

Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre



Information Pack

*Providing Information, Inspiration & Support
For People with MS & Their Families*





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Welcome from our Chairman

Ian Langrish



Dear New Member,

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) takes people right in their prime. It doesn't ask who you are, how smart you are or whether you are rich or poor. MS strikes like a thunderbolt and turns not only your life upside down but also the life of your loved ones.

MS has many different faces, but one thing is for sure: once you are diagnosed, you will need help – maybe not right away, but sooner or later you are going to look for any support you can get hold of.

I found the right kind of support in the Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Centre (BMSTC). MS was diagnosed for me after an MRI scan, in 1991. I was able to go on working, as a financial advisor and singer, quite normally for several years. But things gradually became more awkward. I noticed, for example, I had to walk with one and then two sticks and didn't like very hot weather. But I was able to carry my computer and various papers in a shoulder bag without any problem at first. Working from home helped. But I had to stop working altogether in 2000 thanks, mainly, to changes with my company.

I started going to BMSTC at about that time. A little while ago a friend commented that it must have taken courage to walk through the front doors at BMSTC for the first time. I was walking at that stage. Frankly I wasn't aware of it, but merely doing what I needed to. The first thing I heard was laughter! Yes, MS is not good news but there's no gallows-humour at the Centre. Apart from anything else, everyone understands that you can have a bad day. MS is certainly life-altering but it is not life-threatening! BMSTC aims to make life better for all concerned.

The biggest room in the Centre is the physiotherapy gym. The trained neuro-physiotherapists, or any members in a group physio session, cajole and encourage. Be it with physio, "High Dosage Oxygen", or any of the other therapies the basic maxim is to help an individual do what they can. No force, just quiet encouragement.

My wife and I haven't needed to take advantage of it, but a very important service/therapy available is Counselling. That can be for the individual or their next of kin. BMSTC is here to help with both the physical and psychological impact of MS. BMSTC also offers massage therapy, Reiki, acupuncture, chiropody, yoga and spinal reflexology. There is no cure for MS yet but any one of the various therapies might just be very helpful.

BMSTC also benefits the next of kin to know the person concerned is somewhere safe, with people who understand and can help. That aspect is easily forgotten. The nearest and dearest can be assured the person with MS is in a place where everyone understands and can help. Personally, I have also learnt so much from chance comments over a cup of tea too!

See you in the Centre!

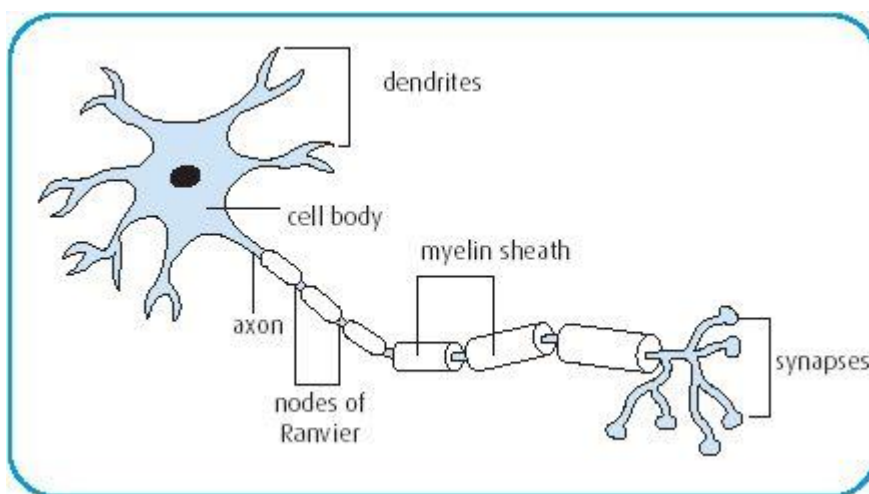
Kind Regards,
Ian Langrish
Chairman of BMSTC's Board of Trustees

What is MS?

MS is the most common disease of the central nervous system affecting young adults. The central nervous system comprises the brain and spinal cord. Together with the nerves connecting to the rest of the body, they form the body's communication network.

Nerve cells (neurons) contain nerve fibres (axons), which are surrounded by a protective sheath of fatty protein called myelin. This protects the nerves in the same way that insulating material protects an electric wire. In MS, damage or scarring occurs to the myelin sheath. This damage (called demyelination) disrupts the way in which messages, or nerve impulses, are carried to and from the brain and so can interfere with a range of the body's functions.

A nerve cell or neuron:



The term 'multiple sclerosis' comes from 'sclerosis', which means 'scarring' and 'multiple', which relates to the sites of the scarring, which can occur in different places throughout the brain and spinal cord.

The symptoms experienced depend on the position and extent of the scarring or lesions within the central nervous system and on how much damage has occurred, so no two people with MS will have exactly the same set of symptoms.

In the earlier stages of MS, the central nervous system can often repair areas of damaged myelin or reroute messages via different pathways of neurons thereby avoiding the damaged areas. This explains why episodes of symptoms (relapses) can be followed by weeks, months or even years when symptoms improve or disappear (remission). However, if the area of damage becomes too large, communication with that specific part of the central nervous system may become permanently blocked.

What are the common symptoms at the time of diagnosis?

- fatigue
- loss of vision in one eye
- blurred or double vision
- dragging a foot

- weakness of limbs
- reduced coordination
- balance problems
- numbness, pins and needles, burning sensations

What causes MS?

The cause of MS is not yet fully understood but is thought to be a combination of environmental and genetic factors. One theory is that some people have certain groups of genes that make them more likely to develop MS. It may be that an external factor, such as a virus, triggers a reaction in those with this genetic predisposition causing the immune system to malfunction and attack its own myelin.

Key facts about MS

- More than 100,000 people in the UK have multiple sclerosis.
- Recent studies suggest about three times as many women as men have MS
- Multiple sclerosis is not inherited, but family members do have a slightly higher risk of developing MS
- It is usually diagnosed when people are in their 20s and 30s
- MS is a disease affecting the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord)
- Symptoms can come and go and can vary greatly in terms of severity
- There may be periods of relapse of varying length and severity
- Everyone's MS is different
- MS is not a fatal condition
- It is neither infectious nor contagious
- Most people diagnosed with MS will not need to use a wheelchair on a regular basis
- At present, there is no cure for MS but this certainly doesn't mean that the symptoms of MS cannot be treated.

Diagnosing MS

Getting a diagnosis of MS can be a long and difficult process, not least because the symptoms of MS are common to many other conditions. Many people with MS say that handling the uncertainty during and following diagnosis is harder than coping with any of the symptoms they ever experience. Knowing what to expect during the diagnosis procedure and understanding what the various tests are looking for can help to make the process easier to deal with.

There is no one test or procedure that can be used to accurately diagnose MS on its own. Diagnosis is usually based on a history of symptoms (perhaps an unexplained episode of blurred vision years before, or pins and needles in the hands or feet) and on the results from a series of tests. Doctors need to rule out other possible causes of symptoms before they can confirm a diagnosis of MS.

If you experience symptoms for the first time, and then they improve or disappear, neurologists often prefer to wait for a second relapse, or for symptoms to become more severe, before giving a definite diagnosis.

Medical (clinical) history

Your doctor will ask about your medical history and symptoms and may perform some simple physical examinations.

MRI scanning

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans are used to identify any areas of scarring in the brain or spinal cord.

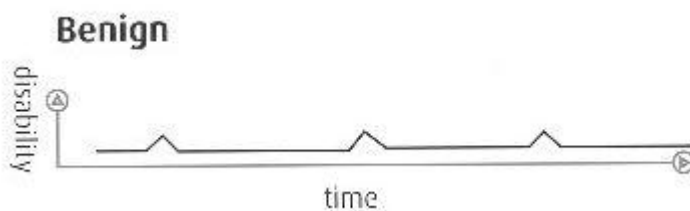
Types of MS

MS is a complex and unpredictable condition that varies from person to person and does not follow a set pattern. Symptoms can come and go from day to day but there can also be relapses followed by periods of complete or partial remission. For other people, MS can be more progressive in nature.

MS is often divided into four different types:

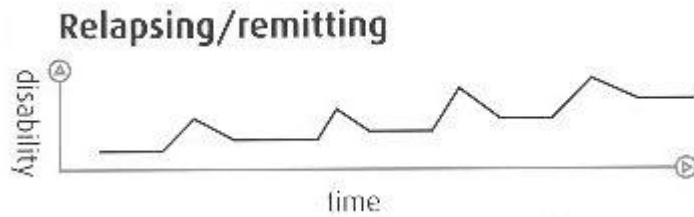
Benign

Benign MS is associated with very occasional relapses, with good recovery in between and minimal symptoms over many years; therefore it can only be diagnosed retrospectively. Some neurologists estimate that more than 20% of people with MS have this benign form of the condition. The long-term prognosis for a person with benign MS is generally good, but there can be exceptions and some people do find their benign MS worsens in later life.



Relapsing remitting

Initially, about two thirds of people have relapsing remitting MS. They experience relapses on average once or twice per year, with good or complete remission in between. However, there is a tendency for symptoms to worsen very gradually over time.

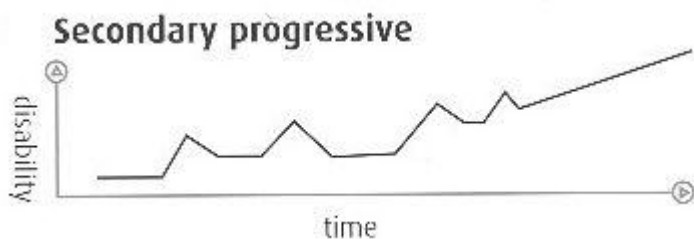


A relapse is a significant worsening or a re-occurrence of a symptom, or a group of symptoms, lasting for more than 24 hours. Relapses are also referred to as exacerbations, episodes and attacks. Symptoms usually appear over a short period of time (hours or days), but can last for anywhere between a few days to many months. The severity of a relapse can also vary from mild to more severe.

A remission is a period of recovery, when symptoms become less severe or disappear altogether. Periods of remission can last any length of time, sometimes even for years.

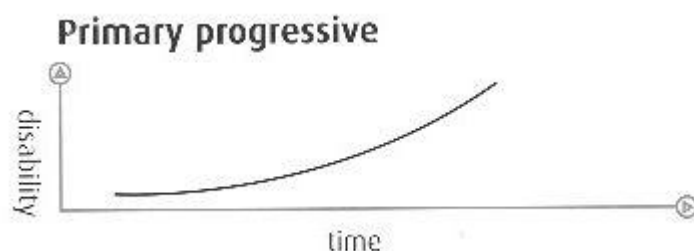
Secondary progressive

People who start off with relapsing remitting MS may go on to develop a progressive form of the condition; on average this occurs 15-20 years after diagnosis. The severity and frequency of the relapses decrease, but disability slowly increases.



Primary progressive

About 10% of people experience symptoms right from the start that become progressively worse over a period of years without remission.



It is important to note that it is not usually possible to determine which type of MS you have when you are diagnosed - this will only become apparent over time. Also, the course of MS is very varied and unpredictable, which makes it impossible to say with any certainty how MS might develop.

Research has shown that some early symptoms, particularly those affecting sight and sensation, as well as long intervals between relapses, suggest a more positive long-term outlook or prognosis.

Remember that whatever type of MS you have, it is unlikely to shorten your lifespan.

Despite the fact that approximately 150 years have elapsed since the first recorded case of MS, neither the cause of, nor cure for the disease is yet known. Until a cure is discovered, we aim to help people with MS learn to manage the disease effectively with appropriate therapy.

(This first section has been reproduced from the MS Trust information with their kind permission www.mstrust.or.uk)

How the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre works

The Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre (BMSTC) has the motto *“Self help is our way of action”*. This desire to take control of the illness and to overcome the lack of positive answers to questions means that we are now a one-stop-shop for almost anything and everything to do with MS.



Our aim is to improve the quality of life for people with Multiple Sclerosis. To do this we offer a range of therapies and Counselling for people affected by MS. Our support is not only for people who have MS, but for all those affected by it including carers, spouses and families.

This means that when you are ready to find out how you can take charge of the disease we can offer all the support you need. The frustration that goes with the patronising attitude so frequently shown to people with MS disappears. The Centre knows that people with MS want to be involved in finding ways to deal with the disease and recognises that no one else has more motivation to do this and to bring a sense of urgency to the problems involved.

The Centre recognises that whatever age you are when you are diagnosed you have a vested interest in preventing the disease from disabling you further. To this end we place great emphasis on research that alleviates the effects of MS in addition to laboratory research that seeks the cause and cure of the disease.

All members of the BMSTC are aware of the role they can play in research. This switching of emphasis from traditional methods to patient-managed research and therapies is one of our most important achievements.

We support research that looks into the cause, diagnosis, treatment, cure and prevention of MS. We seek to educate the public, clients and professionals about the disease.

BMSTC offers individuals:

- Therapy advice based on scientific studies
- Membership of a network of therapy groups
- Information resources on research and therapy open to professionals and clients **alike**.

Clients are put **first**, and the services arranged around their needs.

BMSTC is an independent local charity, part of a national network of centres providing support, information, advice and a range of therapies aimed at limiting the progression of the disease. Every MS Therapy Centre is entirely voluntarily funded through donations and relies heavily on an army of volunteers.

BMSTC has over 70 regular volunteers to help run the services alongside a small number of employees comprising mainly of our professional physiotherapy team and other self-employed professional therapists. The registered charity is governed by our volunteer board of Trustees who are people with MS or their partners and other local professionals with an interest in MS.

People of all ages who have MS and their family members or carers are welcomed as members of the BMSTC. There is a voluntary annual membership subscription of £24 due.

Therapeutic treatments, Counselling and other services are provided by the fully qualified professional personnel engaged by the Centre. Around half of the cost of providing treatments to its members is subsidised by the Centre. Therefore, members receiving therapy are invited to make a voluntary contribution, towards the balance, for each treatment given.

If you are able to donate a little more than the current minimum level recommended by the Trustees, it would be much appreciated. In cases of genuine hardship, being unable to contribute does not preclude anyone from receiving the majority of treatments at the Centre.

It is the duty of the Trustees to ensure the continued secure operation of the Centre for its membership. To this end the subscription and the minimum level of voluntary contribution for treatment will be maintained at the lowest sensible rates recognising prudent management and the range of services provided.

Therapies available at the Centre

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy treatment programmes are tailored to the individual needs of each person. Using the basis of careful and detailed assessments, the Physiotherapist draws up a physiotherapy regime specific to each patient.

The regime is adjusted appropriately following reassessment when the patient has made progress, or when the symptoms of MS change due to disease activity. Using this as a basis, MS clients can be shown how to help themselves regain movement and co-ordination.

Individual clients are encouraged to monitor their own progress resulting from their programme of exercise, and to use the gains made through treatment in activities of daily living.

One way of teaching and encouraging people is in classes that offer the discipline and mutual support of a group. A chat over a cup of coffee after a class is the ideal time to exchange information or find a listening ear.

Individual sessions are also available to work on particular problem areas. Physiotherapy has a vital role to play in helping people to cope with the daily challenge of living with MS.

We use a neurological approach to Physiotherapy to enable MS clients to:-

- learn to control and co-ordinate movement patterns
- reduce spasticity and encourage more normal movements
- regain functional abilities

Physiotherapy can teach someone the importance of good posture and correct movement in everyday activities such as sitting, walking, rising from a sitting or lying position. The therapist and patient work together to achieve easier and more normal movement so that the patient can enjoy the greatest degree of independence possible.

The Physiotherapist can also instruct the patient in how to prevent secondary disability which may arise from disuse.

Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES)

FES is a relatively new approach which helps people with their walking when suffering from “drop foot”.

With FES, electrical stimulation is provided in a safe way so that a person’s leg muscles are activated at the right moment to lift their foot and therefore make walking easier.

FES can potentially help anyone who has a drop foot due to a neurological disorder. such as multiple sclerosis. You can speak to our Physiotherapy team for more details.

Oxygen Therapy

Oxygen is essential to every one of the tissues in the body and any tissue injury requires oxygen for healing. Recent research at the University of Dundee shows that, in the



inflammation that is typical of MS, the transport of oxygen is severely limited by tissue swelling.

Oxygen Therapy, where the normal amount of oxygen in the air is exceeded many times, is now being widely used in medical practice, notably in the USA, mainland Europe, Japan, Russia and China.

Use in Multiple Sclerosis has been controversial, largely because function and expectations have been widely misunderstood, although studies have shown that it is beneficial.

Clearly, the process by which damage to the nervous system is caused in MS cannot be prevented by Oxygen Therapy. However, as the body normally heals itself using oxygen from the air, additional oxygen can extend the body's ability to heal and can limit some of the damage which the disease causes.

Breathing oxygen under pressure causes the dilated and leaky blood vessels in MS to constrict back to normal size and reduces the swelling. At the same time, more oxygen is delivered to the bloodstream so increasing the amount available to help undertake repair.

How can Oxygen Therapy help?

The aim of oxygen treatment in MS is to minimise the amount of damage being caused, promote rapid healing and limit the scar formation which can prevent nerve function being restored.

Oxygen Therapy is available at the Therapy Centre, and is offered only with the knowledge and approval of the G.P. It is conducted within strict regulations and all operators are comprehensively trained in its use.



The initial course consists of 15 sessions over 3 consecutive weeks, each lasting 1 hour. These are then followed by 'top up' sessions which may vary

from once a week to once a month. The chamber at the Therapy Centre allows up to 7 people to be treated simultaneously. All sessions are individually monitored as is the patient's progress. Sessions are paid for by voluntary contribution.

The most significant benefits are in improved balance, sensory perception and control of incontinence. Other symptoms also show beneficial change in different people; often people report improvements to symptoms of fatigue in particular.

Oxygen Therapy is not a cure for MS - but it does seem effective in helping people with MS to slow down the progression of the disease. In addition, it often results in some improvement in general condition.

Counselling Service

It is generally recognised that mind and body are inseparable. What affects one invariably affects the other. Hence it is equally as important to provide help and support for the emotional aspects of MS as for the physical effects and the symptoms.

Is Counselling for you?

You may need some help and would find talking to someone in complete confidence of benefit to you. Counselling can help with:-

- Anxiety or depression
- Low self-esteem
- Emotional problems
- Relationship difficulties
- Family / marital crises
- Work-related problems
- Bereavement
- Personal development

The role of the Counsellor

The Counsellor's role is to be very supportive and to encourage you to find your own way forward. Counsellors do not give unwanted advice, spend time talking about themselves or pass judgement on you or others.

Individual Counselling

Individual Counselling is an opportunity for you to talk with one of the Counsellors and share the concerns and feelings you are experiencing. The Counsellor will work with you to help you discover your inner resources.

"I have had very difficult times and I could not have got through without Counselling. It has made me come though to see life more positively"

Couples Counselling

Couples Counselling is for people wanting help with their relationship. The Counsellor will not take sides, but will support you both in finding how you want to relate to each other.

"Counselling led us to a new understanding and has moderated the way we act and communicate with each other. It did not just help us at that time but is continuing to help us."

Cost?

The Centre operates a voluntary contribution scheme.

Interested?

If you are interested in coming for Counselling or would like to have more information, please get in touch with the Therapy Centre to book an appointment.

Telephone Counselling

The telephone Counselling service has been set up by the MS Society to provide a sympathetic ear and information that is based on an understanding gained through personal experience of the disease.

By ringing the numbers given below, the caller can obtain general help or telephone Counselling:-

MS Society,	Mon – Fri 9am – 9pm	0808 800 8000
MS Resource Centre	Mon – Fri 9am – 9pm	0800 783 0518

The service is run by trained Counsellors who either have MS themselves, or are closely related to someone who does.

Yoga and Relaxation

Yoga has been developed over many thousands of years to promote good health and inner peace. It combines gentle holistic activities designed to:

- Maintain fitness, suppleness and muscle tone
- Strengthen the body's own self-healing powers

With breathing, meditation and visualisation which help:

- Energise both body and mind
- Reduce stress
- Improve concentration and clarity
- Control and calm the mind

Helping you work, relax and sleep more deeply. As such, it affords strong protection against illnesses of all kinds.

Originating in the East, Yoga is now practised by millions of people worldwide to maintain and improve the quality of their lives.

Yoga for people with MS

Yoga is uniquely able to assist people with MS. Its gentle holistic activities, and breathing and meditation techniques, improve and help maintain energy flow with minimal physical effort. Fitness and clarity of mind are improved whilst further degeneration can be slowed down and even reversed.

Acupuncture

The ancient Chinese physicians did not view the body as something absolutely solid—a frozen, unchanging sculpture—or as a machine. Rather they saw it as an expression of a

deep vitality that is in constant ebb and flow within itself as well as in exchange with its environment. This vitality can become unbalanced—either through emotional strain and modern stresses or through a myriad of environmental factors. The human body, they said, is much more like a garden than a machine. As any gardener knows, you can get away with occasionally not weeding or feeding or pruning or any of the many tasks we perform as gardeners but, if you leave things too long, pests and weeds start choking out the plants that were placed there with so much care in the first place. If things are left too long, a state of imbalance occurs and, in the human body, just as in the garden, that expresses itself as a disease, pain and discomfort.

The job of the Acupuncturist is to assess the imbalance and rebalance this vitality, which the Chinese call Qi (pronounced Chee). Once the Acupuncturist has established the ‘landscape’ of the imbalance, he/she then seeks to restore balance to this flow of vitality by inserting needles as fine as a human hair in some of the many Acupuncture points in the body.

Does it hurt?

If you take one strand of hair from your head and pluck it out there is a short lived ‘ouch!’ sensation. Acupuncture is just like that. You feel it as the fine needle enters your body and then, while the needles remain in place for about twenty minutes or so, you don’t feel it again after that initial entry.

What if I really hate needles?

Because so many people in the West have phobias about needles that often stem from a childhood trauma, Acupuncturists have worked with scientists to develop ways of using the same principles without the necessity of inserting needles.

Acupuncture at the Therapy Centre

For more information on Acupuncture, Acupressure and Reiki at the Centre, or to arrange an appointment, contact us.

Reiki



Reiki is a popular, gentle and effective therapy. The therapist works with their hands on or just off the body and so it is non-invasive but provides effective relief from pain or stress and you will leave feeling refreshed and deeply relaxed.

The treatment lasts for about an hour and you will be asked to remove your shoes before lying or sitting comfortably. The therapist uses their hands to channel Reiki energy to stimulate the body’s own healing power.

As Reiki is so gentle it is suitable for everyone: children; the elderly;

pregnant women; anyone suffering from chronic conditions e.g. multiple sclerosis; acute conditions e.g. arthritis; those recovering from an operation or an injury e.g. broken limb.

The Reiki we practice today was developed by Dr Mikao Usui in Japan around the beginning of the last century. The word Reiki is understood to mean "Universal Life Force".

Massage Therapy

Massage Therapy aims to provide people with time and space for a relaxing and soothing experience in a warm, supportive atmosphere. Massage improves the circulation. It relaxes tense muscles and is an excellent way to unwind and help restore a sense of well being and balance.

Foot Care

A general tidy up of those bits and pieces of hard skin, corns, cracked heels and thick toenails can make all the difference to the look and feel of your feet.

Kayleigh Keen Ward MCFHP MAFHP is here at the Centre on either a Monday or Wednesday.

Kayleigh can offer you a wide range of treatments which include:

Foot Care Treatment

- Routine foot care including toe nail cutting and filing
- Hard skin and callous reduction
- Cutting and treating fungal nails
- Dry feet and cracked heels
- Ingrowing toenails
- Veruccae treatments
- Treatment and removal of corns
- Athlete's foot
- Reduction of thickened nails
- Foot and lower leg massage

Spinal Reflexology

Spinal Reflexology works by gently releasing the muscles around the vertebrae of the whole spine including the shoulders, neck and pelvis.

This enables the underlying nerves to send correct information to the brain, thereby helping to allow normal functioning to return to all parts of the body and organs that are supplied at that level.

The treatment is carried out fully clothed (loose jogging trousers and T-shirt are ideal) with the client lying comfortably on their front and, for a shorter while. on their back. The therapy feels like a gentle massage on the back and is very relaxing, but extremely effective. Some people notice a difference after only one session, but symptoms are greatly improved by regular sessions to start with followed by less frequent maintenance treatments.

The list of conditions helped by Spinal Reflexology is extensive from general aches and pains to Tinnitus, however MS -related problems helped by this therapy can include:

- Improved mobility
- Decreased stiffness of limbs
- Increased stamina
- Increased flexibility
- Improved speech and vision
- Improved posture
- Reduction in pain
- Relief from neck and back pain and stiffness
- Improved circulation
- Improved bladder and bowel function
- Reduced swellings in legs
- Less numbness in hands and feet
- Significant reduction in leg spasms

Interested?

If you are interested in finding out more about us or arranging a time to come and visit please call 0118 901 6000, email ms@bmstc.org or visit our website www.bmstc.org

You can also keep up to date with our current news by visiting our Centre blog or joining our Facebook page community. You will find links for both of these on our website home page www.bmstc.org

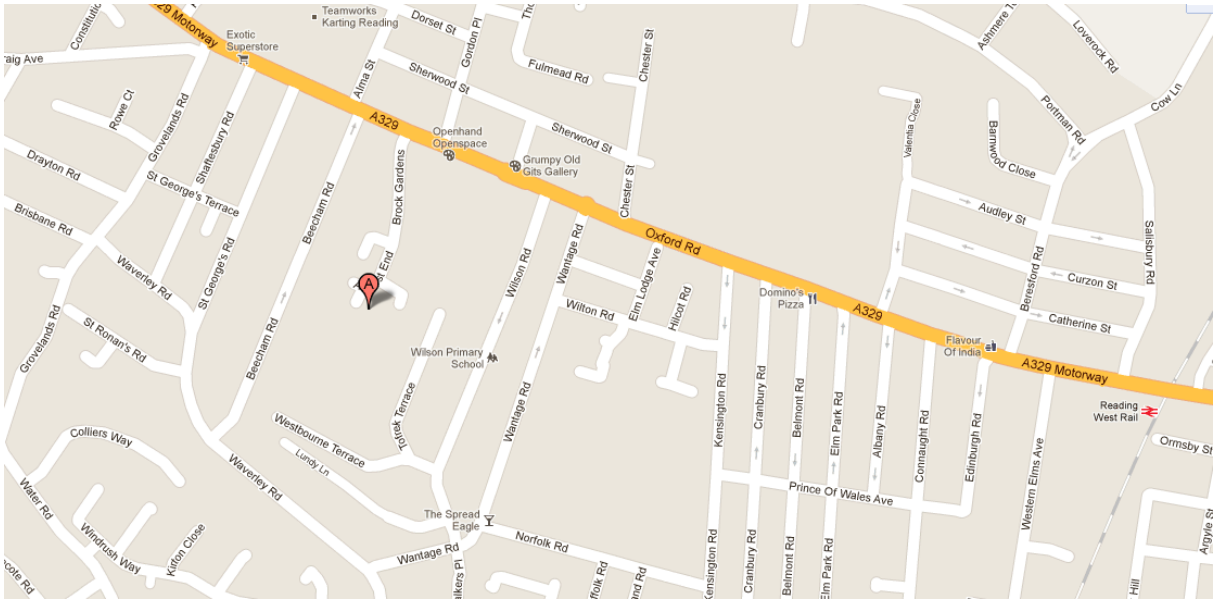
Outside the area?

MS Therapy Centres are spread widely across the UK and Ireland. The majority of centres are members of the umbrella body, MS National Therapy Centres, and there is a separate umbrella body in Scotland. Find your nearest centre by visiting www.msntc.org.uk

Client Quote:

“My physiotherapist gave me not only physical support but also emotional support which helped me get out of a bad patch, get back to work and flourish! Thanks so much to all at the BMSTC for helping me to live with my MS in a positive way, and for letting me know I am never alone.”





Google Maps

We look forward to welcoming you!



**The Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre,
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Patrons: Sir John Madejski : Paul Daniels : Martin Salter

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