

MS Society photography exhibition features Edinburgh couple

Karine and Sarah Mather met at university on the first day, fell in love and got married. They now live in Edinburgh where they are to star in a new photographic exhibition staged by the MS Society.

Supported by Mumford and Sons bassist Ted Dwane and celebrity photographer Louis Browne, the exhibition highlights the impacts of loneliness and isolation on those who live with MS.

The MS Society conducted research which found that three in five people with MS feel lonely because of their condition – which is 12 times the figure in the general population.

Karine and Sarah explained that their lives are affected by MS as Karine was diagnosed with primary progressive MS in 2013 when she was 27. She now uses a wheelchair and depends on Sarah each day. When they couldn't find a support group they began their own.



Karine and Sarah Mather at the 'The MS Connection' exhibition which explores the impact of loneliness and isolation on people living with MS.

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Karine said : "We used to travel the world together but now even the smallest journeys can be a challenge. I can't walk and can only use my right hand and arm, but can just about stand up. With progressive MS you know it's going to happen, so I was prepared for it. But there are some very low days and I suffer from anxiety and depression. My wife suffers from depression too.

"MS created a void in our lives we desperately needed to fill. So when we couldn't find a local group in our area we started one ourselves. Now we meet once a month for something like coffee or a picnic – our next adventure is to a microbrewery! It gives us a chance to be with like-minded people, and I can't imagine life without it.

"We took part in this campaign in the hope others going

through the same thing would realise there is support out there – no one should have to face MS alone.”



Guests attend the ‘The MS Connection’ exhibition which explores the impact of loneliness and isolation on people living with MS.

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MS is unpredictable and different for everyone, and can cause problems with how we walk, move, see, think and feel. Issues with mobility, losing employment, stigma around disability, and a lack of understanding from loved ones can all contribute to social isolation.

Morna Simpkins, Director of MS Society Scotland, said: “Anybody can be lonely, but we know from our research that loneliness is an issue which disproportionately affects people living with MS. The MS Society offers a whole host of support, including a free helpline, information and grants. Our local groups are based all around Scotland, and provide friendship, social events and support to those affected by the condition. To think 60% of people with MS are lonely is shocking and we

hope 'The MS Connection' will encourage people to get in touch with us and join the fantastic community that's out there."

'The MS Connection' was staged in London and is expected to tour the UK next year with the help of local MS Society groups. If you've been affected by MS and would like to speak to somebody, call the free MS Society helpline on [0808 800 8000](tel:08088008000). You can also visit www.mssociety.org.uk