

## **Draft minutes of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the National Eczema Society**

**Held at 1.30pm on 21 September 2019, at  
Birmingham Children's Hospital, Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham B4 6NH**

The Chairman, Ed Davies, opened the Society's Annual General Meeting and warmly welcomed members present, reflecting that the Society was delighted to be gathering in Birmingham for this important annual event. There were more than 15 members present, making the meeting quorate.

**1. Approve Minutes of the AGM held on 22 September 2018 (Resolution 1)**

The Minutes were considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

**2. Chairman's report on activities for the year to 31 December 2018**

Ed Davies began his report by reviewing key activities and achievements during 2018, before going on to highlight the Society's future plans and priorities.

2018 was a year of change and transition for the Society, with the appointment of new Chief Executive, Andrew Proctor, who took over from Margaret Cox in March. Andy's early priority has been to work with the Trustees to review the charity's strategic priorities, to ensure the Society continues to achieve the greatest impact it can for members and others affected by eczema.

Supporting people with high-quality advice and information remains a cornerstone of the Society's work, as does our role as the collective voice for people with eczema to support research and influence health policy. We also aim to raise awareness and understanding of eczema among the general public through our campaigns, media engagement and partnerships.

While so much needs to be done, the Society simply doesn't have the funds to do everything. It is important that we prioritise activities where we can make the biggest difference to people with eczema, as the Society works towards a sustainable model of operation. Above all, we aim to reach and support many more people with eczema across the UK and give additional support to those in greatest need of help.

**Activities and highlights over the year included:**

- Our free telephone and email helpline service continues to be at the heart of the Society's work. We responded to a wide range of enquiries about eczema symptoms and treatments, from both parents of children with eczema and adults with the condition. Callers with more complex questions are able to speak to one of our dermatology nurse advisers, and increasing numbers are requesting this excellent service.
- Alongside our helpline, the Society continued to produce a range of evidence-based booklets and factsheets about eczema management and treatment. These are available online and in print. Our website, emails and busy social media channels continue to be popular and well used.

- We have around 2,700 members currently, who support the Society through their annual membership fee and additional donations. Members receive our quarterly membership magazine, Exchange, and access to all the Society's resources.
- Over the year we grew the charity's capacity to support patient and public involvement (PPI) in eczema research projects and other initiatives like clinical guideline development, where a patient perspective is so important.
- We submitted evidence to National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for its assessment of the new biologic drug for eczema, Dupilumab. We also contributed to a similar Dupilumab assessment exercise for the NHS in Scotland, undertaken by the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC). We were delighted when both NICE and the SMC recommended Dupilumab for use by the NHS, which is the first new drug treatment for eczema in over 50 years. Dupilumab has the potential to transform the lives of those for whom current eczema treatments do not work effectively. The Society is also delighted this new medicine has, more recently, also been made available to adolescents with more severe eczema.
- We started campaigning for people in England with eczema to have access to emollients on prescription, and generating the evidence from patients to show health commissioners that emollient rationing is causing huge difficulties for people with eczema. This is a very worrying development, as we know that emollients are a fundamental part of an effective skincare regime to repair and protect the skin. The Society has produced guidance for people with eczema, to use when making the case with their GP to have emollients on prescription for eczema.
- We sought to develop partnerships with companies that share our strategic objectives and values. Among other initiatives, we were delighted to support the educational objectives of E45's Straight-up Skincare Campaign and endorse Dermal's eczema information resources.
- We increased our social media activity and reach over the year, reflecting the growing trend for people to seek and share eczema information through Facebook, Twitter and other social media. We were more active in the media over the year too, achieving coverage on the BBC, The Guardian newspaper, the I newspaper, Huffington Post and other titles.
- We organised three well-attended eczema training days for healthcare professionals during 2018, in Manchester/Salford, Bristol and London. Over 200 nurses, health visitors, GPs and other professionals attended the three events to update their eczema knowledge.
- And finally, National Eczema Society was delighted to support a new award that recognises exceptional care in eczema nursing. The Eczema Nurse of the Year Award was organised by the British Dermatological Nursing Group (BDNG), and patients were asked to nominate a dermatology nurse who had provided them with exceptional eczema care and support. The worthy winner was Julie Carr, Senior Children's Dermatology Nurse Specialist in Sheffield.

Looking ahead to 2019, our priority is to take forward the strategic review proposals and ensure charity activity is aligned with income. We are retaining the Society's core services,

while implementing an organisational restructure to reduce overall expenditure and ensure our resources meet future needs. Key activities include:

- Continuing to deliver information and advice services for people with eczema, through our nurse-supported helpline, booklets, factsheets and online resources. This year we plan to bring our helpline service operation in-house, from the current outsourced contact centre provider.
- Working on a new website, which will better serve our needs going forward as we look to expand our reach and impact.
- Delivering the Society's valued membership scheme, including producing and distributing Exchange magazine four times a year. In 2019 we plan to review the annual membership fee, which has not increased for many years, and increasing it from £20 to £25 per annum.
- Promoting awareness and understanding of eczema among the general public. The annual national flagship awareness event, National Eczema Week in September, remains the highlight.
- Developing a stronger campaigning voice for people with eczema, to challenge inequalities in health policy and practice. We are also representing people with eczema in clinical guideline development, the assessment of new treatments and policy consultations, and expanding our organisational capacity to support patient involvement in shaping eczema research.

As can be seen, the Society has a busy programme of work and we can only achieve this with the contributions of so many – thank you to all our donors and fundraisers who support the vital work of the Society, and to the volunteers (including Trustees), partners and staff who work so hard to make a difference for people affected by eczema.

### **3. Treasurer's report on the accounts for the year to 31 December 2018**

Stephen Pugh, Honorary Treasurer, presented his report on the Society's accounts for the year to 31 December 2018.

Stephen started by outlining the charitable aims of the Society and the way in which finances affected charitable organisations. The most notable constraint was the need to hold adequate reserves to ensure solvency, but not excessive reserves that could deter donors who might feel that the charity is already adequately funded.

The Society had reduced reserves in recent years and Stephen showed a chart of the annual deficits run from 2014 to 2018. The 2018 deficit, at £187,000, had reduced reserves to £346,000. The Society's reserves policy sets a minimum reserve of six month's expenditure. In 2018 this amounted to £246,000 and so there remained £100,000 of "headroom reserve" at the previous financial year end. Nonetheless, at the rate of previous deficit expenditure, there was a pressing need to rebalance income and expense. Stephen noted that whilst the minimum reserve policy set by the Society was not a hard and fast limit, it was an important benchmark that required close monitoring.

Stephen displayed charts showing the increasing reliance of the Society on donations from individuals and also the volatility of income created by legacies, where the pattern showed

occasional large receipts, but these were unpredictable and infrequent and so reserve levels needed to allow for periods without such major benefactions.

The 2019 year was showing lower levels of deficit, £27,000 at the half year, and work continued on growing income from a wider range of sources. Costs had also been reduced through a reorganisation of the Society. Stephen thanked Andy Proctor for his hard and continuing work in effecting these changes.

Taking a broader perspective of the future, Stephen observed that, given the wide prevalence of eczema, even in its more severe forms, there was a huge opportunity for the charity. Stephen thanked the Society's donors and those who worked on its behalf.

**4. To re-appoint MHA MacIntyre Hudson as the Society's Independent Examiner and to authorise the Board to fix their remuneration (Resolution 2).**

The Chairman outlined to members that the Society was not required to have its accounts audited by either the Charity Commission or the Office of Scottish Regulator, as turnover is below the required thresholds. Hence the Trustees believed it was appropriate to have the accounts scrutinised by the independent examination process, rather than the more expensive audit process. Following a competitive tendering process, MHA MacIntyre Hudson was appointed to conduct the Independent Examination of the Society's accounts in 2018. MHA is a UK top 15 chartered accountancy practice and does independent examinations for around 100 UK charities, so is very experienced and has a strong track record.

The Resolution was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

**5. To re-elect Suzanne Watson (Resolution 3a) and Myrtle Johnston (Resolution 3b) as a Trustee.**

The Chairman outlined that Suzanne Watson and Myrtle Johnston were retiring from office under the requirements in the Articles for Trustees to retire by rotation. Both are eligible to be re-elected under the Articles and are willing to stand for re-election.

Resolution (3a) to re-elect Suzanne Watson was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

Resolution to re-elect Myrtle Johnston (3b) was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

**6. Special Resolution (Resolution 4) - That Section 12 of the Articles be amended to include the following: 'The Society's annual accounts and other organisational information can be distributed to members via the Society's website and/or by email.'**

This proposed change will help save the Society money, by not sending printed information to members when they are willing to access the accounts via the website and email. It was noted that members will still be entitled to request a printed copy in the post.

Resolution 4 was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

**7. Special Resolution (Resolution 5) – That section 14(2) of the Society’s Articles be amended to say ‘Ten members present in person shall be a quorum.’**

This proposed change will ensure that future AGMs can go ahead as planned, and reduces the risk of not achieving quorum and incurring the costs of having to rearrange the meeting.

Resolution 5 was considered and members approved with a majority show of hands.

**8. Special Resolution (Resolution 6) - That section 14 of the Society’s Articles be amended to say ‘Members present at a meeting by proxy shall be included in the quorum for that meeting.’**

Around 30 members routinely submit their proxy vote and it is important that their wishes are taken into account at the AGM, along with members who are able to attend in person. This proposed change also helps ensure that future AGMs achieve the required attendance for quorum.

Resolution 6 was considered and members present approved with a majority show of hands.

**9. Meeting closed**

The Chairman closed the meeting formally and thanked everyone for attending and for their attention.

Signed

Ed Davies, Chairman

Date

After the formal proceedings of the meeting had been concluded, the Chairman was delighted to receive a cheque for £2,000 from Helen Lovegrove (Co-Chair of the West Surrey and North East Hants Support Group), being funds raised by the Group to support the Society during the last 12 months. Helen and Vicky Robinson, also representing the Group, had travelled to Birmingham for the event and were using the occasion to have a stall selling merchandise to raise funds for NES. Ed asked Helen to pass on the Society’s grateful thanks to everyone who had again contributed to raising such a significant sum to support the charity’s important work.