Quarterly update from research and support at MND Scotland

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Friend, here is an update from the support and research teams at MND Scotland.



A warm welcome to our latest support and research newsletter.

We know that every donation made to support MND research is made with the trust that it will be used responsibly. That's why we're pleased to confirm MND Scotland's research funding processes have passed the **Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)** expert review audit, confirming we are transparent, fair and robust. You can **read more about the high standard of our funding processes here**.

We are also very pleased to confirm that people with MND will be able to apply for a **cost-of-living grant** from 1 October 2026. We understand this is a valued part of the support we provide and there is more information below.

From Monday, 31 August to Thursday, 3 September, one of the people we support, **Steven Harts**, is holding an exhibition of his recent and past artworks. **IN YOUR FACE** at the Glue Factory in Glasgow will officially open with a live charity auction in aid of MND charities. The exhibition is on each day between 12 and 5 and is free to attend. **Read more about Steven's story here**.

Remember, if you need any support, please don't hesitate to contact **support@mndscotland.org.uk**.

Nicola Povey, Head of Support Development, and Jane Haley, Interim CEO and Director of Research

We are reintroducing grants for people living with MND



From 1 October, people living with MND in Scotland will be able to apply for a **£250 cost of living grant**.

The grant, funded by MND Scotland, is not means-tested and is fully flexible, so people can use the payment in a way that is most helpful to them.

Nicola Povey, head of support development, said*: "We understand a £250 payment will not remove all financial pressures, but we believe it can provide immediate, practical support to people with MND in Scotland and allow individuals to use the support to suit their own circumstances."*

Read more on our website

Gordon Aikman scholarship awarded to Euan's Guide



Euan's Guide, founded by **Euan MacDonald MBE** following his own MND diagnosis, will receive £33,000 to support the development of a new digital resource designed specifically around the journeys people with MND make every day.

The **Gordon Aikman Scholarship**, set up in 2017 in honour of late MND campaigner Gordon Aikman, funds research and developments into improving care and support for people living with

MND. The scholarship scheme is jointly funded by MND Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The grant will create **Euan's MND Scotland Guide** – a tailored version of EuansGuide.com. The guide will be an online platform that provides trusted access information tailored to the needs of people with MND.

The funding announcement was made on Euan's birthday - Friday, 14 August.

Read more on our website

All MND Scotland counsellors ACT trained



We have invested in **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy** for all our trained counsellors to ensure people affected by MND are receiving the most up to date and effective support.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, often known as ACT, is an evidence-based approach that can help people manage difficult thoughts, feelings and experiences, while staying connected to what matters most to them.

The COMMEND study, led by the University of Sheffield, showed that tailored psychological support can have a major impact on the quality of life of those people living with MND. COMMEND, which was the largest-ever trial of a psychological intervention for people living with MND, found ACT therapy, delivered alongside usual care, can significantly improve quality of life.

MND Scotland's counsellors will receive a recognised qualification in ACT Therapy from the University of Strathclyde, plus 18 months of expert-led supervision.

MND Scotland is proud to provide free counselling directly to people affected by MND. This support is delivered by a specialist counselling team, who understand the impact MND can have on individuals, families and carers.

Read more about ACT

ECR competition announced



MND Scotland has launched the inaugural **Ignite Early Career Researcher (ECR)** competition, offering up to five ECRs the chance to embark on their own, small-scale research project in MND, to help spark their careers in the field.

We believe developing the careers of ECRs is vital to continue moving MND research forward. **Ignite**

will provide ECRs with the opportunity to explore their own theories, produce their own findings and give the initial boost needed to get an idea off the ground. This may be investigating pre-existing data from a new angle, creating a prototype piece of equipment, or interviewing people affected by MND to improve an aspect of MND care.

The deadline for Stage 1 applications is **31 October 2026**.

Read more about Ignite

Join us at LEARN in 2026



Our **Lived Experience and Researcher Network (LEARN)** local events return this Autumn with six events across Scotland.

Since launching in 2024, LEARN has brought together over 270 people affected by MND and MND researchers to share knowledge, experiences and opinions. This year

we will be returning to **Aberdeen**, **Dingwall**, **Dundee**, **Edinburgh** and **Glasgow**, with the addition of our first LEARN event in **Dumfries**.

The events bring together the MND community and MND researchers to discuss MND research and what matters to people with lived experience of the disease. **Here is a recent lab tour video** that explains the importance of linking lived experience with researchers.

You can find full information about each event by following the links below to the event webpage:

Glasgow – Monday 07 September 2026

Aberdeen – Tuesday 15 Sept 2026

Dumfries – Tuesday 29 September

Dundee – Tuesday 06 October 2026

Edinburgh – Monday 19 October 2026

Dingwall – Tuesday 27 October 2026

If you would like to attend a LEARN event, please let us know by filling in our note of interest form - **Fill out form**.

Read what attendees thought of LEARN last year **here**, and if you have any questions, please get in touch with **research@mndscotland.org.uk**.

Complete the form to join us at LEARN

Get involved in research



At MND Scotland, we believe the involvement and engagement of those with lived experience is of the utmost importance. One way we facilitate this is by advertising opportunities for people with lived experience to take part in research. This could be being part of a panel, providing samples, undergoing scans or taking part in an interview about your experience. You can find opportunities to take part in research that are currently open on our **website**.

Current opportunities include:

- Undertaking a motor unit MRI (MUMRI) scan in Newcastle
- Being part of the Public Involvement Advisory Forum for the iCOMMEND study
- Online interviews about genetic testing pathways with researchers from the University of Sheffield

Find current research opportunities

Join us for Kevin Sinfield's Grand Finale



This September, **Sir Kevin Sinfield** and the 7 in 7 team will once again hit the road to raise money and awareness for those impacted by MND.

MND Scotland is proud to receive support from Kevin's challenges and will be attending day two of **Kevin Sinfield 7 in 7: The Grand Finale** on Monday, 28 September.

We'll be in York to cheer Kevin and his team on as they take on one last challenge to raise money for those affected by MND, and we would love for you to join us.

The event starts at 8am when Kevin will be leaving from Shiptonthorpe Village Hall before 9am. The list of stops are below with the final stop at Bishopthorpe Palace at approximately 3pm. The Extra Mile will take place at the University of York Athletics Track around midday.

Locations on Monday, 28 September:

Shiptonthorpe Village Hall

The Old Forge Tea Rooms – Pocklington

Layby Stop (Hull Road) – Wilberfoss

Layby Stop (Hull Road) – Grimston

University of York Athletics Track

York Community Stadium

York Racecourse

Bishopthorpe Palace

If you would like to join Team MND Scotland in York, or to find out more information please email us at – **fundraising@mndscotland.org.uk**.

Click here to donate to Kevin Sinfield 7 in 7: The Grand Finale

Aberdeen researchers identify links between inflammation and MND



Professor Jenna Gregory and her team at the University of Aberdeen have discovered vital new insights into how inflammation in the brain drives MND, thanks to a grant from MND Scotland.

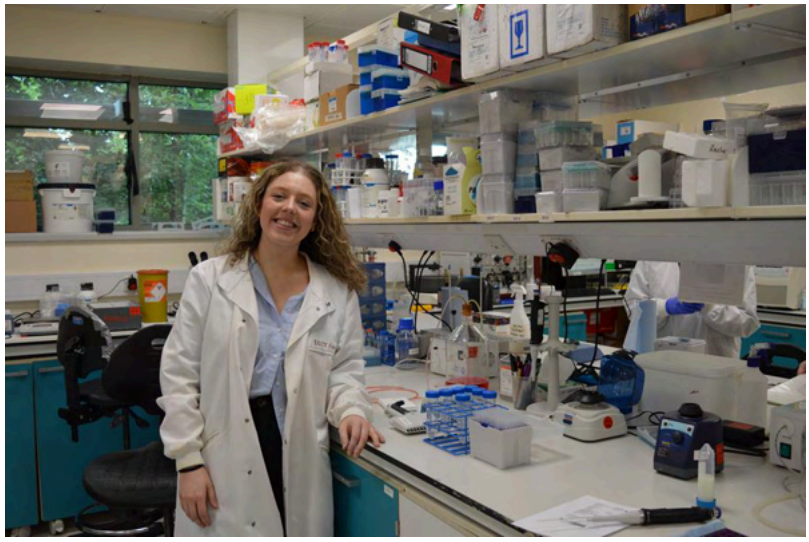
Professor Gregory and her research team discovered that one specific inflammation pathway, known as the type-I interferon

pathway, is unusually active in some people with MND, particularly those with certain genetic forms such as C9orf72-related MND. When this pathway is overactive, research shows that people tend to experience faster disease progression.

Dr Jane Haley said: "*Professor Gregory's work gives hope that, in the future, targeting inflammation could lead to treatments that slow disease progression and make a difference to people living with MND. We are proud to support Professor Gregory's research and will be interested to see the results as this work progresses.*"

Read more about Professor Gregory's research here

Research highlights the role of stathmin-2 and stress in motor neuron survival in MND



Dr Tatyana Shelkovnikova from the University of Sheffield has investigated a new way of protecting motor neurons in people with MND, thanks to a grant from MND Scotland.

In MND, motor neurons, the cells that carry movement signals from the brain to muscles, are damaged and eventually die. A protein called TDP-43 is known to stop working properly in up to 95% of people with the condition.

Recent research has shown that this indirectly affects the production of another protein, stathmin-2 (STMN2). STMN2 is vital for motor neuron health, and when its levels fall, motor neurons lose their connection to muscles, leading to the symptoms of MND. Preventing the decline of STMN2 is therefore a potential target for slowing disease progression.

Read more about Dr Shelkovnikova's research

Kidz to Adultz Scotland



Kidz to Adultz Scotland, a UK exhibition for disabled children, young people and their families, is expanding for the first time in its 25-year history to directly support disabled adults, adult services and later-life care.

The event, held in Glasgow at the **Scottish Event Campus on Tuesday 15 September 2026,** will welcome hundreds of exhibitors, including many new organisations specialising in adult and later-life disability services. Alongside the exhibition

there will be a free programme of CPD and educational seminars and workshops for parents, carers, individuals and professionals. Organisers expect 2,500 visitors, building on the success of the last Kidz to Adultz event in Scotland, which attracted 1,000 attendees in 2022.

Find out more about this event

And finally ...



As shared in previous newsletters, our survey showed you are keen to see more regular staff updates and photos. Over the next few newsletters, we are going to share a bit more about the support team.

Meet Kat Foster

Hi, I'm the Practical Support Development Lead at MND Scotland. My role involves supporting the National Support Advisers, including line management and guidance with cases. I continue to advise clients directly, too, where I can. I love speaking with our clients and find having first-hand experience of what the MND community are

experiencing helps inform the choices we make about the support we offer. Another key aspect is liaising closely with MND Scotland partners and stakeholders to ensure we keep our advice up-to-date and offer the widest range of support possible.

I've always worked for organisations whose aim is to help people, and this is still what I love most about MND Scotland. We offer a whole host of practical support, so there's always a sense of truly helping, even if it is just in one small way. On a personal level, the feedback we get from clients demonstrates that we do make a difference and that is so rewarding.

Beyond MND Scotland, I have a second 'voluntary' role as taxi driver for my teenagers. However, if time allows, I usually have a DIY or decorating project on the go; working through the house and garden with a Forth Bridge approach - it never ends!

We welcome feedback on our quarterly newsletter. If you have any comments or suggestions, please get in touch by emailing **communications@mndscotland.org.uk**.

MND Scotland

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MND Scotland is the only motor neuron disease (MND) charity providing direct support to people living with MND in Scotland. We campaign to create lasting change and invest in pioneering MND research to find a cure.

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