

# Annual Report

Fibromyalgia Friends Together 2024-2025



*Friends who understand. Support that lasts.*

**PRESENTED BY:** MARK FARMER - CHAIR OF FIBROMYALGIA FRIENDS TOGETHER

**A LOOK AT HOW WE HAVE MET OUR OBJECTIVES IN THE YEAR 2024-2025**

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As Chair of **Fibromyalgia Friends Together**, it is both an honour and a pleasure to present this year's report at our AGM — a particularly special one, as we celebrated our **10th anniversary**.

Over the past decade, our charity has grown from a small group of friends with a shared experience into a recognised organisation that offers understanding, companionship, and support to people living with fibromyalgia and their families. Reaching this milestone is a testament to the dedication of our volunteers, trustees, and members, past and present.

## **10th Anniversary Celebration**



Our biggest achievement this year was marking **10 years of Fibromyalgia Friends Together**. On Thursday 19 June, we celebrated this milestone with a garden party at **Ulverscroft Manor in Markfield**, bringing together long-time supporters, new members, and friends of the charity. It was a joyful occasion where our community came together to reflect on how far we've come, thank those who have supported us along the way, and look ahead with optimism.

The warmth and sense of community on that day perfectly reflected what Fibromyalgia Friends Together is all about – providing a safe, supportive space for people to feel heard and understood.

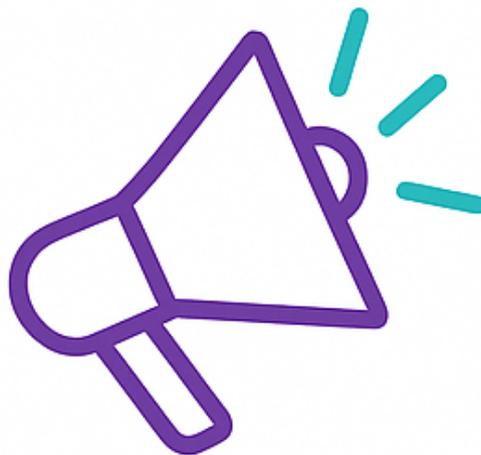
## **Who We Support**

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition that causes widespread pain throughout the body, often accompanied by symptoms such as fatigue, poor sleep, and challenges with memory and concentration – often called “fibro fog.” It is estimated to affect between **1.8 million and 2.9 million people in the UK**.

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**FIBROMYALGIA**

When Fibromyalgia Friends Together began in 2015, awareness and information about the condition were far more limited. Many people had never even heard of fibromyalgia, which delayed diagnosis and left people feeling isolated. Our charity has worked hard to change that – not only supporting those who are newly diagnosed, but also helping carers, families, and health professionals to better understand the condition.

### Highlights of the Year



- **We became a registered charity** - enabling us to secure resources that help meet our objectives.
- **Monthly Meetings:** We continue to run our **in-person meetings every 3rd Monday of the month** at Bright Hope House in Swannington, North West Leicestershire. These sessions give members the chance to share experiences, tips, and coping strategies in a safe, understanding environment. Topics this year have included managing pain, online safety, and practical advice for daily living.

*"Due to our growing numbers, we moved from the **Manor at the Shuttlewood-Clarke Foundation** – where we were warmly hosted for almost 10 years – to the Bright Hope Centre. We remain deeply thankful to the Trustees of the*

*Foundation, and especially to **Kathleen Wass**, who worked with me in 2015 to get the group off the ground and provided much-needed support in our early days. While it was not easy to leave such a special place, the modern facilities at Bright Hope will allow us to continue growing and supporting more members.”*

- **Information and Resources:** Our website and supports packs provide free resources to help members navigate life with fibromyalgia. From advice on healthcare appointments to financial guidance and pain management strategies, these resources remain a cornerstone of our support.
- **Research:** This last year, we have partnered with Loughborough University to help them with research around the framing of pain. We are planning to do further research with Loughborough University - to build the body of evidence around the impact that Fibromyalgia has on people's life.
- **Helpline:** Our **telephone support line (0116 298 8007)** has been an important way for people to reach out when they feel isolated or wanted to know more. This number has proved especially valuable for those newly diagnosed or unable to attend meetings.
- **Awareness & Advocacy:** We have continued to raise awareness through events, social media, and partnerships with health bodies and universities. Our logo, designed by a member, featuring a resting leopard, has become a powerful symbol – representing both the need for rest and the strength required to live with fibromyalgia. It remains a wonderful talking point at awareness events.
- **Online Community:** Our **Facebook group now has more than 3,000 members across the UK**. It is a vibrant space where people share advice, experiences, and encouragement. For many, this group is a vital source of connection and reassurance. We have nearly 14,000 people following our work via our Facebook page and around 40,000 people visit our website.

## Financial Position



Our finances remain stable, thanks to the careful oversight of our Treasurer and the **generosity of members and supporters**, who play the Charnwood Community Lottery and use EasyFundRaising to do their shopping. Like many small charities, fundraising is a constant challenge (We must raise around £1,500 per year to meet our increasing running costs alone), but our anniversary year gave us valuable opportunities to engage with supporters and raise awareness. We are therefore grateful to both the Barratts Community Fund and Rise Foundation for their particularly generous donations. The Treasurer's report has the full details of the financial position.

## **Volunteers and Members**



This year has been especially positive as we welcomed **new volunteers** into the Fibromyalgia Friends Together family. Two new people, **Charlotte and Nadia** joined our **communications team**, helping to increase our visibility on social media and in the press, while two new volunteers **Helen and Lucy** joined our **fundraising team**.

Our new volunteers have truly hit the ground running – raising our profile, strengthening our voice, and helping us to bring in much-needed funds. Their hard work and creativity have already made a noticeable impact, and we are excited to see their contributions continue to grow.

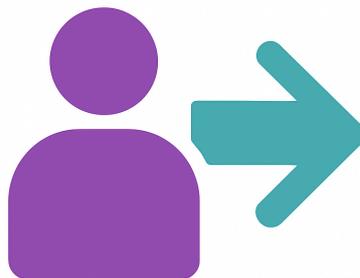
As I reflect on the last year, I also remain deeply grateful for the ongoing commitment and hard work of our **Trustees**, whose dedication underpins the success of our charity. They give so much of their time, care, and energy to ensure that we deliver against our charitable aims:

- **Cara Noton** – for her creativity and technical skill in leading the redesign of our website, making it more modern, accessible, and interactive for members.
- **Janet Hall** – for her warmth, compassion, and advocacy, providing peer support and understanding to so many members.

- **Patricia and Trevor Jordan** – for their tireless efforts, from running raffles and arranging social days out to raising awareness, funds, and spirits. Their enthusiasm and kindness make them wonderful ambassadors for the charity.
- **Diane Stephens** – for managing our large Facebook Group with dedication, ensuring it remains a safe, supportive space for members to connect.
- **Sandra Webster** – for her meticulous financial management as Treasurer, keeping us compliant, financially sound, and well governed. Beyond her financial expertise, Sandra provides wise counsel and steady guidance to the board, always putting members first.
- **And on a sad personal note - Gill Youngs**, who has been our membership officer for a number of years, Gill will be stepping away from her role next year - thanks Gill for all you have done.

Alongside our trustees, we also extend heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers and members. Whether supporting others directly, organising events, or simply offering encouragement, your commitment ensures that our charity continues to thrive.

## Looking Ahead



Over the past 10 years we have grown so much – further than any of us might have imagined back in 2015. Today we are a strong network of members and volunteers, with an established reputation for support and advocacy. But our journey is far from over.

In the coming year, we want to:

- Continue expanding our support network so that no one faces fibromyalgia alone.
- Grow our digital resources, recognising that people increasingly seek online information and support.
- Roll out the use of our new strapline, *“Friends who understand. Support that lasts”* to go with our existing logo enabling us to further build our branding.
- Build stronger partnerships with healthcare and community organisations.
- Advocate for improved services and more research into fibromyalgia.

## Closing Remarks



*"Ten years ago, there was little awareness and few resources for those living with fibromyalgia. Today, Fibromyalgia Friends Together stands as a thriving community of strength, compassion, and hope, reaching thousands of people across the UK.*

*I am so proud of what we have achieved, and I am confident that the next ten years will bring even more growth, recognition, and support for those living with this challenging condition.*

*Thank you to everyone who has been part of our journey – trustees, volunteers, members, and friends. Here's to the next decade together."*

**Mark Farmer**

**Chair, Fibromyalgia Friends Together | Email: [chair@fibro.org.uk](mailto:chair@fibro.org.uk)**

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# The Treasurer's Report

## Fibromyalgia Friends Together 2024-2025

### Introduction

The accounts are for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

### Income 2024-25

Total Income was **£3,014**

There was a generous donation of £1,033 from the Rise Foundation. This funding was specifically for a social event at Xmas. £586 was donated to the charity from the Barratts Community fund with no restrictions.

The Charnwood lottery provided a regular monthly income totalling £344 for the year. Easy fundraising annual donations were £360.

The groups fundraising events raised £95 at the Ibstock country fair and £206 at the coffee morning held at the Charles Booth Centre,

There was no new grant income.

### Expenditure 2024-25

Total expenditure was **£2,461.**

Some of the main expenditure last year was related to IT equipment and website software and licenses. £359 was spent on a laptop for the group's secretary. £259 in total was spent on software and licenses.

Printing costs were £464 of which £278 was spent at Flex press. Promotional items were purchased at £352.

We received invoices for room hire at Ulverscroft Manor of £216.

The Xmas lunch for the group cost £706 which was paid for by the Rise donation.



### **Cash Reserves**

At 31<sup>st</sup> March the charity had **£7,265** left in cash reserves. This is an increase of £553 on the previous year. Included within this balance was the unspent Rise restricted fund of £327.

**Cash at 31st  
March 2025:**

**£7,265**



**Forecast**

**Annual  
running  
costs:**

**£1,500**



**Increase on  
previous year:**

**£553**

### **Forecast for 2025-26**

There are some running costs which are recurrent in nature e.g., website support contracts & software packages and insurance. In total these come to around £600 per annum. In addition, room hire at the Bright Hope House costs £900 annually.

The charity therefore has sufficient cash reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 for the time being.

In the longer term however, there is a need to generate regular sources of income. At the present time, an annual income target of at least £1,500 is required to cover unavoidable annual recurrent running costs.

**Sandra Webster**

**Treasurer, Fibromyalgia Friends Together | Email: [treasurer@fibro.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@fibro.org.uk)**

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# Reports from other Trustees

## Fibromyalgia Friends Together 2024-2025

### **Trevor and Pat Jordan, Activities and Fundraising Co-ordinators and Trustees of Fibromyalgia Friends Together**

#### **Introduction**

This is a report for the period 1st April 2024 to the 31st March 2025. Outlining the activities and fundraising events the group has taken part in. This report is compiled by Trev and Pat Jordan joint Activities and Fundraising Co-Ordinator's for Fibromyalgia Friends Together.

#### **Events**

In this year we have organised the following events:

- 1) A Coffee Morning at the Charles Booth Centre Thringstone. With all the profit going to the group.
- 2) A Manor Day Visit which included a relaxing day at Ulverscroft Manor with a chance to meet and socialize with others and a two-course hot lunch provided by the volunteers at the Manor.
- 3) Outdoor awareness display at the Ibstock Country Fair.
- 4) Fibromyalgia Christmas Lunch at the Priory Inn, Loughborough. Paid for by the Rise Foundation a Leicestershire based Charity.

#### **Fundraising**

In addition to the yearly schemes, we have in place, the Charnwood Lottery, the Easy fundraising online shopping platform, recycling empty ink cartridges, grants, and

donations. This year we have managed to raise funds at the Ibstock Country Fair and the Charles Booth Centre coffee morning.

To finish off this report we would like to thank everyone that have helped us make this such a rewarding year, thank you.

### **Diane Stephens - Social Media Moderator and Trustee of Fibromyalgia Friends Together**

The last year moderating the Facebook group page has been good in that membership has grown well & now around 3.6K. A few months back requests to join shot up rapidly but with the help of Gill it was kept on top of. The act of turning on post approval, for 30 days, after accepting a new member has greatly reduced spam posts which previously had been a big problem.

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