DG ME FM

Dumfries & Galloway
ME and Fibromyalgia Network

SC051578 | www.dgmefm.org.uk

Impact Report

August 2024 - July 2025

October and our AGM are upon us again after a somewhat tumultuous summer. The weather veered from cold and rainy to extra hot and sunny which we're not used to here in the Lowlands of Scotland. Could it have been these weather conditions that saw more than a few of us laid low, particularly during August? With our various health issues, you never can tell.

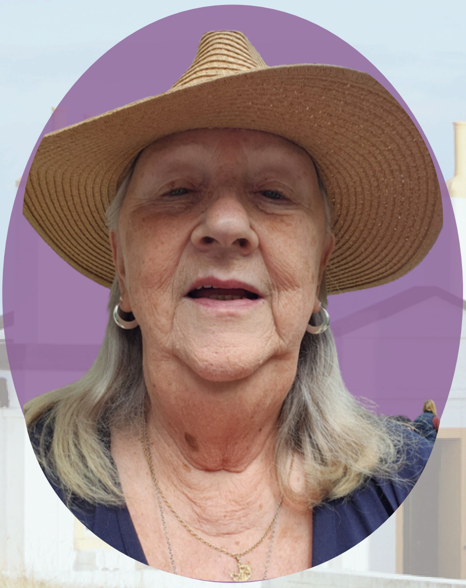
In this respect, our Facebook group continues to be a source of comfort to its users with members sharing tips and news reports about current research which always give us a flurry of hope.

Our Board, which now has a solid core of seven members, continues to work behind the scenes on points of strategy vital to the running of the Network. Our two paid employees, Eppie Sprung and Christine Aitchison, continue to seek funding, for the former and keep the back office ticking over, in the case of the latter.

We have welcomed back Kalpana Ratnam this summer into the role of Wellbeing Worker and she is working tirelessly setting up activities, making sure that every corner of the region is included. Information and frequent updates are provided on the WhatsApp groups and the Facebook group. Please don't hesitate to contact kalpana@dgmefm.org.uk to ensure you're kept in touch about these activities.

Further funding has been sourced for this next period to allow these wellbeing and craft activities to take place. Funding bodies are always keen to see that members are active within our community, even if that only means using the website or chatting in the groups because you're not physically able to attend other events. So, please do continue to use whatever facilities you're able to. And if you feel you could join our Board as a Trustee, please do contact me on bobbie@dgmefm.org.uk.

I trust you will enjoy reading this report and the various facilities DGMEFM Network offers its members.



~ Bobbie Jeal, Chair of DGMEFM Network

Number of members: 449

Members of our Facebook Group: 532

Funding Secured: £35,025

1. Raising awareness and promoting understanding

76% of respondents said the Network is helping to raise awareness and promote understanding of ME/CFS, Fibromyalgia and long covid.

- **Our stakeholders have better access to accurate information which improves awareness and understanding of ME/CFS and FM**
- **Public, third and private sector organisations across Dumfries and Galloway have more knowledge, skills and confidence to effectively support the needs of people with ME /CFS and FM**

Over the past 12 months there has been a bit of a lull in awareness raising activities as we have been between two large pieces of funding. The Volunteer Co-ordinator post finished at the end of October and, thanks to funding from The National Lottery Community Fund's Fairer Life Chances programme, the new Wellbeing Worker post started in June. However, Kalpana has hit the ground running in her new role as Wellbeing Worker and has already connected with 68 professionals and will be prioritising attending locality meetings of Health and Social Care practitioners in the coming months.

> *"Many people I know and have known for years do not understand the daily experiences of FM.*
>
> *Meeting other members of the Network is an eye-opener; others who 'get' what the symptoms and adjustments made in day-to-day life entail."*

449 Members
(^ 24 from previous year)

445 Facebook Page Followers
(^ 42 from previous year)

532 Facebook Group Members
(^ 66 from previous year)

1599 Website Visits

11 Blogs Shared

4 Newsletters

£35,025 in funding secured

> *"It's a comfort....a collection of other people....all supportive and understanding of each other. Somewhere to turn for info, suggestions, informal advice. It's a sharing of troubles and successes. of each other"*

2. Supporting access to services and support

•92% of respondents felt the Network was providing appropriate services/support

- People with ME/CFS and FM have better access to a range of high quality clinical and peer-led services and support which enables more timely diagnosis and supports more effective self-management
- People with ME/CFS and FM and their carers / supporters have more opportunities to connect with their peers, which reduces isolation and increases wellbeing

Over the last 12 months we have had a vast selection of activities including craft activities, health focused activities and social activities. Some members have called for more activities in the West of the region and so we will do our best to ensure we offer a wider geographic spread. We're grateful to funding, from Henry Duncan Grants, that allows us to deliver these activities.

Peer Chats

Dumfries	**18 Members**
Stranraer	**21 Members**
Annan	**12 Members**
Castle Douglas	**20 Members**

23 Wellbeing Activities

8 online Zoom meet ups

> *"I feel less alone, if I've a problem I ask my friends in the group through WhatsApp, and I always get great advice"*

In the coming 12 months we are going to be trialling recorded sessions with professionals to allow members to access these information sharing sessions at their leisure.

> *"Understanding of the condition. To realise I am really ill and not a hypochondriac. To realise that I know soo much more about the conditions than most health practitioners. To give me the confidence to stand my ground."*

3. Building participation, skills and confidence

87% said the Network is building participation, skills and confidence.

- **People with ME/CFS and FM and their allies have access to high quality volunteering opportunities which build knowledge, skills and confidence and enable them to take leading roles in the delivery of services**
- **People with ME/CFS and FM have more opportunities to give their views, and are better able to influence decision-making and service design**

Our annual survey provides members with the opportunity to shape the services of the Network. We review all comments and do our best to adapt services to meet the needs of the members, with the constraints of our funding.
Our craft and wellbeing sessions have provided members with a range of opportunities to learn new skills and have new experiences. Some members have also taken on leadership roles in delivering sessions.

> *“I value the Network, the Network makes me feel included, and provides service that make me feel less isolated”*

4. Building our organisational capacity

84% said the Network is running smoothly

- **DGMEFM Network has the required resources, plans, policies, and systems to ensure that the charity is run safely, ethically, legally, efficiently, and effectively.**
- **DGMEFM Network has a confident, knowledgeable, skilled and effective Board and staff team.**
- **DGMEFM Network is accessible and inclusive, and better able to support individuals from protected characteristic groups and those with more complex needs.**

We currently have 7 Board members and 3 paid team members. Eppie, our Network Development Manager, works with us 2 days per month. Christine, our Admin Officer, works with us 1 day per week and Kalpana, our Wellbeing Worker, is with us 3 days per week.

> *“The Network is a place and space where people get me and my conditions. I don’t need to explain myself or feel guilty. All the staff and members are so nice and understanding.”*

We are always looking for new Board members or members who would like to volunteer in other ways (such as writing Newsletter articles or leading activity sessions). If you would like to volunteer your time, please reach out on: admin@dgmefm.org.uk