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For immediate release

Hertfordshire woman with MS laughs her way to success

A woman from St Albans will be bringing Laughter Yoga to thousands at the biggest multiple sclerosis (MS) lifestyle event in Europe hitting the UK next month.

MS Life, an event organised by the MS Society, is taking place on 17-18 September and for the first time in its 10 year history, will be held in London at the ExCeL Centre. It will feature talks from some of the world's leading MS researchers, celebrities, chefs, and interactive workshops.

Lotte Mikkelsen, aged 48, from St Albans was diagnosed with MS eight years ago. She says: "It was a really tough moment for me because I lost my elder sister in 1991, just one year after she was diagnosed with MS. I knew the changes caused by the condition could quickly have a huge impact on my whole life."

Lotte's way to confront her diagnosis was to start the Telephone Laughter Club – a free-phone service connecting people to laugh together. She believes laughter has helped lower her stress levels and boosted her health.

The hour-long Laughter Workshop at MS Life will involve exercises that incorporate deep breathing and playfulness. She says Laughter Yoga can be

beneficial to people with MS because laughter – like exercise and other stimulating activities – releases increased levels of endorphins which are the body's natural pain killer: "There are many stories of people with MS, who have started regularly using Laughter Yoga or similar techniques, who have experienced improvement in relaxation and sleep owing to lower levels of pain."

Lotte says she's most looking forward to laughing with people at MS Life: "When we laugh we change how we see things, our perspective becomes less judgemental and we start noticing possibilities and opportunities instead of dreading what lies ahead."

Michelle Mitchell, Chief Executive of the MS Society, said: "There are more than 100,000 people affected by MS in the UK and just under a third of them live in London and the surrounding south east area. I'm really excited by this opportunity to bring the MS community together – from people living with MS themselves, to world leading researchers trying to find treatments for the condition. From yoga, wheelchair dancing, hoola hooping to café culture, we hope there'll be something for everyone at MS Life."

The MS Society is the UK's leading charity for people living with MS in the UK. MS attacks the nervous system and is unpredictable - one day you'll be fine, the next you might lose your sight or be unable to move. People typically start experiencing symptoms in their 20s and 30s, which include fatigue, sight loss, incontinence and disability.

Around 5,000 people are expected to attend MS Life this year and more than 2,100 have already secured their place. Tickets are free and people can register to attend at www.mssociety.org.uk/mslife.

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Notes to editors:

About multiple sclerosis

- MS affects more than 100,000 of us in the UK
- MS symptoms typically appear when people are in their 20s or 30s
- MS attacks the nervous system. Symptoms include sight loss, pain, fatigue, incontinence and disability
- MS is unpredictable - one day you can be fine, the next you might lose your sight or be unable to move

About the MS Society

- The MS Society is the leading UK charity for people with MS
- We have a free helpline - 0808 800 8000 and information can be found on our website www.mssociety.org.uk
- We're funding research to beat MS, we're now at the start of a generation of MS research that holds incredible promise
- With your help we'll beat MS