of peas/ sweetcorn
Handful of cherry tomatoes

Boil kettle and pour water into a bowl with sachet of couscous
Add tin of preferred tinned fish
Add tin of microwaved veg of choice and cherry tomatoes

Less than ten minutes to make :)

This recipe was one of our competition entries from Emma Davies. It sounds yummy!

If you have a 'Quick Fix' recipe – something to make when energy/pain/thinking is just not going your way, please email it to christine@dgmefm.org.uk. Our members would benefit from some new ideas. Pictures of the finished meal would be even better!

Member contributions are very valued.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

If there's something you'd like to see in the next newsletter, or you feel able to write something for us, please do so and send to: christine@dgmefm.org.uk

It costs the Network a considerable amount of money to post out newsletters every quarter. If you would be happy to only receive an emailed copy of the newsletter and not have one posted out to you, please let us know so that we can amend your details and use the money elsewhere.

Accessing a National Trust venue

I had a long chat with an executive at National Trust Scotland. He explained that there are three options available re. accessibility/carers tickets.

Regarding accessibility in particular, there's information on the website but he recommended contacting the properties ahead of visits to find out about access, if they have scooters to loan out etc.

1. The disabled person buys a **Standard ticket** and asks to be accompanied by an essential companion/carers. It is up to the property to decide whether it's free, discounted, or full price.
2. The disabled person buys an **Annual pass** in person or online and also requests an Essential Companion Card (for 1 or 2 companions) to be issued by Head Office. No evidence is requested online and is unlikely to be requested in person (but useful to have a copy of relevant benefits paperwork, Blue Badge or other evidence just in case it is requested).

The Essential Companion Card doesn't have a name on so is usable by any carers/friend/relative accompanying the paid, named member who is disabled. It would allow the member plus carers(s) access to National Trust Properties in Scotland, England, Wales (including free parking) and many other places around the world. It is annual but based on months so best to buy it on or soon after the second of the month to maximise how long it's valid for.

If you buy an Annual pass at a property rather than online, the property gets a £50 bonus which is really appreciated especially by the small properties. You'd be given a temporary membership card (you can ask for two; one for entry and one for temporary free car parking privilege), with the proper card and car park sticker arriving by post 2-3 weeks later. Interestingly, National Trust for Scotland annual passes are currently around £20 cheaper than the National Trust England annual pass and still allow free parking at England, Wales and Northern Ireland NT properties. It can be a one-off payment (don't have to do renewable direct debit) but they will send out an unactivated new card with request for payment, unless you notify them you don't plan to renew.

3. **Non-profit cards:** This would be purchased via a charity for £5 per card for a year; with a minimum of 15 cards at first purchase. These cards can be used at National Trust Scotland properties by the charity's workers, volunteers, service users, or relatives of any of those. If lost, they won't be replaced - another one would need to be bought. Again, best to order on or soon after the second of the month to maximise the validity of the cards. They include free parking. Essential Companion Card is not relevant in this scenario because basically the carers(s) would use a card each too. ***

Joanne Halliday

***** If we had more than 15 members who were keen to buy the £5 pass, I would be happy to purchase them through the charity and post them out to members who had bought them. If you would be interested, contact christine@dgmeffm.org.uk and state how many you would want to buy. Please DO NOT send any money until it is decided that we are going ahead with enough interest. Christine**

Brain Fog



Brain fog is a common symptom for those of us living with ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia. Doctors call it Cognitive Dysfunction and it typically includes – short-term memory lapses; difficulty in concentrating or sustaining attention; difficulty with processing incoming information and retrieving stored information; trouble finding the right word, remembering or mixing up commonly used words; and problems with carrying out everyday tasks that involve any form of sustained mental activity.

What can you do to help manage it?

The following advice and tips are taken from the ME Association's leaflet on the subject.

Just like pacing physical activities, pacing mental activities is a key aspect of management. Overall, this means finding a comfortable baseline of mental activity and splitting mental activity up into small, manageable chunks – with rest or relaxation periods in between. As with physical pacing, stop any activity before you start to become mentally tired and don't push yourself beyond your limitations.

To help with short-term memory problems:

- Use a notepad or wall planner to jot down important 'things to do' each day – appointments, phone calls to make and, very importantly, refer to it regularly
- Prepare a written check-list of things you need to do on a day-to-day basis
- Always make a shopping list when you go out
- Make use of post-its and other simple written props to remind you about important events or 'must-dos'
- Don't attempt to multi-task when it comes to mental activity – focus on one task at a time
- Make use of the new technology – an electronic organiser for information on things you are likely to forget: a beeper on a mobile phone to remind you to attend a meeting or take medication
- Allocate set places for important items such as glasses, keys and medication
- Write down names of new acquaintances matched to obvious features as soon as possible
- Learn new skills with brain-training activities – such as playing sudoku, puzzles or computer card games
- Stay calm and patient if you misplace or lose something. Try picturing what you normally do when you put them down
- Avoid distractions – for example, being hungry can be a huge distraction

To help with word-finding and concentration problems:

- Ask people to give you more time to explain yourself if you are having word-finding difficulties
- Try visual imagery by painting a picture in your mind to help prompt the missing word. Don't focus too hard on trying to find the correct or missing word – it may well appear later
- Leave any difficult mental tasks to the time of day when you normally function best

To help improve the processing of new information:

- Minimise external noise and distractions – TV and radio, etc –and work in an environment that helps you concentrate
- Ask people to speak slowly
- Repeat new information to yourself to help retain it
- Print information off the computer rather than reading it on a screen
- Break up written print into shorter, well-spaced paragraphs. Use a pencil or highlighter to mark important bits of text
- Bullet point or number new ideas or information
- If your sense of concentration is weakening, move around and have a break from mental activity.

In addition, it's important to make family, friends and work colleagues aware of the sort of practical difficulties you are having with normal mental functioning and explain how they can also help you to cope. Lastly, check with your doctor if you experience 'red flag' features such as progressive deterioration in mental functioning or forgetting familiar things like dates, names, locations and problems affecting long-term memory, which could indicate another neurological explanation for your symptoms.

Paul

Fancy Fascinators



In February and March, there were 2 lots of fascinator workshops being run by member Emma Mitchell of Fascinatingly Different. One set of workshops were



held in Dumfries and the other in Newton Stewart. All of them were well attended and great fun. We were given a notebook and tasked with designing some ideas that we would then create in our own fascinator. There was plenty of Emma's pre-made designs as inspiration on display and we tried on a few to see what would look good. Then we chose our colour schemes from the millions of resources that Emma had brought along. I felt like a kid in a toy shop! Then



over both sessions, we put together our designs with a lot of help from Emma. She taught us sewing techniques, how to create shapes with feathers and how to put things together to good effect. She was immensely patient and very passionate about us getting a good result which we did. Have a look at some of the designs we came up with!



Christine



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Please let us know if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or if you want to change how you receive it. Also, if your contact details have changed or if you wish to cease being a member of the Network, please contact us on admin@dgmefm.org.uk or text or phone 07557 536110.