

# How the Bournemouth Branch Operates 'The Osborne Centre'

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The question often asked “**Who runs The Osborne Centre?**” has a very simple answer. Anyone who kindly offers to give some time and help each week, in any capacity, is vital to the daily functioning of the Centre. All the volunteers seen or behind the scenes, are simply priceless.

The Centre operates Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Volunteers are always on hand throughout the day to assist members or be there just for a chat. In addition the branch employs a care agency to help any service users with personal care.

The branch runs eight wheelchair adapted vehicles and the day could not commence without Transport Officers organising various runs, in order to bring the less able members into the Centre for the day. More volunteer drivers and escorts are always needed and welcomed.

By the time people start arriving, tea coffee and biscuits are available, tables have already been set for lunches and the aromas of home cooking welcomes everyone. All thanks to a different group of volunteers working each day the Centre opens.

The activities begin as soon as the members arrive. The physiotherapy suite is soon buzzing with members eager to book sessions on the tilt tables, pedal machines, standing frames, parallel bars or multi gym. Our physiotherapists are under contract from a local company but all the assistants are volunteers.

The hairdressing salon is always busy on Tuesdays and Thursdays with volunteers washing, cutting, setting and perming hair for any member wanting a 'hairdo'. On Mondays a qualified Counsellor is in attendance for private consultations and on Thursdays a member of Poole Citizens Advice Bureau is available in the Support Office.

On Wednesdays, whilst the Centre is officially closed, there are yoga and palates classes available, with other 'out of hours' meetings taking place such as the Carers Group, usually in the evening as most carers work during the day.

There are two shops at the Centre. 'Aladdin's Cave', the charity shop, sells good quality donated gifts whilst the 'Tuck Shop' sells general goods at wholesale prices. We also have an Intendo Wii system, set up within a very well equipped computer suite, which was kindly donated by Barclays Bank. The Quiet Room, built in 2007 and funded by The National Lottery, is a recently welcome addition as is the Arts and Crafts room which has been doubled in size to accommodate additional wheel-chairs.

The Centre Co-ordinator is responsible for day to day management, including the security of the building and supervising contract cleaning activities.

The branch has to comply with standards set by the National Centre and the MS Society's Constitution. It also has to work strictly under regulations set by the Charity Commission. In accordance with the Constitution the branch must have a committee of named officers. A branch is

not permitted to operate without a Treasurer who meets regularly with the Chairperson, Secretary, and Lead Support Volunteer. Branches then elect other officers to suit their individual needs. For Bournemouth these volunteers undertake tasks such as organising Transport, Fundraising, MS Liaison and Carers. What is required of these officers? This is another question that has been asked i.e. Who should do what? The following very brief descriptions may answer this, but in reality once a day session begins everyone happily tackles any query or task that is requested of them.

The Chairperson oversees monthly meetings, and when invited gives talks at various venues to promote the activities and the needs of the Centre.

The Lead Support Volunteer has overall responsibility for the Support Office and it's volunteers. The CAB representative and the MS Counsellor are part of this team who are in constant touch with MS members either at the Centre, in the homes of those members unable to attend sessions and of course members who are hospitalised. Advice is given about benefits and a Grants sub-committee assess individual needs, if required. Help is given to newly diagnosed people and advice given on where to seek help for home improvements and equipment. Any discussion with a member is of course totally confidential.

The Treasurer keeps detailed records of all income and expenditure and with the help of nominated cashiers is responsible for the handling of all cash. Annual accounts are finalised, in accordance with the National Centre pro-forma, for approval by the appointed auditors.

A Branch Secretary is closely involved with the general administration of the branch and is responsible for branch correspondence, taking minutes at all official meetings and putting into action decisions made by the committee.

The Fundraiser and team produce income for the branch by organising many varied events throughout the year, both in and out of house.

A separate team of dedicated volunteers undertake vital street collections, which have to be requested from Councils at least nine months in advance and permission has to be obtained from supermarkets during the previous year.

The MS Liaison Officer is the contact between the branch and local government departments, NHS, other statutory bodies and National Centre.

The Carers Officer is the link between the branch and all carers of people with MS. Responsibilities include holding regular meetings and organising social activities for the carers.

So, perhaps the answer to the question of “**Who runs the Osborne Centre**” should be **A Dedicated Band Of Truly Wonderful People.**

**Come and join them**

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